

better to make the men supply all their own tools, except jacks, hand-carts, barrows, and other cumbersome and expensive plant. If they have no money or credit on starting they can give an order on their first pay for any tools besides the above which they may require. The payment of the cost of all repairs of damage done to tools lent should be strictly enforced.

Contracts carried out under the co-operative system are, generally speaking, more faithfully done and better finished than under the ordinary system, especially so where the men can be picked. This is chiefly owing to the work taking so much longer that more visits of inspection by the supervising officer are made. Work under this system can be pushed on just as fast as the Engineer may wish, or as fast as funds become available, and there is no waste of time or money in advertising contracts. Also, alterations in the designs are much more readily made, as the work progresses, than under the contract system.

As the contracts are much smaller, and therefore more numerous, supervision is more difficult. The estimates of these small ones have to be more exact than for the large ones, where errors of a few pounds would not have any bad effect, as the contract price would be the tender price, and not the estimate.

The amount of clerical work is greatly more. There are many more specifications to prepare, more payments to make, with a corresponding increase in the entries and returns of the same, travelling and other deductions from the payments due have to be carefully noted, lists of tools to be kept; all materials have to be ordered; there is a greatly increased correspondence from co-operative contractors, and from men looking for work, &c.

The most suitable work for co-operative contract is heavy earthwork, where a large plant is not required. Large bridges and metalling contracts are more suitable for ordinary contracts, on account of the expensive nature of the plant required, and the amount of depreciation such plant would undergo if supplied to co-operative contractors, and the impossibility of the men supplying it themselves.

Generally speaking, co-operative contractors try to give satisfaction more than under the tender system. Under the present system, the Engineer has more direct and absolute power over the men than under the former one, and has, besides, more authority in the matter of providing further work, whereas, under the former system, future work was simply a matter of amount of tender.

G. T. MURRAY, Road Surveyor.

NELSON.

THE total number of men employed on this work has been eighty-five during the year, and the daily average rate of wages earned has been 7s. 2d. per day of eight hours. The larger portion of the work has been located in places to which access could only be obtained through horse-tracks, which, owing to the amount of packing to be done of stores and material, made the work more costly.

Mokihiniui-Karamea Road.—This work was the forming of a dray-road to Seddonville. The two first contracts were in the hands of the Buller County, but from August, 1894, the work has been carried out by the District Surveyor. Seventy-four men gave in their names as unemployed, and conducted a ballot themselves for thirty-six men to get work, which was divided into five contracts, and let for £224 16s. The average daily wage has been 8s. 5d. for eight hours' work. The highest wage earned was 11s. 10½d., with longer hours, and the minimum 5s. The latter was made on the first contract; the men were not well up in the work, and a spell of bad weather set in by which ten days' work was lost.

Karamea-Wangapeka Road.—This work is the construction of a horse-track, with dray-road grades, over the main range from Nelson to the West Coast, and was begun at the two starting-points. The Little Wanganui end on the West Coast was let in seven contracts of 20 chains each, five men to each contract. No. 4 contract was abandoned, the men not being good workmen, and making only 4s. 11d. per day, and the weather set in wet. On the other contracts the men averaged 7s. 7½d. per day in all weathers. The minimum wage earned was 4s. 5d., and maximum 9s. 6½d. The loss of time from bad weather was fourteen days. Number of men employed, 74. The work at the Nelson end was commenced at the horse-track at Wangapeka Saddle, 3,308ft. altitude, and all stores and material had to be packed twenty-five miles. Six miles and a half in length was laid off and pegged. The work has been let, and up to date three contracts, each 20 chains length, have been completed. On account of the remoteness of the work it was difficult to obtain men, but in several cases the Labour Department gave railway carriage from Nelson to Belgrove (twenty-three miles)—the whole distance from Nelson of the work being seventy miles. Owing to the difficulty of getting good rock-men, this part of the work was undertaken by day labour at 8s. per day, under the overseer, who has had considerable experience. The cost of this amounted to £105 18s. 10d., including cost of material and packing. Up to date eight men were employed, and the average wage was 7s. 9d. per day of eight hours. The loss of time by bad weather was eight days. The minimum wage was 5s. 6d., and the maximum 10s., according to the class of men. More men are now finding their way up, and I expect that the work will be carried on till about the middle of May, when the winter snows will set in.

JOHN S. BROWNING, Chief Surveyor.

WESTLAND.

THE works carried out under this system embrace two classes—namely, wages and co-operative contract; the former can hardly be deemed to come under the meaning of co-operation. Some of the work, however, was of such a nature that it could only be done by wages. The road-repairs to