

that a number would come together about the arrival of a steamer, when every one was busy, and it was owing to this that the prices were not always filled in; but the settlers could have obtained the information afterwards, had they expressed a wish to do so. There was a little dissatisfaction at first about the price of stores, but I do not consider it was justified, as the prices were moderate. Have earned £287 Os. 6d. for boots supplied to the settlers through the store, but out of that I had to pay for freight and leather £177, and £40 for wages. Arrived here in April, 1875, and was allowed provisions at the Government expense to March, 1876. Had to cook for all the Government officers staying with me during the first year. Have since charged for persons staying in the house. Was paid at the rate of £2 per week for keeping the store. My receipts from that source amount to £204. Have taken up land in the usual way as a special settler. Before the store was sold I took stock of the contents, and afterwards, with Mr. O'Connor, fixed the prices after comparing the cost of the articles with the invoices. The rule observed in determining the value was to ascertain the cost price of each description of goods, and to that add the cost of freight and other charges. The only articles sold under cost price were some shovels that were rusty and unsaleable. I believe the aggregate value of the stock was charged in full to Mr. Dolphin. Some of the stores since Mr. Dolphin has had the store have been high. Flour, for which he gave 18s., has been sold at 26s. Mr. Dolphin has bought a fresh stock of flour since taking the store. The first price that ruled for flour was 22s., then it rose to 24s., and latterly to 26s.; that was owing to the supply having run short. Have bought flour lately for cash at 24s. per 100 lbs.; oatmeal, 24s. per 100 lbs.; tea per box 12 lbs., 34s.; Company's sugar per bag, 6d. per lb. Am aware that Mr. Dolphin has had to pack some of his stores from Westport lately. The price of rice per bag has been high. Dolphin charged 21s. for what the Government formerly sold at 16s. per bag. Have heard complaints that partiality has been displayed in allotting work to the settlers, but cannot say anything of my own knowledge. Consider that the want of regular steam communication has been a great drawback to the place. Settlers who were in a position could have obtained cheaper supplies, and also disposed of their produce. Concerning the price of cattle sold here, a good cow in Westport would be worth £18, but I do not consider that many of the animals sold here could be rated as first-class. Some of the prices obtained have been very high. The average value, in my opinion, of the cows sold here would be about £12. Two cows belonging to the Government were sold to Dolphin for £28. The animals were in calf, and Dolphin resold them to Black and Jordan for £32. The two bulls belonging to Government were killed for meat for the settlers. Jones charged for killing them. Was informed that Government proposed disposing of the store, and afterwards received a notice that my services would not be needed. Heard Mr. O'Connor frequently state that the store would be sold, and with that view the stock was kept purposely low, the intention being to only grant bare rations, and that if settlers wanted other requisites they would have to go elsewhere and seek employment. A large number of the settlers attended the meeting at which it was announced that the store would be sold. Have heard from Mr. O'Connor that he had charge of the settlement to the end of September, and that there would be no employment excepting for heads of families; the single men were not to get work. This rule, however, has not been adhered to. Many persons were refused credit at the store, and very necessarily so, as they were never contented.

*J. Symonds*, special settler (wife and three children): Stores were reasonable while under control of the Government, but have been dear since. Heard of intention to sell the store. Have had a fair share of work. Consider that it has been a great drawback steamer not calling regularly. Have had no produce for sale.

*R. Avery*, special settler (wife and six children): Have nothing particular to say. Am very badly situated at present for want of work. The chief complaint I have to make is that I could not get work to pay off my store account. Applied to Mr. O'Connor, but he could not give me any Government work. He employed me privately to burn some bush for him for £18; the price was ultimately raised to £25, owing to it turning out such a difficult job. Have nothing further to state.

*H. Dolphin*: I own the store that formerly belonged to Government. Bought the building for £50 and the stores for £105. The sale took place on the 27th March last. Mr. O'Connor bound me down to sell at Westport prices, but some things I have sold much lower. It was also understood that I was not to sell liquor of any kind. The recent high prices were caused by scarcity of supplies. Flour was rising in the market, and I had, owing to the settlers not receiving payment for work done for Government, to wait a long time for my money. Requested Mr. O'Connor to allow me to raise the price of oatmeal, molasses, and various other stores in consequence of the scarcity, but he only consented to my raising the price of flour. Sold flour at first at 22s. per 100 lbs., and afterwards raised it on two occasions 2s. each time. No guarantee was given me that I should be paid for supplying the settlers. Undertook to do so at my own risk. There was very little prospect when I took the store of making it pay, as there was a possibility that the Government would still continue to supply the settlers with flour, tea, and sugar. Mr. O'Connor intimated as much to me at the time. Another disadvantage I had to contend with was that prior to my taking the store the settlers were supplied with three months' stores by the Government. Mr. O'Connor has no interest with me in the business, nor in anything else. His brother, Mr. A. O'Connor, is in my employ at £2 per week to manage the store. Commenced with about 160 head of cattle—100 large cattle and 60 small—from one to two years old, but of these I have lost 10 large animals and 10 calves. The value of the large cattle landed here would be £12 each. I purchased a horse from the Government for £15; it died about a month afterwards. A pair of bullocks, dray, and harness were sold to me for £35. These things were sold to me cheap on the understanding that I was to make no claim on the Government for the time I had been employed packing stores for the men working on the track. The dray is too heavy to be useful, and I have been compelled in consequence to incur a further expense to procure a light body for it from Nelson. I purchased the anvil, vice, and grindstone from the Government, but not the forge. Agreed when I bought these things that the settlers should have the use of them, and I have never denied them. The handle of the grindstone is kept in the store, but any one can get it on application. I am neither related nor connected with Mr. O'Connor; was under the impression at first that such was the case, but have since ascertained that we are not related. When I first arrived at the settlement I was