

AUCKLAND CENTRAL.

The number of contracts completed is seventy-five. The average amount per contract paid in cash to contractors is £50 1s., and including explosives, tools, &c., the average amount is £58 7s. 6d.

As regards the wages earned, the average for the whole district has been 6s. 2½d. per day of eight hours. The above general average wage appears to be as near right as could be expected, considering the situations of the works in regard to the base of supplies.

As a rule the men have done the work well, and everything in connection with it has gone on smoothly and without friction of any kind.

C. W. HURSTHOUSE, Road Surveyor.

ROTORUA.

The number of contracts completed under this system during the year was 125, of which only forty-three were undertaken by Europeans and eighty-two by Natives. The average number of men on each contract was five, and the character of work done was bushfelling, clearing, and road-formation.

The average wage per day of eight hours for the whole district was 8s.

When possible I inform the Labour Agent in Auckland of the nature of the work the men will have to do when they get here, that they may not expect to earn too much at the start at work they are unaccustomed to, such as bush-work or rock-work. Unfortunately, many men in town, in their natural anxiety to obtain work, persuade themselves and others that they can do much more than they really can when put to a test, and generally, instead of being satisfied with a low rate of wage until they can get experience and earn more, leave the work, condemning the system and its connections, when the fault often is at their own door.

As you are aware, the Natives carry out their work in such an erratic manner that it is almost impossible to ascertain with any degree of accuracy the hours worked, time lost, or wages earned on their contracts, and no attempt has been made to keep such record.

The cost of tools, inspection, and management is proportionately high, owing to the high rates of freight, and the distances and expenses of travelling in a scattered district far from its base of supplies.

ROBERT H. REANEY, Road Surveyor.

HAWKE'S BAY.

During the year 98 miles 73 chains of road has been constructed by co-operative labour, twenty-two miles being dray-road and 76 miles 73 chains bridle-road. Ninety-two miles were in forest country, which is cleared 1 chain wide on the line of road. Two hundred and thirteen contracts have been in operation, the maximum number employed in any week being 318, and the minimum 131, giving an average of 226 throughout the year.

The average wages earned in the district is 7s. 9½d. per day of eight hours.

Generally the works have gone on smoothly, and have been carried out in a satisfactory manner. It must be expected that among a number of men, some quite inexperienced to the work, that some are disappointed in the amount that they are able to earn, but our average is satisfactory. I regret to have to report two accidents at Ngapaeruru, by which William Little and Patrick Harding were killed while employed felling and clearing forest on the roads. There is a danger in sending men into the bush who are unaccustomed to bush-work.

ERIC C. GOLD SMITH, Chief Surveyor.

TARANAKI.

As a rule, the work done under this system has been well finished. It has all been through heavy bush, and generally on steep sideling ground underlain with papa or sandstone rock, the clearing and formation of which is usually expensive.

As the work is always in advance of settlement, the cost of food supplied to the workmen is much greater than to workmen under local bodies, and men with families have to exercise rigid economy unless they earn an average of over 6s. 6d. per working-day.

The average rate over all the works was 6s. 6½d. per day of eight hours. The average is certainly no more than should be earned in back districts, where the food-supply in winter (the time we do the most of our work) is from 20 per cent. to 30 per cent. higher than in settled districts.

The number of co-operative contracts completed during the year was 351; average number of men on each contract, 2.82.

An endeavour has been made as far as possible to raise the number of men employed on contracts to from four to six in each party, as it is found those numbers in heavy work answer best.

Very few complaints have been made by the men during the year, and those that have been made are of a trivial nature.

No loss has been incurred on tents or explosives, these being supplied to the men at a slight advance on cost; and the loss on tools is very trifling—the men purchase their own axes, grubbers, picks, shovels, &c., and pay for the use of jacks and saws; and the only plant supplied free is barrows, hand-carts, and wagons.

The majority of the men on the works are improved-farm settlers and special settlers, these being always accorded the preference.

G. ROBINSON, Road Surveyor.