

ANNEXURE B.

STONE QUARRIES.

SUMMARY OF REPORT BY INSPECTOR OF QUARRIES FOR THE NORTH ISLAND.

(JAMES NEWTON.)

The quantity of stone won during the year under review presents a slight increase when compared with the previous year's output, and, whilst twenty-six more quarries have been worked, seventy-three fewer men have been employed. The output of stone per person employed, however, shows a decided increase, being 838 tons, as against 766 last year.

Harbour works present a decreased output of 3,683 tons, the stone won for manufacture of cement or mortar shows a decided decrease of 32,828 tons. Stone won for agricultural purposes presents an increase of 5,524 tons. Stone won for roading purposes was increased by 21,374 tons, and, whilst no stone was recorded under "Miscellaneous" last year, the output under this heading for the present year represents 26,321 tons. The total output, 1,086,217 tons, shows an increase in output over last year's winnings of 16,604 tons, but whilst the output has been greater to that extent the value of the stone at the quarry has decreased by £40,403.

Only a small proportion of the quarries operated can be designated permanent undertakings. By far the greater number are worked during a very limited period of the year, in consequence of which nothing like permanent employment has been available to the majority of those persons employed in this class of work.

Generally speaking, I have found on inspection that reasonable care is being shown in the working of the numerous stone faces. When the nature of the stone won in our quarries is taken into consideration, the work at its best is in my opinion a precarious occupation, owing to the fact that the greater number of quarry-faces are high, and for the most part consist of greatly shattered and extensively jointed stone traversed in many cases by treacherous erratically disposed greasy heads which at times defy observation until the frontal stone has been removed. These conditions necessitate the careful vigilance of the quarry-worker in order to prevent accidental happenings. On account of such conditions I have favoured working the most of the quarry breasts with a backward gradient, systematic benching of the face being resorted to only where the stone is horizontally bedded.

The following accidents, notifiable under section 4 of the Stone Quarries Amendment Act, 1922, have happened during the year under review:—

On the 12th January, in the Auckland City's Mount Eden Quarry, F. Florey received a broken toe, the result of getting his foot run over by a truck whilst endeavouring to lower it down an incline.

On the 4th March K. Young, employed in Pascoe's Epsom Quarry, received a broken leg, the result of being struck by a rolling stone that was barred from the tops of the quarry by one of the employees.

On the 26th June J. Zegura received a broken leg, the result of a rolling stone. He was engaged spawling stone on the floor of the quarry, and in attempting to place a stone by means of a crowbar in a position to spawl same it rolled on to his leg with the above result. This occurrence happened in Bray's Penrose Quarry.

In the same quarry on the 24th July M. Dracevich received a nasty flesh wound, the result of a rolling stone striking him whilst barring down the face.

On the 8th December J. Tipene, in the Paekakariki Quarry, had the misfortune to lose the index finger and thumb entirely and the distal joint of the ring and middle fingers, the result of a premature explosion. Tipene was about to bull a hole, and he states that he held on to the bulling charge too long.

Tunnel Quarries.—During the year tunnelling in connection with sewerage-works in the Auckland District has been carried on continuously, and has entailed a fair amount of inspection. Most of the drivages have been through hard blue basalt, and on account of the drives being somewhat small in size very little timber has been necessary for support. I have found on inspection that satisfactory conditions have prevailed in connection with the handling and storage of the necessary explosives, and that ventilation has been adequate.

A fairly large number of examinations have had to be conducted with candidates for quarry-managers permits. Such applications have entailed a considerable amount of clerical work, and the examinations have been conducted at times and places most suitable both to the examiner and candidate.

I think it would be a matter of gross discourtesy did I not mention in conclusion that the officers connected with the various public bodies have ungrudgingly tendered to me every facility in the manner of transport to their several quarries. At times with inconvenience to themselves I have been motored by them long distances into the back country, in consequence of which I have been enabled to attend to my duties economically and expeditiously.