

Important amendments in the Mining and Coal-mines Acts were also made. These for the most part were for the purpose of giving effect to the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Mines, and to bring the law into line with recent enactments in the United Kingdom, in the interest of greater safety. The most important provisions in these amending Acts were in connection with ventilation and miners' baths at metal-mines, and with safety-lamps, flameless (or permitted) explosives, ventilation, systematic timbering, miners' baths, and the prevention of the accumulation of inflammable dust in coal-mines.

A new appointment—viz., that of an Inspecting Engineer of Coal-mines, who by virtue of his office would also be Chief Inspector of Coal-mines—was provided for. For this position applications were publicly invited, the appointment being eventually conferred upon Mr. Frank Reed, M.I.M.M., who during the past nine years has held the position of Inspecting Engineer of Mines. Mr. Reed formerly held a similar position under the Government of Western Australia.

To give effect to many of the safety provisions in the amended Acts, regulations are required, and for the preparation of these a conference of the Inspectors of Mines of the Dominion was held in Wellington. As a result of such conference very comprehensive regulations were drafted, and subsequently submitted to representatives of the employers and workers at mines throughout the Dominion. It is gratifying to state that the proposals were received in a very friendly spirit, and but few alterations were suggested.

SCHOOLS OF MINES.

With the gradual decline of the gold-mining industry at some of the centres where schools of mines were established during the more prosperous years of mining, the attendance at some of the subsidized schools has fallen off a good deal. At the Government examination held in connection with these schools throughout the Dominion during 1914 only one student presented himself for examination in the subject of metal-mining, and only five for coal-mining certificates.

The expenditure by the Department on schools of mines during the year ended the 31st March, 1915, amounted to £5,047.

SUBSIDIZED PROSPECTING.

During the year ended the 31st March, 1915, twenty prospecting and other mining parties were granted subsidies for prospecting, also for the construction of a jetty, water-races, and tail-races, the amount of subsidies granted being £1,399, of which sum £600 was expended during the year; in addition to which, £1,386 granted during the previous year was expended by fifty parties during the past financial year. There continues to be a growing disinclination among miners and others to prospect the back country, nearly all the sixty-two persons engaged during the year upon work which had been subsidized being occupied upon the development of ground held as claims in settled districts.

LOANS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF MINING.

The statutory Board appointed for the purpose of reporting upon applications for mining loans did not report favourably upon any applications during the year. Since 1905, when provision was made in the Mining Act for such loans, the amount lent has been £35,225.

ROADS AND TRACKS ON GOLDFIELDS.

The expenditure on roads and tracks by subsidies and direct grants during the financial year ended the 31st March, 1915, amounted to £30,064; in addition to which, North Island goldfields' local bodies were credited with gold duty amounting to £12,450. The total amount of State aid thus given on behalf of the mining industry was £42,514.