

In Wellington the conveyance of letter-carriers and telegraph message-boys is arranged for by agreement between the City Council and the Department.

From the 1st October, 1907, all letter-carriers, Telegraph message-boys in uniform, and mails in charge of officers of the Post and Telegraph Department have been carried over the Karori and Miramar sections of the electric tramway system under arrangement with the Karori and Miramar Borough Councils.

The premiums for renewal of the insurance policy for mail-contractors for the year 1908 amounted to £206.

The number of contracts for inland mails in operation in 1907 was 693.

There were in addition 555 services not under bond.

The length of inland postal routes by road (counted one way only) was 12,218 miles, and the total number of miles travelled 3,342,307, at an average cost of 3·76d. per mile. In 1906 the respective mileages were 11,601 miles and 3,031,034, at an average cost of 3·65d. per mile.

Ordinary railway-trains with mails travelled 3,946,871 miles.

The estimated sum payable to the Railway Department for the conveyance of mails by ordinary trains was £46,699.

#### OCEAN MAIL SERVICES.

##### *Suez Service.*

In pursuance of arrangements which were in progress at the date of the last report, the steamer from Wellington to Sydney has sailed regularly every Friday, beginning the 26th July, 1907, making a close connection with the outward Suez mail at Sydney. The Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand (Limited) is paid £15,000 for twelve months for the service. At the end of twelve months the service is again to come under consideration.

The English mail which left Wellington by the "Monowai" on Friday, 6th September, 1907, missed connection with the outward Suez steamer at Sydney, 10th September, owing to the breaking of the vessel's rudder-shaft at 3 a.m. on the latter date, 220 miles off the New South Wales coast. The "Monowai" was picked up by the "Mokoia" on the 12th September, and towed to Sydney, reaching that port on the morning of Sunday, the 15th, her mail going forward by the "Mongolia," due to leave Adelaide, 19th September.

The s.s. "Ulimaroa," which left Wellington at 10.40 p.m. on the 5th June, 1908, with a Suez mail, reached Sydney at 11.30 p.m. on the 9th idem, too late to connect with the express train.

The Suez mails which left Wellington by the s.s. "Maheno" on the 19th June at 6.40 p.m. arrived in Sydney on the 23rd at 8.15 p.m., half-an-hour late for the express train connecting with the mail boat at Adelaide. A special train, engaged at a cost to the New Zealand Government of about £230, was despatched at 9.30 p.m., and arrived in Melbourne in time to connect with the mail train for Adelaide. The late arrival of the "Maheno" at Sydney was attributed to a heavy westerly gale.

##### *San Francisco Service.*

An English shipping firm, Andrew Weir and Company, established a regular service between America, New Zealand, and Australia. The firm's offer to the United States Postal Department was accepted for the conveyance of mails to New Zealand and Australia. The line of steamers is called the Australian Mail Line, and the service commenced with the departure of the s.s. "Foreric," from San Francisco, on the 30th August, 1907. The service is four-weekly between San Francisco, Auckland, and Sydney, and the steamers have the option of calling at certain ports in the Pacific. The time allowed between San Francisco and New Zealand is about twenty-three days. The average of the first nine voyages was, however, a little over twenty-six days. Until March, 1908, the steamers did not call at a New Zealand port on the outward voyage from Australia, but, commencing with the s.s. "Foreric's" departure on the 30th March, Auckland is the final port of departure in Australasia. The service is not subsidised by the New Zealand Government, but Postal Union rates are paid for the conveyance of mails from New Zealand. At present only cargo and mails are conveyed by these vessels. English mails from the Dominion are not forwarded, but small mails from the United Kingdom are received *via* San Francisco when better despatch offers by that route.

##### *Vancouver Service.*

The "All Red" route was made the text of a leading article in the London *Times* of the 18th December, 1907. The *Times* pointed out the advantages to New Zealand of a twenty-five days' mail-service with the United Kingdom, and to Australia, although well served by the Suez route, of having an alternative route.

The Board of Trade committee set up to consider the feasibility of a fast mail service to New Zealand and Australia by way of Vancouver is expected to report immediately.

It is understood that negotiations have been proceeding between the Commonwealth Postal authorities and the Union Steam Ship Company with regard to the extension of the Vancouver mail-service for twelve months from the 1st August, 1908. The existing contract dates for two years from the 1st August, 1907, with the right to determine it at the end of the first year on four months' notice. Negotiations for continuing the contract after the 31st July, 1908, were concluded. The "Moana" is withdrawn until July, and the "Manuka" substituted. This is provided for in the present contract.

Mails from southern ports for despatch from Auckland *via* Vancouver sometimes were not delivered at Onehunga in time to be put on board the vessel for Fiji by noon, the regular time of departure, and inconvenience and delay to the steamer were caused. The Union Steam Ship Company has therefore extended the time of sailing to 2 p.m.

The steamers of the Vancouver service ceased calling at Fanning Island on the northward voyage owing to the delay occasioned by the stoppage there prejudicing the steamers' arrival at Vancouver on contract time. The last call on the outward voyage was made by the R.M.S. "Aorangi," which left