

At Napier no buildings are available at the Port, but the site reserved for a Custom House will be ample for the original purpose and for a Post Office. It is estimated that a suitable building could be erected sufficient for all present requirements for £250, and this sum has accordingly been placed upon the Estimates.

At Lyttelton the building used as a Post Office is situated on land reserved for a Market place, the property of the Provincial Government: the tenure is consequently very uncertain as the site may at any time be claimed for its original purpose, in which case great inconvenience would be occasioned. In any case it is obviously unadvisable to continue this occupation on sufferance longer than is absolutely necessary, because its temporary nature acts as a bar to improvements being undertaken in the management of the building, so as to adapt it to the purpose for which it is used.

Moreover, if no objection existed on this score, the selection of some other site has become necessary owing to the inconvenient position of the present office, situated as it is, at some distance from the bank and the business part of the town.

A similar arrangement to that proposed at Napier appears the best for this Town also. The land reserved as the site of a Custom House being sufficient for the requirements of the Post Office as well.

At New Plymouth until towards the end of 1858 the Post Office formed part of a store the private property of the then Postmaster. A change of Postmasters having taken place, by the removal of Mr. Gray to Nelson, an opportunity was offered for putting an end to an arrangement in many respects objectionable. A separate room has been rented, entirely shut off from the rest of the building of which it forms a part.

In order to carry out the separation of the Postal and Customs Departments as proposed at Dunedin and Napier, it will of course be necessary to provide a separate staff for the Post Office at these places.

At the former, the staff consists of a Postmaster without salary, a chief Clerk at £150 per annum, and a second Clerk at £70 per annum.

At the latter, the Postmaster is also without salary, the only charge against the Postal department on account of salaries in the chief Office being a contribution of £30 towards the salary of the clerk in the Customs, whose duty it is also to assist in the work of the Post Office.

The amount necessary for the salary of a Postmaster and Clerk at both places has been put upon the Estimates.

House to-house
Deliveries.

The question as to the means of making a better provision than at present exists for the free delivery of Letters in the principal towns, though not altogether unattended with difficulty, is one which, as affecting very sensibly the convenience of the public, deserves to be considered.

At present there are four Towns only which can be said to enjoy the advantage of a House to House delivery, Auckland, Nelson, Lyttelton, Christchurch.

Of these, the deliveries at the two last are most regular and complete, the duty of carrying them out being incorporated in the contract for the conveyance of the mail between the two places, the contractors being bound to make a house-to-house delivery on the arrival of the mail.

At Auckland the house-to-house delivery takes place of such Letters only as may not have been called for, and is performed by the Post Office messenger as soon as he can be spared from his other duties.

At Nelson a similar arrangement to the above is in operation.

In other places occasional deliveries are made as opportunity offers.

The great advantage of a regular house-to-house delivery, besides the convenience it affords to persons in expectation of receiving Letters, is that it prevents the confusion and crowding which otherwise necessarily takes place at the window, on the arrival of any large mail.

While, however, it is obvious on the one hand that this confusion and crowding will increase in proportion to the size of the Town at which the office is situated, and the number of its inhabitants, on the other hand it must be remembered that in the same proportion an increase in the staff becomes necessary if a house-to-house delivery is established, involving as a consequence an increase of expense.

This consideration raises a further question as to the incidence of the charge.

It must be borne in mind that the great increase of expense which a house-to-house delivery would create, would be mainly for the advantage of one or two Towns, and that the other inhabitants of the Colony, though contributing their full share to the expense, would at most reap only a very small portion of the benefit.

To this it may be answered that a speedy and regular delivery of letters in the principal towns is an object of no small importance to country correspondents, and that they therefore participate fully in the benefit.

Doubtless this observation is true so far as it applies to letters arriving from the country by the ordinary local posts, though of no force, (as far at least as any direct benefit is concerned), when applied to letters arriving by foreign mails. As regards the immediate delivery of these, the inhabitants of the town are alone interested.

It is, however, in the delivery of these last that the great bulk of the expense is incurred, while the delivery of the former forms a comparatively small item.

The arrival of Letters takes place continuously and regularly, and consequently the number to be delivered every day is tolerably equal.

On the other hand a foreign mail contains the accumulated correspondence of a whole month from all parts of the world, and accordingly would require, in order to effect a prompt and efficient delivery, a sudden and large increase on the staff ordinarily employed in the performance of the work.