

In South Africa (according to the papers) the Government has made an assessment of 10 per cent. on the net profits earned by mining companies there, and also allows them to make an annual provision for the amortisement or redemption of the capital invested. Here in New Zealand the Crown Company is paying in gold duty and other assessments over 20 per cent. on our net profits: this very heavy and unfair assessment prevents the company from making any provision for the recouping of capital over a given period of time.

The effect of such heavy assessments and labour restriction is now being felt, and in a year's time will be more so. What has come about, and is coming, was evidently seen by Mr. Justice Cooper, who, in giving his reasons for the award (as a result of his inquiry into the mining dispute), said, in speaking for the assessors and himself, "We are satisfied that the gold-mining industry in this industrial district is, notwithstanding an increased output of gold from the Waihi Mine, in a languishing and depressed condition."

This opinion could not have been arrived at hastily, because the learned Judge had ample time of going thoroughly into the question. His inquiry was not confined to any particular section of the goldfields: he travelled over every part where mining operations were being conducted, and after a most searching investigation he and his assessors came to the conclusion that the mining industry was in a languishing and depressed condition; and now in face of this opinion, supported by the stopping of many mines and curtailment of operations in others, we find the Goldfields Committee at Wellington considering the question of deleting some words from the Mining Act for the lessening of the hours of labour, and the raising of wages a considerable percentage in a dying industry.

From the NEW ZEALAND COAL AND OIL COMPANY (LIMITED).

Kaitangata, 22nd July, 1902.

SPEAKING as a colliery-manager, I think the hours worked by the miners under the Act of 1901 are short enough, and compare favourably with the hours worked by operatives in other occupations not more healthy, and in some much less healthy, than coal-mining. It is a popular fallacy that coal-mining is a most unhealthy as well as a most dangerous calling. The vital statistics of Great Britain prove that the mortality of coal-miners from all causes, accidents included, is far lower than the average of all males between the ages of twenty-five and sixty-five years; and, as far as my own observations have gone in New Zealand during the past twelve years, I should say, omitting the Brunner disaster, the same would hold for coal-miners in this colony. Mr. James Barrowman, mining engineer, in a most able and interesting paper on the subject of "Mining Mortality," read before the Mining Institute of Scotland in 1898, gives some interesting comparative-mortality tables, extracts from two of which I append to this letter. After dealing exhaustively with the subject, Mr. Barrowman concludes his paper in the following words: "The conclusion that these, the latest reports of the Registrars-General, lead to, therefore, is that, while the coal-miner is liable to accident in a greater degree than most other workmen, the occupation is a particularly healthy one, and that as regards mortality from all causes, even including accident, the miner is more favourably situated than the bulk of his fellow-men." The paper referred to appears in Vol. xiv., page 484, of the "Transactions of the Institution of Mining Engineers."

The effect of shortening the hours of labour at the face from eight to seven has been to increase the cost of production by about one-seventh (14 per cent. nearly), as the same rates have been paid throughout for the shorter period of work. The effect of the proposed change—eight hours bank to bank, inclusive of meal-time—would be to reduce the hours of labour at the face here (Kaitangata) to six and a half, which would mean a further increase of cost of production of about one-thirteenth (nearly 8 per cent.). These increased costs, in my opinion, should not affect local competition very much, as all collieries in New Zealand would be on the same footing with regard to the hours of labour; but, as none of the coal-mines in New Zealand, so far as I am aware, are making such profits that they can bear these increased costs without increasing the price of the coal, it must ultimately be the consumer who would have to bear the burden of the increased cost of production. Further increases in the price of local coal would also probably lead to the importation of larger quantities of New South Wales coal.

*Comparative Mortality of Males, Twenty-five to Sixty-five Years of Age, in Different Occupations from all Causes for the Years 1890-92, all Males being taken at 1,000.*

*England and Wales.*

Unoccupied males ... ..	2,215	Occupied males ... ..	953
File-maker ... ..	1,810	Coal-miner ... ..	925
Lead-worker ... ..	1,783	Baker ... ..	920
Earthenware-manufacturer ...	1,706	Shoemaker ... ..	920
Hawker ... ..	1,652	Clerk ... ..	915
Publican ... ..	1,642	Blacksmith ... ..	914
Tin-miner ... ..	1,409	Fisherman ... ..	845
Manufacturing chemist ... ..	1,392	Railway guard, porter, pointsman	825
Quarryman ... ..	1,176	Barrister ... ..	821
Musician ... ..	1,214	Carpenter ... ..	783
Plumber ... ..	1,120	Railway-engine driver ... ..	810
Printer ... ..	1,096	Artist, sculptor ... ..	778
Butcher ... ..	1,096	Ironstone-miner ... ..	774
Law clerk ... ..	1,070	Domestic servant ... ..	757
Engineer and boilermaker ... ..	1,070	Brickmaker ... ..	741
Draper ... ..	1,014	Grocer ... ..	664
Mason ... ..	1,001	Farm labourer ... ..	632
All males ... ..	1,000	Schoolmaster ... ..	604
Wool-manufacturer ... ..	991	Farmer ... ..	563
Physician ... ..	966	Gardener ... ..	553
Commercial traveller ... ..	961	Clergyman ... ..	533