

The Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, in conjunction with the Mines Department, will make a start on the above work during the present year. A similar survey has been in progress in England for the past eighteen years.

COAL-MINES ACT, 1925.

The Coal-mines Act, 1925, at the time of its last revision was generally considered to be as up to date as any similar legislation in any part of the world.

The experience of the Department during the past ten years of administration has shown that the Act and the regulations made thereunder can still be further improved.

I have recently circularized coal-mine owners and also miners' organizations, and a number of further suggestions have been submitted for my consideration.

A Bill incorporating all sound proposals will shortly be submitted to Parliament.

I want to stress that the principal concern of my Department is to safeguard the lives of our miners, particularly our underground workers, who daily have to face grave risks unknown to many whose vocations do not require them to leave the surface, and I want to bring the Coal-mines Act up to the forefront of the world's mining legislation in this respect.

RESCUE-STATIONS.

There is one scheme I would like to see consummated during my term of office, and that is the establishment of one or more rescue-stations in those districts where mine explosions are most likely to occur.

Recent tragic occurrences in Great Britain and Japan remind us that such events are always possible in spite of the most careful precautions.

A rescue-station for the Greymouth District has been under discussion for some time, and my Department has prepared a suitable scheme.

I propose to include in the new legislation provisions for putting this scheme into operation.

I would also mention that immediately after taking office I authorized the purchase of five sets of Proto apparatus and one set of reviving-apparatus for the Liverpool State Mine.

This supplementary equipment is necessary in any case, because the Liverpool Mine cannot be fully served by a central rescue-station because of the lack of road access.

SOCIAL AMENITIES IN MINING TOWNSHIPS.

The world over, mining townships are notable for their lack of the amenities which civilization usually brings to other communities of similar size. Too often mining villages are sombre and dingy in appearance and uninspiring in their environment.

No doubt there are reasons for this state of affairs.

Valuable minerals more often than not are discovered in localities which no human being would voluntarily choose as his habitation. Moreover, the transient nature of the industry is a factor which discourages expenditure on amenities.

The post-war difficulties of the coal-mining industry, in particular, culminating in the recent depression, have sadly accentuated the position in many of our coal-mining areas.

It is my opinion that underground workers, in view of the conditions under which they labour, are really entitled if anything to more comfort and better surroundings in their leisure hours than the average industrial worker.

Having personally lived in many mining townships, I have always taken a keen interest in the provision of improved amenities, and in my present position I intend to do my utmost to further the cause.

I want to make it very clear, however, that I do not propose to make undue calls upon the public purse.

I desire to achieve results by co-operation—firstly, by fostering a good public spirit amongst the miners and their families, so that they will be prepared to help themselves; secondly, by appealing to employers for financial and other assistance; and thirdly, by making grants from a small fund which has been made available to my Department.

A number of improvements are already under way, and I have much pleasure in placing on record that in every case where I have appealed to a mining company for assistance I have received a prompt and favourable reply.