

COAL-MINERS' RELIEF FUND.

The Coal-miners' Sick and Accident Funds having been abolished as from the 1st April, 1926, and incorporated in the Coal-miners' Relief Fund, all accident relief payments are now made from the latter fund, which is administered by the Public Trustee.

The rate of interest allowed on the fund was decreased from 4 per cent. to $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. as from the 1st April, 1933.

The interest earned for the twelve months ended 31st March, 1937, was £911 0s. 9d., as against £872 9s. 3d. for the previous year, while for the same periods the receipts from the $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per ton contributions were £4,373 8s. 2d. and £4,150 18s. 7d. respectively.

The total expenditure for the year ended 31st March, 1937, amounted to £4,307 19s. 3d., as against £3,880 19s. 1d. for the previous year.

The amount standing to the credit of the fund at the 31st March, 1937, was £26,601 18s. 8d., as against £25,625 9s. at the 31st March, 1936.

STATE AID TO MINING.

(a) MINES DEPARTMENT.

As in previous years, considerable use was made of the Government prospecting drills. They were hired by thirteen parties, and a total of 23,416 ft. was drilled.

The sum of £20,000 was voted for expenditure for assistance towards prospecting. The balance of unexpended authorities at the 31st March, 1936, and those issued during the year, less cancellations, amounted to £18,976 8s. 11d. Of this amount, £4,914 16s. was expended by way of actual subsidies during the year, leaving a balance of £14,061 12s. 11d. authorized but not spent at the 31st March, 1937. The number of men given employment through the subsidies granted by the Mines Department was 135.

I am pleased to state the amount voted was considerably in excess of previous years, and enabled the Department to arrange with the Labour Department to prospect areas in the Reefton and South Westland Districts. This prospecting is now being carried out by parties of men under skilled direction. The cost is being shared by the two Departments, and the sum of £4,000, in addition to the amount of £18,976 8s. 11d. authorized by way of subsidies, was set aside out of the Department's vote, of which £1,485 2s. 6d. came to charge during the year. The number of prospectors in these parties is thirty-five.

Provision totalling £3,969, including £2,969 in the Public Works Fund, was made for expenditure by way of direct grants and subsidies for roads and tracks. The balance of the unexpected authorities at the 31st March, 1936, and those issued during the year, amounted to £3,673 18s. 11d. Of this amount, the sum of £3,132 11s. was expended.

The expenditure on Schools of Mines amounted to £4,035.

(b) LABOUR DEPARTMENT.

During the year assistance to gold-prospectors and the gold-mining industry generally has been continued by the Labour Department from the Employment Promotion Fund. The total expenditure for the year ended 31st March, 1937, was £178,929, which includes all payments made in respect of subsidies, wages, supervisors, purchase of equipment, &c. This amount also includes £5,673 paid to mining companies and syndicates by way of subsidy.

Applications for subsidies made by companies and syndicates are thoroughly investigated by the Mines Department, and reports and recommendations are submitted to the Labour Department to assist in the consideration of such applications. Ordinarily, assistance to companies and syndicates is arranged by way of subsidy on the wages of registered and eligible unemployed men, actually in receipt of relief assistance, taken from the unemployment register by the company or syndicate concerned; but in certain special cases this condition can be varied to allow the payment of a subsidy on the wages of men already employed, or a subsidy on a footage basis in respect of driving, tunnelling, &c.