

With regard to the Macquarie Island Wireless Station, the Commonwealth authorities were unwilling to act without us, because the question of its continuance for the further study of sub-antarctic conditions was of universal scientific interest, and of the greatest importance to the meteorology of the Southern Ocean. It was also necessary for co-operation with the Imperial Antarctic Expedition under Sir Ernest Shackleton. The plant of the wireless station was offered by Sir Douglas Mawson for £500, and the upkeep and supply was estimated to cost from £1,200 to £1,800 per annum. As the island is Commonwealth territory, the purchase of the plant and management of the station was regarded in the province of the Commonwealth Government, but for upkeep I proposed to ask the Dominion to contribute £500 per annum for three years towards its maintenance. On this the Commonwealth authorities agreed to proceed, and on the 7th July the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth was definitely informed by the New Zealand Government of the offer. Some doubt and delay occurred at the outbreak of the war, and the consequent uncertainty of the sailing of the Imperial Antarctic Expedition, but on the 2nd October Mr. H. A. Hunt, the Commonwealth Meteorologist, cabled to me that his Government agreed to his continuance for one year at least, and accepted our contribution. The records from the Macquaries have been regularly transmitted since its establishment by Sir D. Mawson, but on the 8th, 9th, 10th, and 11th January last no records were taken, the staff being engaged in co-operating with the search for the s.s. "Endeavour," which is believed to have foundered on returning from the island after leaving stores, &c. A member of the staff of the Commonwealth Weather Bureau who had been engaged for some time in meteorological work on the island was lost with the ship.

In my visit to the Central Weather Bureau at Melbourne and the divisional office at Sydney I was treated with the utmost courtesy and consideration, and in the short time at my disposal I saw much of the inside working of these offices. I obtained sets of forms, maps, and plans which were of great interest and value, and I would like to especially mention the system of the Queensland flood-reporting inaugurated by the Weather Bureau, which I think might be applied with advantage to some of the rivers subject to floods in this Dominion.

The work of our office has gone on as usual, but with a natural growth in volume, which, without increase of staff, prevents advance in several directions regarded as desirable and important. Changes have also been postponed for want of fuller consultation with, and approval of, international meteorological authorities.

Dr. W. N. Shaw, Director of the British Meteorological Office and Chairman of the International Committee, has informed me that the decennial Conference of Directors of Meteorological Offices throughout the world, which was to have taken place in September, 1915, has been postponed, and probably will not assemble until a year after the declaration of peace. The Conference has many matters of particular interest to New Zealand for its consideration, particularly a system of storm-warning, upon which I have been for some time in communication with Dr. Shaw. Both he and Dr. H. R. Mill, Director of the British Rainfall Organization, however, urge the necessity of bringing New Zealand more into line with international requirements, and say that it would be beneficial if the Government were to send me Home in the meantime.

The need for more office space has been met by the Public Service Accommodation Board securing for us two extra rooms at the former rental by taking the whole under lease for a period of five years. We have now a direct telephone communication with the Telegraph-office and the room in which we prepare the daily morning weather reports. Mr. Wyatt, the Superintendent of the Wellington Telegraph-office, has instituted a system of checking the incoming weather reports, and, by occasionally speeding the returns of certain dilatory reporters, has saved great inconvenience to us as well as the telegraph operators themselves, enabling us to issue the reports more promptly to the public. In some instances it has been reported to us that local Postmasters are careless about the publication of the weather reports and forecasts, but in general the services rendered to our Department by the Post and Telegraph officers show commendable zeal and public spirit. The staff of the Head Office has assisted us, with the utmost alacrity and to the fullest extent, and we are deeply indebted to them.

Chatham Island Wireless Station has been equipped with instruments for reporting weather daily, and on the 8th April, 1915, commenced transmitting reports at a nominal cost to this Department. This report is again sent by us as a collect telegram to Australia.

The establishment of the Public Service Commissioner's system of filing correspondence, though necessary for the growth of our operations, has entailed considerable difficulty and some delay while carrying on the usual work of the office.

Arrangements have been made with the Government of the Commonwealth under which New Zealand is to contribute £500 a year for a period not exceeding three years towards the cost of wireless communication with Macquarie Island, and under this arrangement the Meteorological Branch of the Department is receiving reports which are used for weather-forecast purposes.

Government Steamers.

The Department has continued to employ the "Hinemoa" on her usual work of conveying material, stores, provisions, and oil to lighthouses, in attending to cleaning and painting buoys and beacons, and the work has been carried out in a very satisfactory manner. In addition to her ordinary work the vessel has conveyed to the site the material required for the lighthouse-tower which is being built on Karori Rock in Cook Strait.

A vote was taken last session of a part of the cost of a new steamer to replace the "Hinemoa," and steps are now being taken to invite tenders for building and equipping the vessel.