

I am pleased, also, to have the opportunity of placing on record my appreciation of the manner in which the Defence Department co-operated with my Department in arranging for the conveyance by air of mails for the Royal party. Although it was necessary at times to alter arrangements at short notice, no trouble was too much for the officers of the Air Force, whose assistance was most valuable in expediting the delivery of the mails.

The principal event so far as my Department was concerned in connection with the Royal tour was the laying of the foundation-stone of the new chief post-office building at Dunedin by His Royal Highness on the 12th January last. The ceremony was performed in the presence of a distinguished gathering in the official enclosure and a large assemblage of the public, which accorded His Royal Highness a most enthusiastic reception. As a memento of the occasion, a gold miniature of the new building mounted on a base of granite, the whole being in the form of an ink-stand, complete with pen and inkwell, was presented to His Royal Highness.

VISIT OF ENGINEERING OFFICERS TO UNITED KINGDOM.

Recently two senior technical officers of the Department, Messrs. P. V. R. C. Miles, A.M.I.E.E., Superintending Engineer, and E. H. R. Green, M.Sc., A.M.I.E.E., Radio Engineer, were selected to proceed to the United Kingdom for the purpose of investigating and studying modern developments in radio and telegraph and telephone communication. The officers arrived in the United Kingdom towards the end of August. With the assistance of the British Post Office, they will devote three months to the investigation of all aspects of communication engineering, with particular reference to radio and multi-channel submarine cables. It is imperative, in view of the proposed development in the near future of air communication services, both inland and overseas, that the provision of radio services and beacons for aircraft be thoroughly investigated at first hand to ensure that the equipment installed will be the most efficient available for the particular requirements of the Dominion.

COMMERCIAL BRANCH.

An appreciable increase is recorded in the amount of business handled by the Commercial Branch. In their work of encouraging greater use of departmental services by the public, officers of the branch have been assisted materially by the improved economic condition of the Dominion. Much of the success achieved, however, has been due to the experience gained by commercial officers over the last few years under adverse conditions. The ground-work undertaken and the friendly relations established between the Department and the public in those years greatly facilitated the work of obtaining new business when conditions improved.

It is desired to place on record the Department's indebtedness to the Australian Administration, which, by handling demonstration radio-telephone calls to the General Post Office, Sydney, co-operated in the departmental displays at the Wellington Radio Exhibition and the Winter Shows at Auckland and Christchurch.

BUILDINGS.

New post-office buildings at Karori and Taumarunui were completed during the year, the Taumarunui building being officially opened by myself on the 25th January.

Good progress is being made with the new chief post-office building at Dunedin. It is expected that the work will be completed by September, 1936.

A contract for the erection of a new post-office building at Petone was arranged, and work on the building has commenced.

The erection has been authorized of new post-office buildings at Albury, Belfast, Invercargill, Mayfield, Porangahau, Rangiora, Thames, Thornbury, and Toko, a store-garage building at New Plymouth, and a new garage at Auckland. Work on the new building at Rangiora has commenced. In the case of Hampden, Ohingaiti, Rotorua, and Wellsford, additions to the existing buildings have been authorized.