

Coloured Telephones.

WHILE the high standard of efficiency of modern telephones of the hand-combination type is recognised as their most outstanding feature when compared with instruments of earlier design, other advantages which have also contributed to their popularity have not been so frequently discussed. An example is to be found in the simple design of the component parts. Not only has simplification been effected in the apparatus employed in the circuit but also in the purely mechanical details such as the pedestal forming the case and the handle carrying the transmitter and receiver. Whereas formerly metal and wood were employed almost exclusively in the manufacture of the various external parts, present practice is to combine as many details as possible into a few composite units which take the form of synthetic resin mouldings. Thus in the standard GECOPHONE set, the pedestal carrying the cradle switch and containing the ringer, etc. consists of a single Bakelite moulding. The hand-combination also forms a single unit, carrying both transmitter and receiver

This method of construction has not only given the designer greater scope in the production of a simple type of instrument which is more easily maintained, but from the user's point of view has led to a welcome improvement in appearance. Further, the "clean" external surface of the mouldings, due to the absence of projecting screws, hinges and similar metal parts, has so greatly simplified

the problem of applying external finishes that it is now possible to offer the subscriber the choice of a wide range of colours.

This additional feature has already proved popular among users of private telephone systems and suggestions have been made that subscribers to the public service should also be given a selection of different colours so that each instrument installed can be chosen to match its immediate surroundings. While such a proposal may at first seem attractive and in the event of its adoption may possibly stimulate the demand for instruments and extensions, the value of the scheme from an economic point of view is open to question.

In the first place the production of large quantities of the standard telephone in one common colour simplifies manufacturing problems to the greatest possible extent, whereas a demand for similar instruments in a wide range of colours and probably in small quantities must necessarily introduce complexity and tend to increase the cost. The additional charge must ultimately be borne either directly or indirectly by the subscriber and, although the amount may only be small, its effect in many cases may possibly render the scheme unprofitable.

A further question to be considered is that of replacement of parts. One of the chief merits of the GECOPHONE instrument lies in its adaptability, for it can be employed either as a wall or table set and will satisfy



almost every service condition. Standardisation of one type throughout a system offers the advantage of reducing to an absolute minimum the variety of spare parts to be kept for maintenance purposes, whereas, should a diversity of colours be available to the subscriber, a much larger stock of spare parts would be necessary to meet the varied requirements. External parts would not be interchangeable, nor would complete instruments except within their respective colour groups.

In a private telephone system, serving a bank, institution, hotel or business house, these factors are of relatively minor importance since each instrument is not usually considered to be a revenue earning unit and the capital outlay when first installing the equipment would not be greatly increased by providing a limited number of coloured instruments where required. Furthermore, a supply of spare parts is often considered unnecessary when the system is small, in which case expenditure under this heading may be ignored. It has therefore been seen that coloured instruments have found favour chiefly with private users.

From the point of view of the large user, and of the manufacturer, the introduction of coloured telephones may be generally deprecated, but to meet the demand which has arisen, following publicity given to this

development, The General Electric Company is now producing all instruments of the GECophone series—for magneto, C.B. manual and automatic systems—in a comprehensive range of colours in addition to the standard public service type with polished black Bakelite mouldings. The range also includes various pearl and mottled effects. Where, in any scheme of decoration, a primary colour is predominant, the choice can usually be given of an instrument suitably finished to match or one which will offer a pleasing contrast. Pearl finish, employing any selected colour as the base, is suitable in particular for light or mixed colour schemes.

A limited standard range offering a selection which will satisfy a variety of requirements is as follows:—

Old Gold, Ivory, Green, Blue, Pearl Pink, Pearl Cream, Oxydised Copper, Oxydised Silver, Mottled Brown.

In each case the external connecting cords are braided with silk of a selected shade to match the telephone, the dial being suitably finished either to tone with the body of the instrument or to offer a contrast. Old gold, ivory and green instruments carry a dial relieved by gold plating, while in the blue, pearl cream, pearl pink, mottled brown and oxydised silver types, chromium plating is employed. In the case of oxydised copper, the dial is partly finished red-bronze.

