

Appendix  
(Q.)

13th October.

feited in case of failure, and, where it appeared necessary, by promptly taking the work out of the hands of the contractors.

It has also been the endeavour of the Board to protect the labourers from impositions to which they are subjected, from the establishment on the works by the contractors of a mode of payment styled "Truck payment"—a system which, however much to be reprobated when abused, is extremely difficult to be legislated on, and is, in many cases, rather to be controlled than wholly put down.

The Board regret that the execution of the works committed to their charge has not been exempt from riot and insubordination. In some places these riots assumed a formidable character, and, in one instance, the quelling of them was attended by loss of life.

Various causes have been assigned as the origin of these disturbances, such as the establishment of "truck pay" to which allusion has been already made—the exaction of too long a duration of daily working hours—a rate of pay considered too low by the operatives, &c. &c.

The result of careful and impartial inquiries and examinations, and a full consideration of all the circumstances, induce the Board to the conclusion, that the riots have arisen simply from the fact of a great number of laborers having congregated at particular points, amongst many of whom, previous to their being so assembled, bitter national or sectional feuds had existed. The number of men, also, who flocked over from the United States, on being thrown out of employment by the general suspension of the public works there, added considerably to the evil—more especially, as from their previous habits and irregular life (wandering from one work to another) they were little accustomed to legal restraint, and had but slight respect for the laws: and, finally, the circumstances of crowds having remained at the works, over and above the number which could be, with any advantage, employed thereon, tended much to a disposition for riot.

The "truck system" was established at first with the laudable view of having the men supplied with necessaries on reasonable terms, and with the object of putting down the host of petty hucksters who swarm around public works, charging most exorbitantly for what they have to dispose of; but there is no doubt, that in course of time, its continuance became, in two or three instances, a nuisance, which the Board took measures to abate.

The alteration in the working hours, at the commencement of summer, is usual on all extensive works. By it the men are required to attend at an earlier hour in the morning and to a later hour in the evening; but as this arrangement, in every instance (within my experience), is accompanied by a longer period of rest being allowed during the midday sun, the men are, I conceive, benefitted by it.

With reference to the rate of wages, the opinion of the Board is, that it is already too high, in proportion to the value of agricultural produce—that the price of labor should be allowed to be regulated solely by the ordinary principles of supply and demand, and that any official interference with it would be productive of much mischief. The Board are convinced, from experience, that at whatever fixed rate of labor the works might have been commenced, similar "turns out" would, and always have, under like circumstances, taken place from time to time, and every month's experience proves that whenever the contractors are supposed by the men to be strictly tied to, or limited in time, the laborers immediately take advantage thereof, and "strike" for an increase of wages.

The Board conceive that the only interference on the part of the authorities of the country, which is necessary and called for in such cases, is merely to protect, effectually, those disposed to work at the wages offered, from the others, who, by violence and intimidation, endeavour to prevent them.

Appendix  
(Q.)

13th October.

While upon this subject, I think it may be well to state, that in the view of the Board, it is far from being desirable, by the inducement of high wages, to draw the laborers from their more legitimate, and (to the Province) much more beneficial employment in agricultural pursuits and settlement, to that temporarily offered by public works.

It is notorious that the great majority of the men who have been for some time engaged on public works, become a class of migrating laborers, neither valuable as settlers, nor disposed to fix themselves as such.

I have much gratification in stating, that the appropriations made by 4 & 5 Vic. chap. 38, for all these public works, are likely to turn out ample and sufficient, not only for the creditable construction of the various works, as originally designed, but also to cover the cost of such improvements in their details as have suggested themselves, from time to time, during their progress.

The advanced state of many of the most important of the works enables me to report this fact with confidence, and leads me to expect that, upon the completion of the entire, a considerable balance of the proceeds of the loan will remain unexpended, although the amount of that loan is far short of the aggregate amount of the appropriations.

There are expenses, however, consequent upon these works, which should, when ascertained hereafter, be charged upon the balance just spoken of, such as law expenses, damages, compensation, &c., the amount of which, however, it is not possible yet to state with certainty.

In the great and sudden change which has been effected in the nature of the control and management of the expenditure upon public works, by the establishment of this Department, "the former system of local Commissioners for each work being thereby superseded," it was not to have been expected but that some difficulties would have been felt, especially in the completion of such works as had previously been carried on by Commissioners—such difficulties have been felt, and many points have been developed in carrying out the Board of Works Act, in which change for the better can, in the estimation of the Board, be easily made, and would tend much to render the Act more efficient.

Allusion is particularly had to the necessity of as soon as possible deciding upon what principle the several roads and other works shall be duly and properly maintained.

Some of the works are already finished, and many others on the eve of completion. In many instances, also, works, such as bridges, &c., continue under the management of the original local Commissioners, although it has been considered advisable to have the repairs effected through this Department. It appears to the Board, also, that the existence of all Special Commissions for the maintenance or collection of tolls on any works whatever, constructed at public cost, shall cease and determine, and their management &c., be placed under the control of this Board. That the periodical paying of such tolls, in all cases, directly to the Receiver General of the Province, is advisable; and that such amounts thereof as may be required for the maintenance of the respective works, shall be had only by warrant issued to that effect, upon the estimates therefor having been submitted.