

The following table shows the average earnings per shift by coal-hewers employed at the mines :—

Year ending 31st March.				Point Elizabeth.		Seddonville.	
				s.	d.	s.	d.
1905..	..	..	..	12	7-50	13	0
1906..	..	..	..	13	7-33	14	1
1907..	..	..	..	14	4-35	14	1
1908..	..	..	..	14	10-54	14	8
1909..	..	..	..	14	1-22	16	2
1910..	..	..	..	14	0-53	16	6
1911..	..	..	..	15	3-10	17	0
1912..	..	..	..	16	8-15	17	8

It may at first seem strange that the cost of production at Seddonville has decreased, while the earnings of the miners have so largely increased. The explanation is that the operations in the solid coal at that mine have gradually ceased as the final stage of pillar-extraction has been entered on, pillar-coal being much easier to win than solid coal; the cost per ton is thus reduced, although the hewers have increased their daily earnings.

The earnings shown in the last table are the *gross* earnings. From this should be deducted the cost of explosives and other stores used, equal, on an average, to about 1s. per man per shift.

#### *Sale and Distribution of Coal.*

Before entering into details regarding the sale and distribution of coal, it is desirable to state that the sale price of the coal, both to Government Departments and the public, was fixed and has always been maintained at bed-rock, the policy of the Government being to sell at practically cost price. To show a handsome profit might have been attractive; but this would have defeated the purpose for which the business was entered upon.

The extent to which the public have availed themselves of the reasonable charges for State coal is illustrated by the following statement showing the quantity of coal sold at each depot annually since their inception :—

Year.	Wellington.	Christchurch.	Wanganui.	Dunedin.	Totals.
	Tons.	Tons.	Tons.	Tons.	Tons.
1906-7 .. ..	13,858	7,329	..	..	21,187
1907-8 .. ..	22,110	16,052	4,596	..	42,758
1908-9 .. ..	28,404	25,045	6,837	3,978	64,264
1909-10 .. ..	26,859	26,864	6,375	8,997	69,095
1910-11 .. ..	25,428	26,415	6,112	5,595	63,550
1911-12 .. ..	27,731	30,427	6,261	5,695	70,114
	144,390	132,132	30,181	24,265	330,968

It has sometimes been stated that the Railway and other Government Departments have been charged a higher price than the public for State coal supplied to them for the purpose of inflating the profit, but such is absolutely erroneous, as will be seen by the following table showing the prices per ton f.o.b. to New Zealand Railways, other Government Departments, and to the public respectively :—

Year.			New Zealand Railways.		Other Government Departments.		Public.	
			Screened.	Unscreened.	Screened.	Unscreened.	Screened.	Unscreened.
			s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
1905-6 .. ..	..	..	..	11 6	..	11 6	..	11 6
1906-7 .. ..	..	..	13 6	11 6	15 0	11 6	15 0	11 6
1908-9 .. ..	..	..	14 0	11 6	15 0	11 6	15 0	11 6
1909 .. ..	..	..	14 6	12 0	15 0	12 6	15 0	12 6
1910 .. ..	..	..	15 0	12 6	15 0	12 6	15 0	12 6
1911 .. ..	..	..	16 0	12 6	16 0	12 6	16 0	12 6
1912 .. ..	..	..	18 0	15 0	18 0	15 0	18 0	15 0

When coal is charged to the Railway Department at higher rates than above mentioned it is on account of the State coal-mines bearing the cost of the sea-freight, and including same in the total charge for the coal.