

It is worthy of remark that as regards the four principal centres the average absence from sickness of postal officers is generally higher than that of telegraphists. It does not appear from the information to hand that the average sickness among the staffs in the principal towns varies greatly, although it would seem that the health of the staff in 1896–97 was best in Christchurch. There were six deaths.

The present time will perhaps be opportune to allude to the operations of the past six years in connection with the many concessions made to the public during that period, showing that the policy of the department has been to reduce rates and extend conveniences so long as there was a fair prospect of the gross profits not being unduly diminished. Had the department been conducted for revenue purposes only it would have been possible to have shown an increasing profit year by year.

To practically indicate the attitude of the department towards the public it may be well to show side by side what was charged for the following services in 1890 and 1896 :—

	1890.	1896.
Postage on letters to Great Britain ...	6d. ...	2½d.
"    "    foreign countries...	6d. to 1s. 2d. ...	"
"    printed matter, foreign ...	1s. 4d. to 2s. 8d. per pound ...	4d. per pound.
"    "    inland ...	8d. per pound ...	"
Newspapers, foreign ...	1d. each, and 1s. 4d. to 2s. 8d. per pound	"
Parcels, inland ...	7d. first pound ...	6d. first pound.
"    to Australia ...	1s. 2d. to 1s. 6d. first 2 lb., 7d. and 9d. each succeeding pound	8d. first pound, 6d. each succeeding pound.
Redirection fees on letters, inland ...	2d. ...	Free.
"    "    foreign ...	6d. to 1s. 2d. ...	"
Cable telegrams, international (Europe : cheapest route)	10s. 6d. per word ...	5s. 2d. per word.
Cable telegrams, intercolonial (N.S.W. : lowest charge)	9s. 6d. first ten words, and 1s. each additional word	3s. first ten words, and 5d. each additional word.
Inland telegrams (minimum rate) ...	1890: 1s. for ten words, and free address and signature up to ten words. Delayed telegrams, 6d. 1892: For twelve words, and free address and signature, ordinary telegrams, 1s.; delayed, 6d. Later in 1892 the number of words in text and signature made eighteen.	6d. for twelve words, including address and signature. (From 1/6/96.)
Telephone exchange connections ...	£10, £9, £8, £7 per annum ...	£5 per annum.

In addition, a number of minor concessions has been made, among which may be mentioned the abolition of the additional poundage on postal notes of over four months' currency, the introduction of letter-cards, &c.

It is difficult, if not impossible, in a department in which the several classes of business are so thoroughly fused as in the Post and Telegraph to determine exactly the loss under each separate heading. In some cases, as, for example, the introduction of the halfpenny rate for commercial and printed papers, an entirely new class of business was created, and for a time no undue pressure was felt by existing staffs. It is, however, doubtful whether the halfpenny rate leaves any appreciable margin above the actual cost of handling; but the convenience, especially to business-men, can scarcely be estimated.

In other cases the concessions have resulted in a direct loss of revenue, which can be closely approximated. For instance, the loss consequent upon the reduction of the British and foreign rates of postage, not taking into account the normal increase in business which might have been expected under the old rates, or the increased cost of handling, was as follows :—

	£
1891 ...	8,711
1892 ...	8,433
1893 ...	7,602
1894 ...	7,447
1895 ...	6,744
1896 ...	6,616
Total ...	<u>£45,553</u>

From this it will be seen that the revenue is only slowly recovering itself. If, however, the whole of the postage reductions (including the British and foreign rates) are taken together, it will be found that the net loss was rapidly reduced until 1896, when it disappeared altogether. The figures are approximately as follow :—

	£
1891 ...	11,175
1892 ...	7,000
1893 ...	5,000
1894 ...	4,000
1895 ...	3,000
1896 ...	Nil*

Total loss to end of 1895 ... £30,175

\* Net result, excess receipts about £300.