

SUBSIDY ON COAL-PRODUCTION

For the financial year ended 31st March, 1943, the amount paid by way of subsidy on coal-production was £370,395. The total sum paid out in this way since the subsidy was first introduced in May, 1940, amounts to £713,388. These figures include subsidies on account of coastal shipping freights on coal and for additional cost of mining stores, as well as for increased rates of wages. The amount paid out in respect of wages alone was £302,240 for the financial year, the total to date being £549,456.

The trend of coal-mining costs is definitely upwards, and this is due to the high proportion of unskilled labour employed, the persistent and heavy increase in price of mining stores overseas, together with the implementing of the policy of adopting mining methods aimed to obtain the maximum extraction of coal. Again, heavy increases in consumption by many large coal-users operating under favourable price contracts prior to price control have operated adversely in respect of many collieries, which have been obliged to appropriate a much higher proportion of total production to the low-price market, thus seriously reducing the average selling-price and capacity to earn profits.

These matters are now under review by the Mines Department, and it is not unlikely that in many instances it will be found that increased subsidy will be essential to enable the industry to function efficiently.

COAL-MINES COUNCIL

Important work was carried out by the Coal-mines Council during the year, mainly in the sphere of adjudicating on coal-mining disputes and in the settlement of terms and conditions of employment generally.

MINING CONTROL

The task of surmounting immediate problems of production, including man-power and housing, and of distribution, with its attendant difficulties of transport, as well as the supply of materials vital to continuity of production, most of which come from overseas, has been no light one, but it has been accomplished with some measure of success. A policy of planning ahead of immediate needs and thus anticipating reasonable future requirements, and of seeking and maintaining the good will of all sections of the industry rather than the arbitrary imposition of control directions, has been the keynote of the Mining Controller's work, and the results are reflected in the measure of achievement which has been attained in dealing with a problem which has taxed the capacity of the authorities in all parts of the world.

COAL-MINERS' RELIEF FUND

The Coal-miners' Sick and Accident Funds having been abolished as from the 1st April, 1926, and incorporated in the Coal-miners' Relief Fund, all accident-relief payments are now made from the latter fund, which is administered by the Public Trustee.

The rate of interest allowed on the fund was decreased from 4 per cent. to 3½ per cent. as from the 1st April, 1933.

The interest earned for the twelve months ended 31st March, 1943, was £571, as against £679 for the previous year, while for the same periods the receipts from the ½d. per ton contributions were £5,346 and £5,544 respectively.

The total expenditure for the year ended 31st March, 1943, amounted to £9,284, as against £9,386 for the previous year.

The amount standing to the credit of the fund at the 31st March, 1943, was £14,410, as against £17,777 at the 31st March, 1942.

PERSONS EMPLOYED IN OR ABOUT MINES AND STONE-QUARRIES AND IN OIL-PROSPECTING OPERATIONS

The following table shows the number of persons employed in each inspection district during 1942 and 1941 :—

Classification.	Inspection District.			Totals.		
	Northern (North Island).	West Coast (of South Island).	Southern (Rest of South Island).	1942.	1941.	Increase or Decrease.
Gold, silver, and tungsten ore	565	659	337	1,561	2,325	Dec. 764
Coal	1,826	2,298	873	4,997	4,991	Inc. 6
Stone - quarries under the Stone-quarries Act	1,110	80	369	1,559	1,972	Dec. 413
Silica	2	..	4	6	8	.. 2
Cinnabar	20	..	..	20	22	.. 2
Iron ore	12	3	..	15	21	.. 6
Manganese	3	..	..	3	9	.. 6
Pumice	..	..	..	..	1	.. 1
Fuller's earth	1	..	..	1	1	
Diatomaceous earth	1	..	..	1	2	Dec. 1
Bentonite	2	..	..	2	2	
Serpentine	16	..	..	16	6	Inc. 10
Asbestos	..	12	..	12	10	.. 2
Dolomite	..	3	..	3	4	Dec. 1
Clay	..	2	3	5	6	.. 1
Antimony	..	..	..	..	3	.. 3
Oil prospecting	198	64	..	262	174	Inc. 88
Totals	3,756	3,121	1,586	8,463	9,557	Dec. 1,094