

The Health of the Miner.

Your Committee is further of opinion that if the gold-mining industry is to be encouraged in this country one of the first duties of the State must be the making of the fullest provision for ensuring the health of the miner and removing the curse of the industry—miners' phthisis. No industry is worth encouragement if the health of the men engaged in it cannot be secured.

ASBESTOS.

The production of this mineral in such quantities as will enable certain industries to obtain supplies at a reasonable price is most desirable. Your Committee has been assured that in one district—Takaka, Nelson Province—there are large deposits of asbestos and of French chalk. A company whose deposits are about thirty miles from Motueka claims that the proved extent of its available marketable material would provide a sufficient quantity of asbestos for those industries whose products are dependent upon this material. The company referred to states that all that is required for the successful development of its deposits is the provision of reasonable road access.

Your Committee recommends that an exhaustive examination and report be made by the Mines Department, in order that the question as to whether or not there exists a supply of a marketable article may be set at rest. If it be found, after due examination and inquiry, that asbestos exists in sufficient quantity the Committee recommends that the Government render reasonable assistance for the successful development of the industry.

HOUSING.

The unprecedented shortage of suitable houses throughout the Dominion is a pressing difficulty in town and country alike. The evidence given before the Committee proves that the evil is greater and more serious than is generally supposed, and that it is likely to become more acute in the near future. The reasons for urgency in proceeding with a comprehensive building scheme are—

- (a.) Stoppage of building during the war:
- (b.) A laudable determination on the part of our people to have better homes:
- (c.) Urgent necessity for abolition of slums in the interests of public health:
- (d.) The advisability of increasing the rural population by providing comfortable workers' homes in country districts:
- (e.) Rapid return of soldiers, many of whom have recently married or desire to marry:
- (f.) Necessity for allaying unrest by providing a sufficient number of reasonably good homes at a moderate cost of rental; this applies especially to miners, railway men, waterside workers, city labourers, and artisans:
- (g.) Probability of immigration into New Zealand.

Although a modicum of effort has been made by the State to give facilities to people of moderate means to purchase homes of their own, the quantity of work actually done has not been sufficient to materially improve the position. For some time to come the industrial life of New Zealand will be unsettled, and, while the Committee does not anticipate any shortage of employment, a considerable number of wage-earners will, as heretofore, find it necessary to move from place to place following up their usual avocation. Hence, in considering a practical housing scheme for all our people, it will be necessary to make provision for good sanitary houses for letting, in addition to giving the best possible opportunities to people desiring to make their houses their own.

Hitherto the supply of houses has been left almost entirely to private enterprise, but we have reached a stage at which the housing problem is much too acute to be longer left entirely to that uncertain source of supply.