

The money-orders issued numbered 699,674, for a total of £5,276,776; those paid 606,615, for £4,876,927.

The business with countries outside New Zealand shows a decrease in the amount sent abroad and an increase in the amount received, the total amount sent abroad being £585,059, and the amount received £183,297. The decreased business with countries outside New Zealand is due to the restrictions which had to be imposed through the instability of the rate of exchange with those countries.

The total commission received for the transaction of money-order business amounted to £31,302.

Despite the fact that throughout the war period the pound sterling was slightly depreciated in the United States and Canada, satisfactory arrangements were made to permit of the maintenance of the money-order exchange with those countries without amendment of the rate of conversion. For every pound remitted 4 dollars 87 cents was paid at the office of destination. At the end of the year 1919, however, the exchange value of the pound commenced to decline rapidly, and steps had to be taken to protect the Department against the speculator, and at the same time adjust the loss. This at first took the form of an increase in the rate of commission to 33½ per cent. of the amount remitted. At a later date the method of adjustment was altered, as the result of an agreement with the respective Administrations to pay out in respect of money-orders a lesser sum than that which had come to be regarded as the stabilized equivalent value of a pound. This was fixed at 4 dollars in the case of the United States of America, and 4 dollars 30 cents in the case of Canada. The rate of commission was then reduced to the uniform one fixed for most other countries, but in the case of the United States of America the amount had to be subsequently raised to check speculation in exchange. The rate has fluctuated from 5d. for each sum of 2s. to 6d. for each 5s.

POSTAL NOTES.

The postal-note business shows an increase; 2,280,219 postal notes for £705,027 were issued, and 2,284,354 were paid. On this business the commission of £13,826 was received.

Twenty-four offices were opened and 5 closed, leaving 1,055 postal-note offices in operation at the end of the year.

BRITISH POSTAL ORDERS.

The number of British postal orders sold was 83,682, as compared with 67,882 for the previous year. The amount sent away by means of this very useful form of remittance was £51,020. The twenty-shilling and ten-shilling notes continue to have the greatest sales.

SAVINGS-BANK.

The business of the Post Office Savings-bank again shows a remarkable increase in the excess of deposits over withdrawals. It amounted to no less than £3,140,365, and, in addition to this, there was credited to depositors' accounts an amount of £1,818,534 for interest. Thus the total amount at credit of depositors was increased during the period by £4,958,899. The total balance at credit of depositors on the 31st March, 1921, was £43,352,031. These results are an indication of the unabated confidence reposed in the institution by the people of the Dominion.

There were 36 new savings-bank offices opened during the period and 11 closed, leaving a total of 819 offices open.

New accounts to the number of 152,930 were opened and 118,894 closed, leaving 664,819 still in operation at the end of the year. This gives a proportion of one account in every 1.83 of the population.

Full particulars as to the number of deposits and withdrawals will be found in the tables. The total transactions show a material increase. The deposits reached a total of £44,302,852, and the withdrawals £41,162,486. The average deposit amounted to £26 12s. 5d., and the average withdrawal to £28 4s. 8d., while the average amount at credit of each depositor was £65 4s. 2d. If the total at credit were divided equally among the whole of the people the amount at credit of each person would be £35 11s. 8d.

The working-expenses of the Savings-bank amounted to 6.14d. per transaction, which gives a cost per cent. on the total amount at credit of depositors of 0.15d.

The system of nomination by depositors in favour of relatives who receive moneys at their credit in case of death continues to grow in favour. During the period 393 nominations were made.

The system of transfer of accounts between the Dominion and the United Kingdom resulted in £187,607 being transferred to the United Kingdom and £66,817 to New Zealand. A similar arrangement with the Australian Savings-banks resulted in £190,544 being transferred to Australia and £194,831 to New Zealand.

From the 1st April, 1920, the rate of interest on sums not exceeding £300 at the credit of depositors was increased from 3½ to 4 per cent., and on sums exceeding £300 from 3 to 3½ per cent. From the 1st January, 1921, the maximum amounts on which the respective rates of interest are payable were raised from £300 to £500 and from £1,000 to £5,000.

The termination of the Savings-bank year has been altered from the 31st December to the 31st March in each year, the change taking effect from the 31st March, 1921. This change was made with the twofold object of bringing the end of the Savings-bank year into alignment with the financial year, and affording officers engaged in Savings-bank work an opportunity of enjoying summer months without working overtime, which is found necessary during the balancing period.