

STATE COAL-MINES

The output from the State coal-mines for the financial year 1942-43 was 419,708 tons, which is a new record for the Department, and represents 15·66 per cent. of the total Dominion production. All collieries contributed to the increase, as shown in the table appearing below.

Two new collieries, Dobson and Wallsend, were acquired as State coal-mines on 22nd February, 1943. Considerable dip development work is required at the Dobson Colliery to ensure the maximum possible extraction of coal, and at Wallsend certain additional dip development is essential for similar reasons. On this account, neither of the collieries is likely to show a profit for a few years, although the operating losses should not be considerable during this period and should eventually be recouped when pillar-extraction commences.

The development work at the Blackball Colliery was continued, but failed to locate an area of hard coal similar to that worked in the old colliery. A severe financial loss on operations has been inevitable because of the friable nature of the coal, heavy costs of pumping the large volume of water in the mine, and very heavy timbering costs. Financial results were also adversely affected by substantial periods of idleness caused by lack of shipping and the urgent need in the national interest of giving priority in available shipping-space to gas and railway coals required in the North Island. The Paparoa Colliery (privately owned) was similarly affected by the shipping difficulty.

Boring operations on a coalfield fairly close to Blackball have commenced, following a geological examination of the area. Consideration will be given to the possibilities of this new field when the boring data is available. Experiments with the briquetting of Blackball coal have given encouraging results, and further trials are being conducted and data gathered concerning the latest developments overseas in the technique of briquetting. Altogether 30,542 tons of Blackball coal was disposed of during the financial year to such essential users as the Railways, cement-works, and electric-power stations. The coal from the Blackball Mine has accordingly been of some national importance in maintaining the services supplied by these industries.

The completion of development at the Tatu Colliery was unexpectedly delayed by the occurrence of a fault or "want" which was not detected in the earlier geological exploration work. The need for maintaining the highest possible coal-production to satisfy urgent and immediate requirements of consumers, together with lack of power, limited the number of workmen who could be concentrated on actual development, and has retarded this work to some extent. Arrangements have been made for the installation of electric power, and it is hoped that the major portion of this installation will be completed before the end of the present year. Over 50,000 tons of coal has been produced since the colliery was opened by the Government in 1940.

Full details in respect of the operations and financial results of the collieries appear in the annual report of the State coal-mines (C-2A).

A comparative statement for the last two financial years is shown hereunder :—

Mine.	Output in Tons, 1942-43.		Output, in Tons, 1941-42.		Percentage Increase in Gross Output.	Percentage Increase in Net Output.
	Gross.	Net.	Gross.	Net.		
Liverpool	165,837	160,260	163,799	157,170	1·2	1·9
Strongman	94,170	92,180	87,402	85,381	7·2	7·3
James	29,529	28,770	26,549	25,809	10·1	10·2
Blackball	34,527	34,294	25,950	25,773	24·8	24·8
Mangapehi	52,062	50,915	40,849	38,920	21·5	23·5
Tatu	29,620	24,440	10,159	8,875	65·7	63·6
Wallsend	6,883	6,441	..	..	..	..
Dobson	7,081	6,913	..	..	..	..
Totals	419,709	404,213	354,708	341,928	12·5	12·5

NOTE.—The difference between the gross and the net output is the allowance for mine consumption and waste. In addition to the above, 21,639 tons of coal was purchased for resale.

The disposals, inclusive of stock on hand at the beginning of the year, were as follows :—

Supplied to						1942-43.	1941-42.	Percentage Increase.
						Tons.	Tons.	
Depots	..	..	..	..	..	132,990	118,430	10·9
Railways	..	..	..	..	..	96,328	72,506	24·7
Other Government Departments	..	..	..	..	..	23,758	18,309	22·9
Shipping	..	..	..	..	..	10,289	8,131	20·9
Gasworks	..	..	..	..	..	107,667	107,522	..
Other consumers	..	..	..	..	..	26,235	13,519	48·4
Totals	..	..	..	..	..	397,267	338,417	14·8