

On the Okoke Road the highest wage earned during any one month was 10s. 11d. per day, by Hogan's party, in November, 1894, but the Inspector reported they worked eleven hours per day; the lowest rate earned, 3s. 5d. per day, was by Fraser's party, in August, 1894. The average hours worked were 9.16.

On the Douglas, Makuri, and Kiori Roads the rate earned was much more equal, the whole of the men employed being settlers, or men used to the same class of work. The highest wage earned in any one month was 9s. 4d. per day, the lowest was 5s. 9½d.

On the Mangaere Roads (Akama, Kirai, Mohakau), the highest rate earned during any one month was 7s. 6d. per day, by Holden's party, on Kirai Road, in August, 1894. The lowest rate earned was 3s. 9d. per day, by McKinley's party, on Mohakau Road, in March, 1895. Average number of hours worked per day, 8.3.

On the Waitotara and Rawhitiroa Roads the highest rate made in any one month was 8s. 6d., by Wood's party, in November, 1894; and the lowest, 5s. 8d., by Stoke's party, in November, 1894. The average wage made during the year was 7s. 5d.; the average hours worked being 8.5 per day.

The average wage earned by the men sawing or squaring timber for the bridges was 9s. 1d. per day of nine hours, and of the carpenters building the bridges, 8s. 1d. per day.

On the Ngaire Swamp drainage-works the average wages earned on the contracts, from the commencement of the works to the 31st March, 1895, were as follows: Brew's party, 9s. 4d. per day, all weathers, or 10s. 2½d. for the days they worked; Mumby's party, 8s. 5½d. per day, all weathers, or 9s. 2½d. for the days they worked; Robertson's party, 7s. 1½d. per day, all weathers, or 7s. 8½d. the days they worked. These are the rates made by the experienced drainers, the other parties have made lower wages. In commencing these drainage-works the price per chain was computed at 5d. per cubic yard for the material to be excavated, but as it was found that the swamps were underlain with timber—especially near the bush margins and the outlets—about 3ft. below the surface, the men could make only about 4s. 3d. per day, and the price had to be raised to an equivalent of 7d. per cubic yard. After the work had proceeded towards the centre of the swamps the timber in the drains became less in quantity, and the men made fairly high wages, but as their contracts were completed and new ones entered upon a new price was fixed—5d., 6d., or 7d. per cubic yard, in accordance with the estimated quantity of timber they would have to cut through. No contract is let of a greater length than 20 chains, and this gives us the opportunity of regulating the prices in accordance with the quantity of timber to cut through. No work has been let at a higher rate than 7d. per cubic yard, and that price has been given only where the quantity of timber to cut through is very great. A short description of the work may not be out of place, as it will show the trying nature of the labour the men are engaged upon, and the reason why they should be allowed to make a higher rate of wage than the men on ordinary formation work. The main drains are excavated to an average depth of 7ft., by a width of 13ft. on top and 6ft. at bottom. This gives about 162½ cubic yards of material to be excavated per chain, and the price per chain for the work is thus easily computed, whether it be at 5d., 6d., or 7d. per cubic yard. The material excavated has to be thrown 4ft. back from the edge of the drain and levelled down, the timber being placed separately. This involves at least two shiftings or throws of the material. The top 3ft. cuts out easily with swamp knives, and is removed with forks or drags, and the men can thus far work fairly dry. The timber is then exposed, and the remaining 4ft. of depth has to be cut out in a face from below, the men standing in the slush and water, generally over knee-deep, and being splashed over with mud at every blow of the axe or grubber. They are, therefore, covered with slush from the time they enter the drain in the morning until they leave it at night, and, I think, earn the wages they make.

The highest number of co-operative men we have employed in the district at any time during the year was 224, in March, 1895; the lowest number, 91, in April, 1894. The average number for the year was 137½.

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WELLINGTON.

This year 270 co-operative contracts have been carried out, by which 510 men have received work, and about 1,100 persons benefited thereby. The average rate of wages earned is 6s. 3½d. per day. The minimum wage earned was 3s., and the maximum 12s., per day, the latter being an isolated case, where especially good men comprised the gang, and who were working during the best of weather without losing any time. The minimum wage was earned by men either unable or unwilling to work hard, or perform the full day's labour. When men whose previous occupations have been that of boilermakers, barbers, clerks, and such-like essay the task of bushfelling and road-making for the first time, they cannot expect to do the work at first in the same way as one experienced in it all his life, and consequently make poor wages for a month or two; but every encouragement is given them to persevere, and in the end they make a fair wage. The work is all valued on the same basis, so that a fair wage can be earned by all the men. There are a few men here and there whose only aim appears to be to do as little work as possible, and, at same time, endeavour to spread dissension amongst the others. Drastic measures need to be taken with such men. Also, when a man is in the habit of squandering his earnings, so that those dependent on him reap no benefit, his place should be filled by one more deserving. It is to the credit of the mass of the men that they appreciate what is being done for them by the Government, working honestly and steadily and making a fair day's wage. The struggling settlers in the neighbourhood are provided with work in preference to outsiders. The overseers of these works have, on occasions, great difficulties to contend with in dealing with the various characters of men sent them to be supplied with work, and, as a result, come in for a great amount of undeserved abuse. Of the few complaints made against the overseers by men, I have found it invariably brought about by the