

### MARINE POST-OFFICE.

During the year the system of employing Mail Agents on the mail-steamers plying between Wellington and San Francisco and between Auckland and Vancouver was reintroduced. The result has been of considerable advantage to the business community and to residents outside the centres, in that delivery of overseas mails is made from twelve to twenty-four hours earlier than under the old system. The presence of these officers on the mail-steamers also permits the Department to accept letters up to the time of departure from New Zealand.

### INLAND MAIL-SERVICES.

The coming year will be important so far as mails to and from country districts are concerned. Tenders for inland mail-service contracts throughout New Zealand will be invited early in August. The resulting contracts will take effect from the 1st January, 1925, until the 31st December, 1927, in respect of services in the North Island, and until the 31st December, 1928, in respect of services in the South Island. This action is being taken for the purpose of relieving the pressure of work that now occurs in the Head Office owing to the whole of the contracts expiring on the same date. After this, reletting contracts for services in both Islands will be let for the usual period of three years.

While these contracts are arranged primarily for the conveyance of mails, it is recognized that in many cases the mail-contractor's vehicle is really the "local railway." Frequently contracts are let because some means must be provided to enable settlers in backblock districts to visit centres or procure supplies from those centres. Obviously, it is not the function of the Post Office to make these arrangements; but, as the Government acknowledges the claims of such settlers to this consideration, the best means of securing the service is adopted—very often by arranging for a mail-service and making it a condition of the contract that a certain type of vehicle is to be used. The cost falls naturally on the Post Office; but, while it is often asserted that the Post Office must be conducted on strictly commercial lines, the effect on its finances of such humanitarian services is frequently forgotten.

### RURAL-MAIL DELIVERIES.

The rural-mail-delivery system continues to progress; and, as it is based on sound lines, the Post Office is anxious to develop it as fast as possible. In another Dominion the rural-mail system is as popular as in New Zealand, but there the system is very costly to the Post Office, and naturally any development is a matter of grave concern to the Minister of Finance. Here development on the present lines can be confidently agreed to; and the benefit to the settler in having a daily or even a thrice-weekly delivery and collection of mail at his gate is inestimable. Incidentally, in many cases the rural-mail carrier brings also the local newspaper and urgently required parcels of medicine and food. The Post Office has now a well-designed galvanized-iron letter-box which it sells to settlers. The box is rain-proof, and is so constructed that it will not open accidentally. These boxes are supplied to the public at the bare cost price.

### MOTOR TRANSPORT.

The use of motor-vehicles in the Department is being extended as rapidly as finances permit. An effort has been made to restrict the types, in order to secure the advantages resulting from uniformity of design and standardization of parts; but, owing to the need for absorbing the vehicles used by the Defence Department during the war period, it cannot be said that any great progress has yet been attained. At present there are in use—Cars, seven types; vans, four types; trucks, ten types; ambulances, two types; motor-cycles, seven types. It is hoped to reduce materially this classification in the coming year.

There are many excellent cars and trucks on the market to-day, and salesmen are insistent on the merits of their particular types as against others. Even departmental officers have their preference for a particular type, but in a large Department using nearly five hundred motor-vehicles the only factor which should affect the selection of a particular make is the actual cost per mile over the whole period of a car's usefulness. Statistics are being carefully compiled in the Department, and by this means the Department will know which type is most economical for its purpose.