

forwarded via North America. The very appreciable saving in time thus effected has been of much value to business people and others who have urgent correspondence with Great Britain or other countries for which mails are carried by the service.

The inauguration of the Singapore–Australia air-mail service was an important event for New Zealand from a postal point of view, but of surpassing importance are the proposals formulated in October last by His Majesty's Government in Great Britain for the inauguration of an Empire air-mail scheme in 1937, and the proposed extension to New Zealand of the England–Australia service. It was proposed by the British Government that all letter-mails be conveyed by air between countries of the Empire in 1937 at the postage-rate of 1½d. per half-ounce, thereby abolishing the present unsatisfactory system of charging a special air-mail fee, in addition to postage, on correspondence for despatch by air. For the purpose of furthering the proposals, a delegation from Great Britain, comprising the Deputy Director of Civil Aviation, the Director of Postal Services, the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Under-Secretary of State for Air, and the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Postmaster-General, left England for Australia by air in February last to discuss the subject with representatives of the Commonwealth Government. As the matter was of vital interest to New Zealand, the most distant of the dominions from the heart of the Empire, Government agreed to my proceeding to Australia with the Director-General of the Department, Mr. G. McNamara, C.B.E., to participate in the discussions. A conference was held at Sydney between the members of the delegation from Great Britain, representatives of the Australian Defence and Civil Aviation Departments and Post Office, and the New Zealand representatives, when the scheme, in its relation to the England–Australia service, was examined exhaustively and the problems arising out of it were discussed fully. The proposals put forward by the British delegation include the despatch of mails by air twice-weekly between London and Sydney and *vice versa*, and the speeding-up of the service to reduce the transit time between England and Australia to seven days. It was also agreed that the service should be extended to New Zealand, and thus provide a twice-weekly service with a transit time of about eight days for letter-mails exchanged between the Dominion and Great Britain. In regard to the important question of the cost of the trans-Tasman link, it was agreed tentatively that this should be borne by the Governments of Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand in the proportions of 50 per cent., 25 per cent., and 25 per cent., respectively. The delegation from Great Britain also undertook to ascertain the most suitable type of machine for the service between Australia and New Zealand; and it is expected that information in this connection, together with particulars of the estimated annual cost of the service, will be received shortly.

Progress recently in the development of aviation as a means of long-distance transport over land or sea has been such that there is every prospect that by 1937 all letters from Great Britain to New Zealand will be conveyed by air twice weekly in the remarkably short time of eight days and at the exceptionally low rate of 1½d. per half-ounce per letter. It is no exaggeration to say that, when the proposals are carried into effect, they will mark an advancement that will be incomparably more important than any yet recorded in the history of overseas mail communication in New Zealand.

On the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of His Majesty the King, in May last, arrangements were made with the Australian Administration for a Jubilee air mail to be carried from Australia to New Zealand and back by the monoplane "Southern Cross." Piloted by Sir Charles Kingsford Smith, who had with him Captain P. G. Taylor as navigator and co-pilot and Mr. J. W. S. Stannage as wireless operator, the machine left Sydney about midnight on the 14th–15th May. Misfortune overtook the flight, however, when, less than half-way across the Tasman, damage to a propeller crippled one of the engines and necessitated a return to Australia. The greatest difficulty was experienced by Sir Charles in keeping height, and when the machine was forced dangerously near the water it was necessary to jettison the greater portion of the mails. After a very strenuous and extremely anxious time for those on board, the "Southern Cross" eventually reached Sydney safely in the late afternoon. That the damaged machine was able to escape disaster was most gratifying, and was a tribute to the skill and resourcefulness of the pilots.