

TRANS-TASMAN AIR SERVICE.

The direct linking of New Zealand by air with the Australia-England service on the 30th April was an event of outstanding importance in the history of trans-Tasman communications. The schedule provided initially for a weekly service, but in order to effect connection with the trans-Pacific (fortnightly) service arrangements were made later for an additional flight during the week in which the Pan-American flying-boat arrives at Auckland, the object being to provide good Australian connections with the trans-Pacific service.

The trans-Tasman has proved a most valuable service, particularly in view of the concentration of New Zealand Forces in the Middle East. For the eleven months ended the 31st March, 34,464 lb. of New Zealand mail was despatched by the service, while 31,560 lb. of mail for New Zealand was received. The average weight of mail carried on each trip was 600 lb.

TRANS-PACIFIC AIR SERVICE.

The first regular flight in the Pan-American air service connecting Auckland with San Francisco via Noumea, Canton Island, and Hawaii took place on the 20th July. This service, which provides for a fortnightly connection from Auckland, is now an important link in the Dominion's air communication system with overseas countries.

After the suspension of the Egypt-United Kingdom section of the Empire air service, the Pan-American service provided the only means of rapid air-mail communication between New Zealand and the Mother-country. The normal transit time from New Zealand to the United Kingdom by this service is approximately fourteen days, but owing to exceptional conditions on the North Atlantic section this time was occasionally exceeded during the period November to January, inclusive.

The postage rates on correspondence for despatch by the Pan-American service are, for each half-ounce: New Caledonia, 1s.; Canton Island, 1s. 9d.; Hawaii, 2s. 6d.; United States of America, 4s.; United Kingdom, 5s. 9d.

For the period July to March the total mail despatched was 8,619 lb. and the total mail received was 9,001 lb.

CORRESPONDENCE FOR PRISONERS OF WAR INTERNED ABROAD.

Every effort is made to facilitate the despatch of correspondence for prisoners of war interned in Germany, Italy, and other European countries. This correspondence is forwarded to the United Kingdom, whence, apparently, it is despatched through Lisbon and Geneva. As yet no channel is available by way of the Middle East.

Correspondence for a British prisoner of war must be addressed to show his service number, rank, name and initials, the fact that he is a British prisoner of war, and the name of the camp and the country in which he is interned; but a difficulty that is frequently encountered by next-of-kin and others desirous of communicating with him is that his proper address is not always available until some time after he has been taken prisoner.

Correspondence for prisoners of war is, under an international arrangement, carried by surface routes postage-free.

POSTAGE-STAMPS, ETC.

SOCIAL SECURITY STAMPS.

A 3s. social security stamp was issued during the year.

DUTY STAMPS.

Duty stamps (coat-of-arms type) were issued in June in the following additional values: 3s. 6d., 5s. 6d., 11s., and 22s. Each new stamp was overprinted with the value in large black type.

ISLANDS STAMPS.

The introduction of the "all-up" Empire air service created a demand for 1½d. stamps of the Cook Islands, Niue, and Western Samoa. Stamps of that denomination were therefore ordered, but by the time they arrived in New Zealand, the air-mail rates had been increased following the outbreak of war.

As there was no 3d. stamp in the current islands issues, it was decided to overprint the 1½d. stamp "3d.," and these stamps were placed on sale on the 2nd September.

The stamps were printed by Messrs. Bradbury, Wilkinson, and Co., England, and overprinted at the Government Printing Office, Wellington.

HEALTH STAMPS.

Health stamps for 1940-41 were issued in two denominations - 1½d. and 3d. (1d. for postage and ½d. for "health," and 2d. for postage and 1d. for "health"). The stamps, which were of the same design as those issued in 1939-40, were placed on sale on the 1st October and they were withdrawn on the 28th February. On this occasion the colour of the 3d. health stamp was changed from orange to light brown. Stamps to the value of £5,470 were sold, and one-third of that amount, representing the "health" value, together with donations amounting to £3,191, was paid to the several Health Camp Committees.