

SUBSIDIES FOR DEEP SINKING.

During the year substantial subsidies have been granted to the Ross Gold-fields (Limited), who have now reopened the old mines at Ross Flat, Westland, and to the May Queen Quartz-mining Company (Limited), who have deepened the Queen of Beauty shaft at the Thames to the 1,020 ft. level, from whence it is proposed to carry a crosscut in a straight line to the Kuranui-Caledonian shaft for the purpose of working the numerous reefs at a depth of about 400 ft. lower than they have hitherto been prospected.

The future of the gold-mining industry lies in the deep ground and unexplored country, and the Mines Department, by subsidising deep sinking and boring operations, is endeavouring to bring about increased prosperity to the industry.

WATER FOR MINING PURPOSES.

The value of water-conservation for mining and other purposes has been recognised by the Government, and the subject has received close attention. Surveys have been going on for some time in Central Otago, and valuable data, in addition to what is already in the hands of the Mines Department, have been collected, with a view to an extensive scheme of water-conservation being undertaken. On the West Coast surveys have been made and a scheme prepared for an extension of the Kumara Government Water-race across the River Taramakau to the auriferous terraces situated between that river and the Hohonu River. Regulations have been framed which will enable the enormous hydro-electric power obtainable from our mountain rivers and streams to be available upon very reasonable terms to mining companies and others requiring this power.

ELECTRICAL REGULATIONS.

The safety of life and property demanded the introduction of regulations controlling the installation and use of electricity in and about mines, and during the year the Inspecting Engineer of the Department visited the Commonwealth of Australia to investigate and report on the methods adopted there for controlling the use of electrical energy in connection with mining operations. Regulations based on those standardised in Great Britain and Australia for the protection of mine-owners and operatives have now been framed, and will soon be brought into operation.

MINERS' PHTHISIS.

Miners' phthisis, better known as "miners' complaint," has received considerable attention during the past year, owing to its inclusion in the amendment of the Workers' Compensation Act passed last session as a disease which was covered by that measure. My colleague the Minister of Labour will submit proposals dealing with this question during the present session.

The hygienic condition of the mines of this Dominion is on the whole very satisfactory, owing to the equable temperature, plentiful water-supply, compulsory sanitary arrangements, and regular inspection by both miners' and Government Inspectors. Legislation to enforce the use of sprays in connection with rock-drills and coal-cutters may ultimately be desirable, but I do not propose to deal with this phase of the question at present, pending the result of further investigation into the matter.

Miners' phthisis is not prevalent in this Dominion, and I am pleased to inform honourable members that no claim has so far been made on the Government on account of the risk undertaken by the Government Accident Insurance Department last January.

Proposals to prevent the medical examination of persons over the age of eighteen years engaged in the mining industry will be submitted for the consideration of the House. The medical examination insisted on by some mine-owners at present as a qualification for employment is considered detrimental to the mining industry.