

of representatives took place in February this year. Mr. Harold Lincoln Slyfield was nominated for the Telegraph branch, and, being unopposed, was elected to represent that branch. Two nominations having been received for the Postal branch, a poll was taken, and Mr. Arthur Frederick Wimsett was elected.

INSPECTORS OF TELEGRAPHS AS JUSTICES OF THE PEACE.

The Inspectors of Telegraphs at Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin, Nelson, and Wellington were appointed Justices of the Peace for the purpose alone of witnessing declarations of secrecy of appointees under "The Electric Lines Act, 1884."

UNIVERSAL PENNY POSTAGE.

The following motion was introduced by the Prime Minister of New Zealand at the Imperial Conference, London, on the 9th May last: "That, in view of the enormous social and political advantages and the very material commercial advantages to accrue from a system of international penny postage, and of the further fact that any depression in postal revenue resulting from the adoption of such a system has now been proved to be only temporary in duration and inconsiderable in amount, this Conference recommends to His Majesty's Government the advisability, if and when suitable opportunity occurs, of approaching the Government of those States, members of the Universal Postal Union, which have hitherto declined to agree either to an interchange of letters at a one-penny rate for the minimum rate, or to the receipt of letters from abroad at the same rate, with a view to a more general and, if possible, a universal adoption of that rate." The resolution was agreed to.

The letter rate of postage from New Zealand to the United States of America was reduced from 2½d. to 1d. per ½ oz. on the 1st of November, 1906.

POST-OFFICE INSPECTION.

During the year the four Assistant Inspectors of Post-offices visited and inspected 1,731 offices, and travelled 36,297 miles. In addition to this they also acted as relieving Chief Postmasters in several districts.

INLAND LETTER POSTAGE RATE.

From the 1st November, 1906, the rate of postage for letters conveyed within New Zealand, which had previously been 1d. for each ½ oz. or fraction thereof, was reduced to 1d. for each 4 oz. or fraction thereof. An estimate of the letters dealt with under the new rate for the quarter ended the 31st March, 1907, shows that during that period the total number of letters posted increased by 416,315 over those dealt with during the same period of 1906. The saving to the public for the quarter is estimated at £6,359, or at the rate of £25,436 a year, while the loss of revenue is put down at £1,088. These results are much more favourable than was expected.

OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE.

One of the most important events of the year has been the abolition of franking of official letters and telegrams generally as from the 1st January, 1907. The free transmission of correspondence by post had subsisted for about sixty-six years, while the system of franked telegrams had been in force almost from the commencement of telegraph operations in the colony. Apart from the fact that the Post Office was performing work for other Departments without remuneration, it was felt that the system of franking had grown to extravagant dimensions. While it was probably the case that the number of letters sent by post by Government officers was not excessive, it was found that many of the public were evading the postage rates by addressing letters on their private affairs to Government Departments as on public service. In the Telegraph branch it had been well known for many years that the free transmission of telegrams by Government Departments was conducive neither to brevity nor to a restriction of the number of messages. Moreover, the wires were very frequently occupied by official messages which contained matter that might without inconvenience have been dealt with by post. Under the new system letters and telegrams are paid for by affixing stamps which are overprinted "Official," special arrangements being made for prepaying quantities of correspondence, which are accepted without stamps, and marked "Official, Paid" by the Post Office. The result of the change has been that for the quarter ended the 31st March, 1907, it is estimated that the postage on official letters was £5,706, or, say, a total for the year of £22,824, as against £56,898 for the year ended the 31st December, 1906. The value of official telegrams was £2,217, or, say, allowing for increased work during the session of Parliament, at the rate of £10,000 a year, as against £24,168 for the previous year—a difference of about £14,000.

The great decrease in the value of letter-postage is principally accounted for by the fact that official letters are frequently bulky, and gain the full advantage of the reduced letter rates of postage. That the value of telegrams would be largely reduced was foreseen, the definite charge against Departments being likely not only to restrict the number of messages, but to reduce their length to a minimum.

INLAND TELEGRAPH RATES.

On the 1st November, 1906, the rate for ordinary inland telegrams, which formerly was 6d. for the first twelve words or less, including address and signature, and 1d. for every additional word, was reduced to ½d. per word, with a minimum charge of 6d. The urgent rates were likewise reduced to be double the new charge for ordinary messages.