

1887.

NEW ZEALAND.

INSPECTION OF MINES

(ANNUAL REPORT OF THE INSPECTORS ON).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

No. 1.

Mr. Inspector McLAREN to the UNDER-SECRETARY of MINES.

SIR,—

Inspector of Mines' Office, Thames, 12th March, 1887.

In accordance with clause 59 of "The Coal Mines Act, 1886," I have the honour to report on the coal-mines in the northern districts of Kawakawa and Waikato for the year ending the 31st December, 1886.

The number of mines working in these districts is the same as the previous year, but the total output of coal is nearly 7,000 tons less, the cause being a falling-off in the output of the Kawakawa Mine. The total output in 1886 was 104,794 tons; in 1885, 111,734 tons; and in 1884, 103,856 tons.

1. *Kawakawa Colliery*.—The quantity of coal raised in 1886 was 30,775 tons; in 1885, 37,172 tons. The most of the output from this mine during the year has been from No. 2 District, being new ground, which is situated in a south-easterly direction from the former workings; and from No. 3 District, which is to the dip of No. 2, but driven parallel to it. A new downcast air-shaft has recently been sunk to replace the one that had caved-in some months ago; there is also a duplicate shaft, which is kept as a reserve in case of accident to the one in use. Since the sinking of this new shaft the ventilation has been very much improved in this quarter of the mine. The seam of coal now being worked varies very much in thickness and regularity, about 2ft. 6in. to 3ft. being the average thickness wrought, and this, unfortunately, intermixed with bands of clay and stone, which has to be separated before the coal leaves the workings, adding greatly to the expense. Considering the number of drawbacks in the shape of water, bad roof, thin seam, stone and clay bands, the coal is sent out of the mine wonderfully clean. The same constant care and supervision that I alluded to in former reports is still being continued in timbering the mine and watching over the safety of the men; and, notwithstanding faulty ground, with a bad and treacherous roof, the fact that during the twenty-two years the mine has been at work only one fatal accident has occurred speaks for itself. During my visit to this mine in January last the manager, Mr. Moody, informed me that, on account of the fore-mentioned difficulties—thin seams, &c.—the mine was not paying, and that it would either likely be closed soon, or great reductions to miners and all other employes. Since then an offer of an all-round reduction of from 10 to 15 per cent. has been refused by the men, who expressed themselves willing to take 5-per-cent. reduction. This not being accepted, work was struck on the 9th of the present month (March).

2. *Kamo Colliery, near Whangarei*.—With the exception of the manager of this mine all the mine managers in my districts have shown themselves most anxious to conform to all the requirements of "The Coal Mines Act, 1886;" but on my visit to this mine last month I found the manager, Mr. Joseph Geary, was almost entirely neglecting to carry out the new provisions required by this Act; and, as this neglect in some cases endangered men's lives, it was necessary that some decisive steps should be taken in the matter. I therefore instructed Mr. W. A. Carruth, solicitor, Whangarei, to take action against him for four breaches of the Act—viz., clause 26, subsection (1); clause 26, subsection (15); clause 26, subsection (20); and clause 26, subsection (23). The following is a copy of my letter to Mr. Geary:—

"SIR,—

"Whangarei, 17th February, 1887.

"I regret to find at my visits of inspection on the 12th and 14th instant that you have failed to comply with many of the provisions of the Coal Mines Act of 1886.

"The following are the provisions to which I allude:—

"Clause 24.—No register of boys or youths kept.

"Clause 26, Subsection (1).—Failing to supply an adequate amount of ventilation.

"Clause 26, Subsection (14).—Failing to have the method of signalling posted in a clear and legible form on a framed board. There is no such board at No. 2 or lowest level; at No. 1 level and top of shaft the lettering on boards is so indistinct that it is with difficulty they can be read.

"Clause 26, Subsection (15).—The cages are not provided with iron sloping covers, and are not hung with hinges.

"Clause 26, Subsection (20).—Ropes and chains have not been tested in winding-shaft since the introduction of the Act.

1—C. 3.