

The Coal Mines Bill provides for this branch of mining being placed directly under the control of the Minister of Mines instead of the Land Boards. Applications for leases within mining districts being dealt with by the Warden, and outside mining districts by the Commissioners of Crown Lands, subject in each case to the approval of the Minister. No assignment, transfer, or amalgamation of leases shall be deemed to be completed unless public notification has been given, and the application has been laid on the table of the House of Representatives for ten days.

It is proposed to make it compulsory on the owners and lessees of coal mines to supply the Government and other railways, and also steam vessels with coal on reasonable terms for their travelling requirements.

Service certificates without examination can also be issued to persons on similar conditions to those required in the Mining Bill, the only difference being that ten years practical experience is required instead of seven.

It is proposed to take power for the resumption by the Crown of coal-mines, with the consent of the owner, in cases where leases were issued, or the land alienated before the passing of the Act of this session, and without such consent in any lands thereafter alienated or leased on the payment of full compensation to the owner or occupier for the value of the lands and improvements, and in the case of the Governor and the owner or occupier not agreeing, the amount of compensation will be determined under "The Public Works Act, 1882." The power of the State to resume and to work coal-mines will have a tendency to check any serious friction between the coal-mine proprietors and their workmen.

Amongst several other new provisions eight hours is to constitute a day's work; and in cases where persons are employed consecutively for seven days a week in connection with steam machinery, they are to have twelve half holidays or six whole holidays during the year, and a contribution on the output of coal is to be made compulsory on the owner or lessee of any coal-mine, so as to afford relief to the workmen or their families in cases of accidents occurring.

#### GEOLOGICAL SURVEY.

The twenty-fifth annual report on the work done in connection with the Museum and Laboratory has been distributed to members, and the twenty-sixth, bringing it up to the 30th June last, is in course of preparation.

The twenty-first volume of the Geological Reports is now in the press, and will contain, in addition to the usual progress report of the Director, twenty-one special reports on various mineral districts of the colony, and an appendix which gives a brief description of points of special geological interest in each of the counties into which the colony is subdivided.

During the past year the following districts have been surveyed and reported on: In the northern district of Auckland there has been a further examination, and the mapping of the coalfield continued, the eastern outcrop of which extends without interruption from Whangarei to Mongonui; and, although up to the present time mines have only been worked at the former place and at Kawakawa, there are several other places where the indications are decidedly favourable. A large area of the field is obscured by a cover of volcanic rocks, which makes it difficult to trace the coal-measures westward to the dip without the aid of a diamond-drill.

The silver-bearing lodes at Puhipuhi and the extension of the same kind of mineral continuing towards Cape Brett and Mongonui were also surveyed. The richest lodes, it appears, are in greenstone rock, where it has been decomposed to a great depth from the surface to a soft sandstone and pipeclay. The hard undecomposed rock also contains cherty lodes, but in these the precious metal is only present in minute quantity. As, besides the extensive coalfields and the occurrence of silver and gold, ores of mercury, copper, manganese, and iron are found in the north Auckland peninsula, it may be considered a promising mining district.

Other reports relate to the coalfields on the west coast of the South Island, which have been generally re-examined and detailed surveys made, particularly in the Mokihinui district, where a large expenditure is being incurred at present. It is satisfactory to find that a more minute survey of this area has shown that there is abundance of coal to warrant the outlay.

The geological survey of the Kaikoura Mountains is a work of great importance, which has been further advanced during the year. It is probably only through the study of this particular district that it will be possible to obtain a clue to the distribution of mineral veins in other parts of the colony. This arises from the circumstance that this mountain-chain is