

1873.

NEW ZEALAND.

REPORT OF ASSISTANT ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by command of His Excellency.

Mr. BLACKETT to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

SIR,—

Public Works Office, Wellington, 30th June, 1873.

I have the honor to forward my annual report on road work executed under the Immigration and Public Works Acts in New Zealand, up to 31st May. The works in the different districts have steadily progressed during the year, with, however, varying degrees of speed, according to the natural or other difficulties encountered.

To the north of Auckland the work is necessarily divided into many small sections, and is scattered over a large area, and the unfinished nature of the works prevent any very great or real benefit being generally felt, until the several links in the lines of communication are completed.

In the Waikato, the same remarks will apply to a great extent, as the works were only commenced in January, and none of the projected improvements are yet completed.

In the Bay of Plenty, real progress has been made, as is evidenced by the establishment of coach traffic through to Taupo, and beyond to Napier, between which and the Thames a considerable traffic in cattle and sheep is also carried on along the newly made road. The other short roads in this district are also of real value, and are gradually opening up the interior of the country, and rendering travelling safe and expeditious.

The same may be said of the Hawke's Bay and Poverty Bay districts, over which a network of roads is gradually extending. Considerable progress, it will be seen, has been made in the western district of Wellington Province, in the road made through the Seventy-Mile Bush, both north and south of the Gorge; and on the West Coast the works have steadily advanced, although the progress has not been rapid, on account of the various difficulties and delays incident to carrying on works in a purely Native district, subject at all times to the open or indirect opposition of the Natives.

In Westland, the scheme of roads originally laid out has nearly been accomplished, and the country is reaping the benefit of increased facilities for communication from end to end, as well as in the Lower Grey Valley; and in the Province of Nelson the works projected have been successfully carried out, many of them under very exceptional difficulties, arising from long continuance of wet weather—a complete line of communication now being completed up the Grey Valley, and down the Inangahua to the Buller.

The progress for the year will, I trust, be considered satisfactory, and the details of the various works, as supplied by the District Engineers in charge, are described below.

ROADS NORTH OF AUCKLAND.

(T. HEALE in charge.)

The general scheme of these was described in last year's report, the intention of the Legislature being to provide an uninterrupted line of communication from south to north, partly by road and partly by water, with cross roads at intervals joining the East and West Coasts, and to spend on this a sum of £60,000, to be spread over four years. Surveys were then in hand, and some portions of the works were also in progress; but to expedite the work as much as possible, and to enlarge the scheme, it was arranged with His Honor the Superintendent of Auckland, who made the proposal, that £10,000 should be spent under the supervision of the Provincial Engineer, in work extending from the North Shore to the Wairoa River, including the following, namely:—

1. Improvement of the main road, Auckland to Kaukapakapa *via* Riverhead, including four bridges.