

*Lt.-Col. Gorton.* they could do it cheaper. I have never been able, except in one instance, to purchase really good English serge in the Colony, and then we had to pay 9s. per yard for it, double width. Speaking of the uniform, I may state that blue is the colour most difficult to get. I would therefore suggest whether, such being the case, it would not be advisable to consider if a colour more easily obtainable could not be adopted. The only profit we put upon articles purchased in the Colony is 5 per cent., and that to cover the cost of intercolonial transit. We have tried all over the Colony, but failed to get iron targets equal to those supplied from England. They have been manufactured in Auckland, Wellington, Temuka, Wanganui, and Otago, but are not equal to the home article. They do not stand the firing;—they bend, and the bullets shake and drive out the rivets. For instance, some targets made recently at Temuka were used at the last Colonial prize firing, and I have received a report that they are now in bad order. The target used by the Imperial troops is very expensive, costing £8 14s. per leaf, delivered to them at home on a large scale; it would be about £10 to us, so we were obliged to order the old pattern some time ago discarded by the Imperial authorities, but which are far superior to those at present made in the Colony, and less in price. As to accoutrements, these we hope, in time, to manufacture for ourselves. An accoutrement maker recently arrived here from England,—a foreman from one of the largest manufactories in London, who took a contract for 5,000 sets of harness during the Crimean war, and delivered them all within twenty-one days, and made large quantities of accoutrements. He is here now, and is making 200 sets of Cadet accoutrements, of English leather he brought out with him, which he will deliver at 6s. 6d. per set, the lowest rate I have yet been able to obtain such articles. Tools,—consisting of axes, picks, spades, and shovels,—got from the Imperial Government, are very bad, being of old and obsolete patterns. We will never obtain them again. We always buy our own tools now, using the American, as supplied in the shops. Those obtained originally from the Imperial stores are dear at any price. Our cloth caps are not all imported, some being made in the Colony. The men pay for their clothing: that for the Armed Constabulary is made up by the tailors at Mount Cook. I do not know what they charge. I should like very much to be able to make up our own Snider ammunition,—it would be a great saving. At present, it costs 10s. 2d. per 100 rounds landed here, the cases alone costing 10s. each. That, in a million rounds, comes to a heavy item. There is this advantage in the Snider cartridge: after discharge, the metal case can be used again; and we have got, I dare say, about twenty tons of bullets, which could be utilized. I directed the armourer here, some time ago, to make up two cartridges, which I can produce to the Committee, but it appeared then to come dearer than importing them; but I do not see why boys should not be taught to make them, at payable rates. The difficulty with this ammunition is in fitting the case to the bullet exactly: it must be done to a nicety, or the arm may be injured, and rendered unserviceable. The Armed Constabulary pay for all ammunition used beyond a certain quantity, the same as the Volunteers. Ammunition is a large item of annual expenditure. Enfield ammunition is also expensive, being now 6s. 9d. per 100 rounds. The last supply of this ammunition cost 6s. 8d. per 100 rounds landed here, owing to its having to be collected from the magazine at Chester and elsewhere, and we having to pay for that expense.

*Mr. Blackett.*

JOHN BLACKETT, Esq., Assistant Engineer, in attendance, and examined.

27th Aug., 1872.

54. *The Chairman.*] Do you know anything about the harbours on the West Coast?—I know a little about the Buller, the Grey, and other Southern ports.

55. Have you any suggestion or information to give, so as to make these harbours available, or the coal in their neighbourhood accessible?—I have already expressed my opinions on the Buller and Grey, in a general way. I do not profess to be able to give details. These are the two I have had most to deal with, and I have previously stated, both verbally and in writing, that both could be made available for shipping coal. The expense though, I am afraid, would be considerable. It would require a special survey to find out the extent of the expense. As to making Westport Harbour available for vessels of 400 or 500 tons, I could not say what should be done. It would require a very careful survey, owing to the changes which have taken place.

56. Would it be better to make a port at the Buller than at Greymouth?—I think a larger class of vessels would get in there, but I am not in a position to say what works would be necessary without examination. I know them both in a general way, having been there weeks and months at a time. A vessel of 400 tons, drawing 12 feet of water, has been in the Buller more than once; but the bars of all the rivers there alter from time to time. After a heavy flood, vessels get a good bar and a good entrance, but the prevalence of south-westerly winds and currents drifts up the bar again, so that it gets into the same condition as before. That is the usual action on these coasts. There is a tradition, I have heard, that the Grey bar could be almost walked across after a long spell of dry weather.

57. What of the railway works?—I have already reported on the nature of the railway works at Westport, and given the probable cost.

58. What is your opinion of a temporary tramway at the Grey?—It appears to be almost a waste of money, in the prospect of making a railway. It seems that it is stated it can be made for from £3,000 to £3,500, but, from what I know of the place, it will be found that is a very small figure for the work. It is six or seven miles long.

59. How long would it take to complete a railway?—I should say about twelve months.

60. Would the necessary works at the Grey be more expensive than at the Buller?—That would depend on how you took the railway to the Buller. There are several places where coal is available, but it is not always to be got at. For instance, it would take from £80,000 to £100,000 to make a railway from the coal seams behind Mount Rochfort. From the base of the mountains the coast is generally level to the Buller; the difficulty would be in crossing the rivers. There are not many large rivers, only two, I think, from Mount Rochfort, but the difficulty is in getting the coal from the mountain. I should say, make the Grey Railway first, because it would be almost immediately available. From my experience of the Grey, taking the average seasons of a number of years, you can generally get ships out and in very well. At times the bar is bad, and unless protective and harbour works are made, you cannot depend on keeping it always open.