

To this end I propose going over the line between Woodend and Blenheim as early as possible; and, if I am accompanied by a competent Surveyor, I can point out to him wherever I consider changes necessary or desirable, so that he may mark off the points at which the new posts are to be erected.

APPOINTMENT OF A PERMANENT SURVEYOR.

My suggestion with regard to the diversion of the line, leads me to suggest the necessity of the appointment of a permanent Surveyor who may thoroughly study the theory and practice of laying out Telegraph Lines, and who may give his undivided attention to any future surveys connected with the Department.

Owing to the broken and hilly character of the country, many parts of New Zealand require very careful surveys before a satisfactory route can be laid down for a good line of Telegraph.

A thoroughly competent Surveyor should therefore be secured, and, if possible, one that has been accustomed to similar works, in order that we may be in a position to carry out our surveys as occasion may require.

ESTABLISHMENT OF STATIONS.

During the past year Telegraph Stations have been opened at Waikouaiti, Kaikouras, Cheviot Hills, Havelock, Balclutha, and the Government Buildings, while the station at Port Chalmers has been added to the list of General Government stations.

A building has been erected at White's Bay—the southern landing point of the Cook's Strait Submarine Telegraph Cable—to be used as a translating station; and the establishment of this station is a matter of very great importance, as it will tend greatly to the future welfare of the cable, by removing the necessity of employing the strong currents we have hitherto been compelled to use, owing to the length of land lines worked in connection with the cable.

Daily, or at the very least, weekly tests should be taken of the electrical condition of a Submarine Cable; but the difficulty and expense of sending a Telegraphic operator from Blenheim to White's Bay, has hitherto almost totally deprived us of the power of taking any but very rare tests, and those of a very hurried description.

Although this station will not directly return any revenue to this Department, it may be looked upon as one of the most important stations on the line, owing to its great utility.

In a country like New Zealand, where communication is both rare and difficult, it will not only be useful to the Department; but conferring a benefit on the public generally to encourage the establishment of stations in the outlying districts as much as possible.

The Government cannot, however, be expected to take upon itself the whole burden and cost of establishing such stations; and I would, therefore, recommend a scheme that would seem to meet the case.

My proposition is, that stations be opened in any outlying district contiguous to the lines of Telegraph, where the settlers and inhabitants generally will guarantee an annual revenue to the Department of from one hundred to one hundred and fifty pounds per annum, as required to meet the working expenses of such stations.

The value of all ordinary telegrams, originating at such stations, will be taken into account at the end of each year; and should the revenue, derivable from this source, fall short of the specified guarantee, the guarantor or guarantors will be called upon to supply the deficiency.

In this manner, I think stations might be established in the Middle Island; one between Blenheim and Kaikoura; one between Cheviot and Kaiapoi; one or more, perhaps, between Balclutha and Invercargill.

The establishment of small stations without such guarantee falls heavily upon the Department; and, while wishing to give the public the greatest possible advantage to be derived from the Telegraph, the interests of the Department must not be entirely lost sight of.

WORKING OF THE LINES.

The frequent interruptions that have occurred on the lines during the past year have been chiefly owing to the perishable nature of the saplings used as Telegraph posts, between Woodend, in Canterbury, and the City of Nelson.

The avoidance of bush clearing, and especially between Nelson and Picton, has been another very serious cause of interruption, and this has chiefly arisen from the desire to exercise the strictest economy in the construction of the lines.

During the past year, however, the Government has wisely entered into arrangements with the Provincial Governments of Nelson and Marlborough for clearing the bush in the most dangerous localities; but while the clearing is going on frequent interruptions and delays are sure to occur.

Where Public Works have to be carried on in new countries like New Zealand and the neighboring Colonies, great allowance ought to be made, owing to the numerous difficulties and obstacles that have to be encountered.

The cost of labor, the want of good roads, the absence of the means for conveying tools and material, and the difficulty of transit, are considerable drawbacks in carrying on most of our works.

We cannot expect to be exempted from accidents in this country more than in any other, and we must, therefore, however unwillingly, submit to the prospect of breakdowns and interruptions.

The chief thing to be done in the matter is to provide the means for speedily repairing our accidents when they do occur; and I am happy to say that during the past year active and extraordinary measures have been adopted by the Government in this regard.