

taken into consideration, for it is difficult to arrive at the time worked by a settler, as he only works at a job like this at odd times, to suit himself.

Generally, I think the wages earned have been satisfactory. We have had, I am glad to say, few complaints, and the works have proceeded in a satisfactory manner, the gangs working well together under the overseers. Men coming from the South have not had experience in bushwork, and are therefore at a disadvantage when sent to works in heavy forest country, and cannot expect to earn good wages until they have had some experience at that class of work.

ERIC C. GOLD-SMITH, Chief Surveyor.

WELLINGTON EAST.

There is considerable difficulty in carrying on the co-operative work with satisfaction to all. Settlers are supposed to have preference in obtaining employment, and they have increased to so large an extent that it is impossible to keep them going with the money at my disposal, and when men who are not settlers are sent to work on the roads it causes jealousy, the settlers thinking these men are infringing on their rights. As to complaints made to myself during the past year, there have been but few. All that have come before me have been easily settled, but complaints are still sent direct to head office without my knowledge, and I regret to say, as a rule, the complaining parties economize truth to a large extent by insinuating that overseers are working against the Government, the co-operative system, &c., all of which is most absurd. No matter how frivolous these complaints are, they occupy a large amount of my time, also that of my officers and others. Some of the men have, or pretend to have, an idea that the officers over them are trying to do them out of their earnings. I cannot see why this should exist, as the earnings are paid by the Crown, and do not come from each individual overseer. I am happy to say that all men are not alike, for there are many really good, fine fellows, and who I must say, to their credit, work well, earn fair wages, and do not agitate unless they have a real grievance, which is easily settled upon proper representation being made in the right quarter.

During the year I have averaged 308 men on the works, and 338 men taking their off time.

A. C. TURNER, Road Surveyor.

WELLINGTON WEST.

As in last year's report, a considerable variety of work has been done under this system, such as bushfelling, grass-seed sowing, stumping, clearing and forming bridle-tracks and dray-roads, ditching, sawing, squaring, bridge-building, concreting, stone-breaking, metal cartage, metalling, &c.

The number of men employed has ranged from a minimum of 166 in January to a maximum of 258 last November, the average per month being 202.

The average wage earned by the workmen is somewhat higher than in previous years, partly in consequence of the increased prices given owing to the instructions to that effect after the inquiries of last year, and partly in consequence of the fact that most of the men have been so long on the works that they are now much more experienced in the management and execution of their contracts.

The great majority of the men employed are settlers, and most of these are connected with the improved-farm settlements. Many of these improved-farm settlers now live on their sections, and only work on the roads as a means of obtaining a little ready cash. As a result of this, their time is very intermittent, and it is difficult to arrive at the actual wages earned. Without the assistance thus derived from the co-operative contracts on the Government works it is difficult to understand how many of these settlers could remain on their sections. In consequence they are invariably given the preference as regards employment.

The number of contracts completed in all classes of work has been 277.

On ordinary contracts the average wage, wet and dry, has been 6s. 5d., as against 6s. 1d. last year. The highest wage (10s. 3½d.) was made by a party of three men with a dray at formation in the Clifton Block, and the lowest (2s. 3d.) by a party of settlers moving slips on the Turakina Valley Road.

At contracts on improved-farm settlements the average wage, wet and dry, has been 5s. 5½d., the prices for bushwork on these settlements being in the nature of advances, and not necessarily representing the true value of the work. The highest wage (9s. 11½d.) was earned by a party at the erection of a bridge, and the lowest (1s. 10d.) by a party of entirely inexperienced men at bushfelling on the Taihape State Farm.

At metal-cartage contracts there has been great disparity in the wages earned. I have entered the results on a separate sheet, for this class of work is quite different from ordinary co-operative contracts, as it necessitates the supply of horses, drays, harness, feed, &c., besides labour. This is the first time it has been tried, and on the whole it has proved satisfactory, though the prices require some further adjustment. These prices were fixed at so much per cubic yard per mile of lead, usually from 1s. 6d. to 2s. 6d. per yard-mile. The drays employed were all previously measured and marked. The contracts included cartage only, the loading and spreading being done by specially selected men.

Several contracts are still in progress, which will considerably reduce the average wages earned; but up to the end of the financial year seventeen contracts, totalling 2,845 cubic yards, have been completed. The average earnings per day for a three-horse team and driver, all weathers, has been £1 9s. The highest (£2 9s. 5d. per day) was earned by a three-horse team and driver on the Pipiriki-Waiouru Road, and the lowest (£1 1s.) by a team on the Ohingaiti-Tokaanu Road.