

operating between Sydney and Auckland. However, in June, 1945, "Lancastrian" planes were brought into use on the Empire service which was then extended to Sydney.

A thrice-weekly service has been maintained both ways between London and Sydney, close connection being made at the latter place with Tasman Empire Airways' flying-boats. The scheduled transit time from Sydney to London is sixty-three hours and from Auckland to London five days, although the actual transit time normally averages six days. On four occasions throughout the year, letters posted in both Islands of New Zealand were delivered in London four days later.

Special flights from England to New Zealand were made by two "Lancastrian" planes in March, 1946. One plane carried mails posted in London on the 5th March, and these were received at Palmerston North early on the morning of the 9th March. Special arrangements were made at Palmerston North for sorting the mail on arrival, with the result that letters were received in all main centres by plane or train the same day. On the return flight mails were carried by both planes. The aircraft left Palmerston North on the 10th and 11th March and the mails were received in London on the 12th and 14th March respectively.

TRANS-PACIFIC AIR SERVICE

For the forwarding of troop and official mails to North America use was continued of the air service provided by the Royal Air Force Transport Command operating from Sydney through Auckland to Montreal. Arrangements were later made for this service to be used also for the conveyance of civilian mails for North America, the first such despatch being made on the 20th September, 1945. Unfortunately, the service was discontinued on the 18th December. Since that date, air-mail correspondence from New Zealand for North, Central, and South America and the West Indies has been forwarded by the Empire service via Australia to the United Kingdom, and thence by the North Atlantic air service to Canada. The transit time from New Zealand to the United States of America and Canada by this route averages eleven days.

AIR SERVICES TO PACIFIC ISLANDS

During the past few years, air services have been operated by the R.N.Z.A.F. to many of the Pacific islands. Advantage was taken of these services to forward mail to the New Zealand and other Forces then stationed in the islands, and an excellent service resulted. Civilian mails for the islands were also carried whenever space permitted. With the withdrawal of the New Zealand Forces from the Pacific theatre, additional space became available for the carriage of civilian mails, and it was decided to establish a regular air-mail service, a surcharge being imposed to cover transmission costs of the mail. Accordingly, as from the 1st January, civilian air-mail correspondence for Fiji, Tonga, Cook Islands, Western Samoa, American Samoa, and Norfolk Island has been accepted for despatch on payment of an air-mail postage-rate of 5d. each half-ounce—a rate in keeping with that payable on air-mail correspondence from New Zealand to Australia. The service to Fiji is twice weekly, to Norfolk Island, Tonga, and Samoa weekly, and to Aitutaki and Rarotonga (Cook Islands), fortnightly. The establishment of this service has resulted in a greatly improved exchange of mails with the islands named.

AIR LETTER-CARD SERVICE

The light-weight air letter-card is still a popular form of communication with the countries to which the service is available. During the year the service was extended to provide for the acceptance of cards addressed to civilians in Canada (postage-rate, 1s. each card), in the British West Indies (Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, Jamaica, Leeward Islands, Trinidad, and Windward Islands), British Honduras, and British