

SCHOOLS OF MINES.

The expenditure by the Department on the schools of mines situated at Coromandel, Thames, Karangahake, Waihi, and Huntly, in the North Island, and at Westport and Reefton in the South Island, amounted during the year ended the 31st March, 1917, to £3,792 13s. 6d. The total expenditures on these schools, exclusive of subsidies paid to the University of Otago School of Mines, amounted on the 31st March, 1917, to £70,390 9s. 1d. At the annual Government examinations at these schools no student competed for any of the six scholarships offered annually by the Government. It is now several years since a scholarship has been gained, notwithstanding that the conditions have been considerably relaxed.

SUBSIDIZED PROSPECTING.

During the year ended 31st March, 1917, seventeen approved prospecting parties were granted subsidies amounting to £6,506 13s. 4d., of which £5,353 13s. 4d. was expended during that period. Upon these subsidized operations and those subsidized previously twenty-two parties, employing sixty-seven persons, were during 1916 engaged in prospecting. The results as yet attained have been unimportant.

ROADS AND TRACKS.

The expenditure on roads and tracks by subsidies and direct grants during the financial year ended 31st March, 1917, amounted to £17,098 6s. 3d.

GOVERNMENT WATER-RACES.

The Waimea-Kumara and Mount Ida water-races, which render possible hydraulic mining in the Kumara district, Westland, and the Naseby district, Central Otago, have during 1916 supplied seventy miners with water for sluicing, by which gold to the approximate value of £14,683 was obtained. The cash received for water sold amounted to £2,609, and the expenditure on the upkeep of the races was £3,462. These races are therefore not self-supporting, and no allowance for interest on capital expenditure or depreciation has been made. During 1916 the average annual earnings per miner using Government water, after deducting the amount paid for the same, was £170, being £10 less than during the previous year. From these earnings must be subtracted all expenditure on plant and material, also rent and other incidental expenses; it will thus be seen that the alluvial miners using Government water appear to be satisfied to work for less than the current rate of wages in other arduous occupations.

COAL-MINERS' RELIEF FUND.

As required by the Coal-mines Act, 1908, the owner of every coal-mine contributes $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per ton on all coal sold, for the relief of coal-miners who may be injured whilst working, and for the relief of families of coal-miners who may be killed or injured.

The following is a statement of the accounts of the fund during the two last financial years:—

	Year ended 31st March, 1916. £	Year ended 31st March, 1917. £
Contributions	1,966	1,980
Allowances on account of accidents, &c. .	1,526	1,427
Balance	7,303	8,172

PROVISION FOR PERSONS TOTALLY INCAPACITATED BY MINERS' PHTHISIS.

By the passing of the Miners' Phthisis Act, 1915, the Gold-miners' Relief Fund was abolished; and provision is now made in the new Act for a pension of £1 per week being paid to a married man or a widower with young children, and 15s. per week to a single man who is or becomes totally incapacitated for work owing to miners' phthisis contracted while working as a miner in New Zealand. In addition to this, the widow of any pensioner under the Act who dies from that disease is entitled to a pension of 12s. 6d. per week for two years. Funeral expenses to the extent of £20 are also provided for. Duty of 3d. per ounce on all gold exported is reserved for these pensions, and the Act is administered by the Commissioner under the Pensions Act, 1913.