

POSTAL SERVICES.

INLAND MAIL-SERVICES.

Inland mail-service contracts in the Auckland, Hamilton, and Thames Postal Districts were relet for a further term of three years from the 1st January, 1942.

At the end of March, 1942, there were 34,080 rural boxholders, which represents an advance of 697 compared with the figures on the 31st March, 1941.

AIR MAILS.

INLAND.

For the twelve months ended the 31st March, 1942, the weight of letters carried by air within the Dominion was 73,802 lb. In addition, 7,356 parcels were conveyed by the inland air services.

EMPIRE AIR SERVICE.

The enemy occupation of Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies brought about the suspension of the Australia-India section of the Empire Air Service in February, 1942.

During the ten months of the year that the service was in operation approximately 2,000,000 letters for the New Zealand Forces were despatched to the Middle East by air, the average transit-time being approximately twelve days.

TRANS-PACIFIC AIR SERVICE.

The Trans-Pacific Air Service, which commenced in July, 1940, was suspended in December, 1941, owing to the extension of the war to the Pacific. On the nineteen trips made during the year a total of 16,134 lb. of mail was received in the Dominion (4,925 lb. for New Zealand) and 14,329 lb. of mail was despatched (5,999 lb. originating in New Zealand).

The shortest transit-time of mails forwarded by the service to the United Kingdom was nine days, and the average time approximately fourteen days.

In November, the route of the service was varied to include Suva as a calling-place, but on normal flights only two calls at that place were made before the service was suspended.

Subsequent to the suspension of the Trans-Pacific Service it was arranged for correspondence for the United Kingdom to be given air transit, if desired, from the first port of call in North America. The transit-time between the Dominion and Great Britain under this arrangement usually runs from twenty-five to thirty-five days.

TRANS-TASMAN AIR SERVICE.

The frequency of the Trans-Tasman Air Service was three times a fortnight up to December, 1941, when, with the suspension of the Trans-Pacific Service, it once again became weekly.

The total weight of mail-matter carried by the service in 1941-42 was—from New Zealand 90,034 lb. (77,913 lb. originating in New Zealand), and to New Zealand 72,030 lb. (63,488 lb. for New Zealand). The average weight of mail carried on each trip was 1,026 lb.

RESTRICTION OF POSTAL SERVICES.

With the increasing need for conserving man-power it was necessary to suspend the operation of the "Householder" circular delivery system and the "Express Delivery" service and to restrict the frequency of postmen's deliveries in residential areas to once daily.

PRISONER-OF-WAR CORRESPONDENCE.

Surface mail for prisoners of war is now despatched via New York and Geneva, while air-mail correspondence is despatched to New York, whence it receives air transit to Lisbon by the Trans-Atlantic Air Service. It is understood that air-mail letters for prisoners of war are often given air transit between Lisbon and Germany. Surface mail for prisoners is accepted free of postage, while in respect of air-mail articles cheap rates apply.

Letters from prisoners of war are being received in the Dominion at somewhat irregular intervals. Some appear to be reaching New Zealand via Lisbon and the United States of America and others via Lisbon and the United Kingdom, or via Baghdad and Australia. Advice was received recently that New Zealand prisoners were being permitted to forward their letters at cheap rates of postage for transmission via Turkey and Baghdad for connection with the Empire Air Service. The gain in transit-time that would normally have resulted from this partial air transmission has unfortunately been offset by the interruption to the Empire service.

GIFT PARCELS FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM.

In order to conserve shipping space it was necessary, on the advice of the British Ministry of Food, to impose restrictions on the acceptance of gift parcels of foodstuffs and non-foodstuffs for the United Kingdom. Such parcels are restricted in weight to 5 lb., and the weight of any one foodstuff commodity enclosed must not exceed 2 lb.

The restrictions do not apply to parcels addressed individually to New-Zealanders serving with the Forces.

POSTAGE-STAMPS, ETC.

NEW STAMPS.

The following new stamps, &c., all of King George VI design, were issued during the year: 3d. ordinary and 3d. "Official" (colour blue); $\frac{1}{2}$ d. (brown) and 1d. (green) newspaper wrappers; 1d. (brown) post-cards; and 1s. 6d. prisoner-of-war letter-cards.

HEALTH STAMPS.

Health stamps were again issued in two denominations— $\frac{1}{2}$ d. and 3d. The stamps, which were of the same design as those issued during the previous year, were placed on sale on the 4th October, and were withdrawn on the 28th February. The value of the stamps sold was £7,427, and one-third of that amount, representing the health value, together with donations amounting to £4,608 collected by the Post Office, was paid to the several Health Camp Committees.