

Centre Block.—Prospecting and surveying of coal trenches was continued in this block, which extends from the Island Block north-east on the Waitahu fall to the vicinity of Mount Albert Creek. The area is approximately two miles long by a half mile deep. On the portion of this area within the Inangahua fall, trenching and prospecting was continued in Wellman Creek, but extensive slips and some major faulting hindered the work of uncovering the coal outcrops and work was stopped in the meantime.

As with the Island Block, the final proving of this area will necessitate exploratory drives. The continuation of the proposed road to the Island Block will facilitate the transport of labour and stores to these areas for this purpose.

Webby Creek Block.—A large number of trenches were cut and surveyed in on this area. Preliminary sampling gave a high ash content, and geologic reports by officers of the Geological Survey were not entirely favourable in the indication of a good prospect for mining, either by underground or opencast methods.

Prospecting in these areas is hampered by a shortage of trained survey staff and prospectors, and work has, of necessity, been concentrated on those blocks likely to yield the largest and most suitable areas of workable coal. Particularly does this apply in the area in the Waitahu River basin, where, should sufficient coal be proved, it would be necessary to consider some alternative method of transport to Reefton Railway-station.

Stockton-Millerton

The activities of the survey group have tended to become more concerned with the development and exploitation of the coal deposits rather than with the straight prospecting and mapping of large coal-bearing areas. This is no disadvantage in itself as long as the amount of coal proved by prospecting is sufficient to offset the amount won from all operations. Instead of prospecting and mapping coal far removed from operational areas, the endeavour has been made to map just ahead of the mining operations and so prove sufficient coal to satisfy their needs for several years to come. Once each mine or opencast has sufficient information to enable it to lay out and exploit three to five years' supply of coal the prospecting will be extended behind these primary zones of investigation to enable extended development programmes and new schemes to be planned.

North-west and Rockies Areas.—Preliminary prospecting work has been done over these areas, with some plane tabling, trenching, and traversing. The North-west area will be an underground proposition, the coal running 4 ft to 8 ft thick and with only one continuous outcrop on the south-east side. A considerable amount of drilling will be required to prove this area. A reconnaissance over the Rockies area indicated that it will probably be opencastable, two seams being present, the top one running about 5 feet thick and the bottom or main seam about 20 feet. Development of this area is the only way to rapidly increase production from the Millerton Mine.

Block 2.—Sampling was carried out over this block in order to define more precisely the limits of a high-ash zone and to determine the sulphur content of the seam.

Block 3.—Trenching, plane tabling, and surveying has been done in the vicinity of Pags Z10 and L41.

Bayne's Block.—Traversing, trenching, and surveying has been carried out over this block, two more outcrops still remaining to be trenched and surveyed. All of this block will probably be opencastable with coal up to 45 feet thick, only a strip of relatively thin coal along the edge of the barren zone on the eastern side being excepted.

Fly Creek Opencast.—A complete and detailed survey was run over this area. No report was drawn up, as it became obvious from the initial study of the survey data that any further opencast operations would result in flooding of the Fly Creek Mine by St. Pat's Stream. However, when Fly Creek Mine is worked out or nearly so there will be a considerable tonnage of opencastable coal available in this area.