

RURAL BOXES

The number of rural boxholders continues to increase, and on the 31st December, 1946, there were throughout New Zealand a total of 40,590, an increase of 2,182 on the figures for the previous year.

AIR MAILS

INLAND

The weight of letters carried by air within New Zealand during the twelve months ended the 31st March, 1947, was 252,622 lb. In addition, 48,298 parcels were carried.

During the year the frequency of the services to Auckland, Christchurch, Blenheim, Nelson, Gisborne, and Napier was increased, while on the 20th January the network was extended to include Tauranga, Whangarei, Kaikohe, and Kaitaia.

TRANS-TASMAN SERVICE

The weight of mail-matter despatched from New Zealand by the Trans-Tasman service during the year was 125,522 lb. In the reverse direction the weight of mail-matter carried totalled 139,720 lb.

Early in September the frequency of the service was increased to provide for a daily mail-service, Monday to Saturday inclusive, and this frequency was continued for the remainder of the year.

As from the 1st July, 1946, the payment for mails conveyed on the Trans-Tasman service was changed from a subsidy to a payment per-pound basis. The actual rate per pound which will be paid is still the subject of discussion between the three partner Governments.

EMPIRE SERVICE

The thrice-weekly air service by "Lancastrian" planes between Sydney and London has operated regularly throughout the year. The "Lancastrian" service conveys mails for the United Kingdom and Europe only, and the close connection made with this service by the Tasman Empire Airways' flying-boats has made it possible to maintain an average transit time of approximately six days for correspondence for the United Kingdom. Mails for intermediate places such as Malaya, India, Egypt, &c., are sent forward from Sydney by "Hythe" flying-boats, which take six days between Sydney and Cairo. On this account, correspondence sent forward by the fast "Lancastrian" service to the United Kingdom reaches its destination before correspondence posted at the same time for Egypt reaches Cairo.

The weight of air-mail correspondence from New Zealand despatched by the Empire service for the year ended the 31st March was 44,181 lb. The total weight received was 64,270 lb.

TRANS-PACIFIC SERVICES

Air-mail correspondence for North, Central, and South America and the West Indies, which since December, 1945, had been forwarded via Australia to the United Kingdom and thence by the North Atlantic air service to Canada, was forwarded by the Pacific air route as from the 6th June, 1946, when the former direct weekly service between Auckland and San Francisco, operated by Pan-American World Airways, was restored. The postage-rate for correspondence to North America, based on the charge made to New Zealand by the United States authorities for the carriage of mails by this route, was 4s. a half-ounce.

On the 22nd November, 1946, the Post Office commenced the despatch of mails by the fortnightly air service operated by Australian National Airways (on behalf of British Commonwealth Pacific Airways) between Sydney - Fiji - Canton Island - Hawaii -