

For the last year or two the district-office buildings approved by the Postmaster-General have been designed of sufficient size to admit of greatly increased work, and I consider that it would be to our advantage to increase the powers of such offices as Te Aro and Wellington South in Wellington, and Newmarket, Ponsonby, Parnell, and Upper Symonds Street in Auckland, Sydenham in Christchurch, Dunedin North in Dunedin, and others as may be decided upon from time to time. The principal cities should be divided into postal divisions, and the public encouraged to address their letters to such divisions. As an example of how the system would apply, Wellington South would control, say, a district extending to the Basin Reserve on the one hand and Island Bay on the other. Instead of letters posted in the Wellington South district being collected by a messenger from the main office, they would be collected by a Wellington South collector; those for delivery in Wellington South would be delivered by a Wellington South letter-carrier, and others forwarded to the Te Aro district office or the main office. I do not anticipate that this method would entail more than a very slight increased cost at first, while at the same time the course of post would be greatly facilitated and the business correspondingly increased.

Another important advantage would be that letters addressed to districts could be made up in separate bags by travelling post-offices, &c., and transmitted at once to the proper district without requiring to be sorted at the central office. The Department would thus be prepared for almost any emergency in the way of a large mail.

Generally, I am of opinion that the time has come for an hourly delivery of letters in the populous parts of the four principal cities, with a thrice-daily delivery in the suburbs, and this can only be effected with economy and satisfaction by adopting the district-office system. The increased frequency might be tried first in Wellington and Auckland.

For postal work I cannot recommend pneumatic tubes. The large-diameter tubes necessary are very costly to install and to work. Elsewhere I am recommending pneumatic tubes of small diameter for transmitting telegrams to and from district and suburban offices, and for express letters.

#### OFFICE APPLIANCES.

##### *Sorting-cases.*

In the United Kingdom and New Zealand, and possibly in one or two of the British colonies, the sorting-cases for letters are of the open-table pattern; in the other countries I have visited the sorting-cases are of the upright pigeon-hole pattern: and, after carefully watching the sorting of letters in both ways, I am convinced that the pigeon-hole sorting-cases are not only superior as facilitating sorting and thus saving time, but that their use results in a great economy of space. On reaching London I found that the Controller of the London Postal Service, who had recently visited America, was evidently impressed by the advantage of the pigeon-hole cases, and had erected trial sections of such cases. There is some diversity of opinion as to the precise form of the pigeon-holes. In New York the apertures are just large enough to take a letter of ordinary size, the larger letters being sorted in a separate set of pigeon-holes. By the New York method the operation of primary sorting or inland letters is dispensed with, thus saving one handling of letters. The restriction of size of the pigeon-holes makes a compact case into which a division of 150 to 200 post-offices can easily be made. In most other places where a primary sorting is made, the pigeon-holes for secondary sorting are generally large enough to take all sizes of letters. I am inclined to think that there is much to be said for the New York system, which could be applied to several of our New Zealand offices with a saving of time, and in some instances a saving of staff, and would recommend that it be given a trial. In any case, I am satisfied that no more of the old-style open sorting-tables, which are more costly than the pigeon-hole cases, should be supplied to our offices. I obtained plans of all standard cases in use in the United States and Canada for use when required. The cases in Germany and France were much like those in use in America. In France the horizontal partitions are made of glass, but I prefer the Canadian system of thin steel partitions. An ingenious arrangement of mirrors in the pigeon-holes above the level of the eye was found in Canada, and is worth mention as obviating the possibility of letters being overlooked. In Berlin many of the large-sized pigeon-holes for primary sorting are provided with doors at the back to enable letters to be removed without disturbing the primary sorters.

##### *Facing-up Tables.*

One of the most tedious operations in connection with postal work is the facing-up of letters taken from the posting-boxes. At certain times of the day a large number of men is employed in arranging letters so that they can be passed through the postmarking-machine. I am glad to be able to report that, after long experiments, facing-up tables have been introduced into the Chicago Post-office which are said by the officials of that office to result in a saving of time of about 50 per cent. The plan of the table provides an endless belt travelling at its side. Into this, facing-up clerks drop letters on their edge—ordinary letters in one channel and large letters in another. The letters rapidly travel to a point alongside the postmarking-machine, where they are stacked in a convenient way for the operation of stamping. The advantage of the system is that the facing-up clerk uses both hands for picking up and dropping letters into the channels, instead of one hand for picking up and one hand for holding the letters. After personally trying the operation I am satisfied that one man can with these tables face-up as quickly as two by the old method. The tables are arranged for six or eight men to work at the same time. A further modification of the system provides for letters running into the postmarking machine instead of being stacked prior to this; but so far the modification is not a success.

The cost of the tables should be inconsiderable, and if necessary they can be made in New Zealand.