

MINERS' PENSIONS.

The Pensions Act, 1926, as amended, provides for payment of pensions to miners seriously and permanently incapacitated by miners' phthisis or totally incapacitated by other occupational disease or heart-disease contracted while mining in New Zealand. The rate of pension for a miner is 25s. a week, with 10s. a week added for his wife, if he is married, and a maximum of 10s. a week for each dependent child under fifteen, subject to a limit of £4 5s. a week for the family.

The widow of a miner who dies while in receipt of a pension is entitled to receive 17s. 6d. a week while she remains a widow.

The scheme, which originated in the Miners' Phthisis Act, 1915, is administered by the Social Security Department, and the following summary of operations for the year ended 31st March, 1939, has been supplied by that Department:—

Payments made from 1st November, 1915, to 31st	£
March, 1938	991,625
Payments 1938–39	87,094
	£1,078,719
Number of new grants for year 1938–39—	
Miners	76
Widows	25
	101
Annual value of new grants	£7,927
Number of pensions in force at 31st March, 1939—	
Miners	871
Widows	191
	1,062
Annual value of pensions in force at 31st March, 1939 ..	£85,938
Average pension per annum	£80 18s. 5d.
Number of pensions granted to 31st March, 1939 ..	2,873
Dissection of pensions in force at 31st March, 1939—	
Unmarried miners	242
Married miners	629
Miners' widows	191
	1,062

It should be noted that the Pensions Act, 1926, under which miners' pensions were paid, was operative only until the 31st March, 1939, after which date it was superseded by the Social Security Act. The main alterations in the general qualifying conditions are that the benefit for the miner himself has been increased from 25s. weekly to 30s. weekly, and where any grant is authorized in respect of the child it is payable to the age of sixteen years, whereas the benefit formerly ceased on the fifteenth birthday.

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 3½ per cent. as from the 1st April, 1933.

The interest earned for the twelve months ended 31st March, 1939, was £893 16s. 1d., as against £930 16s. 11d. for the previous year, while for the same periods the receipts from the ½d. per ton contributions were £4,635 16s. 6d. and £4,596 17s. 4d. respectively.

The total expenditure for the year ended 31st March, 1939, amounted to £7,424 15s. 8d., as against £5,300 18s. 1d. for the previous year.

The amount standing to the credit of the fund at the 31st March, 1939, was £24,933 11s. 9d., as against £26,828 14s. 10d. at the 31st March, 1938.