

for the above offices, and through the interruption of my private practice; and the hardships that I have had to encounter since the beginning of May, added to the interest which, as the explorer of the line, I naturally took in it, and the consciousness that, from the employment of Natives, &c., my estimate was being exceeded, were quite a sufficient guarantee that I would not allow more time to be expended on the road than I could well avoid. Except in regard of the trifle of extra work above mentioned as done by my order, I am not fairly responsible for a penny of the increased expense, or an hour of the prolonged time. Both have arisen, as I have shown, mainly from the work being mixed up with the carrying out a certain line of policy under circumstances of peculiar difficulty, and partly from adherence to certain Government routine hardly applicable to such work, and thoughtlessness or want of experience in road arrangements on the part of higher officers than myself.

I can, if necessary, bring evidence in support of the facts above alluded to, and also as to whether I have ever shrunk from any toil or personal inconvenience, by encountering which I could expedite or improve the work; but I hope that the above will satisfy you as to the causes of delay and increased expense, and that, when you have read and considered it, you will do me the justice to acquit me of all blame in the matter.

The Hon. the Defence Minister, Wellington.

I have, &c.,
H. C. FIELD.

No. 10.

Mr. FIELD to the Hon. D. McLEAN.

SIR,—

Wanganui, 6th August, 1870.

Having looked over the correspondence respecting roads, laid before the General Assembly, I have to call your attention to the following remarks thereon, as bearing on the questions at issue between myself and one or more members of the Government, and on that of my having done my duty in regard of the economical construction of the Mangawhero-Taupo pack-road.

As regards my estimates. The origin of the misunderstanding seems to be Mr. Fox's memo. of January 31st, in which he speaks of £300 as the probable cost of the work, and six weeks as the time it is likely to occupy. This memo. is dated three or four weeks after my conversation with him respecting my report of 31st December, which may account for the error it contains. If you will refer to my report of November 13th, you will see that I there named £250 as the probable cost of the road, to which, in my report of 31st December, I added £100, making £350 instead of £300. As regards the time, neither report specifies any, but the following will, I think, satisfy any reasonable person as to the time I was likely to name in our conversation respecting it. In my report to the Kaimanawa and Wanganui Association, dated October 15th, I said it would take "a properly organized party of a dozen good hands two to three weeks to cut a pack-track to the point Mr. Monro and I had reached about twenty to twenty-five miles from Kennedy's, of which distance about seven miles is grassy land, and most of the rest fern. Mr. Monro and I had actually succeeded in taking a pack-horse nearly the whole of this distance in eight days, by merely opening pig tracks and old Native tracks sufficiently to enable the animal to push its way through them, without doing a particle of earthwork. In an interview with Mr. Fox, at Jones' Library, in the beginning of November, I mentioned this, and said that "if the rest of the country was such as it looked to be, and as Mr. Gotty had described it, a similar track could be cut through the rest of the way to the plains in three weeks."

In a telegram from Mr. Fox to Mr. W. Taylor, a few days later, Mr. Fox alluded to this, and asked me to report on the line, which I did on November 13th. Having thus given six weeks as the probable time before I wrote the report in which I named £250 as the price, you can see the absurdity of supposing I should name the same time in January, when I had seen reason to add another £100 to the estimate. Mr. Buller's letter of January 12th bears strongly on this point. Its date shows it to have been written directly after our conversation, in which, from the utter uncertainty as to the time the work would be prolonged through the employment of Natives when Native labour was so scarce, it had been necessary for us to fix rates of pay for myself and the overseers at per diem; and if Mr. Buller had expected the work to last only six weeks, a time often occupied in a moderately large private or Native survey, he would not have approved the terms I had proposed, on the ground that I should "sacrifice my private business as a surveyor during my absence." It is a pity my report of November 13th is not printed with that of 31st December, in which it is referred to, and which is not properly intelligible without it. In fact, in its absence there is nothing to show what was the exact nature of the work proposed by me and authorized by Mr. Fox, nor what my estimate really was.

2. In the published correspondence there are a number of estimates for roads from different engineers and others, viz., Messrs. Smith, Bold, Ross, Ormond, St. John, Morrison, Heale, Clarke, and Stewart. In no one instance are the salaries of officers for laying off and superintending the work included in those estimates, and in no one instance is there any attempt made to construe the estimate as covering such things. Why, then, should so monstrous a construction be put upon mine?

3. Mr. Buller's telegram of 14th February, and my letters of 5th, 14th, and 26th February, 1st, 5th, and 12th March, and 2nd, 16th, and 19th April, show the difficulty there was in getting and keeping the hands; and Aperahama's of 27th March, and mine of 12th March, show the difficulty of getting up food. My letters of 25th March, and of 5th February and 19th April, refer respectively to the unnecessary work we were involved in through the delay in remitting the money, and the hindrance to my pushing on with the leading line, through the small number and consequently slow progress of the Natives, and the necessity of my keeping near enough to superintend them. Mr. Booth's telegram of 5th April refers to the same things, but he jumbles the two together, and makes nonsense of what I said by giving the one cause as a reason for the other effect. It also confirms the pains that had been taken by drainage, and fascining or corduroying soft places, to make a good job of the road. He also mistook, by nearly two miles, the commencement of our continuous work.