Accidents.—During the year there were numerous minor accidents but only two of a serious nature. These were as follows: On 19th June a miner struck his head against a bar and suffered a fracture of the cervial region of his spine, and on 19th July a miner received a compound fracture of the right leg when a stone rolled on him.

Mine Workings. Development proceeded to the south-west beyond the Cunningham fault, and the south-west heading was driven back to this fault from the No. 1 panel intersection. Off the south-west headings to the south a pair of levels, after advancing 7 chains, met the Cunningham fault, which cut across at a long angle, but a shaft revealed that the lessened displacement experienced at other points did not continue. An alteration in plans had to be made, and a pair of north-west dip headings, some 14 chains from and parallel to the original north-west heading, were commenced.

These headings have been advanced 5 chains, the coal being 6 ft. 6 in. in thickness and of excellent quality with a good roof and uniform conditions. At the face of the south-west main heading the seam is only 4 ft. 6 in. thick and is of splendid coal with a good sandstone roof, while the usual thin band of overlying fireclay is absent. The floor is fireclay and under wet conditions is sloppy and subject to excessive floor heave.

The heading, before reaching the measures described above, passed through about 4 chains of troublesome measures with wet conditions and irregular lenses of foreign roof stone, which forced the timber bodily into the soft floor and considerably increased maintenance costs.

The north headings were developed under difficult conditions and they cut the 8 ft. fault line with only a thinning of the seam being experienced at this point. Later a rise panel was developed.

The north heading afterwards met further faulting and broken ground from which water and slurry entered the drive, so the intention to make a drainage adit was abandoned.

Owing to costly road-maintenance, development ceased in November in the south-west and north-west headings until the Cunningham fault was pierced and a better haulage established, the North Section alone being concentrated on.

As the North Section developed, the seam increased to 9 ft. in thickness, the coal being friable and fully half the places were wet. Although the roof was poor at the start, it improved considerably, and the panel (limited to the south-west by the 8 ft. fault, to the south-east by the Cunningham fault, and to the north-east by the faulting met in the north heading) has been completed and pillar-splitting commenced with satisfactory results.

To furnish a direct haulage roadway to the south-west and north-west headings the Cunningham fault was pierced on a grade of 1 in 13, a holing being made on 14th April, 1944, by working three shifts of two men on both ends.

In July an improvement in output was shown, the peak of 174 tons being reached, with figures in excess of 150 tons recorded on fifteen days during that month, but the output generally was poor, particularly during the latter half of the year, when miners were transferred to the stone tunnel and maintenance work.

Trucking on contract continued throughout the year, the average earnings being 33s. 7½d. per shift, with the peak fortnight 41s. 4d. and the lowest at 28s. 1d.

Saturday coal-production gave poor results, the men choosing to work day shift every Saturday instead of both shifts on back Saturday.

With the faulted conditions encountered, irregularities in grades, and much water, a greater call on the power plant resulted in boiler troubles on many occasions, and as the old boilers have nearly reached the end of their useful life they will be superseded when the electrification of the mine is completed.

Electrification.—In July the Public Works Department commenced the installation of a substation near Mangaparo to tap the 110,000 volt circuit. Early in 1944 this work was completed, together with the installation of the necessary transformers and current is now used at the mine and bins.

Concrete substations have been erected at Mangaparo and the mine, with the necessary switchgear and wiring installed, and the aerial ropeway and screening plant are now electrically operated. One of the compressors is also electrically operated.

A permanent compressor house is being erected, and the mine substation switchgear and wiring have been installed.

Buildings.—A small bathhouse for the bins hands and a petrol-shed have been provided at Mangaparo, while the screening plant has been housed.

The twenty prefabricated houses at Puketihi Township were completed, the sections fenced, and roadway and gravel paths attended to, while at Ohura the contractor has almost completed five cottages of a similar type.

Waitewhena

On the 20th March, 1944, operations commenced to open up in the Lee Creek by opencast machine mining.

Surveys have been made and plans prepared for an access road from the Waitewhena Road to the coal-face, and a heavy "bulldozer" is engaged on this work and the haulage of heavy logs for bridging the Waitewhena Stream.

The bush on the route of the access road has been cleared and sites for huts prepared. Two three-roomed hutments have already been erected.

The matter of a railway siding and loading-bank has been investigated and an ideal site two miles from Ohura selected.

Contracts for machine mining the coal, for carting it to the railway siding, and for the stripping of the coal-seam have been arranged.

This area should provide an ideal opencast machine-mining proposition, as the seam is thick, clean, and hard, and the overburden shallow, while a good dump for the overburden is available.

I have, &c.,
Geo. Smith, District Manager.