

(2.) LOANS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF MINES.

Since 1905, when statutory provision was made for advances by way of loans for mining development, three new companies have been assisted to the aggregate amount of £15,500 upon the security of their mines and equipment. It is satisfactory to state that the repayments of loan instalments have hitherto been punctual, and the amount of interest in arrears is very small. In one case the results have been satisfactory both to the owners and to the mining industry, for by means of the loan a productive alluvial gold-mine has been developed, and employment given to a number of persons, who absorb about £5,000 per annum in wages. In another case a small undertaking was assisted to introduce a somewhat novel method of alluvial mining, and the result attained has enabled the borrowers to refund a considerable proportion of the money lent before it became due. In the third case—viz., that of a deep quartz-mine—owing to the work not being sufficiently advanced, it is premature to express an opinion.

The experience, however, in the Australian States regarding mining loans has been very unsatisfactory, losses having almost invariably resulted, owing, doubtless, to advances having been made without adequate investigation. In New Zealand, however, it is required that the Government mining advisers shall, after personal examination, report upon the application, stating specially if there is a reasonable probability of the proposed mining operations proving remunerative, and giving reasons for such opinion. The Board constituted to report to the Minister upon such applications consists of four officers, but, owing to the difficulty in bringing that number together to inspect properties in remote places, it would be better to reduce the Board to two members—viz., the Inspecting Engineer of Mines and the Inspector of Mines for the district to which the application relates.

(3.) SUBSIDIZED ROADS ON GOLDFIELDS.

The opening-up by roads of remote or inaccessible mining fields still continues; and when the rugged character of many of these fields is taken into consideration it will be found that the mining industry is now well served as regards roads and bridges. Mining being generally the pioneer for agriculture, the roads constructed in some of the older mining fields are more used by farmers than by miners.

The following schedule shows the amounts expended by subsidies and direct grants out of the Public Works Fund—vote, "Roads on Goldfields"—in the different counties, &c., during the year ended 31st March, 1913 :—

	Subsidies.			Direct Grants.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Thames County .. .. .	..	..	..	732	3	8
Thames Borough .. .. .	..	..	..	300	0	0
Coromandel County .. .. .	..	..	..	2,539	12	4
Ohinemuri County	1,302	0	0	4,235	6	4
Piako County .. .. .	..	..	..	65	16	6
Pelorus Road Board .. .. .	..	..	..	160	0	0
Wairau Road Board .. .. .	..	..	..	200	0	0
Collingwood County .. .. .	..	..	..	748	15	3
Takaka County .. .. .	..	..	..	870	5	0
Waimea County .. .. .	..	..	..	360	0	0
Buller County	52	0	0	7,060	4	7
Murchison County .. .. .	..	..	..	814	16	2
Inangahua County	44	11	10	4,057	13	5
Grey County .. .. .	..	..	..	2,921	0	11
Westland County	78	16	0	2,428	15	8
Ross Borough .. .. .	..	..	..	80	11	4
Mackenzie County	104	0	0	..	..	..
Tuapeka County	190	0	0	100	0	0
Vincent County .. .. .	..	..	..	844	1	0
Lake County .. .. .	..	..	..	552	17	5
Wallace County .. .. .	..	..	..	48	15	0
Southland County	701	6	0	150	0	0
Public Works Department .. .. .	..	..	..	5,017	14	11
	2,472	13	10	34,288	9	6

(4.) GOVERNMENT PROSPECTING DRILLS.

Three diamond drills of Schram-Harker type, with a boring-capacity of 2,500 ft., 1,500 ft., and 500 ft. respectively, one diamond drill of Sullivan CN type, capacity 800 ft., also two Keystone traction placer drills of 350 ft. capacity, are lent out by the Government to mining companies and local bodies free of charge. The borrowers have, however, to keep the machines in good order, and pay all expenses and wages in connection therewith, including those of the Government Superintendent of the drill.

During the year 156 holes, of an aggregate depth of 6,670 ft., were drilled by two Keystone drills in alluvial gravel, and three holes, of an aggregate depth of 1,158 ft., were drilled in search of coal.