

In the existing unprecedented position concerning unemployment, a vast amount of additional work has been thrown upon the Post Office organization. This work has been undertaken by officers most willingly, although in many cases Postmasters and other officers have been required to sacrifice a good deal of their leisure time. Much of the work connected with unemployment requires to be handled with extreme tact; and in this officers have shown themselves not lacking.

On the occasion of the general election in December officers again gave a good account of themselves in undertaking with speed and precision the great volume of additional business, particularly telegraph business, that required to be handled.

#### RATES AND CHARGES.

In the interests of the smaller country newspapers, a halfpenny rate of postage for newspapers weighing not more than 3 oz. was introduced on the 10th August.

On the 1st June, 1932, as a contribution towards a lowering of costs for the community generally, Government had pleasure in reverting to penny postage for letters, and in effecting appreciable reductions in postage for many other classifications of postal packets, including parcels. The reduction is effected at some sacrifice in revenue; and it is hoped that the business community will show their appreciation of the bold step taken by according full support to the Post Office services. Coincident with the reduction in postage charges, a 50 per cent. reduction, with a minimum rental payment of £10 per annum, was also decided upon in the rentals charged certain isolated country telephone subscribers. It is here pertinent to mention that many requests have been made for other reductions in post and telegraph charges, particularly in the rentals charged for telephones. In view of the reductions that have already been granted and of the contraction of revenue that will result, it is regretted that it is not possible at present to favourably consider any further reductions in rates that are reasonable and compare favourably with those levied in other countries.

#### COMMERCIAL BRANCH.

The Commercial Branch continues to render good service despite the difficulties of the times. In addition to fostering the growth of the telephone-exchange service and to securing advertisements for the telephone directories, the work has been undertaken of selling advertising-space on blotting-pads used on the public desks at many post-offices.

The Branch serves a most useful purpose, and as conditions improve can be expected to obtain even better results.

#### BUILDINGS AND LAND.

Owing to the adverse economic position, the Department's building programme has been greatly restricted. Although it was proposed to proceed with the erection of several large buildings, it was found necessary, for financial reasons, to defer the works. Furthermore, the carrying-out of renovations and alterations to a large number of buildings has been deferred until the position improves. The number of new buildings erected during the year was eight—six post-office buildings, an automatic-telephone-exchange building, and a residence for a Postmaster; and a substantial addition was made to the Masterton Post-office building. These works were in progress before the general depression became acute.

The new buildings occupied included the Wellington East Post-office building, which was completed in February. This building now accommodates on the ground floor the former Courtenay Place Post-office and on the seven upper floors three sections of the Accountant's Branch of the Department's Head Office.

It will be remembered that the Westport Post-office building was shaken down by the earthquake which visited the West Coast of the South Island on the 17th June, 1929, and that the Hastings and Napier buildings were very badly damaged