

REPORT ON
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MINING INDUSTRY

Introduction

As is shown by the Ministerial Statement of the Minister for Mines, 1925 (copy of which is attached) the mining industry of the State is reviving and expanding. The annual output of minerals and mineral products is steadily increasing, and each annual increase exceeds that of the former year. This is due chiefly to the exploitation of deposits such as the Read - Roseberry, Zinc-lead silver ore, and the cement materials of Maria Island which were not previously used, or to a limited extent only. Numerous other projects are also being undertaken such as:-

- 1) Mining and treatment of Osmiridium bearing serpentine at Bald Hill.
- 2) Opening up of the South Comet Mine.
- 3) Formation of companies to manufacture cement at Flowery Gully and also at Devonport.

Two discoveries of new osmiridium fields have been made recently. The most important is that of Adams River from which osmiridium of a value over £100,000 has already been sold. These discoveries have brought about an increased activity in prospecting especially in Southern Tasmania.

It is evident therefore that from every point of view the present is the time for an active progressive policy with regard to the Mining Industry.

Phases of the Mining Industry

The Mining Industry of the country depends upon:-

- 1) The continued exploitation of the mineral deposits which are already being worked.

This constitutes the actual mining industry existing at any particular period. Such exploitation depends upon the quantity and quality of the material in any particular product. The market value of the product, efficiency of management etc.

- 2) The initiation of exploitation of known minerals of commercial value.

It is this phase that acts as a feeder to the existing Mining Industry and renders it a progressive one and thus is of great importance. Mineral deposits though after containing almost inexhaustible quantities are generally wasting assets and so the industry requires some such phase as the above.

- 3) The location of hitherto unknown deposits.

This phase constitutes the real basis of the

whole of the Mining Industry acting as it does as the feeder to (2) which in turn acts as a feeder to (1). It is thus of supreme importance and is deserving of all the assistance possible if the Mining Industry is to be maintained and also undergo expansion.

The question is then, as to how this assistance can be given and the answer is that one of the most important ways is in the provision of means of communication and transport.

The Necessity For Roads

This matter of the provision of communication and transport is of special importance in Tasmania. The mineral-bearing regions of this State are situated in the Northeast, East, Northwest, West, and South-western districts. All these districts are of a very rugged nature and covered by a dense growth of trees and undergrowth of various descriptions. These features make the task of penetrating such country extremely difficult and slow. In particular it is the carriage of supplies, tools etc., that is the greatest obstacle in attempting to penetrate such country.

Prospecting has been carried out in such country and great credit is due to the pioneers for it, and of course, can still be carried out to a limited extent. It is, however, a matter to which considerable time and work has to be devoted and every delay and inconvenience makes the work harder and slower. The extent to which these handicaps restrict prospecting is very large and can only be fully realised by those who have to attempt this work. Roads and permanent tracks in the possible mineral-bearing country would greatly facilitate and quickly enable the unprospected and partly prospected country in Tasmania to be prospected.

Roads required in Tasmania.

All parts of Tasmania are well served by roads except the Western quarter. The production of minerals from that part exceeds in value £33,000,000 yet one settlement only is connected by road to a seaport. Some of the more important mining towns are connected by rail, some areas are inaccessible by track, and one, (the south-western division) is not explored. The provision of lines of communication - roads in preference to Railways or tracks - is necessary to the development of that mountainous, forest country. Prospectors, under existing conditions find it difficult and arduous to penetrate far into the mountainous areas owing to lack of transport facilities and the same condition precludes the possibility of exploiting the poorer grades of ore.

Roads would serve the interests of the Departments of Agriculture and Forestry also, and tend to bring about permanent settlement in that sparsely populated region.

The trunk road routes proposed for immediate construction are:-

Lake St. Clair to Gormanston	£70,000
Waratah to Zeehan	£40,000
Zeehan to Queenstown	£25,000
South Gordon River Country to West Coast .	£10,000
South Gordon to Port Davey	£70,000
Huon to Craycroft	£50,000

Development of Known Deposits

The phase of the mining industry indicated in (2) is also worthy of all the assistance that can be given to it. An attached report on this phase was submitted to the State Development Advisory Board in 1923.

The progress on one item of this report viz. oil shale, may be mentioned here. The result of the discussions and negotiations of the Advisory Board was that the Australian Shale Oil Corporation Limited has commenced operations in the Latrobe district. The first unit of the plant is now almost completely erected and ready to begin the testing of the shales on a commercial basis. If it proves successful and there are many reasons to expect this, the importance of this industry to the State cannot be over estimated.

The development of the industry at this stage becomes largely a matter for companies, syndicates, etc. Though it does not come within the scope of this report any assistance from the State which could be reasonably given would help greatly. Some help can be given in the direction of electric power, water supply, and communication.

Water Supply

A large supply of water is required in certain classes of Mining, such as hydraulic sluicing in the Gladstone District. Long water races are necessary to convey the water from the source of supply. A sum of £25,000 could be used to advantage in this direction in the Gladstone District.

GOVERNMENT GEOLOGISTS.

Accredited Author
Wye, P. E.

Hobart.
9th February, 1926.