

ANNEXURE A.

SUMMARY OF REPORTS BY INSPECTORS OF MINES.

NORTHERN INSPECTION DISTRICT. (Mr. BOYD BENNIE, Inspector.)

Taupiri Extended Mine.—The main workings are located in the south-west and north-west dip sections. The bords are 12 ft. to 16 ft. high, with 5 ft. to 6 ft. of coal left on the roof as a protection against falls. The general working-conditions of the mine are satisfactory.

As a result of the arbitration case, *Inspector of Mines v. Taupiri Collieries*, of November, 1915, and a conference held on the 25th March between the directors and management of the colliery, the Miners' Union representatives, and myself, seventeen concrete dams reinforced with steel rails were built in drives. These dams were completed in December, 1916, and shut off all the disused old workings east of the shafts, including the drives underlying Lake Hakanoa and those adjacent thereto, and including the site of the subsidence under Onslow Street and a triangular section lying under the Waikato River abutting on to the Great North Road, and the Barrier coal pillar between this and Ralph's Mine. These dams have been well constructed, and I am of opinion that they are sufficiently strong for the purpose for which they were built. At one place known as the "Iron Pillars" the drives have been filled with fine coal previously heated so that the danger from spontaneous combustion and noxious gases has been eliminated. The drives adjacent to the subsidence of July, 1915, have also been filled in the same manner.

The numbers of prosecutions of miners and workmen for taking smoking material or matches into the mine has been considerably reduced, and is now almost a negligible quantity.

It is a pleasing feature that no fatal accidents occurred during 1916.

The official reports at the mine show that gas has been found in small quantities, principally in the disused old workings, and has always been removed immediately after its discovery.

Ralph's Colliery.—This colliery was worked with a limited number of men. Early in the year the management decided to discontinue mining at the Ralph's and Taupiri West shafts, believing that the remaining available coal could be more conveniently worked through the Extended Mine or possibly through new shafts. With that end in view work was carried on at the sections known as Bond's Dip on the north side of the mine abutting the Extended coal pillar, and also at the south side (Big Jig), and at the back of a fault-line from No. 3 level. At the latter place, at No. 6 jig, there were met two upthrow faults, and although there is a thick cover overlying the coal-seam, the nature of the rock was such as to be dangerous to work the coal lying beyond the faults and abutting on to the western bank of the Waikato River. The coal lying west of No. 6 level and under Lake Waahi can be worked from Taupiri West shaft or a new shaft adjacent to that pit.

In view of the suspension of work at Ralph's Mine a reinforced-concrete dam has been erected in the heading connecting Ralph's and Taupiri West shafts, and, there being no other connecting-drives, the dam will separate those mines one from the other, and in any future operations south-west of Ralph's Mine dam the Taupiri West shaft may be made use of. The said dam is strongly built, is let into the sides and roof and floor of the drive, and is all in coal. The concrete is 15 ft. wide by 8 ft. high.

In December the rails, pumps, &c., were withdrawn and the mine closed.

No fatal or serious accidents occurred at this mine during 1916. Gas has been found in the old workings on several occasions during the year.

Huntly Brick and Fireclay Company (Limited).—This company is mining coal by open cut on its freehold property for use at the brickworks, no coal being sold. The coal is worked from pillars left in by a former mining company.

Waipa Railway and Colliery Company (Limited).—Nos. 1 and 2 adit levels are worked and well ventilated jointly, while No. 3 level is separate from the others, and is working the coal lying beyond the big upthrow fault. At Nos. 1 and 2 levels most of the first working up to the upthrow fault has been completed and a section of pillar coal extracted. The seam is from 6 ft. to 12 ft. thick, 2 ft. to 3 ft. of coal being left on the roof as a protection against falls.

There was a serious accident in the mine during the year, two men being hurt. I attributed the accident to the bords being driven too wide, and in consequence of the friable coal and roof rock I ordered the width of bords to be reduced and systematic timbering to be adopted, the timbers to be set closer in the rows and the rows to be set closer to each other. Generally I found the mine safely worked.

Pukemiro Colliery.—This mine has worked continuously during the year. I have found the mine safe and well ventilated. The coal is of a hard and good quality, bords being driven 14 ft. wide and from 10 ft. to 16 ft. high, 2 ft. to 4 ft. of coal being left on the roof of the bords as a protection against falls of roof, which is friable clay. No pillar coal has yet been mined.

The mine is opening out very favourably. Eight-yard pillars are left, and the mine is being opened in panel sections, which will tend to safety and greatly assist in efficiency of ventilation, which has been good. Electrically driven endless-rope haulage is installed from the screening plant into No. 2 section, improved rope-clips being in use. Mine-pumps, haulage-winch, and ventilation-fan are electrically driven, the cables being well protected.

No serious accidents occurred in the mine during the year, but one serious accident occurred at the screening plant, when a man named H. Magnall was crushed between two trucks.