

On the property of Taupiri Coal Mines, Ltd., a new opencast pit was commenced on Thompson's area, where 156,000 tons of coal will be won, the overburden ratio being 4.4 to 1. The development of Barker's area was also accelerated. From this site it is expected that 336,600 tons of coal will be won, the overburden ratio being about 4.5 to 1.

Devlin's Mine area was purchased during the year and underground mining ceased. Further drilling carried out since the purchase has proved the existence of 201,300 tons of coal with an overburden ratio of 5 to 1. Opencast operations will be commenced on this block in the next few months.

Drilling and survey work is proceeding on the Callaghan's and Maori Farm areas, which are known to be suitable for large-scale opencast development. Further data is essential, however, before these jobs can be put in hand and worked on the most efficient basis.

KING-COUNTRY

There was no change in conditions at Waitewhena, where the nature of the overburden makes conditions very difficult during the wet season. A steady output was maintained during the year and, although the accounts record that a loss was suffered during the year, the costs of production are still below those of underground mining.

BULLER DISTRICT

There was a reduction in output from the opencast area at Stockton, due to exhaustion of the original area and the late arrival of plant from overseas for the development of the new blocks. This defect has since been remedied and outputs are now back to normal, and will be increased as soon as the new power-house is in operation and the aerial ropeway is installed. Drilling and survey work has proved the existence of a very large quantity of coal in this field suitable for mining by opencast methods.

Surveys recently revealed a small block of coal at Denniston which could be worked opencast, and this area will be put in production at an early date.

REEFTON DISTRICT

In the Garvey Creek field the vertical seam on the south-east side is being worked on the opencast principle and production should commence within a few months. Survey work has established large blocks at higher levels in this field which could be opencasted, and plans for road access have been completed. It is expected that road-construction will be started at an early date.

OHAI DISTRICT

There was an increase in output from the Black Diamond Pit, where spectacular and highly efficient stripping operations were carried out with the aid of tournapulls.

A new opencast, known as McLean's, was started on the Star property, and production commenced prior to the last Christmas holidays.

Survey and drilling of other potential opencast sites in the district are under way, with very encouraging results to date.

GENERAL

Opencast mining has made a valuable contribution to the economy of the Dominion and last year was responsible for approximately 25 per cent. of the total coal-production. Valuable knowledge and experience has been gained over the past few years and new projects are being planned well ahead. When all the plant on order has arrived and capital works in progress have been completed, the project at Stockton will compare favourably with the most modern undertakings of its kind in any part of the world.