

A few details of the more important dredges being built or about to be built will not be out of place.

At the time of the dredging boom of thirty years ago, the largest dredge in New Zealand had buckets of 7 cubic feet capacity, which discharged at a rate of nine and a half per minute. The maximum depth to which the dredge could work was 50 ft.

The Rimu Gold Dredging Company's new plant near Hokitika, which commenced work in 1931, has buckets of 12 cubic feet capacity, which discharge at the rate of nineteen per minute. The largest gold-dredge in the world was built in California in 1934, and has buckets of 18 cubic feet capacity. At the present time there are two modern powerful dredges under construction in Otago for operation on the Clutha River, both of which will have buckets of 12 cubic feet capacity, while for the West Coast several dredges are at present being designed which will have bucket capacities from 14 to 18 cubic feet and will require about 1,000 horse-power each to operate. Modern machines of this type each have a digging-capacity equal to ten average dredges of thirty years ago, and one or two will excavate up to a depth of 115 ft.

It is hoped that as a result of the greatly increased activity in dredging the amount of gold exported will show a corresponding advance, the benefit of which will be felt by the whole Dominion.

Indeed, those companies which are carrying out intensive prospecting campaigns, or have already commenced constructional work, have assisted very appreciably in easing the unemployment situation.

The peak of gold-production from dredging occurred in 1902, when there were about two hundred plants in actual operation, and probably totalled about 160,000 oz. per annum. Provided the price of gold remains as at present, it is not beyond the realms of possibility again to reach this figure.

During the year the Mining Amendment Act, 1934, was passed. Several sections in this Act are designed to assist development by increasing the maximum size of dredging claims and so encouraging the introduction of the large amount of capital necessary to provide modern dredges.

MINERAL PRODUCTION.

The following statement shows the quantity and value of the production of metalliferous mines, stone-quarries under the Stone-quarries Act, and of coal-mines during 1934 and 1933 :—

Mineral.	1934.		1933.	
	Quantity.	Value.	Quantity.	Value.
Gold and silver*	542,863 oz.	£ 1,195,840	592,247 oz.	£ 1,099,579
Platinum	..	..	3½ „	21
Pig-iron	1,337 tons	6,484	3,286 tons	16,842
Stone	..	261,637	..	196,481
Pumice	2,491 tons	6,796	2,387 „	8,544
Coal	2,060,315 „	2,060,315	1,821,258 „	1,821,258
Tungsten-ore	39 „	4,678	..	..
Quicksilver	3,852 lb.	516	†9,000 lb.	1,240
Totals	..	£3,536,266	..	£3,143,965

* The gold-silver bullion is generally exported unseparated. † Includes 1,500 lb. valued at £240 produced in 1932, but not recorded in that year.

The value of minerals, including kauri-gum, exported and of the coal used in the Dominion, which is shown in Table No. 1 accompanying this Statement, amounted to £3,482,490, as compared with £3,151,807, during 1933. The total value of such minerals exported to the end of 1934 amounted to £188,573,857.