

BLENHEIM AND WOODEND.

Owing to the inferior description of wood used for poles on this portion of the line when it was first erected, it has become necessary to entirely reconstruct the whole of it.

The exceedingly injudicious and even discreditable manner in which this line was first laid off has without doubt hastened its decay, the great number of unnecessary angles which were introduced having caused a very severe strain on a large number of the poles. Considerable difficulties have had to be contended with in the re-erection of this line, but its future permanency will, I am confident, amply repay the expenditure now being made upon it. The course of the telegraph wires has in many parts been altered with advantage, and some miles of wire have been saved by taking the new line in a more direct route than that originally adopted.

The old poles are now being replaced by others cut from the heart of totara, and although these had to be brought from a considerable distance, they have been delivered along the line by contract for the sums of 32s. and 37s. for 20 and 25 feet poles respectively, being not much in excess of the price originally paid (27s.) for the birch and manuka saplings which have so soon become useless, especially when the superior and lasting character of the timber now used is taken into consideration. The price, 27s., above stated, was the average for the entire section between the Hurunui and Nelson, but as about sixty miles of this distance near the Nelson end runs through bush where the contractor was able to supply poles at a very small rate, the real price paid for the poles between Blenheim and the Hurunui was very much more than 27s.

Considerable attention has been paid to the carrying the telegraph wires over the several rivers crossed by them, in such a manner as to provide against the breakages which have hitherto been so frequent, and which have caused not only great public inconvenience, but serious loss of revenue to the Department. The heavy floods of February last have furnished good data upon which to proceed in this matter.

The supply of the poles is being furnished under contract by Messrs. Belcher and Fairweather, of Kaiapoi. They have not hitherto progressed as rapidly as I could have wished, but I feel bound to make allowances for them, in consideration of the great loss to which they were subjected by the February floods, not only through the loss of poles from the different landing places along the coast at which they had been deposited, preparatory to being carted along the line, but also through the wreck of one of the vessels chartered by them. This loss unavoidably crippled their operations for some time. I am happy to say, that notwithstanding these delays, the reconstructed line is nearly finished from Woodend to Cheviot Hills, and every effort is being made to hasten the completion of the remainder.

The reconstruction is being carried on under the supervision of Mr. Walter Blake, who had previously re-surveyed the line. It was found inexpedient to attempt the re-erection by contract, owing in a great measure to the work being complicated and rendered difficult by the necessity for keeping telegraphic communication uninterrupted during the whole process of re-erection.

WEST COAST LINE.

The telegraph from Christchurch to Hokitika and Greymouth was taken over by this Department on the first January last. The line branches from the Southern Trunk Line at the Selwyn railway station, whence it proceeds by way of the Kowai and the West Coast Road to Arthur's Pass and Hokitika; from Hokitika the line is continued to Greymouth. The distances are as follows:—

From Christchurch to Bealey	..	..	..	..	87 miles.
From Bealey to Hokitika	..	..	..	..	63 "
From Hokitika to Greymouth	..	..	..	..	26 "

The present value of the line between Christchurch and the boundary of the Province of Canterbury is to be determined by arbitration, and paid to the Canterbury Government.

The receipts from this West Coast telegraph are larger in proportion to the expenditure than upon any other line in the Colony; its purchase is a very profitable transaction for the Department.

GREYMOOUTH AND WESTPORT LINE.

This line is a continuation of that from Christchurch to Greymouth, and is being erected at the instance of the Provincial Government of Nelson, which has guaranteed the payment of six (6) per cent. interest on the total cost of construction, as well as any deficiency which may hereafter exist between the receipts of this line and the actual cost of working and maintaining it.

Owing to the peculiar and difficult character of the country through which this line has to be carried—over a considerable portion of which a bridle track only exists—and to the excessive outlay which would have been involved in the delivery of totara poles, it has been deemed expedient to make use of the best of the timber through which the line passes. The clearing of the bush and supply of poles is being performed by contract, but the erection is being effected by day labour under the supervision of Mr. Alexander Aitken, with the assistance of an experienced Lineman. The line was carefully surveyed in the first instance by Mr. Aitken.

In Appendix A will be found the relative cost of each of the sections above described now finished. The cost of surveying and inspection may appear at first glance excessive, but the