

NEW AVENUES OF COAL-UTILIZATION.

Field-work in connection with the survey of the coal resources of the Greymouth district was continued, and an extensive sampling programme undertaken of all the working mines in the Dominion.

Further laboratory investigations were also made in the search for suitable fuels for producer gas.

RESCUE-STATIONS.

The erection of additional rescue-stations at Rotowaro and Ohai is proceeding satisfactorily, and the buildings will shortly be completed.

Practically all the rescue equipment required is being imported, and, provided there is no undue delay as the result of war conditions, the stations should be in operation before the end of 1941.

Courses of training continue to be carried on at the Dobson Rescue-station, and excellent progress has been made by the trainees. Arrangements are being made for the issue of certificates of proficiency in mine-rescue work to miners who qualify by examination.

SOCIAL AMENITIES IN MINING TOWNSHIPS.

During the year assistance was made available for the provision of new recreational facilities in mining townships, as well as for the improvement of some already in existence. It is pleasing to relate that these facilities are being fully availed of, and provide good healthy recreation for the miners and their families.

CARBONIZING AND BRIQUETTING.

The low-temperature coal-carbonizing and briquetting plant of Waikato Carbonization, Ltd., at Rotowaro, operated for ten months during 1940.

The following figures show the production during that period:—

Raw coal carbonized	45,225 tons.
Carbonized coal produced	22,242 tons.
Average percentage of carbonized coal to raw coal	49 per cent.
Carbonettes manufactured	22,535 tons.
Tar and oil treated	413,845 gals.
Pitch produced	923 tons.
Light and heavy oils produced	19,384 gals.
Creosote produced	184,267 gals.
“Char” sold for producer-gas plants	1,877 tons.
“Char” sold for other purposes	432 tons.

For the twelve months ended 31st December, 1940, Smokeless Fuel and Briquettes (Canterbury), Ltd., produced 5,543 tons of briquettes at its works at Sockburn. The production of tar was 33,375 gallons.

SUBSIDY ON COAL PRODUCED.

In May, 1940, the coal-owners' and miners' representatives conferred to discuss the terms of the new national agreement, and the outcome, after conferring with the Government, was to provide increases of 5 per cent. in the rates of contract workers and 7½ per cent. in the day-wages rates. This, with similar increases to colliery officials, was estimated to cost 1s. 1d. per ton on coal-production. Just prior to this the Price Investigation Tribunal had examined applications to increase selling-prices of coal on account of the higher prices of colliery stores and had advised the Government that costs had risen 5d. per ton on this account. It was evident that an increase of 1s. 6d. in the selling-price of coal would have resulted in higher charges for transport, which would have necessitated the ultimate consumer paying much more than 1s. 6d. per ton.

The Government therefore decided to subsidize coal-owners to the extent of 1s. 6d. per ton to cover the cost of the increased wages and stores, and thus avoid an increase in the selling-prices of coal. In many cases, particularly open-cast pits, the subsidy actually paid is less than 1s. 6d., the amount being calculated in such cases on the ascertained increase in costs.