

Increased attention to conservation of coal and the persistent trend towards mechanization must create a demand for recruits to the coal-mining industry who have a foundation of sound technical training. Accordingly, I consider that the opportunities which exist in the coal-mining industry warrant greater attention being paid in the mining schools to the problems of coal-mining than in the past.

So far it has not been possible to attract many graduates from the Otago School of Mines into the coal-mining industry. The problem of recruiting technically trained men in mining engineering for coal-mining is not, of course, peculiar to New Zealand. Of late it has been discussed and explored in many other countries, but difficulties still persist. However, it is hoped that in time some of these difficulties may be solved and that the contribution of the Department towards the cause of mining education may be of greater value to the coal-mining industry.

MINERS' BENEFITS

The provision for payment of a miner's benefit is contained in the Social Security Act, which has been operative since the 1st April, 1939. One of the necessary conditions precedent to payment of the benefit is that the applicant should be seriously and permanently incapacitated by miners' phthisis or totally incapacitated by heart or other occupational disease associated with mining service in New Zealand.

The rate of benefit for the miner is 32s. 6d. a week, and this may be increased by 10s. 6d. a week in respect of the wife. There is provision for the payment of a grant of 10s. 6d. a week for each dependent child under the age of sixteen years, with a maximum grant in any particular case of £5 weekly, but the benefit in respect of the children is reducible by all income of the family, other than the miner's benefit, in excess of £2 a week.

The widow of a miner who died while in receipt of a benefit may be granted a benefit of 20s. a week during widowhood.

This scheme, which originated with the Miners' Phthisis Act, 1915, is administered by the Social Security Commission, and the following is a summary of the operations for the year ended 31st March, 1944 :—

MINERS' BENEFITS							£
Payments from 1st November, 1915, to 31st March, 1943	..	..	..	..	..	..	1,423,648
Payments, 1943-44	..	..	..	..	..	..	76,652
							<u>£1,500,300</u>
Number of new grants for year 1943-44—							
Males	..	..	..	..	..	..	27
Females	..	..	..	..	..	..	6
							— 33
Number of benefits in force, 31st March, 1944 (including two emergency)—							
Males	..	..	..	..	..	..	691
Females	..	..	..	..	..	..	106
							— 797
Annual value of benefits in force at 31st March, 1944	..	..	..	..	..	..	£75,087
Average benefit per annum	..	..	..	..	..	..	£94 6s.
Number of children in respect of benefits in force at 31st March, 1944	..	..	..	..	..	..	164
Dissection of benefits in force at 31st March, 1944—							
Single miners	..	..	..	..	..	..	217
Married miners	..	..	..	..	..	..	474
Widows	..	..	..	..	..	..	106
							— 797

ASSISTANCE TO MINING

During the financial year ended 31st March, 1944, assistance has been extended to the mining industry on a basis similar to past years. A sum of £36,743 was advanced to promote and maintain coal-production, £2,244 to scheelite-mining, £2,278 to gold-mining, £636 towards the production of manganese, and £1,142 for the production of mercury. In addition, the Department itself expended £9,506 in prospecting and development work on strategic minerals.