

The output of the several classes of coal mined in each inspection district is summarized as follows :—

Class of Coal.	Output of Coal during 1935.				Total Output to the End of 1935.
	Northern District (North Island).	West Coast District (South Island).	Southern District (South Island).	Total.	
Bituminous and sub-bituminous	Tons. 72,866	Tons. 752,361	Tons. ..	Tons. 825,227	Tons. 48,977,729
Brown	764,754	50,210	355,841	1,170,805	29,842,388
Lignite	..	1,082	118,070	119,152	5,017,209
Totals for 1935 ..	837,620	803,653	473,911	2,115,184	83,837,326
Totals for 1934 ..	807,413	783,439	469,463	2,060,315	81,722,142

WASTAGE OF COAL.

The unnecessary wastage of coal, an irreplaceable national asset, has always given me the greatest concern.

Every ton of coal properly utilized will develop as much energy as one thousand men at heavy labour for one day.

Irrespective of whether it is in the form of slack or not, every ton of coal contains innumerable constituents of the greatest value to the human race.

From one product only of the carbonization of coal—namely, coal-tar—over two thousand derivatives are obtainable, and with the advance of science coal as a source of many of the requirements of modern civilization must come more and more into its own. Those nations which most wisely utilize their coal resources and most jealously guard them from waste and destruction must ultimately reap their reward.

Wastage occurs as the result of bad mining methods, mine fires, and the dumping of slack. The officers of my Department have done much in the past to eliminate the first two sources of waste, and they will have my strongest support in striving for further improvement.

There is, undoubtedly, much scope for the adoption of better methods of mining in many mines on freehold lands.

Although a coal-seam may be situated on private property it is still a community asset, and I cannot admit that private ownership confers upon the owner a franchise to waste a portion of that asset.

The other form of waste, the dumping of slack, is an exceedingly serious problem in some localities, notably the Waikato district, where the slack quickly ignites after being dumped, and is thus destroyed.

The Hon. R. J. Seddon, when Minister of Mines in 1891, expressed grave concern at the fact that 500 tons of slack coal was being emptied into the Grey River every month.

In the past few years in one district alone we have been calmly dumping 100,000 tons of slack each year, and, apart from the loss of the coal itself, it has cost thousands of pounds per annum to commit the sin. This rate of wastage is equivalent in energy to the continuous labour of over three hundred thousand men.

As Minister of Mines I say emphatically that this state of affairs must cease.

To the credit of my predecessor I should mention that the Coal-mines Amendment Act passed by Parliament last year empowered the Minister of Mines to purchase slack coal and preserve it under water until marketable, but, as I stated in the House at the time, I felt the legislation should have gone further. It is my opinion that steps should be taken to prevent the production of slack if it cannot be immediately utilized. Since taking office I have conferred with several groups of mine-owners throughout the country in regard to the problem.

An immediate palliative presents itself in the shape of control of screen openings, and I am very pleased to be able to say that the Waikato Coal-owners are co-operating with me and have already taken action to install screens of a smaller mesh. It is absolutely necessary, however, that any action in this direction should be uniform in each individual district.