

CANTERBURY.

Pukaki-Mount Cook Road.—This work was carried on between the 27th August and 14th October, under the supervision of District Surveyor Brodrick, on the co-operative system. The work comprised the formation of a deviation, 2 miles 14 chains in length near old Glentanner Station to secure a well-graded road in lieu of the steep one previously in use and was let in eight contracts at prices based on a rate of 7s. per day. The number of men employed on the work was thirty-two, all of whom were married. The maximum wage earned per man per day on any one contract, all weathers, was 8s. 1½d.; the minimum, 4s. 8d. The total payments made to co-operative contractors amounted to £337 0s. 6d.; the expenditure on account of surveys, supervision, day-labour, tools, &c., was £181 5s. 11d.; making a total expenditure upon this work for the year of £518 6s. 5d. The men were reported as well-behaved and hard-working, and as having carried out their work in a creditable manner. This portion of the road was left in very good order, and it is to be hoped that the local body will see to its maintenance.

Roads in Arundel Village Settlement.—The Government voted £54 for these works, which were carried out by the villagers on the co-operative system, under the supervision of the Mount Peel Road Board. The works were let in two contracts of four men each, and comprised 121 chains of formation, the construction of two open crossings, and two culverts, all of which were completed in a very satisfactory manner. The men were contented with their earnings, which averaged for each man 6s. 5½d. per day.

Nukuroa Village Settlement Roads.—These works, comprising 57½ chains of formation and 6½ chains of gravelling, for which £30 was voted, were let to the villagers in four small contracts on the co-operative system, all of which were satisfactorily performed. The average daily wage earned per man per day, in all weathers, was 6s. 6d. The works were supervised by District Surveyor Brodrick.

Waimate Gorge Drain, in Kapua Settlement.—Owing to complaints made by the villagers as to the state of this drain, I instructed District Surveyor Brodrick to visit and report on same. He found the drain to be on the whole in satisfactory order, the swamp (except on the north side of the line) being very dry, and all that was needed was to widen and deepen the drain in parts, and put in a culvert under the railway-line in order to drain the northern part of the swamp, which he estimated to cost £61 2s. 5d. The expenditure having been duly authorised, the work was let to the villagers in two contracts, one of which has been completed, at a cost of £16 2s. 10d. The three men engaged thereon earned 7s. 9½d. each per day in all weathers, but they found their own horses, plough, and scoop. A further expenditure on this work is necessary to connect the drains under the railway-line, which will be carried out by the Public Works Department.

J. W. A. MARCHANT, Chief Surveyor.

OTAGO.

ALL the roadworks carried out by the department during the past financial year have been under the co-operative system. I have gone into the advantages and disadvantages of this system in my previous reports, and have nothing further to say. In my road report I have given full particulars of the various roads constructed under the system. The maximum wage (8s. 5d.) appears very high, but on these contracts carts are employed, and when the horse-hire was paid the wages earned would not be above the average. The minimum wage of 3s. 1d. was made by some settlers who were not working constantly, putting most of their time into work on their own sections.

C. W. ADAMS, Chief Surveyor.

SOUTHLAND.

THE principal roadworks in this district continue to be carried out under this system, and although there has been a certain amount of friction, as on former occasions, with regard to the prices paid and wages earned, yet it may be fairly inferred from the results that the average wages earned have been fair in amount, and such as to comply as close as possible with the general instruction to frame the rates so that average men may earn 6s. a day.

The invariable experience here has been that whenever new works are started attempts are made to obtain higher prices than those fixed by the local officers in charge, for which more or less plausible reasons are given; but the real reasons are because, while the majority of men are disposed to give the thing a fair trial, there are always one or two of the agitating class whom nothing would content, and who deliberately lay themselves out to stir up discontent; because many of the men undertake such work for the first time in their lives, and are therefore physically unfit for it, and cannot therefore hold their own, or make fairly good wages until they get broken in to it; and also because very often work is begun in the very worst season, so that the men get discouraged by losing so much time in wet weather and short days. Again, we sometimes have men who are considerably past the prime of life, and if prices are arranged so as to enable these, and the inexperienced above referred to, to earn a minimum wage of 6s., there would be young able-bodied men making £1.

I have before me an application from an elderly man who has thrown up employment at a saw-mill in order that he may be taken on roadwork, on the plea that his work was too hard for him; but if he cannot stand the mill-work, it is hard to see how he could hope to be more successful on the roads.

Notwithstanding the agitation for increased rates which was going on here some months ago, it is within my personal knowledge that the moderate and steady workers took no part in this, and