

1908.
NEW ZEALAND.

MINES : STATEMENT

BY THE HON. JAMES MCGOWAN, MINISTER OF MINES.

MR. SPEAKER,—

In presenting my ninth annual Statement on the mining industry of the Dominion, I desire to congratulate members on its continued advancement.

Although there was a falling-off in the yield of gold for the twelve months, there are indications that it will be made up by the increasing yield from some of the leading mines during the current year. Owing to the drought that prevailed there was a scarcity of water for hydraulic elevating and sluicing in Otago and Westland, and many of the claims were consequently idle for several months. As might reasonably have been expected, there has been a falling-off in the number of dredges working, and a consequent decrease in the yield of gold from that source.

Coal-mining, on the other hand, has shown a distinct advance, the output for last year being the largest yet recorded. New coal areas are in course of development on the West Coast to keep pace with the constantly increasing demand for the high-class bituminous coal mined in that part of the Dominion. There is a very large area within which brown coal is mined, and, with the introduction of producer-gas plants, we may look forward to seeing its utilisation for power purposes, not alone in connection with mining, but for many other industries. Brown coal has given good results, more particularly in Germany, in the manufacture of producer-gas.

Kauri-gum continues a valuable export, and affords employment for a large number of men. The census of 1906 disclosed the fact that there were upwards of three thousand men engaged in this industry. Up to the end of 1907 the export of gum had reached a value of over £14,000,000.

The heavy fall in the metal markets throughout the world has given a set-back, for the time being, to the development of our copper lodes, but as prices are now gradually recovering there is likely to be renewed activity in that direction.

Scheelite-mining is becoming firmly established in Otago, and deposits of this mineral have also been mined at Top Valley, Marlborough. There is an abundance of manganese and antimony in New Zealand, but the low price at which these minerals can be produced in countries having an unlimited supply of cheap labour preclude competition to any great extent on our part. The enormous deposits of hæmatite ore at Parapara are still unworked, but remain a valuable asset to the people of this country.

The total value of gold, silver, and minerals produced within this Dominion now exceeds one hundred millions sterling, while our population has only just reached one million.