

INDUSTRIAL DISTURBANCE.

The industrial disturbance which occurred between October and December, 1913, affected the Department's services, and some difficulty was experienced in maintaining postal communication. The Wellington-Lyttelton ferry steamers were replaced by slower boats, which frequently failed to connect with the express trains at Lyttelton. The Nelson-Picton-Wellington service was maintained by subsidizing the small coastal steamer "Nikau." Places southward of Nelson were for some time without steamer communication, and their mails were sent overland via Christchurch. Special coaches were provided to overcome the increased traffic on that route. The Auckland, Gisborne, and Napier districts suffered considerable postal delays, but were served occasionally by small steamers.

Mail-steamers which were scheduled to sail for Australia, America, and the United Kingdom were affected. The San Francisco mail-steamer "Moana" was detained for five days at Wellington, the Vancouver steamer "Makura" for a similar period at Auckland, and parcel-mails for despatch by direct boats via South America were also seriously delayed. The weekly services from Auckland and from Bluff for the Commonwealth were suspended for several weeks.

To meet the extraordinary conditions of trade, the maximum weight-limit of in and parcels was temporarily extended from 11 lb. to 21 lb. for parcels addressed to places served by rail or steamer, and the limit of size was increased; the rate per pound remained unaltered. The public readily availed themselves of this concession, and many parcels which had hitherto been sent by steamer as ordinary freight were sent through the post.

Post and telephone offices were opened at special-constabulary camps at Auckland, Christchurch, and Wellington.

Considering the difficult situation, the public were not seriously inconvenienced in respect of the Department's business, the main interruption being that of regular mail-communication.

POSTAGE-STAMPS.

The new issue of King George postage-stamps is expected to be ready about the end of this year.

A new die showing the effigy of King George V was brought into use on the 7th July, 1913, for embossing envelopes with the $\frac{1}{2}$ d. postage-stamp.

The order which was made demonetizing certain postage and revenue stamps was subsequently varied to exclude from its provisions the 2s. and 5s. revenue stamps of 1882.

Stamps at $\frac{1}{2}$ d., 1d., 3d., and 6d. overprinted "Auckland Exhibition, 1913," were on sale during the currency of the Exhibition. Halfpenny and penny post-cards bearing views of Auckland City, and showing the imprint "Auckland Exhibition, 1913-14," were also similarly vended.

To minimize illicit trafficking in "official" stamps issued for the use of Government Departments, it was decided in November, 1913, to sell the stamps to the public on the understanding that they were not available for prepayment of postage.

OCEAN MAIL-SERVICES.

The maximum, minimum, and average periods within which the mails were delivered at and from London and New Zealand by the various ocean mail-services are given in Table 14.

San Francisco Service.

The Wellington - San Francisco contract, which expired in October, 1913, was extended to March, 1914. A new contract has been let for a period of five years from the 1st July, 1914. The steamships "Tahiti," "Moana," and "Aorangi" will perform the service at the outset, but the two last-named vessels will be replaced, not later than December, 1915, by two vessels of larger size and improved design, fitted with cold-storage chambers of at least 30,000 cubic feet capacity. The subsidy is £25,000 per annum. The number of voyages is thirteen per annum, and the contract time is twenty-one days. Provision is made whereby on the inward voyage vessels may stay at Rarotonga not more than thirty hours in the event of weather-conditions retarding the loading of perishable cargo. The rate for butter has been fixed at $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per pound up to the 31st March, 1916, and $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per pound from the 1st April, 1916, to the termination of the contract. By terms of contract these rates apply likewise to the Vancouver contract.

With the exception of the interruption caused by the industrial disturbance at the end of 1913, the service has been regularly performed, and time-table dates generally have been maintained.

The "Aorangi," which left San Francisco on the 1st April, 1914, was compelled to return to that port owing to an accident to the main steam-pipe. The vessel resailed thirty-six hours later, and arrived in Wellington two days after schedule time.

Vancouver Service.

The contract for the Auckland-Suva-Honolulu-Vancouver service has been satisfactorily performed during the past year.

The Vancouver mail-steamer was allowed to leave Auckland at 10 a.m. on Saturdays, instead of Fridays at 3 p.m., from November, 1913, to April, 1914, on the contractors guaranteeing that the connection with the east-bound mail-trains from Vancouver should not be missed under normal conditions. The original time-table was reverted to on the 8th May, 1914.

Suez Service.

The arrangement by which Auckland was made a port of call for P. and O. steamers during the summer months was not renewed for 1913-14. The P. and O. steamer last called at Auckland on the 13th April, 1913.