

With mails for North America, however, it has been necessary in the intervals between the regular sailings of the "Aorangi"—which leaves Auckland at two-monthly intervals, and is the only passenger-vessel in the North American service—to rely on cargo-vessels departing at irregular intervals to Pacific Coast ports and, on occasions, vessels passing through the Panama Canal to New York and other Atlantic Coast ports. At all times, however, an endeavour was made to despatch mails at least once in every two weeks, and on only three occasions was this interval exceeded. Twenty-eight despatches of mails were made during the year.

Letters for all overseas destinations posted for despatch by surface transport continue to show a decrease. On the other hand, parcels (except gift parcels for the United Kingdom) and newspapers, &c., have shown a marked increase.

INWARD MAILS

Inward surface mails have been received at about the same frequency as outward mails have been despatched. Mails from the United States are often despatched to Australia for trans-shipment to New Zealand, and this adds to the transit time. In addition, some delays have been caused by berthing and unloading difficulties in New Zealand ports.

GIFT PARCELS

The postage on gift parcels addressed to individuals in the United Kingdom was reduced during the year to 1s. 6d., 2s. 9d., 4s., and 6s. 3d. for 3, 7, 11, and 22 lb. parcels, respectively. This was made possible by the reduction by the British Post Office of its share of the postage on *bona fide* unsolicited gift parcels of food, worn clothing, medical supplies, or soap.

Notwithstanding the reduced postage-rates, however, postings of gift parcels for the United Kingdom have continued to decline. For the year ended 31st March, 1950, the number of parcels posted was 788,343, compared with 1,203,052 for the previous year.

MAILS CONVEYED BY NAVAL VESSELS

In disposing of mails for many of the outlying Pacific Islands the Post Office has received ready co-operation from the New Zealand naval authorities. During the year it was possible to forward mails by naval vessels to Raoul Island, Niue, the Cook Islands, Samoa, Tonga, Fanning Island, Funafuti, and other islands in the South-west Pacific, and also to Campbell and Macquarrie Islands in the Antarctic. In the ordinary course of events some of these islands receive mails only at very irregular and infrequent intervals, and consequently, the receipt of additional mails by naval vessels is very much appreciated.

The Post Office, for its part, keeps in close touch with the movements of New Zealand naval vessels when they are away from New Zealand waters, and every opportunity is taken to ensure that the ships' personnel receive mails, both surface and air, as frequently as circumstances permit.

POSTAL SERVICES TO CHINA

During the year it became necessary to restrict postal services to China to the acceptance of unregistered letters and post-cards, which can be sent forward only as far as Hong Kong for onward despatch at sender's risk.

INCREASE IN PARCEL-POST WEIGHT-LIMIT TO CANADA

The weight-limit for parcels from New Zealand to Canada was increased from 11 lb. to 20 lb., with effect from the 1st August, 1949. This makes the weight-limit more uniform in both directions.