Plant's Start Draws Crowd

Contracts for Steel to Be Let Soon

Two hundred autos and two chartered buses took an estimated six hundred to the Western Electric Company's groundbreaking Thursday.

Chairs were available for five hundred at the open-air ceremony atop a hill in what formerly was farm land adjacent to Millard.

The crowd included farmers in overalls, men in business suits, well-dressed women, kids in strollers—and the inevitable dog. One farsighted woman brought an umbrella.

H. V. Schmidt, engineer of manufacturing, was in the crowd. He said contracts for the plant's steel would be let within two weeks.

Big Drawing

A 20-foot high drawing of the proposed buildings was a backdrop for the speakers stand.

Two Products

Arthur B. Goetze, vice-president of manufacturing, explained the two products to be made at the plant: exchange cable and No. 5 crossbar equipment.

The cable contains from 50 to five thousand wires. It connects subscribers' telephones to exchanges, and interconnects exchanges. Mr. Goetze said the plant will produce 24 billion "conductor feet" annually, about one-sixth of the Bell System's present requirements.

The crossbar equipment receives dialed impulses, memorizes them while it selects a route to complete call, sets up connections, keeps track of call and when completed disconnects lines.

Sun's Energy Used

When W. E. President Fred R. Kappel removed a black velvet hood from the solar battery, a high whining noise began.

Electricity from the battery powered a miniature broadcasting station using transistors. The signal was received by an earth-moving machine a quarter mile away.

The battery, comprised chiefly of highly purified silicon, converts the sun's energy directly into electricity. The battery is being used to power a rural telephone system in Georgia.

'Most Significant'

Charles V. Price, director of the Nebraska Resources Division, termed the plant "a most significant event in Nebraska's economic progress."