

of orders, 36; back Saturdays, 26; dispute between Miners' and Engine-drivers' unions, 10; stop-work meeting, 1; demonstration at Blackball, 1; stoppage over reduction in wages, 2; damage to power-line, 1: total, 77.

Employees.—In connection with coal-winning, the average number of persons employed in and about the mine was 83, made up as follows: Underground—Coal-hewers, 34; deputies, shiftmen, and truckers, 30. On the surface—15 men and 4 boys. In addition to those employed on coal-winning there were on an average 6 men and 1 boy employed in prospecting work, making a total of 85 men and 5 boys.

Expenditure.—The total expenditure in connection with coal-winning for wages, stores, mine-timber, and compensation, together with the cost of electric power and coal used on the works, amounted to £23,853 17s. 8d., as compared with £28,148 2s. 10d. for the previous year. In addition to the amount expended on coal-winning, £1,754 8s. 7d. was expended on boring and prospecting on the reserve between the Nine and the Ten Mile Creeks, also on prospecting-work in connection with the James Mine.

Coal-hewers' Average Daily Earnings.—The coal-hewers' average daily earnings (gross) were £1 8s. 10-81d., and after deducting stores (explosives) the net return was £1 1s. 9-70d., a reduction of 4s. 9-30d. per day when compared with the previous year.

Daily Output.—The average daily mine-output was 188 tons, and the coal-hewers' average daily output 5 tons 15½ cwt., as compared with 175 tons 15 cwt. and 6 tons 1¼ cwt. for the previous year.

Deficiencies.—The total amount paid under the minimum-wage clause during the year was £381 13s. 5d. This works out to a cost of 2-41d. per ton.

Accidents.—During the year there were a few minor accidents, but not any of a serious nature. The payments made at this colliery under the provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act amounted to £651 18s. 9d. On the output produced this works out to a cost of 4-12d. per ton.

Stone-dusting.—Work under this head has been regularly carried out, and during the year 4 tons of stone dust was used for this purpose. The number of samples analysed from the various zones in the mine was 82.

Underground Workings.—The bulk of the output during the year was obtained from the development of workings in the cross-cut and new dip sections, the balance being made up from coal won from the extraction of pillars in the west section. Work in connection with the extraction of pillars has been carried out in a satisfactory manner, very little coal being lost during extraction. In the cross-cut area there are two sections worked—namely, the dip and south level. In the former the seam has been fairly uniform in gradient and thickness, and the quality has also been good. Unfortunately, the area in this dip section is limited, due to the close proximity of an upthrow fault with a displacement of approximately 190 ft.

Development work in this section is nearing completion, and the time is not far distant when the extraction of pillars will be commenced. To the left of the dip section herein referred to there is an area yet to be developed. To develop it means driving under Cannell Creek, where measures overlying the seam are not very thick. With the object of opening up this area arrangements have been made to drive a new dip heading on the east side of the present one, and at the same time leave a barrier 2 chains in width between it and the existing dip workings. The object of the barrier is that in the event of water being encountered when driving under Cannell Creek it would not affect the workings in the present dip section. In the south level section the seam has been somewhat variable in thickness and quality. In this locality the seam has been troubled considerably with intrusions of stone bands and rolls, also thick bands of iron pyrites. The main south level is at the present time stopped owing to the coal being inferior. A small dip section off the main haulage road was worked continuously during the year, the seam in this locality being variable in quality and thickness.

Prospecting.—The areas surrounding the James Mine have been prospected during the year and, with the exception of a small block between the Nine Mile and Cannell Creeks, the results obtained were of a disappointing nature. In the block between the Nine Mile and Cannell Creeks the James Seam was traced for a distance of approximately 9 chains, the thickness being upwards of 7 ft. The coal in this block will in all probability be worked in the near future from the new dip section that is being opened up from the cross-cut section. Prospecting work was also carried out on the areas between the James Mine and Rocky Creek, also between Rocky and Cavern Creeks. Several seams were traced, but, owing to faulting and the areas being so small, it is regrettable to report that no coal of a workable area was discovered in this locality.

GENERAL.

From a trade point of view it would not be out of place to state that the past year has been one of the most difficult in the history of coal-mining in New Zealand. The State Coal-mines, along with other mines in the Dominion, have suffered through lack of trade, in consequence of which the output, together with the days worked, are below those of the previous year. Although it has been the aim of the management to keep down the costs of production, the frequent stoppages through lack of trade and consequently reduced output have caused them to be higher than they would have been with a regular and greater output. A reduction in the working-time has always a serious effect not only on the output, but also on the general average cost of production, for it must be noted that there are many standing charges that cannot be reduced, and the maintenance of the mines has to be attended to whether full time or otherwise is worked.

In conclusion, permit me to say that all the officers have performed the duties delegated to them in a most satisfactory manner, and I am also indebted to yourself for valuable services rendered in connection with several matters concerning the mines. I am also indebted to the Director of Geological Survey for assistance rendered in connection with the area that is being prospected on the reserve between the Nine and the Ten Mile Creeks.

I have, &c.,

I. A. JAMES, Superintendent.

The Under-Secretary, Mines Department, Wellington.