

Owing to the enlistment in the Expeditionary Force of male officers of the Department, it has been necessary to engage a large number of female assistants in many branches of the Department. These are employed for the period of the war only, and the arrangement enables the Department to hold positions open for the return of its permanent officers.

INSTRUCTION CLASSES FOR OFFICERS.

The correspondence classes inaugurated in 1910 for the tuition of officers of the Department in technical telegraphy and telephony, and in subjects of the Public Service Senior and Entrance Examinations and the Sixth Standard, were continued during 1915. During the year the fee was raised from 10s. 6d. to £1 1s. for each course. The total number of students who joined the classes was 353, of whom 119 were technical students. The results of the year's work were, as in previous years, very satisfactory.

In all 346 lads received instruction at the telegraph learners' schools at Auckland, Oamaru, and Wellington.

EXAMINATIONS.

The number of officers who sat for efficiency examinations during the year 1915-16 was 779. Of this number, 551 (71 per cent.) were successful either wholly or partially.

To enable officers of the Department taking magnetism and electricity as a subject for the Public Service Senior Examination to fulfil the conditions regarding a minimum course of practical work in the subject, arrangements were made at places where the necessary certificate could not otherwise be obtained for certificates from the Telegraph Engineers, countersigned by the Chief Telegraph Engineer, to be accepted by the Education Department.

INCREASED POSTAGE AND TELEGRAPH RATES.

On the 23rd September, 1915, the postage rates on all postal packets, including parcels, but excepting newspapers, were raised by one halfpenny. But in respect of those addressed to those places beyond the Dominion to which the Postal Union rates already apply no additional charge was imposed. The charge on inland packets prepaid at bulk rates—*i.e.*, *Hansard*, *School Journal*, &c.—was raised $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per pound. An exemption was subsequently made in favour of correspondence addressed to soldiers on active service or in camp in New Zealand, and of correspondence posted by soldiers in New Zealand camps, on all of which the war-tax is remitted. Sailors in H.M. ships on Dominion service have the same privilege.

On the same date the following charges were fixed for telegrams: For ordinary telegrams—(a) on week-days, for twelve words or less, including address and signature—urgent, 1s. 2d.; ordinary, 8d.; extra words, 1d. and $\frac{1}{2}$ d. each respectively; (b) on Sundays, for twelve words or less, including address and signature—urgent, 2s. 2d.; ordinary, 1s. 2d.; extra words, 2d. and 1d. each respectively. Sunday rates were made applicable at all offices without exception. For cable messages the charges were increased by 2d. for each message except in the case of cable messages addressed to soldiers. The rates on Press telegrams were also increased.

PARCEL-POST.

By Order in Council of the 20th December, 1915, it was provided that a fresh rate of postage should be charged for the return to the sender of an unclaimed inland parcel.

Parcel-post number labels are now supplied at the cost of the Department to any firm posting 1,000 or more parcels per annum. The labels bear the initials of the firm and the name of the town in abbreviated form.

Parcels for the Expeditionary Force which are found on arrival at chief offices to be insufficiently packed are returned to the senders for repacking.

Since the 1st September, 1915, inland parcels have been insured for any sum not exceeding £2 on payment of a fee of 2d.

THE WAR AND THE DEPARTMENT.

Special steps were taken to urgently impress on every officer of the Department the need for economy in the use of official supplies during the continuance of the war.

The Department has continued throughout the year to grant concessions wherever possible to soldiers on active service abroad and in camp in New Zealand, and to the general public in communicating with soldiers.

As has been mentioned above, the war-tax has been remitted in the case of correspondence addressed to members of the Expeditionary Forces, whether in camp in the Dominion or on active service abroad, and that posted by soldiers in camp. The estimated value of the concession is £12,000.

The rates of postage for parcels addressed to soldiers, nurses, and Sisters in Egypt and despatched by the Suez route were reduced from 2s. 8d. to 1s. 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. for parcels not exceeding 3 lb.; from 4s. 4d. to 2s. 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. for parcels not exceeding 7 lb.; from 6s. to 4s. 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. for parcels not exceeding 11 lb. The Department also agreed to accept parcels for members of the British Expeditionary Forces in France at the postage fixed for parcels for the United Kingdom.