

CORRESPONDENCE RELATIVE TO THE

No. 56.

Copy of a Letter from Mr. BULLER, R.M., to Mr. COOPER.

SIR,—

Wanganui,

1st March, 1870.

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt (to-day) of your letter of 25th ultimo, relating to the Mangawhero-Taupo road-work.

I lost no time in communicating with Mr. Field on the subject of your letter, and I forward herewith a letter from that gentleman, explaining the difficulty of arranging for piecework till the line has been cut. The future widening of the track might advantageously be done by contract.

Mr. Field has, however, assured me that he will use his best exertions to give effect at once to the suggestion conveyed in your letter, if practicable.

I have, &c.,

W. BULLER,

Resident Magistrate.

The Under Secretary for Defence, Wellington.

Enclosure in No. 56.

Copy of a Letter from Mr. FIELD to Mr. BULLER, R.M.

SIR,

Wanganui,

1st March, 1870.

In reference to the wish which you have informed me has been expressed by the Colonial Secretary that the work on the Mangawhero-Taupo road should as far as possible be done by contract or piecework, although I will endeavour to carry out that wish in any case where I can see a possibility of doing so, yet I do not at present consider it feasible.

In the first place, the terms on which the natives have been engaged seem to stand in the way of any such arrangement; and in the next, Maoris are so different from Europeans, both in their mode of working and in their ignorance of the fair price of road-work, that it would be very difficult to make a bargain with them in respect of earthwork, or to get them to complete a job quite as it should be done, or within reasonable time. From my own experience of natives I think that they would be very apt to take their time over piecework, and that thus the time occupied in the construction of the road might be considerably lengthened. So long as they are paid by the day, the overseers can always insist on their doing a reasonable amount of work; but if they took a contract for a certain length, to be paid for on completion, they would regard it as entirely their own affair whether they worked or not, and would be always wanting advances of money on account of the work in some form or other.

Another difficulty in the way of getting the work done by contract arises from the nature of the work. This is not an ordinary case where a road line is pegged off, sections taken, and specifications prepared in the ordinary manner; but the natives follow along the line as my son and I select it, and cut it through, widening and levelling it so as to be practicable for pack-horses. The dense nature of the vegetation would at present make the ordinary routine almost impossible, and under any circumstances such routine would delay and lengthen the work to an extent which would more than swallow up any small saving that might be effected by contract work on a job of such trifling magnitude. The case will be different when the road comes to be widened and properly graded so as to be practicable for drays, as the cost of the work would be sufficient to justify the expense of regular sections and specifications being prepared, and the experience the Maoris are gaining as to the quantity of work they can perform in a given time will make it far easier to let the work to them by contract.

I have, &c.,

H. C. FIELD,

Engineer in Charge of the Mangawhero-Taupo Road Party.

W. Buller, Esq., R.M., Wanganui.

No. 57.

Copy of a Letter from Mr. BULLER, R.M., to Mr. COOPER.

SIR,—

Wanganui,

6th April, 1870.

I have the honor to forward the accompanying report from Mr. Field.

I have, &c.,

W. BULLER,

Resident Magistrate.

The Under Secretary for Defence, Wellington.

Enclosure in No. 57.

Copy of a Letter from Mr. FIELD to W. BULLER, R.M.

SIR,—

Mangawhero, opposite Te Mai,

5th March, 1870.

Mr. Booth's return to town affords me an opportunity of sending a few lines, to inform you of our week's proceedings.

Our progress this week has been comparatively small. The rain in the beginning of the week, which was far heavier here than in town, stopped the work during the half of Monday and the whole of Tuesday, and caused several soakages to show along the road at places which were dry when we formed it. I saw them on my return on Wednesday, and sent Mr. Pilmer back with a party next day to put in drains at them before they should become soft with the traffic, of which there is even now far more than could have been supposed, owing to Natives coming up to see those employed, and to have a look at the road. Lockett only arrived yesterday, so I had to look after most of the Natives during the day, and yesterday