

A Postal and Telegraph Conference, at which New Zealand was not represented, was held at Hobart in March last, for the consideration of questions arising from the Australasian Colonies having entered the Postal Union, and other matters. A report of the proceedings has been laid before Parliament.

The reduction in the postage on letters for the United Kingdom from 6d. to 2½d. per half-ounce took place on the 1st January, 1891, and the following figures show what has been the effect of the reduction:—

1890	...	...	Number of letters posted,	566,790	...	postage,	£17,066
1891	...	...	"	"	644,742	...	" £8,178

An increase of 13·75 per cent. in the number of letters posted, but a decrease of 52·08 per cent. in the amount of postage for 1891. To bring the postage up to what it was in 1890, immediately prior to the reduction, the number of letters must increase 113·45 per cent.

Reference was made in the last report of the intention to establish letter penny-postage throughout the colony. It has been considered advisable, however, to defer its introduction in the meantime.

By "The Post and Telegraph Classification and Regulation Act, 1890," the sixth class was divided into two grades—£115 to £150, and £160 to £180. In the lower grade were a number of capable officers with considerable length of service, who, in the ordinary course, would probably have been blocked there for years. To remove this disability, the amending Act passed last session abolished the second grade, and the sixth class, as amended, now stands at £115 to £180, by three annual increments of £15 and two of £10.

Provision in the amending Act was also made for a new class for women intended to be employed exclusively in telephone exchanges, and also for the service of distributors and telegraph message-boys being allowed to be reckoned in the case of their retirement from the service through no fault of their own. Service of this nature, however, does not count for seniority.

By the regulations issued under "The Post and Telegraph Classification and Regulation Act, 1890," a right of appeal was given to any officer who considered that his name had "been placed in a class lower than that in which, from the nature of the services he performs, he ought to have been placed."

In all 232 appeals were submitted to the Board specially appointed to consider and report on all such appeals. Many, however, were not appeals contemplated by the regulations, while a number of others were inconsequential. In the case of 134 of the appeals the Board reported that "the appellants were not classed lower than by the nature of their duties they ought to have been classed;" that, in the case of 45, "the matters appealed about were adjusted by the abolition of the second grade of the sixth class;" and that 40 were met by the provision of the amending Act allowing telegraph messengers' service to count in the case of retirement from the service. Recommendations were made by the Board in the case of 26 of the appellants. It should be explained, however, that the Board considered that their duties were limited by the regulations to the question whether the name of the officer appealing had been placed in a class lower than that in which it ought to have been placed.

Telegraph learners' classes have been opened at Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin, and telegraph message-boys, having the requisite educational acquirements and being otherwise eligible for promotion are instructed in telegraphy preparatory to receiving cadetships.

#### THE UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION.

One of the most important events in the history of the Postal Service of New Zealand has been the colony's entry into the Universal Postal Union, in conjunction with the other Australian Colonies, which took place on the 1st October last.

The question of the entry of the Australasian Colonies into the Postal Union is one of long standing, having been raised by the Imperial Government shortly after the General Postal Union was founded in 1874.

A brief history of the formation and the development of the Union will now be appropriate.

About 1860, the enormous expansion of the postal system made apparent the inadequacy of the means for regulating international postal relations, and, at the instance of the United States Post Office, a Postal Conference was held at Paris, in 1863, at which delegates from most of the chief national post-offices met to consider the principles upon which the postal business between separate countries should be conducted. But it was not till more than ten years later that any general agreement was come to. In 1874, a second Conference was held, at Berne, when the following principles were submitted for consideration:—

1. That a common *régime* should be accepted throughout the whole postal service, to be regulated by single treaty.
2. That the right of transit, by land or by sea, should be guaranteed by every country to every other country.
3. That the onus of providing for the conveyance of mails should rest on the country of origin, all intermediate services used by such country being paid for at fixed rates, and upon the basis of periodical statistics.
4. That every country should keep the whole of its postage collections, whether on prepaid or on unpaid correspondence, so as to sweep away the great mass of detailed international accounts.

Upon this basis the General Postal Union of 1874 was founded, and the relative treaty signed on the 9th October of that year. It did not, at first, embrace lands beyond Europe, with the exception of Asiatic Russia and Turkey, Egypt, and the United States of America. The treaty