

was due to an emission of firedamp in the old workings, and that the weekly inspection of old workings was inadequate. On the 17th and 18th November, at a conference of all Inspectors of Mines in the Dominion, held at Wellington, it was decided to enforce Special Rule 8 of the Coal-mines Act, which provides that "the underviewer shall examine *all parts* of the mine daily and also all the air-courses of the mine." In consequence of the above decision, on the 7th March, 1915, Mr. Bennie, Inspector of Mines for the North Island collieries, proceeded at the Magistrate's Court, Huntly, against the manager of Ralph's Colliery for non-compliance with the above special rule with respect to the traversable standing pillar areas at that colliery, and the defendant was convicted on all charges. An appeal was subsequently lodged against this conviction, and in July, 1915, the Full Court held that an offence had not been committed against Special Rule 8, and the conviction was therefore quashed. It was ruled that, Having regard to Special Rules 17, 23, 24, and 41, the words "all parts of the mine" in Special Rule 8 were limited to the actual mine in which the working of the mine was going on. The Judges concluded their finding by stating that "As this is a departmental prosecution necessarily brought to ascertain the law on the subject, we do not think that it is a case for the allowance of costs."

The other important case consisted in an arbitration between the Inspector of Mines (Mr. Bennie) and the manager of the Taupiri Extended Colliery, Huntly, under sections 56 and 57 of the Coal-mines Act, to decide if the Taupiri Extended Colliery was dangerous as to require the construction of an additional outlet as a means of egress for the workmen employed in the dip-workings in case of emergency from irruption of water, gas-explosion, or fire. This case was held before two assessors, with Justice Cooper as umpire, at Auckland, in November, 1915; the assessors finally deciding that the mine was not dangerous as to require such additional outlet, but in a memorandum they suggested the construction of a dam or stopping by hydraulic packing in the under-water workings at the said colliery, also the use of stronger roof-supports. During March, 1916, the miners at the Taupiri Extended Colliery refused to continue working unless precautionary measures were at once undertaken against irruption of water: and, as the result of a conference subsequently held between their representatives and the mine-owners, the latter agreed to isolate the shallow under-river and under-lake workings by the construction of seventeen timber and concrete dams, also to construct an inclined stone drive to the upcast shaft as an additional outlet. The estimated cost of these precautionary measures is quite double that of the additional outlet for which the Department took action. The construction of these measures against irruption of water by mutual consent is creditable to the mine-owners, and substantially vindicates the Mines Department in its action to prove that there was actual danger at the Taupiri Extended Colliery. For further details regarding this case see my remarks on Taupiri Extended Colliery under the heading "Section V, Mining Operations."

In reference to the two cases here referred to, the Coal-mine Owners' Association at its annual meeting in March last passed a resolution adverse to the action of the Mines Department, inferring that it was antagonistic to the welfare of the coal-mining industry. It is fair to assume that the association was not fully informed of the whole of the circumstances of the cases.

SECTION V.—GENERAL REMARKS.

MINING OPERATIONS.

North Auckland Coalfield.

Coal-mining operations in the Hikurangi district during the past year have been unimportant, and exploration has not revealed any extension of the proved coal reserves.

Hikurangi Colliery.—The output from Moodie's old section and at four small detached sections, three of which are situated near Waro Railway-station, has been obtained by pillar-extraction. Operations have been retarded by mine-fires and irruption of water. The Inspector of Mines has reported inadequate ventilation in the Waro sections, and has requested that the same shall be improved.

Northern Colliery.—The principal mine on the company's freehold is almost exhausted of coal. A new mine is being opened on the Crown lease, Section 2, Block XVI, situated to the south-east of the present mine which it is proposed to connect thereto by surface tramway.

Kiripaka Colliery.—The Panipu section having become exhausted, a new section is being developed to work a 6 ft. coal-seam proved by boring near Waitangi Creek. This section has been connected by surface tramway with the company's railway to the shipping depot at Ngunguru River.

Whangarei Colliery.—The seam hitherto worked has proved considerable faulting, but from boreholes it is believed that an improvement may be found ahead of the present workings. This mine is operated from a shaft the winding equipment of which I found to be in an unsatisfactory condition.

Waikato Coalfield.

The output from this coalfield amounted to 342,533 tons, being an increase of 43,213 tons above that of the previous year.

Ralph's Colliery.—The output has considerably decreased, and underground development in every direction indicates that the workable coal remaining is of very limited extent. A new Sirocco double inlet fan has been installed, which I found was circulating 83,580 cubic feet of air per minute, being almost double the output of the Waddle fan previously in commission. I found the working-places and travelling-roads to be well ventilated. Safety-lamps and permitted explosives only are