

In addition to the telegrams forwarded by aeroplane, thousands of messages were forwarded by motor-car between Napier, Hastings, and Wellington, the cars picking up and delivering batches of messages at offices *en route*.

The heavy traffic necessitated continuous telegraph attendance at Napier, Hastings, Wellington, Wairoa, Gisborne, and Auckland from the 3rd until the 10th February. Furthermore, a special attendance on Sunday, the 8th, was observed at Palmerston North, Dannevirke, and Wanganui. On the 11th February all offices reverted to normal telegraph attendance, except Hastings and Wairoa. Hastings since the 11th February has observed an attendance of from 8 a.m. to midnight, the transfer to Hastings on the 18th February of the Napier morning newspaper having made it necessary to observe the midnight attendance permanently. Wairoa reverted to normal attendance on the 19th February.

Owing to the departure of a large number of residents and to the abandoning of homes, the delivery of telegrams by message-boy at Napier and Hastings for the first few days was impossible, and telegrams for towns in the earthquake area were accepted only at the senders' risk. Until normal deliveries were re-established, telegrams were delivered on application at the temporary offices; but a very considerable number remained unclaimed.

RESTORATION OF PUBLIC FACILITIES, NAPIER.

Postal Branch.—As soon as it was seen that the chief post-office building could not escape the fire, as much material as possible was removed from it, and prompt measures were taken to obtain temporary premises. First, the band rotunda in Clive Square was occupied, but this had to be vacated to enable it to be used as a surgical operating-theatre. Accommodation was then obtained in the Railway Social Club room for branches other than the telegraph and the money-order and savings-bank, and business was being conducted in that location by 4 p.m. On the following day (the 4th) the money-order and savings-bank branch re-opened in the Wairere Bowling Club House. On the 6th those branches of the office which were being conducted in railway premises moved to the adjacent Hawke's Bay Farmers' Building; and the money-order and savings-bank branch was transferred to the same building on the 9th. These premises were used until the beginning of March, when all branches were transferred to the Hastings Street School, where, as explained later, the telegraph branch had been installed from the afternoon of the earthquake. The whole of the Department's business at Napier will continue to be conducted in the Hastings Street School until the post-office building is re-conditioned.

For some time after the earthquake the delivery of correspondence by postman was impossible, owing to the destruction of business premises and the abandonment of private residences, and delivery of mail-matter was made over the counter. A once-daily delivery by postman was resumed on the 6th March; and the usual full twice-daily delivery was resumed on the 17th idem.

Telegraph Branch.—The telegraph branch at Napier re-opened to the public on the 3rd February at about 6 p.m. in the Hastings Street School. The news that the telegraph office had re-opened had a very reassuring effect upon the inhabitants, and by 7 p.m. hundreds of people were at the temporary office writing messages on whatever scraps of paper could be obtained. As no telegraph outlet was available, the messages were despatched to Waipukurau and Dannevirke that evening by motor-car, together with telegraphists to assist in their disposal at the latter offices. The gradual development of the telegraph branch and the disposal of the heavy traffic are covered in a general way in other parts of this statement.

Telephone Exchange, Napier.—On the destruction of the telephone-exchange building and equipment by fire, action was at once taken to establish a temporary exchange in the Hastings Street School. The diversion of the lines to the new quarters was put in hand on the afternoon of the 3rd February. A 100-number switchboard arrived from Wellington on the 4th, and an emergency exchange was at once installed in the school, and connections made for the police, relief organizations, temporary hospitals, and other essential services. The efforts of the engineering staff to provide for essential services was splendidly seconded by men from the H.M.S. "Veronica," who assisted in piecing together wire circuits from the temporary exchange site to the Nelson Park hospital and other points. When everything possible had been done to furnish telephone connections for essential services, attention was turned to the more difficult task of preparing for the more extended telephone service which it was anticipated would be required as soon as conditions began to return to normal. To do this effectively and promptly and at a minimum cost, it was essential that a temporary building should be made available close to the main exchange manhole, upon which point all cables converged. With the concurrence of the Mayor and with the assistance of the Public Works Department in the demolition of adjacent menacing walls and the clearance of debris from the site, a galvanized-iron and wooden building was erected on the roadway immediately in front of the old telephone exchange. The building was ready for accommodation on the 22nd February. On the completion of the temporary building and main distributing frame, a large staff of cable-jointers commenced work, and the testing of underground telephone cables was put in hand. It was found that comparatively little trouble had been caused to cables. All aerial laterals in the fire-stricken area were, of course, destroyed; in addition, a 300-pair underground cable feeding Taradale and Westshore was fractured in places and saturated. A 50-pair cable along the Westshore embankment was broken at splices, and smaller underground cables were also affected. No damage appears to have been suffered by cables enclosed in ducts. The telephone-exchange service was transferred from the Hastings Street School on the 4th March, and from that date a more general service was made available. Prior to that date the service had been confined to emergency requirements and to the comparatively small number of subscribers in urgent need of connections.