

not be adopted wherever a telegraph system exists, nor is there any reason why the same facilities should not be afforded between foreign countries, or between colony and colony. There is no doubt that great advantage would be taken of such a system, while it would prove highly remunerative to the various telegraphic administrations.

During the year a thorough inspection of all first and second class stations throughout the colony, as well as the majority of others of less importance, has been made from the Head Office, with the view of reducing expenditure wherever possible. It is satisfactory to state that, with one or two exceptions, no station was found overmanned, although the staff was equal to the work required of it.

Amalgamation of telegraphic and postal duties has been effected at some of the more important stations, such as Hokitika, Westport, Reefton, &c., and it is intended to further extend the system to other stations where the circumstances of both departments will admit. There are now only 19 stations throughout the colony out of a total of 214 where the duties are not so amalgamated.

The railway-telegraph system connected with the Middle Island Railways, which was a department formed independent of the Public Telegraph Department, has now been taken over by this department, and a considerable saving will thus be effected, while the facilities afforded to the Railway Department for the safe and rapid transaction of its business will not in any way be impaired. The system is under the immediate control of the Inspectors stationed at Dunedin and Christchurch respectively, who have been fully instructed as to the duties required of them.

Since the date of the last report, the overtime, as promised by the Commissioner in Parliament, has been abolished, while, as a rule, no officer is called upon to do more than eight hours' duty per day. The introduction of the system was strenuously opposed by a considerable number of officers, some going so far as to refuse duty. The Commissioner, feeling that he was not requiring more than was right from the officers, insisted upon the system being carried out, taking severe measures with some four or five of those officers who were known to have taken an active part in the attempt to enforce their views by the infliction of serious inconvenience on the public. The remainder were fined, and allowed to return to duty. Experience has proved that the Government were quite justified in making this demand upon the officers' services, as it is found that on many days they are not required to do the eight hours, but frequently get off with less; the understanding is that no overtime shall be allowed to any officer until he shall have performed eight hours' duty.

The "Urgent" and "Delayed" codes continue to increase in public favour. The former is taken great advantage of during business hours by the commercial branch of the community, while the latter is made a circulating medium for advices by travellers and trade representatives to their constituents, and for other matters where a night's delay is of no importance.

Since the 1st of April the word rate on all international telegrams has been introduced into New Zealand and on the Australian cable. This was done to assimilate our system of charging to that of other countries, as decided on at the last London International Conference. This alteration does not apply to telegrams within New Zealand, nor between New Zealand and the Australian Colonies.

During the year, 79 miles of line, carrying 83 miles of wire, have been erected, and 803 miles of wire run on existing lines; making the total mileage in circuit on 31st March of line 3,638, and of wire 9,333.

The number of stations open to the public on the 31st March last was 214. Of these, 22 were opened during the year, 11 being in the North Island and 11 in the South Island. During the same period two stations have been closed.

The mileage of line maintained during the year was 3,543, at an average cost for maintenance of £4 3s. 4d. per mile; 95 miles of new line not being included in maintenance table. (See foot-note, Table E.)

The nominal strength of the department on the 31st March, 1880, was 843, against 801 on the date of the last report. This increase is owing to the additional stations which have been opened during the year, and to the enrolment of cadets, who are being trained for future service in the department. The cost of several of the new stations is guaranteed by the parties interested in them.

The duplex system continues to work with increasing success, and is now in use on the following circuits:—No. 1 cable, 42 miles; No. 4 cable, 42 miles; Wellington to Napier, 221 miles; Napier to Auckland, 319 miles; Wellington to Auckland, 540 miles (Napier can be made terminal on this wire, and duplexed north and south); Blenheim to Christchurch, 206 miles; Blenheim to Dunedin, 461 miles; Christchurch to Dunedin, 255 miles; and Dunedin to Invercargill, 134 miles.

To afford greater facilities for the increasing work of the department, and to further insure the continuance of communication in the event of faults occurring in the Cook Strait cables, a new cable, containing one conductor, has been laid from Wanganui to Wakapuaka, the New Zealand terminal station of the Australian cable. This route was very carefully surveyed before being adopted, and the bottom throughout was found to be of the most favourable description for a cable to rest upon. The route is, of course, considerably longer than that over which the Cook Strait cables are laid, but it is considered that the favourable nature of the bottom, and the freedom from tidal influences, will amply compensate for the additional expense incurred.

Tenders were invited for the manufacture and laying of the cable, and the Telegraph Maintenance and Construction Company were the successful tenderers. On the 14th October the tender was accepted, the price being £24,300, and on the 7th February following the cable steamer "Kangaroo" arrived in Wellington with the cable on board. On the 9th February the steamer left Wellington, landing the shore end at Wakapuaka the following morning. On the afternoon of the 11th the Wanganui shore end was successfully landed, and the paying out of main cable commenced. The final splice with the Wakapuaka shore end was completed at 3 p.m. on the 12th. The total length of cable laid is 108.69 knots. The tests after laying were highly satisfactory.

The usual maps and plans of telegraph circuits are appended to this report.

The following works, which were in course of construction at the date of the last report, have now been completed:—