

EMPIRE SERVICE

The Empire service, too, continues to grow in popularity, and last year 55 per cent. of letter-mail for the United Kingdom was sent by air.

The frequency of the air-mail service between Sydney and London, which for some time had been thrice-weekly, was increased in June, 1949, to four times weekly. In consequence air mails for the United Kingdom are now closed at Auckland four times each week, but mails for intermediate countries between Australia and the United Kingdom to which only a small volume of correspondence is sent, continue to be closed thrice-weekly. The average transmission time from Auckland to London for New Zealand air mails is still about seven days.

The weight of air-mail correspondence from New Zealand despatched by the Empire air service during the year was : letters, 68,031 lb. ; second-class mail (two months' traffic), 691 lb. Of this 61,541 lb. of letters and all of the second-class mails were for the United Kingdom.

The total weight of inward mail for New Zealand was 108,062 lb. of letters and 4,621 lb. of second-class mail (two months' traffic).

TRANS-PACIFIC SERVICES

British Commonwealth Pacific Airways (Auckland - San Francisco - Vancouver) and Pan-American World Airways (Auckland - San Francisco) maintained throughout the year direct weekly services between New Zealand and North America. In addition, advantage was taken to fly mails across the Tasman to connect once weekly with B.C.P.A. planes departing from Sydney to Vancouver. By this means it was possible to provide three closings weekly for air mails for America.

Mails containing second-class matter (newspapers, commercial papers, packets, &c.) have been received inward by the Pan-American Airways Service since the 9th June, 1949. A similar service in the reverse direction by B.C.P.A. planes was commenced on the 1st February, 1950.

The weight of mail matter despatched by the Trans-Pacific services for the year ended the 31st March was : letters, 15,228 lb. ; second-class matter, 190 lb.

SERVICES TO PACIFIC ISLANDS

Regular air schedules to Norfolk Island, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, and the Cook Islands continue to be operated by the regional services of National Airways Corporation. Fiji is also served by the direct Auckland-Vancouver service of the British Commonwealth Pacific Airways which calls at Nadi.

On the 18th October the first regular air mail for Papeete (French Settlements of Oceania) was despatched. A regular monthly connection is available by using the B.C.P.A. service from Auckland to Nadi (Fiji), where connection is made with a French service (TRAPAS) operating between New Caledonia, Fiji, and Papeete.

The weights of air mails for the places mentioned, despatched during the year ended the 31st March, were as follows : Norfolk Island, 1,072 lb. ; Fiji, 5,312 lb. ; Tonga, 598 lb. ; Samoa, 1,710 lb. ; Cook Islands, 1,587 lb. ; French Settlements of Oceania, 36 lb.

OVERSEAS SURFACE MAILS

OUTWARD MAILS

Little difficulty was experienced in disposing of mails to the United Kingdom, Australia, and the South-west Pacific. To the United Kingdom mails have been despatched on the average at weekly intervals. To Australia a frequent service has been maintained, full use being made of the weekly sailings of the intercolonial passenger-vessels as well as other vessels, as occasion arose. The service to the South-west Pacific, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, &c., was maintained at least once monthly.