

At Millerton, survey work has commenced in the search for a new underground mine to replace the present mine, in which all development work has been completed.

The opening-up of the Morley Block, in the Ohai Coalfield, has been deferred until such time as the adjoining Star Mine area recently purchased by the State could be investigated. A drilling programme has now been completed which proves that the Star area immediately adjoining the Morley Block contains a considerable extent of the Morley seams, in particular the lower or No. 2 seam, and thereby the tonnage of coal available in one compact block has been considerably increased.

In the Kaitangata Field three holes recently put down by the Kaitangata Co. have proved a considerable tonnage of coal, and it is stated that the company propose opening up this area in the near future. The bore put down by the Mines Department on its property in the Wangaloa Block indicates that the deeper coal-seams have evidently thinned in this direction.

During the year, the Waro Colliery, situated at Hikurangi, ceased operations owing to exhaustion of coal, and while the output of this colliery had never been of any magnitude, it was of considerable importance to the coal-supply position of North Auckland. With the acquisition by the State of the Kamo Coal-mine, it has been possible to transfer the miners from Hikurangi to Kamo, and development work is proceeding to allow of an expanded output from this mine and thus bridge the gap in the supply position.

In addition to plans for increased production, consideration has been given to the utilization of coal to the greatest advantage, and the Fuel Technologist of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research has been employed investigating the use of coal and advising consumers.

OPENCAST MINING

Production of coal from opencast mines continues to increase, and for the year 1947 the output from this form of mining was 644,692 tons, against 528,700 tons in 1946.

Although it was not until October, 1943, with the opening-up of the Glen Afton opencast mine, that attention was directed to the mechanized form of opencast mining, production from the opencast mines commencing operations since that date had reached on 31st May of this year a total of 1,670,289 tons. Eight State-operated opencast mines contributed 394,160 tons to the 1947 total, almost two-thirds of the total.

Stockton continues to be the most important opencast mine, both in respect of output and of quality of coal produced. Not only was the output of 154,803 tons a record for this type of mine, but the coal is of good grade bituminous type, the type of which the supply position continues to be the most acute. It is worthy of mention that this production was achieved despite difficult climatic conditions due to the high elevation and a rainfall which exceeds 200 in. a year.

The organization which has been in operation for the past two years has continued to prepare the way for future opencast operations by detailed topographical surveys and surface prospecting, while recently additional information is being obtained by the use of two diamond drills, so that continued production from this form of mining is assured for many years.

In order to permit of deeper ground being stripped, new equipment has been ordered comprising a special stripping-shovel with 5-cubic-yard bucket and 46 ft. boom, two blast hole-drillers, four 20-yard muck-wagons, and a new fleet of motor-trucks. With the completion of the aerial ropeway previously mentioned, production from opencast mining in the Stockton area should increase.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that the Huntly Coalfield offers considerable scope for opencast mining. During 1947, operations ceased at the Glen Afton opencast owing to exhaustion of the coal, but work continued at both Kimihia and Kemp's. At the latter mine stripping-operations should be completed at the end of this year, but