

SECTION II.—PERSONS EMPLOYED.

Inspection District.					Average Number of Persons employed during 1916.		
					Above Ground.	Below Ground.	Total.
Northern	...	...	...	...	209	329	838
West Coast	...	...	...	...	510	1,711	2,221
Southern	...	...	...	...	269	660	929
Totals, 1916	...	...	...	...	988	3,000	3,988
Totals, 1915	...	...	...	...	1,050	3,106	4,156

The annual decrease in the number of persons employed amounts to 4 per cent., whereas during the previous year it amounted to 13 per cent.

Coal-miners are now exempted from compulsory military service if their appeal is supported by the manager of the colliery at which they are employed.

SECTION III.—ACCIDENTS.

The following is a summary of coal-mining accidents during 1916, with their causes:—

	Fatal Accidents.		Serious Non-fatal Accidents.	
	Number of Separate Fatal Accidents.	Number of Deaths.	Number of Separate Non-fatal Accidents.	Number of Persons injured, including those injured by Accidents which proved Fatal to their Companions.
Explosions of fire-damp or coal-dust	...	...	...	...
Falls of ground	5	5	7	8
Explosives...	...	...	...	...
Haulage	...	...	2	2
Miscellaneous—Underground...	...	...	4	4
On surface	1	1	2	2
Totals	6	6	15	16

The death-rate from accidents was 1·50 per 1,000 persons employed, or one death per 376,189 tons of coal produced and per 665 persons employed. This compares favourably with other countries where mining is also safeguarded by the law.

Of the six fatal accidents four were due to falls of bituminous coal at West Coast collieries, and possibly three of these would not have occurred if greater care had been shown by the sufferers themselves. The fatal accidents to J. Robinson and E. Dando, however, appear to have been unavoidable by ordinary precautions, being incident to the hazard of the industry.

In the description of these accidents following it will be seen that timber was used in proximity to all the places where fatalities occurred, but it failed to support the ground which fell. The extremely treacherous nature of the West Coast bituminous coal owing to absence of adhesion to the roof and frequency of coal-joints or sooty backs is not sufficiently realized by many miners, for although the law provides for systematic timbering, yet upon inspection cases are found at almost every mine where the specified distance between props and the face is exceeded, for which the miners are generally responsible; it is impracticable for deputies or Inspectors to be ubiquitous. There appears, therefore, small prospect of improvement unless miners are more appreciative of the danger.

The only other fatality occurred to an aged man, H. Holmes, who inadvertently walked in front of a slowly moving railway-wagon under a coal-bin, and was run over.

At North Island collieries, all of which are included in the inspection district of Mr. Boyd Bennie, no fatal accident occurred during 1916. It is also gratifying for me to record that during the past three years and a half there has not been a single fatal accident at the collieries of Canterbury, Otago, and Southland, at which nearly a thousand persons are employed. This is a remarkable record, and is greatly to the credit of the colliery officials and to Mr. E. R. Green, Inspector of Mines for those provincial districts which comprise the southern inspectorate.