

POST OFFICE AND TELEGRAPHS.

The cash collections of the Department for 1906-7 were :—

Postal	...	£33,360
Telegraphs	...	6,614

The estimates were exceeded on both heads and surpassed the revenue of the preceding year by a substantial amount. The total revenue of the department for the two preceding years had been 1905-6 £37,418, and for 1904-5 £33,447. The expenditure amounted to £32,194, against £32,115 in 1905-6, and £31,724 in 1904-5.

The department had in recent years been yielding a profit, but it must be borne in mind that it is not charged with any part of the subsidy of £20,000 a year payable to Messrs. Elder, Dempster & Co. under their contract for a fortnightly direct service between Bristol and Kingston. This contract, however, has for its main object the development of the fruit trade with the Mother Country, and if the Jamaica Post Office were debited with a portion of the subsidy equivalent to what was paid under the last mail contract for the carriage of mails the department would still be more than self-supporting. The ocean postages collected have risen from £5,712 in 1904-5 to £7,659 in 1906-7, and the inland postages from £21,390 to £24,400.

The total number of letters and postcards passing through the head office is estimated at—outwards 3,123,551, inwards 3,263,010. The corresponding figures for 1903-4 were 2,133,817 and 2,347,186 respectively. The number dealt with at the district post offices was 1,308,328 in 1906-7, against 1,213,211 in 1903-4.

Mails were despatched by 516 vessels and received by 570, the mails despatched abroad being 87 more than in the preceding year and those received 31 less. The reduction in the number received is attributed by the Postmaster to the adoption by the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company since the termination of their contract of a more circuitous route. Though the service provided by this company between England and Jamaica is now of little use either for mails or passengers, their fortnightly service to and from New York, which is worked in connection with the Cunard Line provides an alternative route to England to that furnished by the direct line (Elder, Dempster & Co.). The Hamburg-American Line and the vessels of the United Fruit Company, some of which are under contract with the United States Government for the carriage of mails between Boston and Jamaica, afford further regular communication with the States.

Under the operation of a law passed in the preceding year the total expenditure for the ocean mail service chargeable to the department amounted to only £2,067. The inland mail service which is carried partly by the Government Railway, and partly by road, cost £9,030, as against £8,722 in the preceding year. The carriage by road is in some cases undertaken by the Public Works Department and in others is subject to contract. As a means of travelling the mail coach cannot be specially recommended.

A daily service is established throughout the Island, but house to house delivery is at present in operation only in Kingston and Spanish Town.

Money orders were issued to the number of 8,301 and the value of £32,208—in both cases an advance on the preceding year. Foreign money orders were received to the number of 7,546 and to the value of £25,106. Both figures are more than double those for 1905-6, the large increase being due to the establishment of a money order system in June, 1906, between Jamaica

and the Canal Zone. A new money order direct system with Canada was introduced on the 1st of January last. The commission on British postal orders of the value of 2s. 6d. has been reduced from 1d. to $\frac{1}{2}$ d. The value of postal orders sold has risen from £32,096 in 1904-5 to £33,150 in 1906-7.

The parcels post business is also increasing, the parcels received numbering 25,170, against 22,319 in the preceding year. The import duty paid on them was £4,090. The parcels despatched were 5,730, against 5,901 in 1905-6. The bulk of the business done through the parcels post is carried on with the Mother Country. The parcels received from the United Kingdom, however, which had been 79 per cent. of the whole in 1904-5, were only 72 per cent. in 1905-6, and 73 per cent. in 1906-7, while those received from the United States were 17 per cent. in 1904-5, 24 per cent. in 1905-6, and 22 per cent. in 1906-7. Of the parcels despatched the percentage sent to the United Kingdom has remained during the three years at 71 per cent.

At the end of the year there were 64 telegraph stations and seven telephone stations in operation under the postal system. In addition to these the railway telegraph service has generally been available to the public.

The total number of messages sent was 109,859 being 7,870 more than in the preceding year. All the telegraph offices have been overhauled and defective leading wires have been replaced during the year. The department continues to work in harmony with the local superintendents of the ocean cables, and during the year £2,398 was collected on behalf of the Direct Cable Company, and £1,042 for the West India and Panama Cable Company.

The profits made by the postal and telegraph departments as a whole have been stated above. It is not so easy to compare the revenue and expenditure of the telegraph service taken separately, as the salaries and wages are for the most paid for the performance of a combination of duties. Charging the service, however, with its fair proportion of salary and wages and including the maintenance of the wires which is borne by the Public Works Department, the Postmaster states the cost of the telegraph system approximately as follows:—

Salaries, Head Office	...	£1,042
Salaries, District Offices	...	3,432
Messengers	...	998
Maintenance of Lines	...	801
Rent (say)	...	700
Other Expenses	...	912
		<hr/>
		£7,885

This total cost is therefore considerably in excess of the telegraph receipts which, as stated above, amounted last year to £6,614, and in the two preceding years to £5,983 and £4,792 respectively.

The Post Office Buildings suffered severely from the earthquake, and two clerks and three letter-carriers were killed by falling buildings. Though, however, the business of the department had to be mainly carried on for some time in an open yard, the continuity of the mail service was scarcely broken, and telegraphic communication was promptly restored with all parts of the Colony. Communication by telegraph with the outer world was in the first instance cut off, but the West India and Panama Company's cable was very quickly reconnected. On the other hand the Direct Company's cable was broken to fragments near the spot which appears to have been the centre of the seismic disturbance, and weeks elapsed before the necessary repairs could be effected.