

overseer honestly doing his duty to the department at the sacrifice of his popularity with the men, who wish to obtain some unfair advantage from him. Besides the duty entailed in supervising the works on the ground, the clerical work takes up a great deal of the overseer's time, in the preparation of contracts, returns, payment-vouchers, and correspondence. Generally, the class and value of work done by co-operative workmen will compare very favourably with that done by ordinary contracts, but a vast amount of clerical work is necessarily required in dealing with the former system.

The men are now paying for the tools supplied them—that is, the tools of smallest value and constantly in use are bought, and rent charged for those of greater value only temporarily required, such as timber-jacks, &c. In this way it is sought to recoup the department for the outlay on tools and tents, without entailing any hardship on the men, and who have the advantage of being able to get them at cost price on the ground.

A. C. TURNER, Road Surveyor.

#### WELLINGTON CENTRAL.

On the Tiraumea North Road two contracts have been let, giving employment to twelve men for two months; their average daily earnings, all weathers, being 7s. 4½d. a man, with a maximum of 7s. 6d. and a minimum of 7s. 3d.

On the Mangarama and Makairo Village Settlement roads six contracts have been let during the year for clearing and construction, giving employment to nine men for eight months; their average earnings per man for all weathers being 6s. 3d. a day, with a maximum of 8s. and a minimum of 4s. 7d.

Twenty-one contracts have been let on the Mangatoro Valley Road, employing twenty men for twelve months; their average earnings for all weathers were 7s. 2d. per man per day, with a maximum of 9s. and a minimum of 5s. 7d.

On the Woodville-Aohanga Road fifteen men have been employed completing eight contracts; their average daily earnings per man, all weathers, were 6s. 4d., with a maximum of 7s. 11d. and a minimum of 5s. 5d.

On the Makuri-Pongaroa Road fifteen contracts have been let, employing twenty men for twelve months; the average daily earnings per man, all weathers, being 7s. 0½d., with a maximum of 9s. 3d. and a minimum of 4s. 6d.

Seven contracts were let on the Makuri-Aohanga Road, employing ten men for eight months, their average earnings being 5s. 11d. per day, all weathers, being a maximum of 7s. 7d. and a minimum of 3s. 9d.

On the Hall Special Settlement Block seven contracts were let, twelve men employed for six months, the average daily earnings per man being 7s., with a maximum of 8s. 9d. and a minimum of 6s.

On the village-settlement roads the settlers living on the adjacent settlements have been employed, and on those roads opening up new blocks, such as the Hall and Puketoi, the settlers going on to the lands have been employed as much as possible, so as to give them every chance of establishing themselves in their new homes.

I am still of opinion that, in a district like this, where the department has during the past nine years placed on the land so many settlers, who of necessity must for some years to come depend on outside partial employment until they can get their holdings into a paying condition, it is the duty of the department to extend and assist the good work it is so doing by giving the work on the roads entirely to the settlers. I also think that in the distribution of work so much preference should not be shown for the married man as compared with the single one, as is now done, and submit that in some cases the single man is more in want of work than the married one. For instance, a single man may be desirous of becoming a married man, and want to get land or earn money to buy it, or he may be maintaining his mother or sisters, whereas many married men are assisted by the earnings of their wives.

The accompanying return shows the number of men taken on during each month of the year, as well as the number at work, and on what roads. Speaking generally, they have conducted themselves, as well as carried out their work, in a very satisfactory manner. A very few cases have been dealt with summarily, for intoxication, and absence without leave or good reason.

In one or two instances I have found it advisable, with new men not quite up to the work, to put them on at proportionate rates of the average earnings until such time as they were more equal in experience and capacity for work to their mates, allowing the parties concerned to fix such rates mutually, subject to the approval of the Inspector. I have by this means, on several occasions, avoided the alternative of having to turn adrift a poor unfortunate who merely required a fair start to put him physically and socially on his feet, or having to drive off the works five or six good men by compelling them to take him on at equal rates. Of course, where there are sufficient poor men to make a party of it is better to do so, but it cannot always be done.

With the exception of large tools—such as timber-jacks and wheelbarrows—they have in most cases provided their own tools and tents.

The prices paid for the work have been much the same as last year: Bushwork—10s. to £1 10s. a chain. Earthwork—Side-cutting, 4d. to 6d. a yard; through-cuttings, 6d. to 8d. a yard, according to quantity in face and quality, with 1d. to 3d. a yard for leads to fillings. Rockwork—Papa, limestone, &c., 6d. to 1s. per yard extra. Drains—From 12s. to 18s. per chain. Culverts—From 1s. 6d. per running foot for 9in. by 9in. to 11s. for 4ft. by 3ft., with 6d. extra per foot where there is special difficulty in obtaining timber.

In conclusion, I consider the co-operative system no longer on its trial, nor as an experiment, but as an established practice, my former good opinion of it being confirmed by another year's