

At the State collieries near Greymouth 432 persons were employed, none of whom succumbed to the epidemic. The West Coast suffered least of all districts. I am unable to offer any explanation for the higher percentage of deaths of coal-miners than of metal-miners, except that the epidemic happened to be more virulent in certain colliery townships such as Huntly, Kaitangata, and Nightcaps. The ventilation of coal-mines is probably superior to that of metal-mines; both are provided with bath and change-house accommodation at the principal mines. There is no marked difference in the character of their homes. Coal-miners usually receive on the average higher wages, and they do not work in deleterious siliceous dust from rock-drills, as do some metal-miners.

MINING AND QUARRY ACCIDENTS.

No fatal accident occurred at any colliery, metal-mine, or stone-quarry in the North Island during 1918, in which operations 4,158 persons were employed. No fatal accident occurred in or about any metal-mine in the Dominion during the year; but two fatalities, one of which occurred at an oil-bore and the other at a gold-dredge, have been counted as mining accidents, such operations coming under the provisions of the Mining Act. At stone-quarries two fatal accidents occurred in the South Island. In or about the collieries of the South Island six fatalities occurred, all being from falls of coal, stone, or timber. In no case was any person held blameworthy by the Coroner's jury which inquired into the circumstances of these accidents. In such cases it is usually found that the sufferer or his companion failed to properly protect themselves by timber supports as required by the regulations.

The proportion of fatalities during 1918 per 1,000 persons employed is as follows: Metal-mines, 0·77; collieries, 1·50; stone-quarries, 1·40: total (8,002 persons), 1·24, being the lowest for any year since mining was commenced in New Zealand.

SCHOOLS OF MINES.

The expenditure by the Department on the schools of mines at Coromandel, Thames, Waihi, Karangahake, and Huntly in the Auckland Provincial District, and at Westport, Reefton, and Otago in the South Island, for the year ended 31st March, 1919, amounted to £4,300.

The present regulations relating to Schools of Mines scholarships are much in need of revision, and are now receiving attention at the hands of the departmental experts, acting in conjunction with the Directors of the schools.

A proposal by the Otago University authorities for the granting of mining bursaries is also receiving careful consideration, with a view to its adoption in a more or less modified form.

SUBSIDIZED PROSPECTING.

During the year ended 31st March, 1919, nine approved prospecting-parties were granted subsidies amounting to over £1,400, of which over £1,200 was expended during the year. In addition to this, £9,942 granted during previous years was also expended. In two cases payable quartz was proved by subsidized work. During the year no loans for the development of mining under Part X of the Mining Act were granted, and it would appear that the part of the Act referred to stands in need of amendment to enable mining companies to take advantage of it to a larger extent than at present. I may say that the present provision has now been in force for fourteen years, and only six loans have so far been granted under it. In the Mining Amendment Bill which I hope to see placed on the statute-book this session provision is made for enlarging and improving this provision.

GOVERNMENT PROSPECTING-DRILLS.

Extensive use has been made during the year of the Government prospecting-drills, which are lent to hirers free of charge. This class of State aid to mining has proved to be most beneficial to the industry. The results of boring during the