

The reduction of output has not been proportional to the shortage of labour owing to enlistment. Thus there has been a falling-off in the average number of persons employed at coal-mines to the extent of 13 per cent. as compared with the previous year, whereas the reduction in output has been only 3 per cent.

The comparative tonnage of the various classes of coal for the years 1914 and 1915 is summarized as follows :—

Class of Coal.		Output for 1915.	Output for 1914.	Increase or Decrease for 1915.	
		Tons.	Tons.		
Bituminous and semi-bituminous	..	1,267,940	1,492,315	Decrease	224,375
Pitch-coal	136,460	1,998	Increase	134,462
Brown coal	725,001	691,367	..	33,634
Lignite	79,223	89,913	Decrease	10,690
Totals	2,208,624	2,275,593	Decrease	66,969

No new colliery commenced operations during the year, and no discoveries of additional coal-bearing areas to those already known were made, but developments at the Denniston and Millerton Collieries, the property of the Westport Coal Company, and the most productive collieries in the Dominion, have proved large areas of hard bituminous coal of the best quality, sufficient to supply all requirements for many years.

SCHEELITE.

The quantity of scheelite concentrate exported during the year amounted to 194 tons, valued at £27,784, a decrease of 10 tons and an increase of £6,286 above the production of 1914.

Scheelite is an ore from which tungstic acid is obtained, and it is associated with gold in the quartz-mines of some parts of Otago, Southland, and Marlborough. One of the most spectacular advances in commodity-prices occasioned by the war has been in tungsten, both metal and ore, such advance being due to the extraordinary demand for tungsten steel, an essential constituent in making high-speed-tool steel. The manufacture of immense quantities of military material has required greatly increased quantities of tool steel, and consequently corresponding quantities of tungstic acid. On the 6th September notice was given by His Excellency the Governor that the Imperial Government had instructed him to requisition all supplies of scheelite and other ore containing tungstic acid, and from that date the export to other markets was prohibited. All persons having such ore were required forthwith to notify the Mines Department, Wellington, the price fixed by the Imperial Government being £2 15s. per unit—i.e., per 1 per cent. tungstic trioxide. Since this notification all consignments have been bought by the Mines Department, and shipped to the Imperial Supply Board. The price thus fixed is an increase of 80 per cent. on ante-bellum prices, but in the United States the price paid per unit during 1915 was considerably greater. Fortunately, however, the British Empire produces or controls a very large proportion of the world's tungsten supplies.

KAURI-GUM.

The quantity of kauri-gum exported during 1915 amounted to 4,575 tons, valued at £279,133, as compared with 8,473 tons, valued at £497,444, during 1913.

The considerable decline during the past two years in the export of kauri-gum is due to the fact that previous to the war the principal market was in Germany. To afford a measure of relief to unemployed gum-diggers the Government, in terms of the Kauri-gum Industry Act, 1914, has purchased from the diggers over 300 tons of gum, which is now stored in Auckland for shipment to a new market when the opportunity occurs.

This industry being under the administration of the Hon. the Minister of Lands, my reference thereto is accordingly brief.

PETROLEUM.

Drilling operations in search of petroleum, which have for a number of years been in progress in the Dominion, have not during 1915 resulted in any additional supplies to those already proved at Moturoa, Taranaki, being tapped.