

ANNEXURE A.

REPORTS OF INSPECTORS OF MINES.

Mr. BOYD BENNIE, Inspector of Mines, Northern Inspection District, to the UNDER-SECRETARY,
Mines Department, Wellington.

SIR,—

Inspector of Mines Office, Thames, 14th February, 1910.

In compliance with section 78 of the Coal-mines Act, 1908, I have the honour to report on the coal-mines in the Northern District for the year ended 31st December, 1909.

Kawakawa Colliery (Samuel Neill, mine-manager).—Operations are still confined to the extraction of pillars, and considerable expense has been incurred in reopening the old drives, &c. The output of coal from the mine for the year was 580 tons, and three men were employed. The mine, when inspected, was in good order.

Ruatangata Colliery (William Wallace, mine-manager).—The owners have located a seam of coal 7 ft. thick about 40 ft. below the seam worked by the old company. The newly discovered seam is reported to be of first-class quality. The expenditure required for the opening of the mine will be comparatively light, as it is situated near to the Government railway. The mine was inspected during the year, and found to be in good order. Three men were employed prospecting.

Hikurangi Coal Company (Limited) (W. R. Dunn, mine-manager).—The company has vigorously worked the three sections of its property during the past twelve months. In the eastern section the pillars, of which there are a large number remaining, are being drawn with very little loss. The quality of the coal has scarcely deteriorated to any appreciable extent during long and constant exposure to the atmosphere. In the western section men are employed working on the bord-and-pillar system. The seam varies from 4 ft. to 7 ft. in thickness; in the Crown lease section it is only from 3 ft. to 5 ft. thick, hitherto very few men have worked there. The other sections of the company situated south-west of the Hikurangi Township have been prospected by boring, and I understand that the results are satisfactory. The mines were examined several times during the year, and everything gave satisfaction except the ventilation, which is induced by natural means, and is consequently very erratic. The output for the year was 58,359 tons of coal, or 2,712 tons below the return of the previous year; the dividends amounted to £5,062 10s.

Northern Coal Company (Limited) (William Morgan, mine-manager).—A dip heading has been driven in a north-easterly direction to the dip of the old mine, thus opening up and draining a large area of coal, and improving the ventilation. This section is opening out well, the coal-seam being 12 ft. thick in places. A drive has been carried through some pillars in the old Mino section where a creep had taken place, and towards the end of the year pillars were being drawn close to the boundary. Most of these pillars may safely be drawn if care is exercised. In the early part of the year the ventilation was defective, necessitating the sinking of a shaft to connect with the workings, also the connecting of the north-east dip with the old workings. Although this has resulted in a material improvement in the natural ventilation, it is inadequate. The output of coal for the year was 39,301 tons, showing a decrease of 10,275 tons. Seventy-three men were employed.

Kiripaka Mine (Northern Coal Company, owners; E. W. Tattley, mine-manager).—Early in the year operations were confined to the north side of the main dip, where some pillars were extracted. Subsequently a creep occurred in No. 2 south level, but it has now settled, enabling the company to extract the pillars in this affected area. A new dip heading has been driven through the thin coal on the south of the main dip for a distance of 400 ft., and coal 5 ft. in thickness has been proved. To facilitate this undertaking a new air-compressor was installed on the surface, and a 5 in. single-cylinder haulage-engine underground. The haulage-engine and pumps are now driven by compressed air. A diamond drill for prospecting-work has been continuously used during the year, with satisfactory results. The mine was found to be in good order. Adequate ventilation is maintained by a fan. A complete first-aid equipment has been jointly purchased by the company and the Miners' Union. The output for the year—a record one—was 36,542 tons of coal and 1,500 tons of fireclay. Eighty-five men were employed.

Taipiri Coal-mines (Limited).—This company continues to occupy the premier position in this Island as a coal-producer. A disagreement between the company and the workmen regarding a vital clause in the Workers' Compensation Act, 1908, caused a short delay in resuming work after the Christmas holidays; but upon this being satisfactorily arranged the men returned to work. Mining operations were pushed ahead, with the result that the coal output from the three sections of the company constitutes a record, exceeding the output of the previous year by 17,050 tons.

Ralph's section (E. S. Wight, mine-manager).—The principal development work for the year consisted of driving a connection with the Taipiri West shaft. Three shifts of men have been constantly employed on this work at both ends, and it is anticipated that the connection will be made by the end of July, 1910. There remained only 530 yards to be driven on the 14th February. Various improvements have been carried out in the last few months. The drainage has been improved by putting down a borehole 62 chains west of the shaft connecting the mine-workings at a depth of 380 ft. A