

accurate one. Moreover, the actual or potential saving to farmers, who formerly had to lose, say, a half-day's work of themselves and teams to visit the market town once or twice a week for letters, is calculated at £120,000,000 (\$600,000,000).

It must be observed that in considering the question the distribution of post-offices in the United States was scarcely on the same liberal scale which has contributed so much to the success of the Post Office in New Zealand. It would be impossible for us, for example, to close post-offices on the establishment of a rural-delivery route, as is done in the United States, as so many of our offices are also telephone-offices, which must be kept open.

While the stage at which the United States rural delivery has arrived is interesting, I am more or less doubtful whether the same effect could not have been largely attained by the establishment of post and telephone offices at short distances apart, as has been done in New Zealand, with the addition of boxes as used in Canada, as described hereafter. The system, as adopted in the United States, would not, I am convinced, suit New Zealand requirements, but an important modification is in force in Canada, and is well worth considering. Instead of appointing special letter-carriers, the services of the ordinary mail contractors or couriers are made use of. Like many other important developments this has only been rendered possible by what at first sight might seem unimportant. On the rural deliveries in the United States settlers are required to provide their own collection and delivery boxes, which are usually erected in groups at cross-roads. As the system extended, boxes of various patterns were introduced, with the result that there is great diversity in the style of the boxes, which results in loss of time in clearing them. In Canada nothing was done in the direction of rural deliveries until the new rural-delivery box referred to, which is spoken of as an ideal one by officers of the United States Post Office, was invented. This box is so contrived that it can be cleared and letters deposited by a mail contractor without his getting off his horse or leaving his vehicle. The box is erected at the side of the road away from traffic. It normally rests at the end of a long arm, and, if letters are in the box, is placed at right angles to the arm. When letters are ready to be cleared, the arrangement of the arm enables the box to be drawn forward by the mail contractor by the end of his whip. After the box is cleared the arm automatically runs back, and reassumes its position parallel to the road. I have obtained samples of these boxes, which seem to me to be admirably adapted to our requirements. As in Canada, the invention of this box appears to make rural deliveries possible in New Zealand without excessive cost to the Department. In Canada mail-carriers are paid 4s. per annum in addition to the amount of their contract for each box on their line of route. The settlers pay the cost of the box. So far the Canadian rural deliveries have been very successful, and highly appreciated by settlers, who have taken the matter up heartily.

As practically all our mail routes are under contract, the Canadian system is one which I would recommend for adoption in New Zealand. The cost of clearing the boxes might be fixed at the same rate as in Canada, at which the cost would be £200 for each one thousand boxes, against which it is to be anticipated that business would materially increase. Considering the great advantages to country settlers, who would, by means of this box, practically have a post-office near their doors, the cost must be reckoned as slight.

HALFPENNY CITY POST.

The most important recent innovation is the establishment of a halfpenny city post in Canada—*i.e.*, for a letter for delivery within the city where posted. While Germany has preceded Canada in this reduction of postage, the action of Canada is particularly interesting from a New Zealand point of view, as the question is one that has been under discussion from time to time, and the experience of Canada will be of particular value. When I was in Ottawa the new postage-rate had been in force for a little over a year, and it appeared to be the general impression that the revenue was not likely to suffer. In confirmation of this the Postmaster-General kindly supplied me with the return of stamp-sales at a few of the larger offices for three months before the reduction of rates and for the corresponding period of the succeeding year, when the 1-cent rate was in force. Notwithstanding the depression in trade, I found that the stamp-sales for the latter period were practically equal to those of the period before the reduced rates came into force. The Canadian office will no doubt continue to supply this Department with comparative returns, and, if the result continues to be as favourable, the Postmaster-General may later on consider the desirability of modifying our city rates. The question is, however, one that should be considered with caution. While I am inclined to think that, in conjunction with the greatly extended city deliveries I have elsewhere recommended, there would be no ultimate loss of revenue in reducing our city rate to $\frac{1}{2}$ d., I estimate the loss of revenue, allowing for a reasonable increase in the volume of correspondence, at £45,000 for the first year, £30,000 for the second, and £15,000 for the third year, after which the revenue would recover itself. It should be remembered in this connection that a great proportion of matter which would fall into the letter-post in other countries, such as invoices, &c., has already in New Zealand the advantage of a halfpenny post.

COLLECTION OF LETTERS FROM POSTING-BOXES.

A postal officer visiting Germany cannot fail to be impressed with the great facilities offered in the larger cities for the posting of letters. Little attempt is made, as in England, to provide pillar boxes which will accommodate newspapers as well as letters; but a letter-box of a special pattern, adapted to be fixed to any convenient wall, is to be found every few yards. These boxes are contrived so that the clearance is effected by a messenger without his handling the letters. This is accomplished by means of a special collection-bag. The mouth of the bag is pushed into a device at the bottom of the box, the letters falling down into the bag. At the same time provision is made for indicating the time of the next clearance on the box. The box is simple, well adapted for its purpose, and of good design. A sample is being obtained. The use of similar boxes will be