

at once that such an arrangement would increase the cost, as overseers would be required to look after the Natives, and the latter, having no experience in road work, would not do it so fast or so well as Europeans; and he replied that he and the Government were quite aware of this, but that it was part of their policy to employ Natives in this way. I believe, however, that he, like myself, had at that time no idea of the difference it would make in the expense and time occupied.

The causes and extent of the prolongation of the work may be stated as follows:—Owing to the bulk of the Wanganui Natives being away with Kemp and Topia at the time the work was in progress, those who remained (and who consisted chiefly of the aged, very young, sickly, and indolent,) were required to do the necessary work about the kaingas. This made it very difficult to get Maoris for the work, and, when got, they were constantly leaving to attend to their own affairs, and many of them were not the proper stamp of men for such work. The Natives employed were not engaged by me, but were supplied, to Mr. Buller's order, by the chief of the hapu owning the land traversed by the road, and to whom the hiring was restricted by the Government.

Nine labourers (including three boys) formed the first working party. At the end of ten days they all left to attend a funeral, and stayed away till all the grain crops of the hapu were harvested. Before they returned, the increase of their number to twenty had been authorized by the Government. It was of course intended that the twenty labourers should be all able-bodied men, but the working party actually supplied included seven boys of from fourteen to seventeen years of age, a cripple, two men far gone in consumption (one boy ditto), and two small, slightly built men, quite unfit for road work.

Under any circumstances, the hapu could not, I believe, supply anything like the required number of able men, and at that time, even after sending up such inefficients as the above, they had to make up the twenty by pressing into the service men from other tribes (who were actually Ngatimaniapoto, from beyond Rangitikei), and latterly a European connected with the hapu.

It is only fair to the chief who supplied the labourers to say that I believe he did his best to procure them. I know he and his deputy were sometimes two or three days scouring the country to get as many men; and the chief who was to supply the next gang found it so utterly impossible to do so from his own people, that he twice came up to try and arrange for those at work to continue so on his account. Men in fact were not to be got.

I refused to receive some of the smaller boys, except at a lower rate of pay, but had to pass the others on account of their having served as men in the Native Contingent.

Except these small boys, the whole,—whether industrious or lazy, able men or sickly boys,—were engaged at 5s. per day.

As I did not engage them, my power to discharge them was disputed, and it was by no means clear that I possessed any except through the chief, who was rarely on the spot. This, and the uncertainty when I could get others in their place, or whether I could get others at all, prevented my ridding myself of hands whose work was not equivalent to their pay, and put me completely in their power. In fact, from the uniform scale of pay, and the small fear of discharge, there was no inducement to exertion to counterbalance the natural indolence of Natives, and the small amount of work done by the laziest became a sort of standard for the whole. The European whom I have mentioned as being employed, afterwards told me and the overseer that, on his arrival, the Natives called his attention to the small amount of work they were doing, and cautioned him not to do more, lest more should be required of them. We could not make up for the defective quality of the labourers by increased numbers, as, on our having for a few days twenty-one hands at work, I was ordered to get rid of one, as being in excess of the number authorized by the Government. The small boys had been engaged at 3s. per day, with the promise of 3s. 6d. or 4s. if they worked so as to deserve it. This worked so well, that in an interim report sent in at the end of February or early in March, I suggested that I should be authorized to offer increased pay to the extent of 1s. per day to the rest of the hands, but was afterwards told by Mr. Buller that the Government would not sanction it. I could therefore only make the best of a bad bargain, and trust to the overseers to get as much work out of the Natives as they could.

The married men brought their wives and families with them: this, and frequent Native visitors, caused an undue amount of food to be required; and as, except pigs and a few eels, the whole of it had to be brought from Wanganui, much time was lost in procuring it. From the beginning of March they were allowed time on pay, at the rate of three men one day per week, for the purpose of fetching food; and, by the terms on which they were engaged, they claimed the right to kill any pigs they could while at work, an arrangement which caused constant loss of half-hours and hours. Much time, again, was unnecessarily lost in regular pig-hunting. This arose partly from the extravagant way in which Natives consume food when it is plentiful, partly from the fact that they scorned any but the very best pigs and killed at least three or four for every one they ate, and partly from their practice of letting their dogs range about on their own account, killing or driving away all the pigs within reasonable distance of their camp. It repeatedly took a couple of men two days to get as much meat as would serve the party for three.

With such drawbacks as the above, you can judge whether I am going beyond the truth when I say that the working party was not doing, in a given time, more than two-thirds of what an equal number of able Natives working steadily would have done. Out of the twenty Natives employed, however, we had only an average attendance of nine, which at once again more than doubled the time occupied in the work. In short, the nominal twenty, and real nine, only did, in the period from 17th January to 6th May, as much work as six good Natives, or four such Europeans as are usually employed on roads, would have easily accomplished. As nine Maoris were being paid for doing the work of six, it is evident that 50 per cent. was added to the fair cost of the work; and as the nine represented a nominal twenty, it follows that the time occupied (and with it the incidental expenses, officers' salaries, &c.) was increased in the ratio of six to twenty.

Some extra time was consumed through the Natives (who wanted not a mere pack-road, but one along which they could gallop their horses) persisting in grubbing every little stump, instead of merely cutting it off close to the ground. Of course the track is the better for it, but it added to the cost, as