

PHONE RATES TOO HIGH, SAYS CITY IN ANSWER TO BRIEF

"After perusing the company's brief we find that it contains nothing new and that the full force of the case and brief presented by the people remains unimpaired," is the terse introduction of the city of Portland, represented by City Attorney Grant and Deputy City Attorney Tomlinson, in its reply brief on the rehearing before the public service commission of Oregon in the matter of the application of the Pacific Telephone & Telegraph company for authority to increase rates.

Delving into details, the municipality's brief continues along much the same line, setting forth that the telephone interests are now deriving a greater revenue than is justified.

RATES UP 40 PER CENT

"The large and conspicuous facts remain that the company's rates have been increased 40 per cent since May 1, 1919; that previous to the last increases in the prices of labor and material, due to the war, had already been provided for by the commission, and the last increase was not necessary for those purposes; that the company, after the elimination of competition, which should have a tendency to reduce rates, is receiving higher rates than it ever received in its history; that in Portland rates are higher than in other cities in the United States with approximately double the population; and that in other cities in Oregon where the Pacific company operates the rates are much higher than in cities of comparable size in Oregon where independent companies operate. For instance, rates are much higher in Pendleton, where the Pacific company operates, than in La Grande, where an independent company operates; they are higher in Dallas, which is a Pacific exchange, than in Medford, which is an independent exchange, and so on down the numerous list."

The brief goes on to relate that facts corroborate the "already overwhelming evidence" that the rate base is too high; the 4 1/2 per cent payment unreasonable and burdensome, the annual allowance for depreciation too large, "the management expensive and inefficient, the equipment obsolete, distorted and expensive to operate, the Western Electric

contract a burden rather than a benefit, the toll expenses disproportionately apportioned and that the company had not permitted its subscribers to receive the benefit of the general reduction in prices."

CRITICISE COMMISSION

The city narrows that the first "23 pages of the company's brief are devoted mainly to a criticism of this commission and of the representatives of the public on account of the petition for and the granting of the rehearing, and the company also contends that the rehearing was invalid."

In reply to repeated queries of the company in its brief as to why the city did not appeal to the court, the city brief sets out that the reason was simple in that, under the laws of Oregon, the court cannot review the case on its merits and "it was on the merits the review was desired."

The brief of the city is embraced in 44 pages, and throughout it is replete with answers to detailed denials and evasions of the company. On page 29 reference is made to the east office of the company as having been in a "distorted and obsolete condition" when a visit of the commission to the plant was decided on and that it was inclined to resist and resent the visit.

"When the company found the commission was going to look at it in spite of its protest," says the brief, "it hurried to remove the stacked-up and distorted switchboard and apparatus in it, saying it intended to remove it anyway. Our disclosure at that point brought results, one step in the right direction, but that is only a small beginning. The east exchange is still an obsolete and expensive-to-operate affair. The Main-Marshall exchange is still worse, as is shown by the unrefuted testimony, as well as the inspection made by the commission."

ARLETA PLANT "SECOND HAND"
The "second hand" plant at Arleta is referred to. The brief says: "We believe that the full truth would reveal that the Bell system in the East made considerable money by selling it to the Pacific company, in addition to the profit made by the Western Electric company in repairing it."

Going into the matter of present-day wages and suggested cuts in salaries of officers and employes other than mechanics and operators, the brief delves into the closing paragraph of the company's brief, in which reference was made, "it expected a restricted development on account of the last rate increase," the city brief says. "This confirms our repeated assertions that it is the policy of the Bell interests to make of the telephone a luxury for the well-to-do classes and not a service to the greatest possible number. Our local gas company also voluntarily reduced its rates for heating purposes to avoid a falling off of profits, and the railroads

have also reduced freight rates for the same purpose."

In conclusion it is asked that the commission make a substantial reduction of exchange rates in the state and the readjustment of such rates on a just and equitable basis.

Tomlinson expressed optimism on the

outcome of the case today, saying he looks for a decision early in December, possibly by the first. New rates, if ordered, would therefore be in effect as of January 1.


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Twelve Will Go to Reclamation Meet

Salem, Nov. 25.—Governor Olcott has received acceptances from a number of citizens of the state whom he requested

to attend a meeting of the Western States Reclamation association, to be held at Salt Lake City, November 29 and 30. Those who have agreed to go at their own expense because of their interest in the reclamation development of Oregon, are as follows: Frederick W. L. Powers, Corvallis; Whitney L. Boise, Portland; A. A. Smith,

Baker; G. L. Smith, farm expert of the O-W. R. & N., Portland; P. J. Gallagher, Ontario; A. L. Washard, secretary of the Klamath Irrigation district, Klamath Falls; Sam Mothershead, secretary Harney Valley Irrigation district, Burns; Judge Will R. King, Washington, D. C.; William Hanley, Burns; Fred Henshaw, United States geologi-

cal survey, Portland; George Quail, secretary Oregon State Chamber of Commerce, Portland, and J. W. McCulloch, Ontario, Or.

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