

The drop shown in the number of persons employed in metalliferous mines is due principally to the diversion to other occupations of a large number of subsidized prospectors. It will be noted that the coal-mining industry found work for an additional 199 men during the year.

MINING AND QUARRY ACCIDENTS.

In metalliferous mines, at which 2,824 men were ordinarily employed, three persons were killed and nine persons seriously injured.

At stone-quarries under the Stone-quarries Act, employing 2,083 men, there were five fatal accidents and three serious accidents.

In coal-mines, where 4,762 persons were ordinarily employed, seventeen persons were killed and twenty persons seriously injured.

The year was marred by the regrettable disaster which occurred at the Glen Afton Colliery and in which eleven men lost their lives. A Royal Commission was set up by the Government to inquire into the cause of the disaster. The report of the Commission has been published.

It is clear that statutory rules and regulations, however desirable and necessary up to a certain point, will not of themselves provide for safety. There must be strict compliance with these rules, and also unceasing vigilance on the part of officials and workmen to ensure the avoidance of accidents from preventable causes.

It is pleasing to record the greater measure of co-operation which now exists between owners and workmen in the adoption and use of the latest types of safety-equipment. Protective helmets, commonly known as "hard hats," are now fairly widely used in our coal-mines, and the value of this type of safety equipment will be appreciated when it is realized that, apart from a number of minor accidents, at least seven fatalities have been avoided since September, 1936, by the use of protective helmets in New Zealand coal-mines.

HOUSING.

Sixty-two loans, including eight during the year under review, have been granted to miners and other workmen under the Department's housing scheme to enable them to erect and own their own houses. The loans, which range from £180 to £700, are repayable, together with interest, by fortnightly payments over a term of twenty years. I am pleased to state that a sum of £6,000 to enable further loans to be made is being provided on the current year's estimates of the State Coal-mines Account, together with a sum of £3,000 for the erection of two new staff cottages, and hutments.

GEOLOGICAL SURVEY.

During the 1939-40 field season the Geological Survey carried out systematic mapping in three districts, the sampling and estimation of resources of mineral substances in three other districts, and geophysical work in four areas. Officers also examined deposits of possible economic value in several parts of New Zealand.

Detailed mapping proceeded in the Dannevirke, Greymouth, and Orepuki districts. The first area is part of the oil-bearing strip along the east coast of the North Island; the Greymouth district contains the most valuable coking and gas coals of the Dominion; and there are deposits of coal, oil shale, and alluvial gold in the Orepuki Subdivision.

The sampling and estimation of the lower-valued mineral resources was at Rotokaua for sulphur, near Porangahau for bentonite, and near Kaka in Nelson for feldspathic clay.

The geophysical work at Onekaka was to determine the depth of iron-ore, near Cambridge and Atiamuri to ascertain the nature of dam-foundations, and at Orepuki to explore the structure of the shale deposit.

Miscellaneous work included the examination of deposits of manganese-ore south-east of Auckland, of chromite at D'Urville Island and the Croixelles, and of barite near Baton Saddle. The parties prospecting for gold-quartz veins in the Lyell, Reefton, and Big River - Waiuta districts were also visited.

In addition to the annual report and several short papers, a memoir on a district in West Otago was published during the year.