

## REPORT OF THE CIVIL

Wangarei, with salary for Customs of	£100.
Hokianga	£50.
Port Waikato	Nil.
Havelock	£150.
Wairau	£150.
Oamaru	£225.
Chatham Islands	£200.

This arrangement was instituted at first no doubt with a view to economy; but we believe it is likely to lead to the reverse, as such officers, unless they have previously served for some time in the Customs at one of the large ports, must be imperfectly acquainted with the duties of the Department, and another officer has generally to be appointed to assist, on whom devolves nearly the whole of the Customs work: two persons are thus employed to discharge duties which could very well be done by one competent and properly trained officer.

Several of the Collectors and Sub-Collectors at the small ports have been at their present stations for a great length of time, and as their duties must have been limited to entering and clearing a few small coasting vessels and collecting a trifling amount of revenue, they must of necessity be unacquainted with the business of the large ports, where the rapid increase of trade requires progressive modifications and improvements in the Customs regulations and practice. Officers kept at small out of the way ports become each year less fitted for positions at the larger ports, and their fair and regular promotion is thus impeded. In order to remedy this state of things, which is alike prejudicial to the interests of the officer and of the Government he serves, we strongly recommend that for the future the officers in charge of the small ports should be selected from among the trained clerks or Landing Waiters of the large ports, and that no officer should be left at such stations for more than two years at a time.

It would be to the advantage of the service if the out-door officers of the Department could be moved from port to port more frequently than at present.

*Overtime Allowance.*

We find that officers of Customs are allowed certain fees for attendance after the usual hours of business. No rule applicable to the whole Colony has been laid down, and from returns received from some of the principal ports we find that the scale of remuneration at each varies considerably. The rates allowed at Wellington are as under:—

Landing Surveyor,	6s. per hour.
Landing Waiters,	} 3s. per hour.
Chief Clerk,	
Warehousekeeper, and Boarding Officer,	
Lockers and Tidewaiters,	2s. per hour.

This scale was approved of by the Commissioner of Customs some years since.

The highest rate is at Lyttelton, as follows:—

Landing Surveyor,	7s. 6d. per hour.
Chief Clerk,	6s. per hour.
Landing Waiters,	4s. 9d., 4s., and 3s. 6d. per hour.
Clerk,	4s. 6d. per hour.
Warehousekeeper,	3s. 6d. per hour.
Tide Surveyor,	4s. per hour.
Lockers and Tidewaiters,	2s. 6d. per hour.

The lowest rate is at Napier, where the Landing Waiters and Clerks are allowed 3s. per hour, and the Lockers 1s. 6d. per hour.

At some ports a fee of 10s. 6d. is allowed for clearing vessels after office hours.

In no case is any allowance made to the Collector. These fees are not paid by the Government, but by the merchants and importers, or by Agents requiring the attendance of officers for the purpose of having goods landed or shipped, or vessels cleared after the usual hours. The system adopted in these cases is for the merchant or agent requiring the extra attendance of officers to make an application in writing, accompanied by a deposit to cover the expense, stating the grounds upon which the application is made; if approved of by the Collector, the requisite officers are appointed, and they are paid according to the specified rates. These deposits and full particulars of the payments made out of them are entered in the Collectors' Deposit Cash Book, copy of which is now required to be sent to the Treasury once a month.

Averse as we are to the system of allowing fees of any kind to Government servants, we yet think that in the case of Customs officers an exception should be made, as it would be a hardship not to allow them to receive remuneration for special and extra services which are performed at the request and for the convenience of merchants and others having business to transact after the usual office hours. This would be particularly the case at those ports where a large number of steamers are constantly arriving and departing, and where it is necessary to afford to them every facility for discharging and shifting cargo. It frequently happens, for instance, when steamers are behind time, that the Customs officers have to attend on the discharging or transhipping of cargo through the greater part of the night.

The practice of allowing remuneration to Customs officers in this manner is authorized by the Board of Customs in England, according to the following rates:—

Landing Surveyors,	5s. 6d. per hour.
Landing Waiters,	3s. per hour.
Clerks, according to rate of salary,	1s. to 3s. per hour.
Tide Surveyors,	2s. per hour.
Lockers,	1s. per hour.