

The number of Money Order Telegrams sent was 5,791, representing £28,106 16s. 8d., being an increase of 2,755 messages, and of more than £14,000 as compared with 1871-72. The amount of commission collected by the Post Office was £770 1s. 4d.; and, deducting therefrom £289 11s. as fees for the telegrams sent, there was left to the Post Office £480 10s. 4d., or rather more than £1 14s. per cent. on the total sum transmitted. Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin, and their sub-offices, issued the largest number of orders; while Auckland, Wellington, and Dunedin paid the largest number.

The length of line maintained was 2,314 miles, at a cost of £9,479 5s. 4d., or an average of £4 1s. 11d. per mile. Thirteen new offices were opened; and 20 Cadets were trained in the Learners' Gallery, and drafted to different stations.

The total earnings for the year were £51,864 6s. 4d.; so that, deducting the cost of the Signals Department and maintenance of lines, and charging the receipts with 6 per cent. on the capital expended (£224,580 11s. 11d.), there remained to the credit of the Department, on the year's business, about £870.

In some of the Provinces, 25 telegrams have been transmitted for every 100 letters posted, and for the whole of New Zealand 19 telegrams have been despatched for every 100 letters posted. Last year, the average for the Colony was 17·02 of telegrams per 100 letters. The total number of telegrams transmitted was 568,950, or an average of rather more than 2 per head of the population of the Colony—a proportion which is not equalled in any other colony or country.

At the close of the year, there were 2,356 miles of line, carrying 4,574 miles of wire. Large additions to this mileage are being made, and still larger additions are contemplated.

EXTENSION OF LINES.

The lines which were in course of construction at the date of the last report have been completed. They are as follow:—

WAIAU LINE.

This line was completed early in July, and two stations have been opened, one at the Hurunui, and the other at the Waiau Township, the terminus of the line. The line is a branch one, leaving the Main North Line on the north bank of the Waipara, and immediately crossing the Weka Creek at its confluence with the Waipara. The Weka, Hurunui, and Waiau have all been piled, so as to guard against mishaps from floods. The total cost and length of this line (as well as of the others completed during the year) will be found in Table H. All the poles are of heart of totara, and, where practicable, 20 to the mile have been used.

THE REEFTON LINE

Was completed in August, and two stations have been opened, one at Ahaura, and one at Reefton. From the great extent of bush country through which the line passes, the insulation is at times rather faulty. This will of course improve year by year, as the line gets opened up by the gradual removal of the bush. Where possible, totara poles have been used, but birch poles from the adjacent bush predominate. During the latter part of the year, considerable interruption was caused by the careless manner in which timber was felled by the contractors for the road alongside the line. The line is fifty miles long, forty miles being through bush.

COROMANDEL LINE.

This line was finished in July, and an office was opened at Coromandel shortly afterwards. To facilitate inspection and maintenance, a bridle-track has been made between Tapu and Carver's Creek. It is intended shortly to open a lineman's station at Hastings, about midway between Grahamstown and Coromandel, which will tend to the still more rapid repair of accidents, besides being a source of revenue to the Department; whilst the expenditure for maintenance will not be increased, as the lineman now stationed at Coromandel will be removed and stationed elsewhere.

INVERCARGILL TO WINTON.

This line was opened for business on the 19th March. The station at Winton is in charge of an officer who performs the duties of lineman as well as those of operator. The length of wire is nineteen miles, suspended for the first five miles from Invercargill on the poles carrying the Riverton wire; for the remainder of the distance, the wire is carried along the line of railway between Winton and Invercargill. The line is to be extended to the Elbow, along the proposed railway; and ultimately, no doubt, Queenstown will be connected with Invercargill by this route.

LINES AND WORKS PROJECTED AND FINISHED DURING THE YEAR.

THIRD WIRE, OAMARU TO CHRISTCHURCH.

This work was commenced in January, and completed during the first week in May. In addition, over 1,000 poles of heart of totara have been inserted. Between the Rakaia and Rangitata (forty miles), the number of poles per mile has been increased from 16 to 20, and the line has been entirely re-poled throughout that distance. There are now three wires from White's Bay to Dunedin.

SECOND WIRE, CHRISTCHURCH TO HOKITIKA.

The erection of this wire was commenced in February, and completed the second week in May. The line throughout has received a complete overhaul, new poles of totara being inserted where required, and at points where the line has suffered at times from snow, the poles have been strengthened. Much trouble has been taken to secure the line from lightning and from disturbances due to other electrical causes, which have hitherto given more or less trouble.

ROSS LINE.

This line follows the main road from Hokitika to the Kanieri Township, crossing the Hokitika River at the Kanieri Ferry, in one span. Between the ferry and the top of the Woodstock Terrace