

PETROLEUM OIL.

Since the passing of the Petroleum Act, 1937, a thorough and intensive search has been prosecuted for oil by the three major companies operating in the Dominion. In addition to geophysical and geological investigations, topographical surveys, and palaeontological examinations, three wells all of which failed to disclose oil, have been drilled—at Totangi to a depth of 5,700 ft., at Morere to a depth of 6,643 ft., and at Midhirst to a depth of 10,925 ft. The last named is the deepest well ever drilled in this country.

Good progress is being made with the sinking of a further hole at New Plymouth. This is already down to a depth of over 3,000 ft. Three new and exceptionally large drilling-rigs will be operating in this country at an early date, one in the South Island and two in the North Island.

From the wells at Moturoa on Petroleum Prospecting License No. 7 held by New Zealand Petroleum Co., Ltd., 93,915 gallons of crude petroleum oil were obtained during 1941.

The Dominion's total production of crude petroleum oil to 31st December, 1941, is estimated at 3,177,917 gallons.

COAL-MINING.

There were 140 coal-mines operating in the Dominion in 1941. Fifty-seven of these mines are situated on freehold property and produced 1,132,490 tons, or 43 per cent. of the total output. The remaining 83 mines are situated on Crown lands and produced 1,507,017, or 57 per cent. of the total output of 2,639,507 tons.

The annual production of coal since 1937 has been as follows :—

Year.		Tons.	Year.		Tons.
1937	..	2,277,799	1940	..	2,516,099
1938	..	2,222,088	1941	..	2,639,507
1939	..	2,342,639			

During 1941 the quantity of coal imported was 78,171 tons or 13,311 tons more than in the previous year, whereas exports (58,179 tons) were 23,108 tons less than in 1940.

The output for the year under review of 2,639,507 tons is a record for the Dominion and represents an increase of 123,048 tons, or 4.9 per cent., on the 1940 production. During the past six years production of coal has risen by 524,323 tons, or nearly 25 per cent.

The output per miner employed underground during last year was 726 tons, or 56 tons higher than in 1940. This has been exceeded only once previously—namely, in 1916—when 752 tons per man underground was won. Again, production per man on the payroll—i.e., both underground and surface workers—was 528 tons, or 30 tons higher than in 1940. Only twice previously has this output been exceeded—viz., in 1915 and 1916, when the figures were 532 tons and 566 tons respectively.

The difficulties which have arisen recently as a result of further heavy increases in consumption consequent upon the entry of Japan into the war are being steadily overcome. This affected the supply position for householders, especially in the North Island, but it is expected that some improvement in the domestic supply will soon be possible.

Other problems of man-power and shipping have had to be faced, and it is not unlikely that other new problems will manifest themselves as time goes on. Under war conditions it is not reasonable to expect the maintenance of standards of service which can be given in times of peace, but there is no real need for concern as to the future in respect of supplies of coal.

A careful survey shows that the collieries now being developed and operated have adequate productive capacity to meet the country's fuel needs, both for the present and for some years to come. It is not considered desirable or necessary, therefore, to open up new collieries, but it is essential that all collieries now operating continue in production. To achieve this the Government has taken over mines which have been abandoned by former owners and has extended aid to others which could not carry on without financial assistance.

The following is a table showing the output of coal from the various coalfields, and the comparative increase and decrease, for the years 1941 and 1940, together with the total approximate quantity of coal produced since the mines were opened:—

Name of Coalfield.	Output.		Increase.	Decrease.	Approximate Total Output up to 31st December, 1941.
	1941.	1940.			
	Tons.	Tons.	Tons.	Tons.	Tons.
North Auckland	80,367	81,411	..	1,044	6,132,313
Waikato (including Taranaki) ..	837,629	788,559	49,070	..	19,296,386
Nelson	14,360	16,166	..	1,806	714,671
Buller	519,095	504,647	14,448	..	26,960,890
Reefton	72,030	69,875	2,155	..	1,255,544
Grey	570,610	533,369	37,241	..	19,344,646
Canterbury	27,898	26,893	1,005	..	1,199,604
Otago	184,646	188,508	..	3,862	14,346,243
Southland	332,872	306,671	26,201	..	8,725,378
Totals	2,639,507*	2,516,099	130,120	6,712	97,975,675

* Increase, 123,408 tons,