

considering the varying capabilities of the men, it works fairly well, but necessitates a very large discretionary power being placed in the hands of the person in charge. I think that in the event of any new works being started it would be decidedly better to call for tenders amongst the men sent up, and let them arrange their own parties. It would probably result in a slight increase in the cost of work, but it would give greater satisfaction to the men themselves, and reduce the responsibility of the person in charge. The only time we called for tenders was when several parties had cut out at the same time: it then resulted in an advance of nearly 20 per cent. on the former rates. This established a sort of precedent, which was amply quoted against us when pricing other jobs to be let.

The wages made on this work varied as the capabilities of the men—good men could make from 1s. to 1s. 2d. per hour, while poor workers only made 7d. to 8d. per hour. The men generally worked very long hours, and worked very hard. Some of the men who were able to employ carts, ploughs, &c., made more than those who could not get these helps. I believe this kind of work costs from 20 to 30 per cent. more than it would if it was tendered for in the open market, chiefly because the unemployed have not got the means to get teams and other appliances necessary for the economical and expeditious working of the job.

The greatest difficulty we found in this work was getting the men to work together. They always thought that the others were not working as hard as they might. All the good men want to get together, and will not take a doubtful man in their party: the result is, all the good men do get together, and all the bad are left to get on as well as they can. This greatly increases the difficulty of pricing the work so that all can make fair wages, for if you give the poor men an extra price it is giving a premium to incompetency, and creating discontent among the others; while, if you only give him the same as the good workers, it simply means starving the poor workers off the job.

Parties over four men do not appear to work well, and the difficulty appears to increase with the number of men.

A line of road has been surveyed on the Hanmer Plains between the Hot Springs and Jollie's Pass, the plans and specifications for which will be ready soon.

The tools are now stored at the Hot Springs to be handy for the above work, should it be undertaken this winter.

The cost of survey, supervision, &c., has been very heavy for many reasons, chiefly owing to the fragmentary nature of the surveys, the small contracts necessitating constant attention, and letting other small jobs, the frequent payments required, and the immense amount of what one may call "dry-nursing" the men required, that wanted everything done for them.

F. STEPHENSON SMITH, District Surveyor.

WESTLAND.

Hokitika-Christchurch Road.—As indicated by the name, this road forms the connecting-link between the East and West Coasts, *via* Arthur's Pass, and is a favourite route for tourists, who come from all parts of the world, and cross over by coach to see the far-famed Otira Gorge. During the past summer there has been a large influx of tourists, and on an average there have been three five-horse coaches running twice a week each way. The season has been an expensive one on account of several severe floods, which have in succession damaged the road, in many cases carrying it completely away, and in others covering it up with heavy landslips, while the fords have to be made afresh after each, as they are constantly shifting. Several of the bridges have been repaired, strengthened, and tarred, a large number of culverts have been lifted and renewed, and a considerable amount of river protective works constructed by means of crib-logging, &c., also one or two short deviations made to avoid steep pinches. Notwithstanding the frequent breaks through floods, however, and thanks to the energy of Mr. McIntosh (our local Inspector of Works) and his men, the interruption to coaching traffic has been but slight. The destruction by fire of one of the roadmen's huts (which had to be rebuilt), and also the purchase of a couple of young draught horses during the period, help to increase the total cost, which amounted to £1,750 14s. 9d. The length of road maintained from Harris's to Pass is thirty-nine miles.

Haast Pass Road.—This is a bridle-road leading from the mouth of the Haast River *via* the Haast Pass to the Wanaka Lake and East Coast, the portion of it in this district being forty-eight miles. This is a fairly passable track during the autumn and winter months, but in spring and summer it is not so safe, owing to the melting snows swelling the rivers. The greatest obstacle to traffic, however, is the Clarke Bluff, near the junction of the Landsborough with the Haast River. This is a precipitous rocky bluff against the base of which the river runs, and when the latter is high a complete stop is put to traffic, but in ordinary times the bluff is avoided by crossing the river twice. On the upper end of the bluff, a track was cut round for some distance, and again on the lower side; but a gap of some 10 or 12 chains of the most difficult part was left untouched, and, as this is pretty well a straight face and solid rock, it would probably cost about £200 to complete it. There are also three other bluffs lower down where a track has been cut round, but which could be greatly improved. In one or two other places, where the present track takes up the river-bed, a track would require to be formed round the foot of terrace if there was to be any considerable traffic on the road. The bridge over the Wills River has been replanked, sundry culverts repaired, slips removed, and a few chains of very boggy ground near Grassy Creek flat have been drained, formed, and fascined. The total cost, by our books, has been £131 10s. 2d., but I understand sundry other works were done on the occasion of His Excellency's trip through. As these were not done through this department I am unable to state the nature and extent thereof. On this route are two good shelter-huts (built of iron)—one below the Clarke Bluff, and the other on the opposite bank of Haast River from the Burke River junction.