

The increase of 102 persons employed above ground can only be attributed to increased surface development and installation of plant.

The decline of 107 in the number of miners employed below ground is due to several causes, the principal being the improved wages paid in other occupations, also the fact that young men are not taking up coal-mining as a means of livelihood.

Coal-mining being an essential industry, coal-miners may be and generally are exempted from military service, therefore the reduction of miners during the year is not, I think, due to any considerable extent to the call of the war, though up to the 26th April, 1917, when the 28th Reinforcements entered camp, no less than 1,616 coal and metal miners, chiefly volunteers, were included in the New Zealand Expeditionary Forces.

SECTION III.—ACCIDENTS.

The following is a summary of coal-mining accidents during 1917, with their causes:—

	Fatal Accidents.		Serious Non-fatal Accidents.	
	Number of Separate Fatal Accidents.	Number of Deaths.	Number of Separate Non-fatal Accidents.	Number of Persons injured, including those injured by Accidents which proved Fatal to their Companions.
Explosions of fire-damp ...	...	...	...	...
Falls of ground ...	1	1	6	6
Explosives ...	...	...	1	1
Haulage ...	1	1	10	10
Miscellaneous—Underground...	1	2	5	5
On surface ...	...	...	1	1
Totals ...	3	4	23	23

The proportion of deaths by accident in or about coal-mines during 1917 was 1·93 per million tons raised and 1 per 1,000 persons employed. On two occasions only during the history of coal-mining in New Zealand has the annual proportion been less. This result compares most favourably with those obtained in Great Britain, which generally stands ahead of all other countries as regards the low proportion of fatal colliery accidents. For comparison it may be stated that during the past four years at British collieries fatal accidents per 1,000 persons employed amounted to 1·53, 1·35, 0·73, and 1·22 respectively, and per million tons of coal raised 4·84, 3·75, 3·64, and 4·36.

During 1917 two fatal colliery accidents, causing three deaths, occurred in this Dominion, both of which happened at the Blackball Colliery on the Grey Coalfield, which colliery has for several years held a bad record for fatal accidents.

In addition to the two fatal accidents, a death occurred from an accident received during 1916, and this is included in the foregoing summary.

It is again my pleasing duty to report that there has been no fatal accident in or about the coal-mines of Canterbury, Otago, or Southland during 1917, being the fourth successive year of immunity from such accidents in the Southern Inspection District under the control of Inspector E. R. Green.

At the North Island collieries under Inspector Boyd Bennie no fatal accident occurred, although a death took place due to an accident which happened during 1916. The credit for these good results from our safety provisions is shared equally by mine officials, workmen, and Government Inspectors.