

MINING.

The value of minerals entered for exportation and of the coal produced in the Dominion during 1919 amounted to £4,424,689, as against £3,688,168 during the previous year. Though an increase of £736,521 is shown, with the exception of mercury and kauri-gum a decline was experienced in the production of all minerals. The decline was due to the increased cost of labour and all materials, to shortage of labour, and to the lower grade of minerals won.

The State collieries produced 167,595 tons of coal, as against 288,119 tons during the preceding calendar year. The profit on winning coal at the mines was £5,787, and the losses made by the depots was £5,766, thus leaving a credit balance of £21 on the year's transactions.

The total output of coal from the mines of the Dominion for the year 1919 was 1,847,848 tons, a decrease of 186,402 tons as compared with the previous year. The decrease in coal-output may be attributed to shortage of labour, industrial and other troubles.

It is desired to promote the mining industry in every possible way, and considerable financial assistance has been afforded during the past year by way of loans under the Mining Acts. Some monetary assistance has also been granted towards the expense of boring for oil.

With a view to encouraging prospecting for minerals, the Government recently authorized a further 30-per-cent. increase in the rates paid to prospectors. The conditions under which the Government drills are hired have been improved, enabling the holders of mineral or coal rights to obtain the free use of a drill, and, in addition, the services of a qualified drill superintendent, whose salary and expenses are paid by the Government.

LABOUR DEPARTMENT.

INDUSTRIAL CONDITIONS.

The country is passing through a period of unrest such as always follows a great war. The cost of living is high, almost all the necessities of life being far beyond the price at which they stood in 1914. Industrial disputes are of frequent occurrence, and it is greatly to be regretted that in many cases, as between employers and workmen, there is not that confidence which is necessary to success. Both classes have yet to learn that without mutual confidence and co-operation there can be neither satisfaction nor prosperity. The employer cannot prosper without the co-operation of his workmen, nor can the workmen prosper without the goodwill and co-operation of the employer. These are lessons which should be learned and remembered, if we are to hold our own with other countries of the world, either in primary or secondary production.

The best corrective for high prices is increased production; and employers and workers should recognize this. The productive capacity of the Dominion offers ample scope for individual and collective energy and enterprise; and all classes must assist in increasing production to the greatest possible extent, if every section of the community is to receive its fair share of the community's earnings in proportion to the value of its services.

HOUSING.

The machinery provided by the Housing Act of last session has been set in active motion by the establishment of a Housing Branch of the Department of Labour, with the requisite staff throughout the Dominion. The shortage of supplies and the high cost of building generally have retarded the erection of dwellings, particularly of workers' dwellings, the cost of which is limited by the Act; yet it is satisfactory to state that, including nearly two hundred now being built by the Housing Department, it is estimated that twelve hundred houses are at the present time in course of erection in the various towns of the Dominion. A further number will be built during the present year; and I may add that, in response to some nine hundred additional applications for workers' dwellings, funds have been provided by the Government for an additional five hundred dwellings.

Under Part III of the Act meat-freezing, dairy manufacturing, and coal-mining have been gazetted as industries to which the Act shall apply, and a few applications have been made by employers for loans accordingly.