

REPORT BY THE POSTMASTER GENERAL.

General Post Office,
4th June, 1860.

Preliminary
Remarks.

In compliance with your Excellency's Instructions, I have the honor to present a Report upon the Postal Service of the Colony for the past year.

In performing this duty my chief aim has been, (so far as I could do so within reasonable limits) to give a sketch of the present condition of the Department—of the services which have been performed—and to suggest any changes or improvements which may appear desirable.

The plan on which I have proceeded has been to furnish in the returns, to be found in the appendices, the information which can most conveniently be presented in that shape and to introduce into the body of the report any statements or explanations which might seem necessary in order to give a complete view of the results to be recorded.

It is obvious, however, that a bare statement of results if strictly confined to the particular year under review, would give only a very partial and imperfect idea of the real condition of the Department; I have therefore endeavoured, with a view of supplementing what was wanting in this respect, to connect in the form of a narrative the transactions of the past year with those of former years.

Several obstacles have, however, presented themselves in the attempt to carry out this plan, arising principally from the difficulty of obtaining proper returns on the one hand, and from the incompleteness of the records on the other.

This being the first occasion on which a report of this nature has been prepared, and the returns necessary for its preparation having consequently never been required before, the several Post-Offices have not been in the habit of keeping their records in such a manner as easily to make them available for supplying the desired information.

The incompleteness of the records of former years is mainly attributable to the numerous changes which have occurred in the management of the Department since its first establishment.

In the early days of the Colony, and while the operations were very limited, a Postmaster-General was appointed whose special duty it was so supervise the Postal arrangements. This office was however subsequently abolished, and became merely a subordinate branch of the Colonial Secretary's Department.

Although, doubtless, some provision still remained for the performance of the necessary routine work, and even for the correction of obvious evils, it is yet evident that this alteration, effected as it was, just at the time at which a considerable expansion was taking place in the operations of the Post-Office, made it impossible that undivided attention could be bestowed on details, and prevented that expansion from being carried out systematically, or with a due regard to unity of design.

The inadequacy of the machinery for meeting the growing wants of the different Localities, became accordingly so apparent that an attempt was made in the first instance to supplement it by the makeshift machinery, constituted under the "Local Post's Act," of 1856, No. 30, now repealed. These changes have naturally had the effect both of dispersing the records in various different Offices and of introducing many conflicting and unconnected arrangements throughout the Colony, thus rendering it difficult, if not impossible, to draw up any very continuous narrative of occurrences.

While these obstacles to the complete and satisfactory performance of the work must necessarily make this report fall very far short of what it might otherwise have been, yet the information which still remains available is not altogether without value in various ways.

1st. It must in the first place be always useful to have a compendious summary at hand of the principal transactions of any Department.

2nd. A Report of the nature here attempted, is a convenient mode of communicating information to the public, which could otherwise be only obtained by correspondence with the Department and which, when so obtained, would only be of use to individuals.

3rd. The constant changes which become necessary in order to keep pace with the growing wants of the Colony, by extending the operations of the Department, renders corresponding alterations in the details, sometimes indeed in the general system, absolutely unavoidable. These alterations have frequently an important effect, not only on the mere convenience, but also, on the pecuniary concerns of every class in the community; it is therefore very desirable that some channel should be provided for making the public familiar with them particularly, as well as generally with the working of a system in which they are so much interested.

4th. Many complaints and much dissatisfaction against the Department very frequently arise, not so much from any neglect or fault on the part of the Officers employed therein, as from an imperfect knowledge of existing arrangements on the part of the public. A short review of these arrangements appears calculated to obviate these inconveniences.

Lastly, in a statistical point of view, a periodical report of the state of the Department and of the work performed, appears to afford one very reliable test of the general progress of the Colony.