

which I allude were carried out by men sent from Christchurch and from various parts of this district, at a fixed wage of 8s. per day. The result of this was much better than at first anticipated, although there were a few from such a mixed number not equal to the better class of workmen.

On the other works the system worked fairly well; the men earned wages quite equal to the average current rate, and the parties as a rule were satisfied with the prices fixed. There are, of course, exceptions in cases where the men, not through any fault of their own, fail to earn sufficient. These are invariably caused by want of knowledge of the work undertaken. As an instance of this, I may refer to the case of one party of men who failed to make more than 6s. per day on a contract for which, at the prices I have lately seen quoted in Otago, similar work is being done for considerably less than the price allowed. In the one case the men were experienced roadmen, and in the other, although they worked hard and were equal to the best of ordinary miners, their want of experience told heavily against them. Although the completed returns from the Hokitika Southward Road do not come within the year's operations, they afford a good illustration of the working of the co-operative system. When this work was about to be started it was deemed advisable to take a portion of the men from Hokitika. These were balloted for first, and parties formed from the numbers drawn. The result was not so satisfactory as parties made up in the locality of the work: the latter worked better together, their earnings have been greater, and the work was carried out with less trouble to themselves and the Inspector. This is explained by the fact that men accustomed to outside manual labour and acquainted with each other are capable of doing more and better work than others drawn principally from the town, and also explains the different results from their contracts.

*Kanieri Forks-Kanieri Lake.*—The works on this road were the widening and gravelling of the portion Kanieri Forks to Kanieri and improving the balance of the road to Kanieri Lake. The work was carried out by thirty-six men, in eight co-operative parties of from four to five men in each party. As the gravel was in many cases some distance from the road, the men were compelled to employ drays for the purpose, and £165 5s. 1d. was expended by the parties in payment of these teams. It will be seen that the men made fairly good wages—viz., 7s. 5d.—in all weathers.

*Stafford-Waimea.*—The portion of the road constructed consisted of 21 chains of clearing, stumping, formation, &c. This road is in course of construction in response to a desire expressed by Waimea and Stafford residents to have a dray-road to the nearest point of the Hokitika-Grey Railway. The line was laid out some time ago by Mr. Smyth, and estimated to cost about £1,300; as, however, only £400 was voted for it, it was deemed desirable to commence at the railway end of the road and expend the vote as far as it would go. The distance above referred to takes it to the crossing of the Waimea Creek, where a bridge is now being constructed by a co-operative party. The men on this section did not make very good wages.

*Greenstone-Teremakau.*—This vote was expended in widening portion of the present track from the Greenstone Road to the Teremakau Settlement. It was carried out partly by the settlers and by men resident in the locality. The object of this work is to give these settlers an opportunity of reaching their holdings by dray-road without having to risk crossing the Teremakau River. A bridle-track at present connects Greenstone with this settlement. The grades were, however, in places, so difficult, that a new line for about half the distance had to be surveyed. The portion uncompleted is all new work; for this I have requested that a vote sufficient to finish the work should be passed. The co-operative parties make good wages—viz., 7s. 7½d. per day.

*Hokitika Southward.—Karangarua to Cook's.*—The work carried out in this locality was the formation of a bridle-track from Scotchman's Beach towards the Karangarua River. The works embraced clearing, stumping, formation, and gravelling, with the usual side drains where required, and several large culverts. A bridge over the Ohinetamatea River has also been started, and at the date of writing has been completed. A further continuation of this (also in hand) will complete a comparatively safe route from Hokitika to Jackson's Bay. The co-operative men employed have done excellent work, and the average wages earned by the experienced men was good, and by the others fair; the gross average is nearly 7s. 11d. per day.

*Haast Pass Track.*—The Road Report gives briefly the necessity for this expenditure and the work carried out. Along the precipitous face, the track is 5ft. wide in the solid rock, and on the other portions the usual width of a bridle-track. In addition to the new work on this road several of the old portions had to be re-formed, extensively repaired, and the old line deviated from some of the old and almost impracticable grades. The co-operative parties worked hard and long hours; their earnings show good results, but not too high for that locality.

*Bell Hill.—Mount Alexander.*—Portion of this expenditure was incurred in widening part of the Bell Hill-Mount Alexander track. This road will, I have no doubt, in the future be formed throughout as a main road into the back country, to connect with the road already partly formed up the Ahaura River to the Kopara District. The earnings of the co-operative men on this work amounted to 9s. 5d. per day.

*Taipo Track.*—This work was carried out by co-operative labour for the Mines Department. The average earnings was about 8s. 5½d. per day.

Speaking generally, the co-operative system has worked fairly well in this district. Much, however, depends on the overseer in charge of the works, and in the confidence the men have in his judgment and fairness. There are also cases where a man in charge is too easily influenced by the co-operative men, and consequently passes works too readily without insisting on their completion. These are, however, minor matters, which will improve with the continuation of this system.

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