

REPORT ON THE WORKING OF

CHRISTCHURCH TO HOKITIKA AND GREYMOUTH.

This line has been reconstructed during the year. Between the Bealey and the Selwyn, new poles cut from heart of totara have replaced the old ones, which had once been lowered since the line was purchased from the Provincial Government of Canterbury. Eleven sets of tube poles have been fixed at the crossing of the Waimakariri, where great expense and trouble were formerly caused by floods. Between the Bealey and Hokitika, fifteen miles of new totara poles have been erected. From Hokitika to Greymouth the line has been repoled nearly throughout, and two additional wires are being put up on the same poles. The three wires were necessary to provide for the increased work that will result from the completion of the line between Greymouth and Reefton. It is anticipated that this line will require very little beyond ordinary expenditure during the year. The section suffers severely at times from snow storms, owing to the high country through which it passes on the west of the Bealey. During June, interruptions from that cause were frequent.

GREYMOUTH TO WESTPORT.

This section is being thoroughly repaired. Where new poles are required, they are procured from the bush through which the line passes; but in some places near Brighton, where it was possible to convey built poles, made of heart of totara, it was deemed advisable to use them. The repairs have been completed as far as Charleston.

CHRISTCHURCH TO BLENHEIM.

Only a little trouble, except from ordinary casualties, has been caused during the year, but the Hapuka, north of Kaikoura, through a very heavy flood, caused some damage to the line. It is intended shortly to remove the line so as to reach a crossing-place some half-mile further up stream, as on the south bank, where the wire now crosses, the river has encroached sufficiently to imperil the safety of the line should another heavy flood occur.

BLENHEIM TO NELSON.

Between Blenheim and a point four miles north of Havelock, only slight repairs have been needed; but from that point to Nelson, the poles will require to be renewed this summer. Totara poles will be used wherever possible.

WANGANUI LINE.

This section, which embraces all the line north of Patea to Opunake, remains in first-class condition. During the summer, steps have been taken to protect from fire the poles from Bull's to Opunake. Between Bull's and Wanganui, the line runs alongside the road, which is in many places fenced with gorse hedges. From the neglected state of those hedges the gorse is in many places gradually overgrowing the road. At one point, during the summer, a fire originating in one of those hedges destroyed four or five poles, and interrupted communication for a short time. To prevent a similar occurrence, the gorse surrounding poles has been cleared away; but it is not fair that the Department should have to incur such an expense, as it might have been saved by attention on the part of the proprietors on whose lands the hedges are.

WELLINGTON TO NAPIER.

This section has not caused trouble, except on a few occasions. Should the business of the Department continue to increase at the present rate, it will be necessary, during the next season, to run a third wire between Wellington and Masterton, and between Napier and Waipukurau. By this plan, there will be two through wires to Napier without any intermediate station on them, with the exception of Castle Point. The increased accommodation will prevent overcrowding, which would certainly result with only the present wires.

NAPIER TO TAURANGA.

Except that severe damage was done near Maketu by lightning during the autumn, nothing worthy of note has occurred in this section. The running of a second wire on the present poles has already been referred to.

AUCKLAND LINES.

The third wire which, at the date of the last report, was being erected between Auckland and Mercer, has been completed, and it has proved a great relief to the pressure occurring during the great excitement which at times prevails on the Thames Gold Fields. It is anticipated that a fourth wire as far as Mercer will shortly be required, as well as a third wire from Mercer to Grahamstown, should the Coromandel Gold Fields, with which Grahamstown will shortly be in communication, continue to give indications of increasing richness.

The Waikato lines continue in good repair, except that between Cambridge and Alexandra, which, being merely a branch, it was deemed advisable not to repair permanently when the Auckland lines were being reconstructed. The question of renewing this branch must however be considered, as it will soon be impossible satisfactorily to maintain communication, owing to the rottenness of the poles. The branch is of little value as a revenue-yielder; but Alexandra is a place of importance as regards Native matters, and if that consideration renders an efficient line desirable, the branch must be wholly reconstructed.

The cost of maintenance of the several sections is stated in Table B; and the yearly records of the tests for insulation of the Cook Strait Cable are given in Table C. Each of the three wires in the cable remain in as good condition as ever.