

to the men whenever a payment is made. The system is most successful, and has given great satisfaction to the workmen. A storeman has charge of the store, and accounts regularly to the overseer in charge for all goods obtained and disposed of. Supplies to the value of £2,009 14s. 6d. were bought and paid for during the past year. The supply, &c., of tools to the men is also a tax upon the various overseers, as the demand for these amongst such a number of co-operatives must necessarily be great. All charges for hire, &c., are promptly deducted from the men's earnings.

A. C. TURNER, Road Surveyor.

### NELSON.

THE only work done on the co-operative system in this district was roadwork at the Karamea Mud Flat and the Wanganui-Wangapeka Road. In the first case there was only one contract, which was let to ten men. The amount of the contract was £108, and the men, by their own showing, made 6s. 9d. a day all weathers. My predecessor considered it inadvisable to employ an overseer, no doubt feeling that one could not be fully occupied in looking after only one contract. In lieu of the overseer, the District Surveyor supervised and passed the contracts, the workmen thus getting the benefit of earning the money that would otherwise have been paid to an overseer. On the Wangapeka-Wanganui Road five contracts were let, and the amount earned was £353 12s. The contractors were settlers, and averaged 7s. 6d. per diem all weathers. The highest rate of wages earned on any one contract was 9s. 6d., the lowest, 6s. 8d. The average rate of wages earned all weathers was 7s. 3½d.

T. HUMPHRIES, Chief Surveyor.

### MARLBOROUGH.

DURING the past financial year only £28 10s. 6d. has been expended under this system, and the locality was the Blind River Estate.

Most of the roadworks, especially in the Sounds, were done by day-labour, as I find that the sum expended on day-labour (and supervision) amounted to £1,140 16s. 8d., while ordinary contracts absorbed the sum of £420 9s. 10d. This being the case, I have no report to make on the past working of the co-operative system in this district; but I have already taken steps to replace day-labour wherever practicable by co-operative contracts at the end of the present financial year, and I trust that the result will meet with your approval.

C. W. ADAMS, Chief Surveyor.

### WESTLAND.

DURING the year twenty-eight co-operative contracts have been completed, five of which have been for bridge-construction alone, two have been under the Land for Settlements Act, and five were taken in hand on behalf of the Mines Department.

Generally, the system has worked fairly well in this district, and there are no very great differences between the highest and lowest daily wage earned. In two cases the minimum is 5s. 8½d. and 5s. 9d. respectively, but in both instances the men were not up to the average; in the former case the men were all old and weak, and in the latter the party would not work harmoniously together, and were unsuitable.

In the bridge contracts, where skilled labour was required, and the men had to find the tools for that skilled labour, the rates at which the work was priced were estimated to give a return of about 10s. per man per day, instead of 8s. as in the case of roadwork. In the cases of the Turnbull River Road and Block 112, Kokatahi, the high maximum was obtained by the extra skill and strength of the contractors.

Mr. Wither reports that during the year twenty-five co-operative contracts have been completed under his charge, particulars of which are given below:—

*Pine Tree Road.*—This is a small contract to make a dray-road between the Hokitika-Ross main road and the Kanieri Tramway to give settlers access. It is 11½ chains long, and it has been formed and metalled, and one culvert has been put in. The daily average wage earned is 6s. 2d., the men being old.

*Waikukupa Track.*—A mines authority to improve this track was issued, and the track was repaired from the beach a distance of about three miles and a half up the valley, and then a new piece of track was made for about a mile and a half to avoid a rough piece of river travelling. The average earnings were 9s. 0½d. per man per day.

*Turnbull River Road.*—A co-operative contract for metalling a portion of the road formed the previous year, and for forming a further portion up to the crossing of the river, was put in hand and completed. The daily average wage earned was 10s. 6½d.

*White's Creek Bridge, Kokatahi.*—This work was done under most favourable circumstances, and the contractors did not lose an hour after they began to build the bridge. The bridge is 50 ft. long, being two spans of 25 ft. each, and piles were driven for the piers. The piles, caps, corbels, braces, and walings are silver-pine, and the remainder of the timber is heart of rimu. The wages earned per man per day was 11s. 1d. In all cases of bridge-work the rates at which the work is priced are such that skilled labourers can earn more than ordinary labourers.

*Frosty Creek Bridge.*—This bridge is composed of one truss of 40 ft. and two end spans of 20 ft. each, and was built to replace one washed away in March, 1896. The timbers for this are similar