

# PAPERS RELATING TO THE WEST COAST ROADS IN NELSON AND WESTLAND.

## No. 1.

### I.—WEST COAST ROADS, NELSON PROVINCE.

Mr. DOBSON to Mr. BLACKETT.

REPORT ON PROGRESS OF WORKS, to MAY 31st, 1872.

SIR,—

I have the honor to hand you the following Report upon the works in my charge, and the progress attained up to May 31st, 1872:—

1. The work in hand consists of the construction of a dray road from the junction of the Inangahua and Buller to the Ahaura, *viâ* Reefton. The accompanying tracings, sheets 1 and 2, show the line of road approximately; for the convenience of reference I have styled the road from the Buller to Reefton the Inangahua Road, and from Reefton to Ahaura the Grey Road, and each line has been subdivided into four sections. These sections have been divided again into contracts, which in the case of new work have been made as nearly one mile each, as the circumstances allowed. The accompanying schedule of contracts and tenders will give all the requisite details respecting dates, amounts, &c.

#### *Inangahua Road.*

2. Section No. 1.—Buller to punt crossing (landing). The total length of road required is about five and-a-half miles, of this, three miles thirty chains are under construction in four contracts, as follows, viz:—

(1). W. Ferris, 100 chains, £543. The work is going on rather slowly in consequence of the difficulty of getting proper outfall for the water of a swamp through which the road runs.

(2). W. Morris, 80 chains, £747 0 0

(3). " " 90 " £822 0 0

The contractor made so little progress with the work that I recommended the Government to cancel the contract and give the work to Messrs. Pell & Atkinson. The contractor had felled all the timber by sub-contracts and I therefore desired the Government to pay the sub-contractors for the work done through Morris, to save all the delay upon making out accounts &c. for the men. The Government is not bound to pay anything, and according to the terms of the specification can claim to take over the contract, paying 50 per cent. on all work actually finished, but not a chain is actually finished as no earthwork is yet done. My reason for recommending payment in this case is because the sub-contractors, who are all poor men, have done the work well, and Morris cannot pay them. Pell & Atkinson carry on the work at Morris' prices.

(4). John Walker, 80 chains, £490. This contract is being carried on satisfactorily and the work is well done.

Besides the works in progress, to complete communication between the Buller and the punt crossing, a side cutting 50 chains in length will be required from Christy's downwards. I have only lately been able to get this set out, and I find the hill side so wet and liable to slip that I cannot recommend the Government to attempt the work during the winter. If the ground would stand at all it should not cost more than £5 a chain, but if the hill begins to slip there is no saying how much it will cost. Besides this, there is a sandstone bluff about 10 chains long at the end of the first contract; it is soft but nearly perpendicular, and requires a short bridge at one end, it will cost at least £350. I intended to carry the road on the shingle bed, but the late flood cut a channel close under the face, preventing this being done.

3. Section No. 2.—Six and-a-half miles let in six contracts to W. Morris, £3600.

This contract is not progressing favourably, the contractor evidently being unable to manage the work properly. It is now nearly five weeks since the contract should have been completed. There have been numerous delays which are no fault of the contractor: floods preventing him from getting tools and men on the ground in the first place, and wet weather subsequently. I have done what I could to push on the work, thinking it better to give a little rather than cancel. All the main part of the work is done, the work that will occupy the most time is metalling two swamps; the metal has to be drawn a considerable distance. If this section is not shortly completed I would recommend the Government to put on a lot of men to complete the gravelling.

An advance of £1000 has been made on this work.

4. Section No. 3.—Four and-a-half miles in four contracts.—Pell & Atkinson, £2880. This work is nearly completed, the contractors having done all in their power to push on the work. An advance of £1000 has been made.

When tenders were received for this section, I advised the acceptance of Pell's for the first three, and Courtney's for the fourth. Courtney, however, refused to take up one alone alleging that his