

# N.Z. BUILDING PROGRESS

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Architecture, Building, Engineering and Industries

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## Editorial Comment

**The Coal Problem.** What has been described as "the strike on the job" continues to reduce New Zealand's coal supply to below bare necessity, and the general public has begun to feel the pinch severely, though cold weather has not yet arrived to add to the troubles of keeping comfortable conditions in the household. The point at issue has narrowed down to a demand by the miners to be represented in negotiation by the labour organisation known as the Alliance of Labour. The employers decline to recognise any body but the miners' unions. Meanwhile, supplies of coal are getting shorter and shorter, trams are curtailed in Auckland, the whole building industry is restricted by a shortage of cement—due to lack of coal—and the New Zealand output is being eked out by importing coal at high rates of freight, which constitute a further burden on the industries of the country. The general public would like to do justice to the miners, and the employers declare that justice is being done. However, miners are hard to get, which indicates in a practical way that conditions are not satisfactory compared with other industries. The Prime Minister's latest declaration on the subject, as the representative of the much harried community, is that the situation is being closely watched. Apparently it has been watched, off and on, for many months, and the trouble gets more acute. The very painstaking report on the industry by the Board of Trade indicated that while the mining companies are not making excessive profits, the methods of handling coal to the consumer are wasteful and expensive, and the sea journey from the West Coast provides the steamship companies with about as much profit as is obtained by the mining companies which have to risk a good deal of capital before they reach the point of production. As coal is as essential to the country as transport—and is the essential to transport—it seems surprising that the proposal