

OVERSEAS SURFACE MAILS

FREQUENCY OF DESPATCH

With the extended use of air services, the volume of letter-mail forwarded by surface means has shown a considerable decline. In consequence, surface mails at present tend to consist largely of second-class mails and parcels.

There has been little improvement during the year in the regularity of surface mails. Stability in this direction will become effective only when scheduled sailings by passenger-vessels to Australia, North America, and the United Kingdom are resumed. In the meantime the bulk of the surface mails for overseas destinations continues to be forwarded by irregular but frequent sailings of cargo-vessels.

To the United Kingdom sailings have been frequent and at no time has there been difficulty in disposing of letters and newspapers. On the other hand, slight delays have, on occasions, arisen in the despatch of gift parcels. Reference to this is made later.

Mails for Australia have also been exchanged at frequent intervals, and the placing of the "Wahine" in the service between Wellington and Sydney has been of great assistance to the Post Office in the disposal of mails for the Commonwealth.

As regards mail despatches to North America, a reasonable service has been maintained, mainly by cargo-vessel.

In the Pacific, regular steamer services have been maintained to Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, and the Cook Islands, with irregular but frequent services to the French Settlements of Oceania and to Nauru and Ocean Islands.

GIFT PARCELS FOR UNITED KINGDOM AND EUROPE

The volume of gift parcels for the United Kingdom and Europe continued at a high level throughout the year. The number posted for the year ended 31st March, 1948, was 1,290,195, compared with 1,015,435 for the previous year. This represented an increase in weight of 4,867,129 lb. This increase was mainly the direct result of the lifting of the weight restrictions which had operated prior to October, 1946.

Prior to the war, approximately 20,000 parcels were despatched annually to the United Kingdom. As may be expected, the tremendous increase which has taken place in recent years has resulted in a certain amount of congestion at the four centres immediately prior to the loading of vessels. Although the shipping companies have co-operated fully with the Post Office, minor delays in shipment have occurred, mainly through lack of shipping space sufficient to accommodate the great quantities of parcels offering. Normally at least two full clearances of parcels are made from each of the four centres every month, and when the vessels arrive in the United Kingdom on schedule the average time which elapses between posting and delivery of the parcels is two or, at the most, three months.

INLAND POSTAL SERVICES

EXTENSION OF FACILITIES

Throughout the year continued efforts have been made to improve postal services. Several additional postmen's deliveries have been established, and many existing deliveries extended. Numerous street posting-boxes have been erected and clearance-times have been improved. By the end of the year, Auckland and Wellington were