

The Act, however, also contains many new provisions designed to improve the safety and welfare of the miners. The following summary sets out the more important matters of this nature dealt with :—

Daily supervision of mines and batteries is now required of all mine-managers and battery superintendents.

Youths under the age of eighteen years must not be employed underground. The care of detonators in the mine is restricted to one member only of each group or party of workmen.

Winding-engines with only screw-operated brakes must now have adequate brakes of other types installed.

Tests of detaching-hooks by actual overwinds are not required as frequently as they were, but all detaching-hooks in use must be dissembled and examined at intervals not exceeding three months.

Where drilling is done by hand an adequate spray must be provided, and where blasting is done a spray must operate in that place for at least half an hour after the firing has been done.

Engine-rooms must be sufficiently heated, and if a trucker or a miner works alone in a level there must be at least one other person in another place off that level.

Tests of the mine air must be made as often and at such places as is required by the Inspector to ascertain the number and size of the dust-particles per cubic centimetre which the mine air contains.

GOLDFIELDS REVENUE AND GOLD DUTY.

The amount of goldfields revenue received and credited to the accounts of local bodies during the year ended 31st March, 1938, was £19,505 3s. 4d., a decrease of £3,437 11s. 8d. compared with the previous year. During the same period the total of the three duties on exported gold amounted to £114,694 13s. 3d., of which £6,918 19s. 4d. was credited to the accounts of local bodies under section 12 of the Gold Duty Act, 1908. The special export duty of 12s. 6d. per ounce amounted to £105,412 8s. 7d., which sum was paid into the Consolidated Fund.

MINING PRIVILEGES.

Interest is still being maintained in the mining industry, although the number of licenses granted has decreased. During the year ended 31st March, 1938, 743 licenses for mining privileges were granted under the provisions of the Mining Act, 1926, as compared with 938 for the previous year. Out of this number, 146 were licenses for claims authorizing the holders to mine for gold. For the same period 187 mining privileges, including 78 licenses for claims, were struck off the registers under the provisions of section 188 of the Act.

PETROLEUM OIL.

No boring for petroleum was carried out in 1937.

From the Nos. 1, 2, and 4 wells of Moturoa Oilfields, Ltd., at Moturoa, Taranaki, 132,972 gallons of crude petroleum oil was obtained.

From the Kotuku field on the West Coast of the South Island 1,487 gallons was recovered.

The Dominion's total production of crude petroleum oil to 31st December, 1937, is estimated at 2,765,796 gallons.

In my last statement I announced that a comprehensive Bill designed to encourage the search for petroleum had been prepared by my Department. That Bill was duly submitted to Parliament and passed as the Petroleum Act, 1937. It marks the commencement of a new era in oil search in New Zealand. The most important section in the Act provides that all oil existing in its natural condition in the Dominion is declared to be the property of the Crown. In this respect the legislation follows British and Australian precedents.

This provision removes the major obstacles which have debarred any really exhaustive search in the past. It is now possible for strong organizations to obtain