

RESTORATION OF PUBLIC FACILITIES, HASTINGS.

As soon as possible after the earthquake mail-matter, valuables, and other matter were salvaged from the damaged building and safeguarded. The first public demand was naturally for telegraphic communication, and the acceptance of telegrams was commenced on the 3rd February at the railway bus office (opposite the post-office). The following morning post-office business was commenced in the departmental lineman's shed in St. Aubyn Street: and the telegraph office was fully established at the railway-station. During Thursday, the 5th February, possession was taken of Clifton Commercial College—departmental property in St. Aubyn Street—the telegraph instruments remaining at the railway-station. It was soon recognized that the St. Aubyn Street premises were inconvenient and unsuitable for lengthy occupation, and other premises were sought. On the morning of the 10th February, all public branches at Hastings commenced operation in the Oddfellows' Hall, Market Street. The telegraph instruments were removed from the railway-station to the Oddfellows' Hall on the 22nd February.

A postman's delivery was made at Hastings on the afternoon of Thursday, the 5th February, prior to which time as much correspondence as possible had been delivered to callers. The postmen resumed their usual two deliveries daily on the 16th February, when all services were approaching normal.

Telephone Exchange.—The central battery telephone exchange at Hastings, which gave service to about two thousand subscribers, although put out of action by the destruction of the power plant and dislocation of the outside plant, was comparatively little damaged. It was, however, exposed to the weather due to the collapse of portions of the roof and walls of the portion of the building in which it was housed. Preliminary steps were taken for its preservation soon after the earthquake, and a little later greater protective measures were adopted. Four of the main 600-pair cables were damaged in the exchange manhole, which was filled with water from broken water services. Terminals and laterals in the business area were extensively damaged, but the outlying portions of the system on the whole suffered only minor damage. An emergency manual telephone exchange for essential services and for toll lines was established at the railway-station on the 6th February. On Sunday, the 22nd February, the connections with this emergency exchange were cut over to a provisional and more permanent exchange, capable of providing for one thousand subscribers, established in a storeroom at the back of the post-office building. The reconnection of subscribers was then put in hand with all speed.

In the new portion of the Hastings building the installation of a "Strowger" automatic exchange, to take the place of the central-battery system, was proceeding at the time of the earthquake. Fortunately, this apparatus escaped almost uninjured, but its erection was not sufficiently advanced to enable it to be brought into operation at the time. The work was accelerated, and the automatic exchange was brought into operation on the 31st May, 1931.

RESTORATION OF PUBLIC FACILITIES, PORT AHURIRI.

As the post-office building at Port Ahuriri was completely wrecked by the earthquake and later in the day swept by fire, the facilities provided by that office were totally interrupted. Pending the provision of other accommodation, a temporary office was established in the railway-station on the 4th February, and telegrams and mail-matter were carried between Port Ahuriri and Napier at frequent intervals. On the 25th February the office was transferred to a temporary galvanized-iron shed which had been erected on land adjoining the railway-station.

On the 23rd March Morse telegraph communication with Napier was restored, and two days later the toll service was restored.

MAILS AND MAIL-SERVICES.

The principal effect of the earthquake on mails and mail-services was the interruption of the Napier-Gisborne mail-service. There was very little other disorganization, except on the day of the earthquake.

On the 4th and 5th February at every opportunity mails were exchanged by motor-vehicle between Napier and the temporary rail-head at Waipukurau and intermediate offices. By midday on the 4th February the train service had been resumed as far north as Otane, by 2 p.m. on the 5th to Hastings, and later on the same day to Napier, each successive step lessening the use of motor-vehicles.

Napier-Gisborne Mail-service.—The ordinary time-table for this service provided for a service by lorry leaving both Napier and Gisborne at 7 p.m. daily, and arriving at destination at 5 a.m. the next day. From the 4th to the 11th February, inclusive, the Gisborne-Wairoa section of the service was performed daily in daylight, the road between those two places being in good order.

On the other hand, the section between Napier and Wairoa was totally interrupted on account of the road being impassable. The contractors made strenuous efforts from both the Wairoa and Napier ends to resume the service as soon as possible, but about a fortnight elapsed before that could be done. Even then only a service in daylight for letters was possible. On the 3rd March, the service was extended (still by daylight trip) to all mail matter except parcels, which were conveyed by sea as opportunity offered. The comprehensive night service was resumed in its entirety on the 21st April. During the period in which the Napier-Gisborne mail-service was disorganized mails to and from Gisborne, Wairoa, and other offices served from those places were exchanged by air (letter mails only): by sea as opportunity offered; and overland via Rotorua and the Motu Gorge (letter mails only).