

A new briquetting plant, in which a mixture of West Coast and Waikato slack coals is being used, has been erected at Onehunga.

LABORATORY INVESTIGATIONS.

The Dominion Laboratory has been responsible for the testing of prospectors' samples from all parts of the Dominion, chiefly for gold and silver, but occasionally for other metals also. Several were examined for manganese, for which a demand exists abroad.

Mine airs from numerous collieries have been examined as required by the inspection staff of the Mines Department for noxious and inflammable gases.

Some further work is in progress in connection with the utilization of New Zealand coal for gas-making at works equipped with vertical retort settings. The excessive swelling of some of our best coals is a handicap to their use in such retorts. Investigations in previous years have shown that blending with non-swelling coals, such as the brown (sub-bituminous) coals, overcomes the difficulty, but blending is laborious on a works scale. It has been suggested that exposure to the air by storage for several months prior to use might be a solution, and the Department and the laboratory are co-operating in a series of storage experiments with typical coals.

The progress of coal research in Great Britain, and, as far as possible, in other countries, is carefully followed by the Dominion Analyst, especially research dealing with the addition of pulverized coal to fuel oil, for oil firing, and with hydrogenation of coal to produce petrol and other oils. The Fuel Chemist of the Laboratory, who formerly worked under the Coal Research Association, is in Great Britain at present, and is making a special study of hydrogenation.

PERSONS EMPLOYED IN OR ABOUT MINES AND STONE-QUARRIES.

The following table shows the number of persons employed in each inspection district during 1934 and 1933 :—

Classification.	Inspection District.			Totals.		
	Northern (North Island).	West Coast (of South Island).	Southern (rest of South Island).	1934.	1933.	Increase or Decrease.
Gold, silver, and tungsten ore	1,271	2,951	2,318	6,540	6,212	Inc. 328
Coal	1,452	2,081	945	4,478	4,386	„ 92
Stone-quarries under the Stone- quarries Act	1,324	107	387	1,818	1,711	„ 107
Oil	10	..	..	10	9	„ 1
Cinnabar	2	..	..	2	..	„ 2
Totals	4,059	5,139	3,650	12,848	12,318	Inc. 530

MINING AND QUARRY ACCIDENTS.

In metalliferous mines, at which 6,542 men were ordinarily employed, six persons were killed and eleven persons seriously injured.

At stone-quarries under the Stone-quarries Act, employing 1,818 men, there were three fatal accidents and six serious accidents.

In coal-mines, where 4,478 persons were ordinarily employed, eight persons were killed and sixteen persons seriously injured.

CO-OPERATIVE MINING, STATE COAL RESERVE.

Eighteen co-operative parties working portions of the State Coal Reserve near Greymouth produced during the year 1934 95,357 tons, the number of men employed being 159. During the previous year eighteen parties produced 90,883 tons, there being an increase this year of 4,474 tons.