

COAL-MINING.

The output of coal during 1918 amounted to 2,034,250 tons, as compared with 2,068,419 tons during 1917, being a decrease of 34,169 tons.

The following is a comparative statement of the coal and lignite raised during the years 1916, 1917, and 1918 :—

Inspection District.	Output for 1917.	Output for 1918.	Increase or Decrease, 1918.	Output for 1916.	Decrease between Years 1917 and 1916.
	Tons.	Tons.	Tons.	Tons.	Tons.
Northern	470,638	549,778	79,140*	486,114	15,476
West Coast	1,146,778	997,089	149,689†	1,295,635	148,857
Southern (Canterbury, Otago, and Southland)	451,003	487,383	36,380*	475,386	24,383
Totals	2,068,419	2,034,250	34,169†	2,257,135	188,716

* Increase.

† Decrease.

The decline in the annual output for 1918 amounts to nearly 2 per cent. There was also a decrease in the output per person employed underground, from 715 tons during 1917 to 703 tons during 1918, which is likewise at the rate of nearly 2 per cent. This alone would account for the decrease of total output; but had it not been for the influenza epidemic, to which sixty-six coal-miners succumbed, and which caused most of the collieries to cease production for two or three weeks, an increased output would have resulted. The considerable decline in the production of bituminous coal was principally due to scarcity of miners on the West Coast.

The comparative tonnage of the various classes of coal for the years 1917 and 1918 is summarized as follows :—

Class.	Output for 1918.	Output for 1917.	Increase or Decrease for 1918.
	Tons.	Tons.	Tons.
Bituminous and semi-bituminous ..	1,122,308	1,247,989	Decrease 125,681
Brown coal	705,773	629,174	Increase 76,599
Lignite	206,169	191,256	„ 14,913
Totals	2,034,250	2,068,419	Decrease 34,169

During the year prospecting-operations by Government drills have proved considerable areas of workable coal near Awaroa in the Parish of Whangape, on the Waikato coalfield. An area of nearly 1,300 acres of excellent coal-bearing land has accordingly been acquired, on which a State mine for the North Island will be established as soon as the necessary preliminary works can be undertaken. Also within the Government colliery reserve on the low coastal range adjacent to the Point Elizabeth State Colliery a good coal-seam has been proved, and here also coal-mining operations will be undertaken as soon as a short branch railway has been constructed to the site of the mine-mouth. The opening of this new colliery will afford an opportunity of utilizing nearly all the plant at the existing Point Elizabeth Colliery, which will shortly be closed on account of exhaustion.

The question of providing adequate and superior housing-accommodation for the State miners has also received careful consideration, with the result that at Waikokowai it has been decided to lay out a new township on “town-planning” lines, and provided with an efficient water-supply and drainage system, and furnished with electric light and power and all modern conveniences. Similar conveniences will be supplied as far as possible at Runanga.

It is also proposed to inaugurate a superannuation scheme for our men, and to also permit them to elect a representative on a Board of Management so that they may have a voice in matters of control. It is hoped by these means to gain the full interest of the miners in the success of the undertaking, and to ensure the permanence and continuity of their employment.