

were free at the former place, but were charged 1d. on arrival in the colony. In 1850 newspapers were once more placed on the free list. The rate from the United Kingdom appears to have been at first 1d., although the postage from New Zealand was free. Later the rate from the United Kingdom was raised to 2d. on newspapers forwarded *via* Southampton and Suez, the option being given to the colonies of charging the same rate in the opposite direction. The New Zealand Government considered, however, that the benefit to be derived from accepting the proposal appeared to be so small in comparison with the inconvenience likely to be occasioned to the public that they declined to act upon it.

"The Post Office Act, 1858," provided for the free transmission by post of all newspapers published in the colony, but not of those published elsewhere. An abuse which threatened great inconvenience by unduly increasing the weight of the mails was thus put a stop to.

The finances of the Post Office appear to have been strained in the few years following 1860, owing mainly to the sudden call for inland-mail services in Otago as a result of the discovery of gold, and the Postmaster-General in his report for 1863 remarked that "the Post Office expenditure in New Zealand is very far in excess of the revenue, an excess mainly caused by the very heavy cost of transmission of mails. The inland conveyance of mails is an especially heavy item, and this is to a very large extent caused by the great bulk of newspapers transmitted by post. At present newspapers are in New Zealand transmitted free, although such a course is not adopted, as far as can be ascertained, in any other colony. There seems no good reason why the finances of the colony should be burdened with the cost of carriage of newspapers, and it is a matter which should receive the consideration of the next General Assembly whether all newspapers transmitted by post should not be subject to a small postage rate."

An attempt was almost immediately made to apply a postage rate, but this was not successful, as would appear from the following extract from the report for 1864:—

"The question of making newspapers transmitted by post subject to a small postage rate was recommended by the late Postmaster-General in his report for the year 1863, and, heartily concurring in the expediency and justice of the proposal, an Order in Council was issued on the 29th December, 1864, to give effect to this recommendation. Owing to some supposed illegality or informality the order was revoked, and also in order that the subject might be brought prominently before the Assembly for its decision. During the short time it was in operation there is reason to believe that it met with very general satisfaction. The interval which has been allowed to elapse has strengthened the conviction that such a tax is alike demanded by fairness and necessity, especially when there is no restriction against the carriage of newspapers by private enterprise, which, as regards letters, is contrary to law. In Great Britain, with its network of railways affording every facility for cheap conveyance, newspapers transmitted by post are subject to a penny stamp, with a fine for improper folding. In Victoria for each newspaper posted in the colony, not exceeding 5 oz. in weight, 1d. must be prepaid, and the instructions are precise as to the mode of sending. In New South Wales every newspaper whatever posted in the colony for transmission inland or beyond sea is subject to a charge of 1d. If it be urged that such a charge is a tax upon literature, it may be replied that in Victoria the charge did not have the effect of diminishing the number of newspapers posted, nor was such the case in some parts at least of this colony; and, considering the expense of country mails in New Zealand, amounting to no less a sum than £31,646 9s. 7d. per annum, and the number of newspapers sent by these, amounting to 1,616,919, averaging about six times the weight of the letters, there can be little doubt that the public will reconcile itself to the charge, if not now approving of it already, especially when it is remembered that the newspapers received from abroad are invariably prepaid. The amount derivable from this payment would probably increase the postal revenue by about £10,000 per annum in the shape of direct receipts, while at the same time it is reasonable to suppose that the contracts for the conveyance of inland mails, being much affected by the carriage of newspapers, would in some measure be diminished in amount."

Free newspaper postage remained until 1866, when "The New Zealand Post Office Act Amendment Act, 1866," fixed the rate of 1d. each on all newspapers posted within the colony for delivery within the colony, and provided for an additional charge to be fixed by Order in Council on newspapers posted within the colony for transmission to other countries. In 1868 the rate to the United Kingdom by way of Panama or Suez was 1d. for each newspaper, and *via* Suez and Marseilles 3d., the higher charge apparently being fixed to cover transmission by the overland route. Thenceforward, until 1873, the postage on inland newspapers remained at 1d. each, the same rate being charged by the sea routes to the United Kingdom, with an additional charge of 1d. if sent overland *via* Trieste, when a reduction of the inland postage from 1d. to ½d. each newspaper took place, and no further change was made until 1892, when the rate by weight was reluctantly applied to newspapers to the United Kingdom and other places beyond the colony, Australia excluded.

At the time of writing the Postmaster-General is not in receipt of any definite reply to the representations made to the London Post Office by cable immediately it was learned that a special arrangement had been come to between the United Kingdom and Canada, under which Canadian newspapers are transmitted to the United Kingdom at the Canadian inland rate. Unfortunately (as indicated in a Press telegram) the Postmaster-General of the Australian Commonwealth does not at the moment appear to be disposed to ask the London Post Office to revert to the penny rate; and, if this be correct, there may be delay in concluding negotiations with the Imperial Post Office.

INSPECTION.

During the year 1902 the Postal Inspectors visited and inspected 1,414 offices, the distance travelled being 25,221 miles