

Year.				Output.	Men employed.	Tons per Man employed.
<i>All Mines</i>						
1930	..	..	..	2,542,092	5,867	433
1931	..	..	..	2,157,756	5,745	376
1932	..	..	..	1,842,022	4,636	397
1933	..	..	..	1,821,258	4,386	415
1934	..	..	..	2,060,315	4,478	460
1935	..	..	..	2,115,184	4,231	500
1936	..	..	..	2,140,217	4,257	503
1937	..	..	..	2,277,799	4,417	516
1938	..	..	..	2,222,088	4,563	487
1939	..	..	..	2,342,639	4,762	492
1940	..	..	..	2,516,099	5,046	499
1941	..	..	..	2,639,507	4,991	529
1942	..	..	..	2,680,041	4,997	536
1943	..	..	..	2,787,868	5,374	519
1944	..	..	..	2,805,970	5,595	502
1945	..	..	..	2,833,576	5,592	507
1946	..	..	..	2,793,870	5,557	503

It will be noted that there has been a decline of late years in the production from underground mines and that over-all production has only been maintained by the increase in production from opencast mines. This is also reflected in the progressive decline in the output per man figures for underground mines both in the output per man underground and in the output per man on pay-roll. This is due in great part to the difficulty in recruiting young able-bodied men to the industry, the more difficult mining conditions in some mines, and the increased proportion of workers underground who are not engaged in actual coal-hewing. Despite the comparatively high wages earned, the better conditions obtaining, and the provision of social amenities, the industry is not as attractive as other occupations, while it has also to carry an increased proportion of men who have been injured in the industry and are not physically capable of full effort. Under these circumstances it has been difficult to make up the inevitable wastage of hewers by skilled men, and their number, in consequence, has declined. Increase of men employed at the coal-mines cannot be obtained without an increase in the provision of housing in coal-mining centres, which is retarded by the difficulties general to the whole housing position of the country. The provision of hostels for single men in four centres now being undertaken by the National Employment Department should help to relieve the situation, while it is hoped that some skilled men may be recruited from Great Britain under the Government's immigration policy.

The most serious aspect of the coal-production position has been the decline in the production of the higher-grade bituminous coals. Since 1941, when a record production of 1,179,581 tons was achieved, there has been a gradual decline until 1946, when 958,270 tons were produced. New Zealand's resources of bituminous coal are not unlimited, and after many years of exploitation the more accessible and easily-worked deposits are approaching exhaustion, while, owing to the lenticular nature of the deposits, extensive boring is necessary before development of new mines can be undertaken with confidence. It was inevitable during the war years with shortage of man-power that essential development work had to be sacrificed to the exigencies of the times, and there is accordingly considerable leeway to be made up.