

EMPIRE SERVICE

The thrice-weekly air service between Sydney and London has operated regularly throughout the year. In May the practice of sending mails for countries between Australia and the United Kingdom by "Hythe" flying-boats was discontinued. Since then all mails have been forwarded by the faster "Lancastrian" service operating over the same route. This resulted in the transmission times for mails for India, Egypt, East and South Africa, &c., being reduced by from two to four days.

To provide an improved service to the public, air-mail correspondence forwarded by the Empire service for foreign countries in Europe, Africa, and Asia was given air transmission throughout from the 3rd November. Previously a rate of 1s. 6d. a half-ounce ensured air transit for this correspondence only to the point at which it was off-loaded from the Empire service. To cover the cost of providing the additional air transit to the country of destination, the postage-rate was increased to 1s. 9d. a half-ounce. To those countries directly served by the Empire air service (including France, Egypt, Iraq, &c.), the rate of 1s. 6d. a half-ounce has continued to operate.

The weight of air-mail correspondence from New Zealand despatched by the Empire service for the year ended 31st March was 50,334 lb. The total weight received was 87,002 lb.

TRANS-PACIFIC SERVICES

Air-mail connection to Hawaii, North, Central, and South America, and the West Indies has continued to be maintained by the use of the British Commonwealth Pacific Airlines service operating between Sydney (and Auckland) and Vancouver and by the Pan-American service operating between Auckland and San Francisco.

Connection at Fiji with the B.C.P.A. service operating from Sydney to Vancouver is made by the weekly National Airways Corporation air service from Auckland. In addition, as from the 25th April, a direct flight once every fortnight has been operated by the B.C.P.A. service from Auckland. Thus by the B.C.P.A. service there are three despatches every fortnight of mails for North America.

Throughout the year the Pan-American Co. has operated a scheduled weekly service from Auckland to San Francisco. In addition, frequent non-scheduled flights have been maintained, with the result that over a period of some months since last December, New Zealand has enjoyed a twice-weekly service for air mails by the Pan-American service, making in all seven services a fortnight by both companies.

On the 29th April the light-weight air-letter form was introduced in both directions between New Zealand and the United States of America, the postage-rate from New Zealand to the United States of America being fixed at 8d. each card. A reduction in the rate from 2s. to 1s. 6d. a half-ounce for letters despatched by the B.C.P.A. service came into operation on the 3rd June. The rate for letters forwarded by the Pan-American air service remains at 2s. a half-ounce. The weight of air-mail correspondence despatched by the Trans-Pacific services for the year ended 31st March was 14,096 lb.

SERVICES TO PACIFIC ISLANDS

The air services maintained by R.N.Z.A.F. planes between Auckland and Fiji, Samoa, the Cook Islands, Tonga, and Norfolk Island passed to the control of the National Airways Corporation on the 1st November, and since then regular services have been continued. Air mails for Fiji are also conveyed by the direct Auckland-Vancouver service operated fortnightly by British Commonwealth Pacific Airlines, Ltd. Small letter-mails for Norfolk Island and Fiji are also forwarded as opportunity offers by Service planes operated by the R.N.Z.A.F.

The weights of air mails to the places mentioned despatched during the year ended the 31st March were as follow: Fiji, 6,526 lb.; Samoa, 1,644 lb.; Cook Islands, 1,066 lb.; Tonga, 550 lb.; and Norfolk Island, 1,231 lb.