

Motor-registration fees are collected at approximately 800 post-offices in the Dominion, at 351 of which the Postmasters have been appointed Deputy Registrars. Local registers of motor-vehicles are kept at each Deputy Registrar's Office, and a general register comprising the whole of the registrations in the Dominion is kept by the Registrar of Motor-vehicles at Wellington.

The insurance premiums payable by motorists in terms of the Motor-vehicles Insurance (Third-party Risks) Act, 1928, were collected by the Department on behalf of the forty-one insurance companies authorized to underwrite business in terms of that Act. Owners of vehicles may nominate any one of these companies to which the nomination forms are forwarded. The volume of work entailed in distributing the forms to each nominated company will be appreciated when it is realized that 201,315 proposal forms were dealt with. The gross amount of insurance premiums collected during the year was £226,728.

The Department is required in terms of the Motor-spirits Taxation Act, 1927, to arrange refunds of duty on motor-spirits used for purposes other than as fuel for licensed motor-vehicles. During the year 49,265 claims were dealt with involving refunds amounting to £138,194. Payment of these claims is made by Postmasters. The number of claims dealt with has increased progressively each year, those handled in 1933 showing an increase of 3,279, compared with those of the previous year. Considerable inquiry work is involved in connection with some of the claims.

Suited as it is with its widespread organization to conduct business on behalf of Government in cases in which it is necessary to deal with persons residing in country districts as well as those resident in the more thickly populated areas, the Post Office was entrusted with the duty of collecting the special mileage taxation (prescribed in section 19 of the Finance Act, 1932-33 (No. 2)), which is payable in respect of the road-mileage covered by all motor-vehicles not propelled exclusively by means of motor-spirits. Owners of vehicles subject to the tax are required to make a declaration each month of the actual road-mileage covered by their vehicles. A penalty is payable in respect of each declaration that is not made within seven days after the close of each month. During the year declarations in respect of 269 vehicles were dealt with, the total amount of tax collected being £2,016.

At the request of the Transport Department, the Department undertook, as from the 1st June, through its Postmasters who are Deputy Registrars of Motor-vehicles, the issuance of temporary goods licenses under the Transport Licensing Act, 1931. The system is working satisfactorily.

Detailed particulars of the work undertaken by the Registrar of Motor-vehicles appear in the report of the Transport Department.

UNEMPLOYMENT.

The work associated with unemployment has reached such proportions that it occupies an important place in the Department's activities.

Receipts and payments on behalf of the Unemployment Board during the year totalled approximately £7,000,000, and, as many of the transactions are for small amounts, it will be appreciated that this involved a very large volume of work.

Particulars of the various classes of transactions are indicated hereunder:—

- (a) Quarterly instalments of the general unemployment levy collected amounted to £432,509.
- (b) The sales of unemployment-relief stamps, which are used mainly for the payment of wages-tax, amounted to £1,422,740. In addition, wages-tax amounting to £1,067,643 was paid in cash to the Post Office.
- (c) An amount of £834,653 was paid through the Post Office in respect of emergency unemployment charge on income other than salaries and wages.
- (d) Wages payments made through the Post Office to relief workers during the year totalled £3,221,318.

In many instances difficulty is experienced in obtaining payment on the due dates of instalments of the unemployment levy, and the emergency unemployment charge on income, and this adds substantially to the volume of work which has to be undertaken.

Postmasters continue to act as certifying officers and as Government representatives on local unemployment committees. Their services, besides being of great value to the Unemployment Board, have proved helpful to persons who are registered as unemployed.

TELEGRAPH AND TOLL SERVICES.

TELEGRAM CHARGES, ETC.

In May a committee of departmental officers was appointed to inquire into and report whether any changes in equipment, operation, or organization in the Telegraph Branch would be the means of putting the Branch on a better footing, financially and otherwise. Following consideration of the report of the Committee, it is proposed, as from the 3rd April, 1934, to abandon the existing uniform system of charging for telegrams in favour of a zonal system, under which the charge will vary from a minimum of 6d. for a telegram of twelve words for local delivery to a maximum of 1s. 3d. for a telegram of twelve words despatched between the most distant points. From the same date it is intended also to abolish the double rate of charging for urgent messages, and to apply instead an "Urgent" fee of 6d.; to impose a fee of 3d. on "collect" telegrams; and to reduce to ordinary rates the charges made for telegrams presented on Sundays and holidays, messages which at present are charged at double rate.