

The Department has now contracts expiring at the end of 1920 and of 1921. To bring these into line, tenders will be invited for the performance for one year, from the 1st January, 1921, of those contracts expiring at the end of 1920.

Owing to a shortage of coal, train services were very considerably reduced from the 2nd July to the 27th September, 1919. To prevent serious public inconvenience, subsidiary mail-services by motor and steamer were established in various parts of the Dominion. The principal of such services were:—

Auckland-New Plymouth: By steamer, thrice weekly.

Wellington-New Plymouth: By motor, daily.

Wellington-Onehunga: By steamer, twice weekly.

Christchurch-Dunedin: By motor, daily.

On the 9th September, 1919, a mishap occurred to a mail-coach proceeding from Tolaga Bay to Gisborne, with the result that the driver and a passenger lost their lives and another passenger was injured.

#### BURGLARIES, ETC., AT POST-OFFICES.

The Postmaster's residence at Milton was burglariously entered on the 30th April, 1919, and the keys of the post-office safes were secured. The safes were robbed of cash amounting to £520. The thief was traced, and, on conviction, was ordered to be detained for reformatory purposes for a period of not more than three years. The whole of the stolen money was recovered.

On the 20th May, 1919, the post-office at Rotorua was found to have been burglariously entered and the safe robbed of cash, postal notes, and stamps amounting to £60. The case was exhaustively investigated without success.

On the 13th March, 1920, Mr. A. E. Braithwaite, Postmaster at Ponsonby, was murdered at his residence, and the office keys extracted from his clothes. A sum of money was taken from the office, but most of it was afterwards recovered. The man arrested for the crime was found guilty, and the sentence of death was carried out.

Minor cases of burglary occurred during the year, the following offices being broken into: Aria, Horopito, Lyndhurst, Normanby, Ohinemutu, Parkvale, South Dunedin, Waimarino, Whakarewarewa.

#### BUILDINGS.

Except in very urgent cases, the erection of new buildings was held in abeyance during the period of the war. An endeavour is now being made to overtake arrears, but extraordinary difficulties, due to the high cost and scarcity of labour and material, are being encountered.

During the year new post-office buildings were erected at Henderson (temporary), Pakakariki, Reikorangi, Tiramea, Waitomo Caves, Walton, and Wharepoa; automatic-telephone-exchange buildings at Khandallah (Wellington) and Wanganui; and a combined post-office and automatic-telephone-exchange building at Wellesley Street (Auckland).

The post-office building at Brunnerton was destroyed by fire.

Residences were purchased for the Postmasters at Cromwell, Mercer, and Picton, and for the linemen at Darfield, Havelock, Rakaia, and Te Awamutu.

At many offices the work of providing additional accommodation and making extensive repairs and renovations, which was suspended during the period of the war, has been carried out.

When the existing post-office buildings were erected at Auckland and Wellington, accommodation for the parcel-post branches was provided in the basements. The accommodation is now insufficient for requirements. In Auckland a suitable building in Albert Street, a short distance from the Chief Post-office, was secured upon lease for thirty years, and on the 15th September, 1919, the parcel-post business was transferred to the new premises. Plans are being prepared for a building in Wellington to accommodate the parcel and other branches.

#### MONEY-ORDERS.

The money-order business for the year shows an increase in both the number of transactions and the total of the amount remitted.

Ten money-order offices were opened and 6 closed, leaving 807 offices open at the close of the year.

The money-orders issued numbered 690,291, for a total of £4,604,059; those paid 599,240, for £4,180,355.

The business with countries outside New Zealand shows an increase in both the amount sent abroad and the amount received, the total amount sent abroad being £610,004, and the amount received £181,972.

The total commission received for the transaction of money-order business amounted to £19,329.

On account of the extreme variation in the rate of exchange with America it was found desirable to increase the commission on all money-orders issued on the United States of America and Canada to an amount which would not only cover any loss when making settlements through the medium of the London Post-office, but also put a stop to an improper use being made of the money-order system, which, under the Conventions, has a fixed rate of exchange. Under the Money-order Conventions there are only two methods by which a crisis in financial affairs may be met—(1) the entire suspension of the money-order system; (2) an increase in the commission. It was thought better to follow the precedent set by the United Kingdom and to make a considerable increase in the rate of commission instead of ceasing to issue orders.

#### POSTAL NOTES.

The postal-note business shows an increase; 2,197,520 postal notes for £655,910 were issued, and 2,172,727 were paid. On this business the commission of £9,499 was received.

Sixteen offices were opened and 8 closed, leaving 1,036 postal-note offices in operation at the end of the year.