

INVESTIGATIONS, NEW ZEALAND COALS.

Research work on coal has been continued at the Dominion Laboratory under the direction of the Coal Research Association, in which the Mines Department is represented.

The low-temperature carbonization of some Waikato coals has been investigated at temperatures of 550° and 600°, using the Fischer rotary retort installed last year. The condensing system was modified by the addition of absorbers of activated carbon to strip the light oil from the gas. A meter was also installed to accurately measure the volume of gas produced. A full charge for the retort is 30 lb. of coal. The average yield for Rotowaro coal at 600° C. per ton of coal as charged was: Residue, 10·5 cwt.; tar-oil, 16·3 gallons; light oil from gas, 0·9 gallon; gas, 4,215 cubic feet. The work is being extended to the other chief classes of New Zealand coal.

In addition to the work carried out at the Dominion Laboratory, an investigation was made of conditions of stone-dusting in New Zealand coal-mines, and a report prepared on the subject.

COAL-MINERS' RELIEF FUND.

As mentioned in the Statement for the year 1927, all accident-relief payments are now made from the Coal-miners' Relief Fund, which is administered by the Public Trustee, the Miners' Sick and Accident Funds having been abolished as from the 1st April, 1926, and incorporated in the Coal-miners' Relief Fund.

Notwithstanding that the Public Trustee increased, as from the 1st April, 1927, the rate of interest on the funds by $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., the Relief Fund shows a diminution of £685 7s. 4d. as at the 31st March, 1929, as against a diminution of £712 0s. 1d. as at the 31st March, 1928. This has been caused by the payments for relief exceeding the receipts for the year.

The interest earned for the twelve months ended 31st March, 1929, was £1,364 14s. 2d., as against £1,365 1s. for the previous year, while for the same periods the receipts from the $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per ton contribution were £4,893 10s. 7d. and £5,072 18s. 1d. respectively. No vouchers were recredited to the Fund during the year, as against £2 12s. 1d. for the previous year.

The total expenditure for the year ended 31st March, 1929, amounted to £6,943 12s. 1d., as against £7,152 11s. 3d. for the previous year.

The amount standing to the credit of the Fund as at the 31st March, 1929, was £25,471 3s. 10d., as against £26,156 11s. 2d. at the 31st March, 1928.

STATE COLLIERIES.

HOUSING.

With the object of enabling miners and other employees working at the State collieries to erect and own their own homes, a housing scheme was introduced by the Government several years ago, but it was not until two years ago that the employees availed themselves of the opportunity thus offered.

To the 31st March, 1929, twenty loans for financing the cost of the erection of twenty houses have been sanctioned, the lowest advance being for £250 and the highest £300. Repayments are made at the rate of 3s. 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per week for each £100 loaned, and at the end of twenty years' time the loan is liquidated.

OUTPUT AND SALES.

The operations of the State coal-mines and State coal-depots for the year ended 31st March, 1929, are briefly reviewed hereunder.

Liverpool Colliery.—The gross output for the year was 129,126 tons, as compared with 143,889 tons for last year, a decrease of 14,763 tons.

James Colliery.—The gross output for the year was 39,105 tons, as compared with 41,345 tons for last year, a decrease of 2,240 tons.

A comparative statement for the two years is shown hereunder:—

Mine.	Output in Tons, 1928–29.		Output in Tons, 1927–28.	
	Gross.	Net.	Gross.	Net.
Liverpool	129,126	122,340	143,889	137,180
James	39,105	36,614	41,345	37,142

NOTE.—The difference between the gross and the net output is the allowance for mine consumption and waste. In addition to the above, 4,280 tons of coal were purchased for resale, of which 2,455 tons were purchased from co-operative parties on the West Coast.