

In May, 1915, public information bureaux were established at all chief post-offices, with the object of affording prompt information to the public on matters concerning the war. It came to the knowledge of the Department that many people were quite at sea as to the avenues of information on a variety of things connected with the war, particularly in matters concerning communication with our men at the front or those lying in the various hospitals; and in order to give the public every facility of finding out as quickly as possible any legitimate information the bureaux were established. Among the many matters of information the bureaux afford may be mentioned—

- (1.) Names on nominal rolls of New Zealand Forces;
- (2.) Supplying enrolment cards;
- (3.) List of wounded;
- (4.) Cable rates and methods of cabling money to soldiers;
- (5.) Condition of wounded soldiers;
- (6.) Changes of addresses of next-of-kin of soldiers in the field accepted to be forwarded to Defence Department;
- (7.) Parcel rates;
- (8.) Any information regarding relief or patriotic funds.

The bureaux are greatly appreciated by the public.

The system of free official inquiries by cable about the state of soldiers reported wounded continues to give much satisfaction. It is to be remarked that it is only by the courtesy of the cable companies and the Pacific Cable Board, in carrying the messages without charge, that this system is made practicable.

Magazines, books, &c., for the entertainment of soldiers in camp in New Zealand or on active service have been accepted from the public by Postmasters, and forwarded without charge to Wellington.

Unpaid or insufficiently prepaid letters and post-cards from soldiers and sailors on active service belonging to any of the allies of Great Britain have been delivered free of charges.

Post-offices, money-order offices, and savings-banks were opened at the military camps.

PATRIOTIC FUNDS.

The Department continues to render assistance to the organizers of the various patriotic and relief funds by the granting of special concessions.

Contributions from officers of the Department as a separate body to the Belgian and other war-relief funds ceased in February, 1916. The total amount contributed by officers through the Department was £3,685 11s. 8d.

POST OFFICE.

During 1915 the Inspectors of Post-offices visited 2,021 offices. 560 non-permanent offices were inspected by permanent Postmasters in their vicinity.

Fifty post-offices were established (of which 4 were reopened offices), and 44 closed. The number of post-offices open on the 31st December, 1915, was 2,402. The names of ten offices were changed to meet local circumstances.

The number of articles delivered in the Dominion, including those received from places beyond, during the year 1915, as compared with the number in 1914, was as under:—

	1915.	1914.	Increase.	Decrease.
Letters and letter-cards ..	119,542,410	118,808,274	734,136	..
Post-cards	5,078,723	5,646,784	..	568,061
Other articles	48,528,376	55,492,801	..	6,964,425
Totals	173,149,509	179,947,859
Parcels	2,886,039	2,585,719	300,320	..

The letters and letter-cards increased 0·61, post-cards decreased 10·05, other articles decreased 12·55; and parcels increased 11·61 per cent.

In 1914 letters and letter-cards increased 4·76, post-cards decreased 1·51, other articles increased 6·86, and parcels increased 17·58 per cent.

The average number of letters and letter-cards posted per unit of population during 1915 was estimated at 111·53. The average in 1914 was 105·01.

The declared value of parcels received from places outside the Dominion in 1915 was £444,648, as against £448,108 in 1914. The Customs duty amounted to £70,299 7s.

The declared value of parcels despatched to places beyond the Dominion in 1915 was £35,674, as against £44,470 in 1914.

The inland rates for books and printed papers and for pattern and sample packets have been reduced to correspond with the inland parcel rates in all cases where they formerly exceeded them. The new rates for books and printed papers were adopted on the 21st January, 1916; those for pattern and sample packets on the 18th February, 1916.

Owing to uncertainty in obtaining supplies of paper the monthly issue of the Post and Telegraph Guide Supplement was replaced by a pamphlet containing additions and alterations to the Guide.

On the 1st January, 1916, amended regulations for the prepayment of postage in cash by the "permit" system came into force.

On the 1st August, 1915, the offices in the Eltham, Hawera, and Waimate West Counties, and also those offices in the Egmont and Stratford Counties which were included in the Wanganui Postal District, were transferred to the New Plymouth Postal District.