

taken to invite tenders for a Bluff—Melbourne service to provide for an improved connection with regular sailings. Only one offer was received—from the Union Steam Ship Company—and after negotiations arrangements were completed during the year for the performance by the company of a Bluff—Melbourne mail, passenger, and freight service, the steamers “Manuka” and “Maheno” to maintain the service with sailings at alternating intervals of nine and twelve days. Owing, however, to the wreck of the “Manuka” at Long Point, on the coast between Bluff and Dunedin, shortly after taking up her contract running, and because of the inability of the contractors to make another suitable vessel available, the service is being performed by the “Maheno” for one year only from the 29th January, 1930, at intervals of twenty-one days, following the route Melbourne—Bluff—Dunedin—Lyttelton—Wellington inward, and Wellington—Bluff direct, Melbourne outward.

As the time of expiration of the existing service draws near, the whole question of the South Island—Australia connection will be carefully reviewed, with a full appreciation of the importance of the matter to the South Island.

The contract services between Auckland and Vancouver and between Wellington and San Francisco, and the non-contract services between Auckland—Wellington and Sydney, have been performed with pleasing punctuality throughout the year, providing the regular communication that is so necessary to the business community with the countries overseas with which the great bulk of our trade is transacted.

The contracts for the Vancouver and San Francisco services, which expired on the 31st March, are being renewed for a further period of twelve months.

INLAND MAIL-SERVICES.

Except for the interference caused by the earthquake, inland mail-services were conducted without serious interruption.

The earthquake destroyed completely or partially many of the roads in the Nelson and Westport Postal Districts, and in some instances new arrangements required to be made for the transport of mails to and from the affected areas. One of the most important mail-services in New Zealand—the road motor service between Nelson and the West Coast—was diverted via Maruia at greatly increased cost owing to the road between Murchison and Inangahua Junction being rendered impassable. Karamea, which depended on a thrice-weekly overland service from Westport by a road which was also rendered impassable, has been provided for by a twice-weekly sea service at an increased subsidy of £865 per annum.

Owing to the great damage to the roads concerned, some time is expected to elapse before these services will be resumed over the old routes.

CABLES AND WIRELESS MERGER.

The Imperial and International Communications Co., Ltd., assumed the operation of the beam wireless services in England, the Imperial Atlantic cables, and the systems of the Pacific Cable Board, the Eastern Extension, Australasia, and China Telegraph Co., and the Western Telegraph Co. on the 29th September, 1929. This was a new page in the history of Empire communications, and can be regarded as a big step in the unification of Imperial communication. The company has assumed great responsibilities as an Imperial public-utility company, working with the Governments of the Empire, and supervised by an Advisory Committee representing Great Britain and the overseas dominions and colonies. It is felt that the company will appreciate its role as a servant of the public and of the Empire, and will spare no pains to serve the interests of cable-users and to bind even closer the links which keep the various parts of the Empire in intimate communication.

The Dominion is represented on the Advisory Committee by Mr. M. B. Esson, formerly Second Assistant Secretary of the Department, whose long and valuable