

POST OFFICE.

INLAND PARCEL-POST: REDUCED RATES.

A review of the first year's working of the inland parcel-post under the cheaper rates introduced in 1936 confirms the expectation that the reduced rates would attract a large amount of additional business. The estimated number of parcels posted during the year was 3,810,000, compared with 1,665,000 in the preceding year and 354,000 in excess of the previous peak posting in 1925.

As the new parcel rates were cheaper than packet rates for articles between $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. and 5 lb. in weight, the maximum weight for packets was reduced from 5 lb. to $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. In effect this meant that, from the date the new rates took effect, all articles over $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. in weight automatically came within the category of parcels.

TALKING-BOOK RECORDS FOR USE OF BLIND: FREE TRANSMISSION BY POST.

Arrangements were made in May for parcels of talking-book records not exceeding 7 lb. in weight posted by or addressed to the New Zealand Institute for the Blind, Auckland, or posted by or addressed to branches of the Institute at other centres, to be accepted for inland transmission free of postage. The records are enclosed in special containers provided for the purpose by the Institute.

BOOKLET OF RATES AND CHARGES.

The booklet "Principal Rates and Charges" issued by the Department in May was distributed to the public free of charge at all post-offices in the Dominion. Reports received from offices indicate that the issue of the booklet was greatly appreciated by the public generally and by the business and farming communities in particular.

INLAND MAIL-SERVICES.

As the result of the inauguration by the Railways Department of rail-car services on certain lines, the exchange of letter-mails between a number of offices has been expedited. A service between Christchurch and Hokitika commenced on the 5th August, and services between Wellington, Upper Hutt, Masterton, and Woodville on the 7th September.

The contracts for the mail-services in the Gisborne, Napier, New Plymouth, Wanganui, Palmerston North, and Wellington postal districts expired on the 31st December last, and were relet for a further term of three years from the 1st January. It was possible to improve some services either by extension or by an increase in frequency.

The contract services in general continue to operate regularly and efficiently. Due to improved conditions, there was a marked increase in requests for more frequent services.

An indication of the popularity of the rural-delivery system may be gained from the fact that there were at the end of the year 26,790 rural box-holders. This is the highest number yet recorded, and represents an increase of 1,925 compared with the preceding year.

On a number of occasions during the year mails were delayed slightly through floods, slips, &c. In each case effective steps were taken to avoid undue inconvenience to the settlers, alternative methods of transport being employed where practicable and necessary.

At 6.20 a.m. on Sunday, the 30th August, the Main Trunk express which left Auckland at 3 p.m. the previous day ran into a landslide about a quarter of a mile south of Paraparaumu, derailing the engine and causing damage to the first carriage in particular. The postal-van was not damaged, but it was necessary to transfer the mails to Wellington by departmental motor-lorries. The through train service was interrupted until after 5 p.m. on the 31st August, on which day it was necessary to transfer mails at the point of derailment, three lorries with the necessary officers being sent to Paraparaumu for the purpose.

On the night of the 29th June, the mail-truck operating between Taneatua Railway-station and Gisborne was destroyed by fire near Opotiki, and a portion of the mail was lost.

OCEAN MAIL-SERVICES

The Auckland-Vancouver ocean-mail-contact service maintained by the "Aorangi" and the "Niagara" was performed regularly during the year. The average transit times of mails by this service were as follows:—

Auckland to London	..	..	..	..	..	..	28.1 days.
London to Auckland	..	..	..	..	..	..	30.9 days.

The Wellington-San Francisco ocean-mail-contact service was discontinued on the arrival at Wellington of the "Maunganui" on the 9th November and of the "Makura" on the 8th December. The service had been maintained with regularity.

Owing to the withdrawal of the Wellington-San Francisco steamers and to vessels of the Matson Line being held up at San Francisco by labour trouble, it was necessary on occasions during December and January to forward mails for the United States of America and Canada via Panama and ports on the east coast of North America. In some instances the mails were transhipped at Balboa.

Appreciable use is made of the all-sea route via the Panama Canal for the conveyance of mail-matter to Great Britain and Europe, this applying particularly since the withdrawal of the San Francisco contract steamers. The bulk of the second-class mails for Great Britain and Europe is now sent by this route, and whenever an advantage is to be gained letter-mails are also forwarded. With the placing in service of faster vessels, the Panama route now forms a satisfactory alternative to the North American overland services for the forwarding of ordinary mails.