

FIFTH ANNUAL REPORT
ON THE
TELEGRAPH DEPARTMENT, NEW ZEALAND.

General Post Office,
Wellington, 1st July, 1869.

SIR,— I have the honor to submit for the information of your Excellency the Fifth Annual Report on the Telegraph Service of the Colony, for the year ended 30th June, 1869.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your Excellency's most obedient Servant,
JULIUS VOGEL,
Telegraph Commissioner.

His Excellency Sir George Ferguson Bowen, K.M.G.,
Governor of New Zealand.

New Zealand Telegraph,
Wellington, 1st July 1869.

SIR,— I have the honor to submit the following Report on the progress and condition of the Telegraph Department during the financial year ending 30th June, 1869.

EXTENSION OF LINES.

During the past year the lines that were in course of construction at the close of the financial year 1867-8 have been completed. They are as follows:—

Greymouth and Westport.

This line was erected at the instance of the Provincial Government of Nelson, which has guaranteed six per cent. on the total cost of construction, as well as any deficiency which may hereafter exist between the receipts of the line and the actual cost of working and maintaining it. On its completion, stations were opened at Brighton, Charleston, and Westport. The line consists of a single wire, and is a continuation of the Hokitika and Greymouth line. Its total length is sixty-seven miles, and it has been constructed at a cost of £7,002 17s., being at the rate of £104 10s. 8d. per mile. Full particulars of this expenditure will be found in Appendix F.

It has been the most expensive line yet constructed, owing to the large amount of bush-clearing that had to be effected; the high rate of wages (12s. per diem); the almost incessant wet weather during the progress of the works; and the numerous other difficulties which had to be overcome during the course of construction. These difficulties were not unforeseen, and the estimated cost of the line by the Provincial Government of Nelson (£7,000) has only been exceeded by the sum of £2 17s. Since the line has been opened, it has added largely to the revenue of the Department. Appendix H. will show the extent to which it has been made use of by the public at Brighton, Charleston, and Westport, and also the position in which this Department stands to the Provincial Government of Nelson in pursuance of the guarantee above mentioned. As a general description of the line, and the difficulties which its construction presented, may not be uninteresting, I add an extract from the report of Mr. Aitken, to whom the superintendence of this difficult work was intrusted:—

“The cost of erection is very large, but the sinking throughout was much worse than I ever anticipated. A large proportion of the holes were in rock or cement, and the weather during the progress of the work was, for three-fourths of the time, of the worst description for such work. The whole of the poles are down at least five feet, and the large sized and angled ones are down from six to ten feet. On portions of the line, from fifteen to twenty-four miles from Greymouth, the poles are set up in very bad swamps, in which holes could not be sunk, and which could not be avoided except by erecting the line much too close to the sea to be safe. The surface of the swamps was not so bad, but when broken, poles dropped down by their own weight from five to seven feet, at that depth reaching a solid bottom. All the poles in those swamps have been rendered thoroughly stable by driving pointed stakes from seven to ten feet in length into the solid bottom closely around the pole, and making good the surface with shingle carried for that purpose.

“The poles are full-sized, and of good sound timber—white pine and birch, and other woods, the durability of which was doubtful, having been carefully excluded.

“The clearing, done by contract, cost £20 14s. 11d. per mile, and was from ten to thirty-three feet wide, and I found it necessary to make a further expenditure of £8 7s. 7d. per mile to give the line that degree of safety and stability which I considered indispensable. All trees of a doubtful character have been taken down, and the clearing through the heavy timber, as the line now stands, varies from three-fourths of a chain to two and a half chains in width, according to the nature of the timber through which the line passes. The contract prices for clearing and supplying the poles would have paid the contractors had the weather been good, but the weather they have had to do the work