

between the Department and the public. They are in a position not only to advise customers as to the class of service best suited to their requirements, but also to explain departmental policy where it is not understood and to remove misunderstandings where they are seen to exist. In this way commercial officers contribute to the smooth working of the Department.

BUILDINGS AND LAND.

During the year a new post-office building was erected at Toko to replace the building that was burnt down in March, 1935. The new building that was begun at Petone last year was completed and was formally opened by myself on the 30th March. The new buildings at Porangahau and Albury were formally opened, the former by the Hon. Sir Alfred Ransom, M.P., on the 20th April last, and the latter by Mr. D. Barnes, M.P., on the 27th June last. Substantial additions were made to the Ohingaiti, Rotorua, and Wellsford buildings, and a building for carrier-current apparatus at Kaikoura was completed in April of this year. The additional story on portion of the General Post Office building, Wellington, has been completed, and the increased accommodation provided has done much to relieve the congestion that existed in the building.

Works at present in progress include new post-office buildings at Dunedin, Pahiatua, and Rangiora, additions at Cambridge, a large garage at Auckland, and a Postmaster's residence at Pahiatua. The Dunedin building is progressing satisfactorily, and it is expected that the work will be completed by November.

Owing to structural difficulties, the preparation of the plans for the new building at Thames has been protracted. The plans are now completed and tenders will be called shortly.

Plans are being prepared for several new buildings, including chief-post-office buildings for Christchurch and Invercargill. At Christchurch several old buildings in the chief post-office yard have been demolished in preparation for the erection of the proposed new building.

A number of sites were acquired during the year, including one for a new chief post-office building at New Plymouth and several that were taken over from the Railways Department.

The Auckland East post-office building and site and the Stout Street (Wellington) line-depot building and site were taken over by Government for the purpose of erecting administrative buildings, and in each case the old building has been demolished. The Auckland East post-office is at present being conducted in rented premises in High Street. The Wellington line-depot is accommodated in temporary departmental premises until permanent accommodation can be provided.

On the completion of the new chief post-office building at Dunedin the telegraph-office buildings and site at the junction of High Street, Rattray Street, and Bond Street will be no longer required by the Department, and Government have decided that the property is to be utilized in the best way after consultation with the Dunedin City Council.

The additional duties (especially unemployment work) undertaken by the Department in recent years, together with the increased business created by the improvement in economic conditions generally, have had the effect of overtaxing the accommodation at many post-offices and necessitating the provision of more room by alterations and additions. In some cases the increase in work has accentuated the need for new buildings. The increase in confidential work which Postmasters are required to conduct with members of the public has made it necessary to provide Postmasters' rooms at smaller offices where such accommodation was not needed previously.

A complete schedule of works for the whole of the Dominion has been prepared, and a programme covering the Department's building requirements for the next four or five years is now in course of preparation. In the meantime the current year's schedule is being vigorously prosecuted.

In connection with the celebrations on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of His Majesty King George V in May of last year, the more important post-office buildings were decorated and in some instances illuminated. On receipt of the news of His Majesty's death in January last the larger buildings were suitably draped with mourning.