

## COAL-MINING.

The output of coal during 1917 amounted to 2,068,419 tons, as compared with 2,257,135 tons during 1916, being a decrease of 188,716 tons.

The following is a comparative statement of the coal and lignite raised during the years 1915, 1916, and 1917 :—

Inspection District.	Output for 1916.	Output for 1917.	Decrease, 1917.	Output for 1915.	Increase between Years 1916 and 1915.
	Tons.	Tons.	Tons.	Tons.	Tons.
Northern .. .. .	486,114	470,638	15,476	460,415	25,699
West Coast .. .. .	1,295,635	1,146,778	148,857	1,278,994	16,641
Southern (Canterbury, Otago, and Southland)	475,386	451,003	24,383	469,215	6,171
Totals .. .. .	2,257,135	2,068,419	188,716	2,208,624	48,511

New collieries have been laid down by the Taupiri Coal-mines (Limited) at Awaroa, near Rotowaro Station, on the Huntly-Pukemiro Railway; also by the Mount Torlesse Collieries (Limited), near Avoca, on the Christchurch-Arthur's Pass Railway. Both these collieries will supply brown coal of superior quality. In the Wairio district, Southland, several new coal-mining leases have been taken up to work portions of the extensive area of brown coal known to occur in that locality.

The comparative tonnage of the various classes of coal for the years 1916 and 1917 is summarized as follows :—

Class.	Output for 1917.	Output for 1916.	Increase or Decrease for 1917.
	Tons.	Tons.	Tons.
Bituminous and semi-bituminous ..	1,247,989	1,422,074	Decrease 174,085
Brown coal .. .. .	629,174	653,898	„ 24,724
Lignite .. .. .	191,256	181,163	Increase 10,093
Totals .. .. .	2,068,419	2,257,135	Decrease 188,716

The decline in the coal-production was due to the reduction in the number of coal-miners owing to voluntary enlistment, also to the restriction of output at most of the principal mines during the first four months of the year. So serious was this that the average output for each person employed underground declined from 750 tons during 1916 to 715 tons during 1917.

The quantity of coal imported into the Dominion during 1917 was 291,597 tons, as against 293,956 tons during 1916.

I find on investigation that the working-conditions as regards output of quite a number of coal-mining leases granted by the Crown are not being duly observed. In some cases, indeed, there is not, and never has been, any output at all, the leases being apparently held purely for speculative purposes. This is a state of affairs that cannot possibly be allowed to continue, especially at a time like the present, when there is such a scarcity of coal on the market. I am therefore calling upon all defaulting lessees to forthwith comply with the terms of their leases, failing which it will be necessary to cancel them; and several have been cancelled already.

## TUNGSTEN-ORE (SCHEELITE).

The quantity and value of scheelite concentrate obtained during 1917 was 199 tons 8 cwt., value £37,863, as compared with 258 tons, value £47,374, during 1916.

The quantity exported during 1917 was 161 tons, value £28,972, being 38 tons, value £8,891, less than that produced, this difference between production and export being due to the holding of output for an increase in price by some producers.