

desirable to appoint an officer to each district, who, under certain general instructions, should see to the commissariat matters, pay all certified accounts after due examination,—pay the salaries of the staff monthly, and supervise the expenditure generally. Much good has resulted from the appointment of these officers. Order and system have been introduced, and all accounts, when in order, have been paid monthly. The salary paid to these paymasters and commissariat officers, is \$1,200 each.

As the work is put under contract from time to time, the survey parties are broken up, and the members employed as a resident staff for a section, on the system already explained. When the whole work is under contract, a good deal of the present commissariat expenditure will be unnecessary; but it will have to be kept up for some time along the valley of the Matapedia, and on the line between Bathurst and Moncton.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

The commissioners feeling that they were not in a position to judge correctly as to the propriety of granting leave of absence when asked for, have left this matter almost entirely in the hands of the chief engineer, and have advised him accordingly. Foreseeing, however, that all the engineer staff could not be fully employed in the present winter season, the commissioners decided that where employes could not be utilized in the engineer offices, they should get leave of absence until spring, receiving one month's salary on leaving, and another on returning to their duties, but paying their own travelling expenses in both cases.

CONTRACTS.

It was considered very desirable that a portion of the work in each Province should be put under contract at as early a date as possible, the Confederation Act requiring an early commencement of the work; and therefore tenders for the construction of 90 miles of the line were called for, to be sent in by 8th February, 1869, viz. :—

40 miles in Quebec,	
24 " New Brunswick,	
26 " Nova Scotia.	

Although the surveys were not as thorough and complete as could be desired. Profiles of the line had been prepared, showing the general nature of the work, the depths and lengths of cuttings and embankments, the width of bridge openings, and the proposed position of culverts and water courses. The chief engineer had prepared a very full and careful specification of the mode in which the several portions of the work were to be executed.

Before the appointment of the commissioners, the chief engineer had recommended that the contracts should be let upon a schedule of prices, without any definite sum as the cost of the whole work in each contract. In this view the commissioners could not concur. Without the fullest and most reliable information as to the quantities of the different kinds of work, if tenders had been sent in with prices for about thirty different items, the commissioners would have had no means of applying the prices to quantities, so as to ascertain the relative cheapness of the tenders, or the probable cost of the entire work. It is however unnecessary here to discuss that question, as it was fully dealt with in a Report to Council, of date 26th January, 1869, a copy of which is appended hereto. (Vide Appendix B.) That report was approved by Council, and the course proposed in it has consequently been adopted.

It is with great regret that the Commissioners felt that duty required them to arrive at a different conclusion from that of the chief engineer. They have endeavoured to conduct the discussion of the question in a spirit of courtesy and fairness, and they trust they have succeeded. They have now the satisfaction of knowing, that with the full information which has been afforded to contractors in all the lettings subsequent to that