

INLAND MAIL-SERVICES.

The North Island Mail-service contracts were relet in the latter part of 1927. Several entirely new services were established, notably one between Putaruru and Taupo. The routes of a number of services were rearranged to the advantage of both the Department and the settlers.

As regards mail communications, the following are the only incidents worthy of recounting :—

On the 19th May, 1927, while the contractors for the Christchurch-Springston rural-mail delivery were engaged in delivering mail-matter their motor-car was totally destroyed by fire. The mail-matter, however, escaped damage.

In June, 1927, communication by road between Napier and Taupo, and between Napier and Wairoa, was disorganized for two days owing to floods rendering the roads impassable.

At the end of July, 1927, a slip on the Main Trunk Railway line outside the first tunnel near Kaiwarawara (Wellington) disorganized the railway service. Suitable arrangements were made to transport mails between Wellington and the scene of the slip.

Several wagons of a mixed passenger and goods train were derailed near Mangapehi on the 13th March, 1928. One of the derailed wagons which contained bags of post parcels, came to rest some 200 ft. down an embankment. Although the wagon was damaged, the mails were recovered in good order.

The engine, mail-van, and a second-class carriage of the south-bound Main Trunk express of the 25th July, 1927, were derailed at Otaki. The mail-van was badly damaged, but happily the two mail agents escaped injury.

RURAL MAILS.

At the 31st March, 1928, there were in use 16,931 rural boxes, an increase of 1,459 on the number for last year. The number of rural deliveries, including part rural deliveries, in operation at the 31st March, 1928, was 376, compared with 377 on the 31st March, 1927. But for the amalgamation of a number of services at the reletting of North Island contracts, the number of rural deliveries would have shown an increase.

The figures regarding the reletting of North Island contracts disclose that the average cost of serving a rural box exceeds the revenue derived therefrom. In respect of daily services, the cost per box-holder is £3 3s. 4d., and the revenue £2 14s. 5d. For services with frequencies of thrice weekly or less the respective figures are £4 10s. 7d. and £2 11s. 6d. The revenue figures given include the annual fees paid for the boxes. The net loss on rural-mail services in the North Island is £2,490.

“HOUSEHOLDER” CIRCULARS.

The revenue from “Householder” circulars posted during the year was £7,384.

MISSING POSTAL PACKETS.

During 1927 the Department investigated 5,613 inquiries regarding the reported non-delivery of postal packets. In 3,516 cases, or nearly two-thirds of the total number, the articles were traced or accounted for satisfactorily. These cases may be summarized as follows: Sender responsible for delay, 1,012; addressee responsible for delay, 1,241; Post Office responsible for delay, 364; no delay, or responsibility not fixed, 899. In 2,097 cases the manner in which the packets were disposed of could not be determined. A comparison of this figure with the total number of articles posted shows that the percentage of losses was 0.00085.

In view of the fact that the Department provides adequate facilities for the safe transit through the post of money and other readily negotiable value, the number of unregistered postal packets which, on being opened in the Dead Letter Office, are found to contain bank-notes and other values is surprising. In some cases very large sums in bank-notes have been enclosed in unregistered packets. The failure of members of the public to make adequate use of the registration system is a world-wide one; and the meeting of it constitutes a problem with which every postal administration is faced. The importance of using the registration system when forwarding values by post cannot be too frequently stressed.

REGISTRATION OF MOTOR-VEHICLES.

It has been arranged for the Superintendent of Police at Wellington to ascertain from the central register in the General Post Office at any time after the ordinary hours of business information regarding the names and addresses of owners of motor-vehicles in any part of the Dominion.

Police officers in Auckland are now able, in urgent cases, to obtain at any time after the ordinary hours of business the names and addresses of owners of motor-vehicles in Auckland City.

All the Deputy Registrars' offices within a radius of two miles from the chief post-office, Auckland (with the exception of Newmarket, at which office applications for new registrations are still being accepted), have been closed, and the records centralized at the chief post-office. The change inflicts no hardship on motor-owners, and it is welcomed by the police and traffic officers, who have to deal with the ever-increasing number of accidents and breaches of by-laws. The new arrangement will prove particularly advantageous during relicensing periods, as under the old arrangement considerable time was expended at the chief post-office in obtaining records from suburban offices.

The Motor-vehicles Amendment Act, 1927, made provision for several changes, the more important of which are as follow :—

(1) The annual fees for dealers' plates are increased, and dealers are permitted to use such plates for any purpose connected with their business.