

Part I contains only small changes and additions to the old provisions.

Part II contains the most important alterations. The provisions of the Act of 1908 were suited to the requirements of the industry in its early stages, but the growth of the industry and experience here and in other countries rendered necessary the numerous amending Acts of 1908 to 1924. The new Act incorporates these amendments, and also embodies many provisions which were previously dealt with in the Special Rules in the Second Schedule to the 1908 Act and in regulations. New amendments are in the direction of making the safety provisions more stringent, and relate to winding appliances for raising and lowering men, manholes on travelling-roads, travelling on haulage-roads, height of travelling-roads and horse-roads, signalling appliances, &c. Under the 1908 Act provision was made for the payment of accident relief to miners from either of two funds known as the Sick and Accident Fund and the Coal-miners' Relief Fund; under the new Act the Sick and Accident Funds have been abolished, and accident relief will in future be paid from the Coal-miners Relief Fund, which is administered by the Public Trustee with the assistance of local committees.

Only minor alterations are contained in Parts III and IV.

The Special Rules in the Second Schedule to the 1908 Act had to be provided for in the regulations if not provided for in the new Act. This necessitated a revision of the previous regulations, and amending regulations were gazetted on the 21st May, 1925, in which, at the same time, the provisions were grouped under appropriate headings, and new provisions regarding stoppings and air-crossings, railway-sidings, signalling, appointment of shot-frirers, &c., were added.

I desire to acknowledge the efficient help and co-operation which I have received from the Inspectors during the past year. During the previous year tentative steps were taken to get better mining methods adopted at several of the collieries with the object of thereby attaining greater safety and at the same time reducing the excessive loss of coal. This important phase of our work has received increased attention during the past year and has met with a considerable measure of success. In some cases new methods have been adopted and are being tried out in practice, and in others the proposals are under consideration. The past year has been marked by the increasing readiness on the part of the various coal companies to favourably consider any scheme for better methods of working put forward by the Inspectors and a desire to co-operate with the Inspectors in devising and carrying out such a scheme.

I have, &c.,

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Inspecting Engineer and Chief Inspector of Coal-mines.

ANNEXURE A.

SUMMARY OF REPORTS BY INSPECTORS OF MINES.

NORTHERN INSPECTION DISTRICT (MR. WILLIAM BARCLAY, Inspector).

During the year 1925 the total output produced by the coal-mines in the North Island was 672,403 tons. These figures show an increase of output of 34,878 tons when compared with those of the previous year. No new collieries produced coal during the year. A considerable area of brown coal has been proved by outcrops and prospecting in the Waitewhena Valley district, Ohura, Taranaki. A branch railway-line of ten miles will be required to connect these coal deposits with the Government railway, which is now almost completed to Ohura. In the Waikato district an extensive field of brown coal has been discovered by boring at Waikokowai. The coal-seam varies in thickness from 10 ft. to 15 ft., and a company has been formed with a capital of £130,000 to develop this proved coal area. Preliminary works are proceeding in connection with the building of the mine officials' houses and engineering surveys of tramway to give access to the mine. There were nine serious accidents, resulting in fractured limbs to four persons, and loss of vision in one eye to three other affected persons. None of the accidents had a fatal result, and the injured men were not permanently incapacitated from following light work. Hydrated cement, applied by a cement-gun, is being used for plastering the sides of the main roadways in the Pukemiro Colliery Company's south colliery. The results are extremely beneficial, as the finished cemented surfaces tend to prevent fretting of coal from the pillar-sides, falls of ground, and decreases to a great extent the risk of roof accidents. The cement is forced into the crevices and cracks in the coal-seams, and it seals up the small cavities which collect and hold fine coal-dust. It is also applied to the standing timber in the roadways, and the cement-plaster should arrest decay by preventing the moisture from penetrating the bark of the props, particularly in the return airways. The requirements in connection with the Stonedusting Regulations are generally well observed in the principal collieries, and special attention is being paid by the management to the treatment of the roads. Finely pulverized limestone-dust is obtained from the nearest lime-works and applied to the main roads; pumice sand is also applied in some mines. At a few mines the roof, sides, and floor in the vicinity of shot-holes are being sprayed daily with water before the shots are fired. Some improvements in connection with the incidence of coal-dust accumulations on roads has been obtained by the exclusive use of steel dust-proof mine-trucks. There is still room for improvement in regard to the testing of the dust-mixtures on roads, and the instructions recently issued by the Chief Inspector of Mines should assist the mine-managers to conform to the requirements of the regulations. They provide for systematic sampling, weighing, and testing of the dust, and the result of the analysis should show the portion of any particular road requiring more frequent applications of incombustible dust.

Kawakawa Colliery.—The working-seam is thin, with occurring bands of shaly inferior coal, and much stonework is necessary in order to make the drives of sufficient height for the passage of skips. Operations during the year were confined to the removal of outcrop pillars abandoned by the Bay of Islands Coal Company. Boreholes put down on an adjoining prospecting lease proved the continuity of the seam to the north of the present workings. There is a good demand for coal in this district.