

Karamea by sea, and arrangements for the loan of birds had actually been made with the kind co-operation of the Nelson Homing Pigeon Society, when it was learned that a boat was not available for the trip. The weather was deplorable, culminating on the night of the 27th in a cyclone, which damaged the aeroplane so seriously that its replacement was necessary. The relief aeroplane, in turn delayed by the weather, did not arrive at Westport until the 1st July, when it took off immediately for Karamea with the operator and equipment. The same evening Westport was in two-way communication with Karamea by wireless, and the position of Karamea so far as communication with the outside world was concerned was relieved. At this stage the Department succeeded in securing the services of the s.s. "Nile," of Greymouth, for the purpose of conveying mails and provisions to Karamea by sea, the ship making her first trip from Westport on the 2nd July. This service by sea is now maintained at regular twice-weekly intervals by contract service, the "Nile" having been replaced by the "Kotiti." On nearly all occasions since the beginning of March, 1930, it has been necessary, owing to the silting of the Karamea bar, for the ship engaged in the service to land and load mails and cargo at Little Wanganui, making it necessary for the Department to arrange connecting mail-services at this place.

On the 5th July a dam caused by the earthquake burst in the Mokihinui River, causing Seddonville to be flooded. A good deal of damage was done to departmental lines, and the post-office building was flooded and left full of mud. Communication was soon restored, but for a time the telephone was operated from the local hotel.

The Nelson—West Coast (Reefton and Westport) mail-service—one of the most important services in the Dominion—was terminated at Murchison from the 17th June until the 15th July, when it was resumed by the alternative route from Murchison to Reefton via Maruia, a route which also had been much interrupted by slips. This deviation added considerably to the mileage of the service, especially in the carriage of mails for Westport and district, and was arranged at greatly increased cost to the Department. During the suspension of the service mails were forwarded to the West Coast via Christchurch and by sea from Wellington as opportunity offered. It is not expected that communication by road between Murchison and Inangahua Junction will be restored for some months, so that the deviated service will continue to operate for some time to come.

Owing to the devastation caused by the earthquake in June, the Sullivan's Bridge—Ariki—Paenga service was abolished. Due to the same cause, it was necessary to modify or rearrange several other services.

As may well be imagined, the work of promptly repairing the damaged telegraph and telephone lines was one of considerable magnitude, and one that entailed severe hardship on the Department's officers concerned. As many workers as possible were transferred to the locality, and wherever practicable the work of restoration was immediately commenced. Owing to the extent of the damage to the country between Murchison and Inangahua Junction, it was not possible to begin the restoration of the Nelson—West Coast service until August. These services were, therefore, conducted over alternative routes. Early in October two circuits were completed between these points, providing one telephone and one telegraph outlet. It was not until the 11th March, 1930, that the position was restored to normal. As extensive roadwork has still to be carried out on this section, it was necessary for deviations to be made through bush and an improvised service provided. On account of the difficulties of access and transport, it will probably be at least a year before the lines on the route are restored on a permanent basis.

With the exception of the Murchison—Inangahua line and a few short lines serving small toll stations, the only major work now remaining on a temporary basis is the Westport—Karamea line, the restoration of which will be undertaken when the road is completed and transport becomes practicable. On this route temporary communication by telephone was restored on the 18th December, but the wireless installations at Karamea and Westport are being retained for emergency use.

In repairing the damage done by the earthquake and, to a lesser extent, in recompensing officers for the long hours of duty worked in many cases, considerable expenditure was incurred by the Department. The cost to date of repairing telegraph and telephone plant has amounted to approximately £3,600, and it is estimated that a further sum of about £1,500 will still require to be spent to fully restore the services. The cost of repairing departmental buildings, &c., was about £4,000, and a further large sum will be required to rebuild at Westport. In addition, the cost of special mail-services, some of which are still being maintained, involved considerable increased expenditure.

A feature of the happening was the extent to which broadcasting assisted in tracing various people and in keeping communities otherwise isolated in touch with outside happenings. The service rendered was a most valuable one.

The Relief Committee set up in Westport by Government was allowed the privilege of free telegraphic facilities. Parcels of clothing for the relief of sufferers were also accepted free by the Department when addressed to relief organizations, and parcels of books for the Seddonville Library, which was ruined by the flood of the 5th July, were also transmitted free.

It is difficult to refer in adequate terms to the excellent service ungrudgingly rendered by officers in the affected zone in carrying on the work of the Department and in restoring communication in the face of the extraordinary and frequently dangerous conditions prevailing. Fortunately, no officer of the Department lost his life as a direct result of the earthquake; the experiences of themselves and their families were sufficiently terrifying without that. Conditions following the main shock were aggravated, especially for women and children, by the facts that shocks, some of them severe, continued for days, and that the weather conditions for a week were deplorable, at times approaching the cyclonic. Bereft of the means of providing fires in many cases, and with winter weather of the very worst description, the working-conditions for the staff, particularly for the officers engaged on the reconstruction of lines, were, for the first week at least, of the most trying kind. Officers worked during the day and far into the night, notwithstanding the fact that the homes and families of many