

As long ago as April, 1925, I wrote to the Under-Secretary for Mines pointing out that I had reasons for believing that gas would be met in considerable quantity in this mine, and directed that a close watch should be kept on the operations, and that every precaution should be taken in the interests of the safety of the men. Pursuant to this direction, and in consequence of his own observations, the Inspector of Mines for the district gave special attention to the mine. On two occasions he prosecuted with success the manager of the mine for failure to comply with the law as to the ventilation, and on other occasions he caused the men to be withdrawn from the mine until certain dangerous defects were remedied. The Commission found that the Inspector of Mines had been thorough and efficient throughout.

Since holding the portfolio of Minister of Mines I have laid it down from time to time to my staff that safety must come first, and that the safety provisions of the law must be rigidly enforced; and as long as I have the honour to hold such portfolio it is my firm intention to continue to insist upon the safety-first principle being adhered to and observed.

Although not stated in the report by the Commission, it was shown in the evidence adduced at the inquiry that under the regulations existing at the time of the explosion the Dobson Mine did not require to be stone-dusted. It was also shown at the inquiry that subsequently the regulations were drastically amended so as to ensure that not only the Dobson Mine but other mines on the West Coast would require to be stone-dusted in future. The amended regulation goes much further than the corresponding British regulation.

A leaflet repeating specially the law dealing with the prevention of the inflammation of coal-dust has been published by the Department for the information and guidance of all colliery officials. The attention of officials has also been called in such leaflet to their responsibilities under the law, and to the fact that, by request of the Minister of Mines, the Inspectors of Mines have been instructed to insist upon rigid compliance with the law regarding stone-dusting in coal-mines.

SOCIAL AMENITIES AT MINING TOWNSHIPS.

In my statement last year I referred to the facilities provided for athletic sports, &c., in mining towns. During the past year two additional tennis-courts were in course of construction at Pukemiro, where a bowling-green is also projected for construction in the near future. The Pukemiro Collieries Co. is financially assisting very largely in both of these amenities. At Waipa a standard-size bowling-green has been formed, and is now in use. Half the means has been provided by the Waipa Railway and Collieries Co., Ltd. In addition, the Company has promised further means for constructing a pavilion on the bowling-green.

At Glen Afton, the Glen Afton Collieries Co., Ltd., has financed and constructed a commodious hall, which is let upon a rental basis to the public and miners' organizations.

At Runanga another tennis-court and croquet-lawn are proposed. It is intended that these will be constructed by the clubs, with some assistance from the State Mines staff.

It is pleasing to record that the play areas provided in the various mining townships are extensively used and patronized by the miners and public.

GEOLOGICAL SURVEY.

During the 1926-27 field season the Geological Survey began detailed examinations (1) of a large area in central Nelson, of which Murchison is the centre; (2) of the district extending southward from Poverty Bay to the northern part of Hawke's Bay; and (3) of the volcanic region of the North Island (Rotorua and adjoining districts). The soil-survey of Central Otago, undertaken last year on behalf of the Public Works Department, was continued.

As in former years, a large amount of useful work was done by the palæontological branch of the Survey. Many fossil collections, some of which were received from outside workers in geology, were thoroughly examined.