

The average times of transmission of mails during the year by the contract services, which provide for regular fortnightly sailings, were as follow: Auckland to London (via Vancouver), 31 days; London to Auckland (via Vancouver), 31·07 days; Wellington to London (via San Francisco), 29·07 days; London to Wellington (via San Francisco), 31 days.

The whole of the cost to Government of these services is now borne by the Post and Telegraph Department.

The contracts for the services which expired on the 31st March, 1929, were renewed for twelve months from the 1st April, 1929, and are to be further renewed for a period of twelve months from the 1st April, 1930.

A contract for twelve months for the performance of a service for the conveyance of mails, freight, and passengers between the South Island (Bluff) and Victoria (Melbourne) was established during the year, and since its inception on the 29th January, 1930, has been performed with regularity. The service provides for sailings at intervals of three weeks. At first a contract providing for two vessels to make trips at alternate intervals of nine and twelve days was proposed, but owing to the wreck of the "Manuka" at Long Point, on the coast between Bluff and Dunedin, shortly after taking up her contract running, the proposal could not be proceeded with. While the mails conveyed have not so far been very large, a useful purpose is served by the service.

The non-contract service continues to be maintained between New Zealand and Australia (Sydney) by steamers of the Union Steam Ship Co., leaving Auckland and Wellington alternately every second Friday. On the intervening Fridays a steamer of the Huddart-Parker Co. leaves Auckland and Wellington alternately, thus providing with the vessels of the Union Steam Ship Co. a regular weekly despatch to Sydney. In addition, despatches are arranged fortnightly on Tuesdays by the steamers engaged in the Vancouver and San Francisco services, and cargo-vessels are also made use of when they afford a suitable despatch.

The use of the Suez route is now availed of only for specially addressed letters.

The Panama and Cape Horn routes are used mainly for the despatch of specially addressed correspondence, second-class matter, and parcels, although, with the advent of fast steamers on the direct route to Great Britain via Panama, use of the Panama route was occasionally made during the year for the despatch of letter-mails. This service by fast steamer is irregular, however, and the sailing-times of the steamers, which are engaged principally in the cargo trade, are governed by weather and other conditions which affect loading.

#### INLAND MAIL-SERVICES.

Except for the dislocation of services in the Nelson and West Coast districts of the South Island, particulars of which are given in that portion of this report which deals with the earthquake of June, 1929, little difficulty was experienced in providing for the smooth running of inland mail-services during the year.

A night express train between Wellington and New Plymouth was inaugurated on the 16th March, 1930. It runs alternately three nights weekly from each end. It has improved mail communication between the Wellington, Wanganui, and New Plymouth Postal Districts.

On the 18th and 19th July serious floods on the Taieri Plains interrupted the rail service between Dunedin and Milton, and special arrangements had to be made for the conveyance of mails for offices south of Dunedin.

Owing to an extensive slip on the Central-Otago Railway line on the 27th July, mails required to be transhipped for a period of over a week.

In August, 1929, floods caused serious dislocation of mail-services in the Wairarapa district; and in February, 1930, floods in the Wellsford district caused interruption of the mail-transport services in that district.

A daily service for the conveyance of post parcels for Gisborne overland from Napier has been established; and a similar service to provide for Opotiki has been inaugurated between that town and the Taneatua Railway-station, the nearest rail point. Parcels for these places were previously conveyed by sea at irregular intervals.

#### RURAL DELIVERIES.

The increase in the number of rural box-holders during the year was 1,662. There are now 21,000 rural box-holders in the Dominion.

Wherever possible, daily services have been instituted; and where daily services have not been possible, owing to the sparsely populated nature of the districts and the high prospective cost, services of a lesser frequency have usually been arranged.

#### REGISTRATION OF MOTOR-VEHICLES.

During the year 20,802 cars, 5,745 commercial vehicles, and 4,300 cycles—a total of 30,847 vehicles—were registered. The number of vehicles registered during the month of December, 1929—namely, 2,744 cars, 639 commercial vehicles, and 478 cycles, a total of 3,861 vehicles—constituted a record, being the highest for any month since the present system of registration came into force.

On the 1st June, 1929, the registrations of 6,660 vehicles lapsed owing to the vehicles not having been relicensed during the two relicensing years immediately preceding.