

AIRGRAPH SERVICE.

The airgraph service, which provides for the photographing of letters on a greatly reduced scale on films in the country of origin, for transmission of the films to destination by air, and for the printing of photographic enlargements in the country of destination for delivery to the addressees, was commenced in an outward direction from New Zealand to Canada and the United Kingdom on the 18th January, 1943, and to the Middle East on the 10th February. The service, which was introduced primarily as a wartime measure for speeding communications to and from members of the armed forces, provides air transit for communications which, on account of their weight in the usual form of letters, could not otherwise be conveyed by air under existing wartime conditions. Upwards of 1,500 communications, which in the form of letters would weigh approximately 30 lb., can be photographed on to a film which, when packed for air transmission, weighs only 6½ oz. The film is developed before despatch, and the prints, made in the country of destination for delivery to the addressees, measure about 5 in. by 4 in.

At the outset the service from New Zealand was made available for messages addressed to members of the armed forces (including members of the Merchant Navy) in Canada, the United Kingdom, and the Middle East, and also for messages from British Service personnel and members of the Merchant Navy in or passing through the Dominion addressed to their homes in Canada or the United Kingdom. The cost of any such airgraph message is 5d.

Up to the end of the financial year 7,781 airgraph letters were despatched to members of the forces in the United Kingdom, 2,584 to Canada, and 3,908 to the Middle East.

On the 2nd April, 1943, the airgraph service was extended to permit of the acceptance of messages (including business communications) for civilians and business houses in the United Kingdom.

The service in the inward direction commenced from the United Kingdom on the 2nd April, 1943, and from the Middle East on the 6th April, 1943. Prior to that date airgraph messages for New Zealand had been accepted by the Canadian Post Office from members of the armed forces in Canada and included in films for Australia, the prints for delivery to the addressees being prepared in Australia and flown to New Zealand by the Trans-Tasman Air Service. A similar arrangement was made by the British Post Office in respect of special airgraph messages which members of the New Zealand armed forces in the United Kingdom and the Middle East were permitted to send for the 1942-43 Christmas and New Year season, when 3,892 Christmas airgraph messages were received from the United Kingdom and 18,667 from the Middle East.

The photographic work in New Zealand is carried out by Kodak (New Zealand), Ltd.

PRISONER-OF-WAR CORRESPONDENCE.

Outward.—Mails for prisoners of war in enemy and enemy-occupied countries continue to be despatched at every opportunity. Surface mails and air mails for prisoners in Germany and Italy are routed via New York and Lisbon, the air mails being transmitted by air across the Atlantic. Air transmission from Portugal into the enemy countries is given to both surface and air mails. Surface mails for prisoners in Japanese hands are routed via the Persian Gulf or via Vladivostock, whichever route offers the better despatch. Air-mail service for prisoners in Japanese hands is not available.

Having regard to the circuitous routes by which prisoner-of-war mails are forwarded, to the delays to which shipping and other transport services are frequently subjected on account of war operations, and to the delay to correspondence as a result of enemy censorship, some appreciable time necessarily elapses between the despatch of the mails from New Zealand and delivery to the addressees.

Inward.—Inward correspondence from prisoners of war comes to hand with a fair degree of regularity, although some letters have taken up to eight months in transmission. Generally, of course, the factors responsible for delay to mails for prisoners apply equally to correspondence from them. Most of the correspondence from Germany and Italy is routed by the enemy authorities via Lisbon and New York, although some is received via the Middle East and India.

POSTAGE-STAMPS.

HEALTH STAMPS.

Health stamps of two denominations—1½d. and 3d.—were placed on sale on the 1st October, 1942, and withdrawn on the 27th February, 1943. Stamps to the value of £16,281 were sold, and one-third of that amount, representing the health value, together with donations amounting to £4,787 collected by the Post Office, was paid to the Federation of Health Camps.

MONEY-ORDERS, POSTAL NOTES, AND BRITISH POSTAL ORDERS.

Money-orders issued, postal notes sold, and British postal orders sold and paid during the year were as follows :—

	Number.	Value. £
Money-orders	817,398	4,960,561
Postal notes	2,242,034	933,633
British postal orders sold	21,706	6,579
British postal orders paid	8,767	4,651

SAVINGS-BANK.

Deposits lodged in the Post Office Savings-bank during the year amounted to £38,097,070 and the withdrawals to £26,889,339, an excess of deposits over withdrawals of £11,207,731. The amount at the credit of depositors at the end of the year was £84,469,933, the interest accruing to depositors being £1,816,820.

WORK PERFORMED FOR OTHER DEPARTMENTS.

The total sum handled by the Post Office during the year on behalf of other Departments was approximately £150,000,000, a increase of £48,000,000 on the previous year's figures.

The amount collected by the Department under the Social Security Act amounted to £18,409,967.

MILITARY ALLOTMENT WARRANTS.

The number of military allotment and dependants' allowance warrants paid by the Department during the year was 2,750,698.