

1914.

NEW ZEALAND.

WANGANUI RIVER TRUST

(ANNUAL REPORT OF THE).

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

MEMBERS: Messrs. T. D. Cummins, Government nominee (Chairman); W. A. Veitch, M.P. for Wanganui; G. V. Pearce, M.P. for Patea; W. J. Polson, Chairman, Wanganui County Council; William Ritchie, Chairman, Waitotara County Council; W. G. Bassett, J. H. Burnet, and T. B. Williams, elected by the ratepayers of Wanganui (Note.—Mr. T. B. Williams is also Mayor of Wanganui); and Mr. Alfred Burnett, Chairman of Wanganui Chamber of Commerce.

REPORT.

SIR,—

Wanganui, 1st April, 1914.

During the past working season the energies of the Trust have been mainly in the direction of keeping the river-channel open for the ever-growing traffic on the river, and securing a safe passage for steamers and launches at Tarepokiore (No. 128: see Mr. J. T. Stewart's map of the Wanganui River). Tarepokiore has always been a menace to navigation, more especially in flood-time, when a whirlpool was in evidence. The Trust has during the past working season expended most of the £1,000 subsidy here, and it is satisfactory to note that this previously dangerous place is now safe for traffic under all conditions of river. Not only is this so, but larger steamers can now negotiate this rapid, and are enabled to carry with safety the products of the settlements on the upper reaches to Wanganui.

It is estimated that during the season 1914-15 over two thousand bales of wool will pass through Tarepokiore. This estimate is a reasonable one, and the quantity before estimated is but a tithe of what must eventually come down-stream as the country in the upper reaches comes into profit. It is safe to say that in ten years some ten thousand bales of wool must travel down the Wanganui River as the country is opened up.

In my interim report, No. 97, attached hereto, I have referred to the conditions of the river as they are to-day, also to what is necessary in the future.

I may here remark that the Trust has been enabled, by the vote of £1,000 passed during last session of Parliament, to arrange for the construction and equipment of a suitable launch that will be useful for towing and other purposes. Tenders were invited for the construction of the launch, and the contract was secured by Messrs. Seager Bros., of Auckland. The launch will be equipped with a Thornycroft oil-motor capable of developing 53 b.h.p. on kerosene, or 65 b.h.p. on petrol, and is 50 ft. long by 7 ft. beam. The acquisition of a powerfully driven oil-launch will very materially assist in providing more permanent structures in stone walls by the easy towage of punts to and from stone-deposits.

It is pleasing to note the valuable additions to the river-service fleet of more powerful and up-to-date oil-driven launches. The use of wire ropes and winches for hauling over rapids is almost relegated to the past.

The tourist traffic is assuming larger proportions, and I am informed the present season in this direction will prove a record one.

Tolls and dues levied for goods carried on the river-steamers are in an increasing ratio, and, despite the fact that when the Main Trunk Railway came into competition some years ago dues were reduced by 1s. per ton, the revenue from this source is increasing. This indisputably shows that the river is being largely used for development of settlement. Indeed, it has been the important factor for opening up a large tract of country that for years could not be roaded or brought to profit.

For details of conditions of the river I would refer you to interim report No. 97, attached.

I have, &c.,

The Under-Secretary for Lands, Wellington.

T. D. CUMMINS, Chairman.