

two, and that, if a sufficiently able and reliable man could be found to take that position, there are already enough officers in the service to carry out his directions with energy and exactness. Beneath him, we think that every officer in the service should be arranged in some well-understood order, so that instant obedience could be secured where necessary, and no confusion could arise, as it now appears to do, as to whose directions should be obeyed. It is only by the appointment of an able man, who would devote his energies to his duties, and go with a will into the work of economy so evidently required, taking the supervision and responsibility of the whole department on himself, that our railways will ever be well managed, and produce that return on their cost which the public have a right to expect. This permanent head of New Zealand Railways should be rather a man of business, with good organizing capacity, than simply an engineer, or even railway expert, and should be expected to arrange the business of the department, as a private proprietor would do, with a view to make the line pay and serve the public. Such an officer would also form, what does not now exist, a proper medium of communication between the whole Railway Department and the Minister for Public Works, and would act as a permanent director, whose presence would make political changes less costly and dangerous than under existing arrangements they must necessarily be.

Reductions of salaries and wages.

We are of opinion that a reduction of not less than $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. should be made on the railway wages and salaries, though it is quite possible that it may not be desirable to be perfectly uniform in the application of this decrease of pay to all officers and branches of the service. This would effect a direct saving of £52,000, and would naturally lead indirectly to a great reduction in the cost of new works let by tender, which it would not be too much to estimate as likely to reach at least an equal amount.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT.

Good engineers may not be good directors.

Closely connected with Railways, and, for the present, at least, scarcely second to them in importance, is the Public Works Department. We have long believed New Zealand to be fortunate in having in its service engineers devoted to their profession, and ranking high in professional ability; but, unfortunately, there is no necessary connection between these qualities and that controlling and organizing power required in the head of such a large and expensive staff as that now employed on our public works. We have been able to find very little to commend in the results of its management, and have come to a very painful conviction that New Zealand has not received good value for the large sums that have been expended.

Highly-paid men doing inferior work.

Here, as in most other departments of the New Zealand Government, highly-paid men are too often employed at work requiring no uncommon ability, and engineers are found acting as accountants, as inspectors, or as clerks of works.

Too many engineers.

Fifty-seven engineers at high salaries, and often with expensive offices, form a staff out of all proportion to the work to be done; and it is evident that these engineers, if fully employed at all, must be engaged on work not requiring a professional head.

How employed.

In order to find any appearance of employment for this host of engineers, the most absurd regulations have to be adopted. We have it in evidence that a common siding cannot be put down on a working railway without the presence of two engineers. One must be called in from the construction department to decide how such an important new work can be executed, and a second must be brought from the maintenance staff to ascertain how it can be connected with the existing line.

Fewer blunders with smaller number.

A much smaller number of engineers who were men of ability and experience could evidently supply all the engineering skill our public works are likely to require; and a multitude of officers whose actual personal qualifications do not entitle them to the homage exacted by the profession would be far better out of the way, as they now interfere with the exercise of the ordinary good sense which