

The average wages for the whole district are—for days of eight hours worked, 7s. 1½d., and for wet and dry, 5s. 4¾d.

The workmen, as a rule, have done their work well, and no complications or unpleasantnesses have occurred.

C. W. HURSTHOUSE, Road Surveyor.

ROTORUA DISTRICT.

During the year eighty-five contracts have been let. The minimum wage earned per day, all weathers, was 3s. 11d.; the maximum, 12s. 1d. The highest average daily earning per man on all roads was 8s. 10d.; the lowest, 6s. 6½d. The time lost by bad weather varies from one-sixth on one road to one-nineteenth on others. Contracts were let to Europeans and Natives. The tabulated results are only on the European contracts.

In considering the earnings in this district it must be remembered that all the works are far away from civilisation, and the cost of supplies proportionately heavy; consequently the work generally is valued at higher rates than it would be in more accessible places. The high cost of management, &c., on the Rotorua-Galatea-Waikaremoana Road is partly owing to the necessity of extra expense in connection with Native control.

ROBERT H. REANEY, Road Surveyor.

TARANAKI.

Mr. Robinson, Road Surveyor, reports as follows:—

As in previous years, nearly all road- as well as settlement-works have been executed on co-operative principles, the only contracts (three) let by tender being those beyond the means of labouring men.

The rates of wage have been kept within reasonable limits, the only apparently high ones being where artisans (bridge carpenters) were employed at schedule rates, providing their own plant and tools, the rates being such as to permit them to earn the ruling wage, 9s. and 10s. per day, in towns. No extremely low wages have been earned. Where they are lower than 5s. 6d. or 5s. it has been on by-roads, where indifferent workers, or old men, were put by themselves, in order not to interfere with the better class of men employed on main-road work. This system of separating men into two classes, or, rather, allowing the men to arrange their own parties, has done away in a good measure with an old grievance—that good men had to share their earnings with incapable ones—and each class is now better satisfied. Where main-road and by-road works are in operation at the same time in a district we find it to the advantage of the works and men to put the competent pushing workers on the main road and the indifferent workers and old men on by-roads, the progress of the latter not being of such importance as the former.

No loss is now incurred in the supply of explosives, tents, or tools. The men purchase them outright from us or from storekeepers. We supply only trucks, hand-carts, barrows, jacks, and saws, for the use of which a fair charge is made. The introduction of the part-time system has had a very salutary effect in discovering who are *bona fide* settlers and who take up land for the sake of roadwork only. So soon as the system was brought into operation a large number of single men abandoned their holdings and went away to seek for outside work, thus showing their desire to become permanent settlers was not a very strong one. Those now in occupation, with but few exceptions, will, I think, remain and become successful farmers.

So far as is possible, roadworks within an improved-farm settlement or a special settlement are kept for the owners of land within those settlements, men who are not landholders being generally put on main-road works. This is done for the purpose of giving settlers the advantage of having work closer to their homes and families than would otherwise be the case.

The tone of feeling between co-operative men and Road Inspectors has much improved, the former having at last discovered that the latter are not oppressors who endeavour to cheat them out of their lawful earnings; but little friction has therefore occurred on the works during the year.

Our average number of men on the works during the year was 246, the highest number being 298—in July, 1897—and the lowest number being 147—in January, 1898. Up to February, 1898, we had not many outside applications for work, many men having left here for Thames and Australian diggings, and the remainder obtained work from the local bodies.

JOHN STRAUCHON, Chief Surveyor.

HAWKE'S BAY.

All the roads constructed by the department during the year in this district have been under the co-operative system. Eighty-four contracts have been completed, covering 11 miles 51 chains of main road and 25 miles 63 chains of horse-road, 21½ miles of which were in forest, which was felled 1 chain wide.

On the 31st March 146 men were employed under this system, the maximum wage earned per day being 12s., and the minimum 2s. 8¾d. The average daily wage earned per man, all weathers, was 6s. 8¾d.

The maximum wage was made on the Gisborne-Waikaremoana Road, where first-rate workmen are employed, but the works are situated far from a store, all the supplies having to be transported from Gisborne for a distance of fifty-nine miles, which makes living expensive. The minimum was on a small bush contract of 16 chains of bushfelling let to a settler at Waikopiro. It cannot be