

timbering is now required by the law. The recommendation contained on page 10 of the Report of the Royal Commission on Mines, 1911, that the members of the Commission "are of opinion that provisions similar to those of the British Coal-mines Act, 1911, on systematic support of roof and sides should be incorporated in the Coal-mines Act of this Dominion" was unanimously endorsed at a conference of all Inspectors of Mines held in Wellington during November, 1914; and after discussion and examination of witnesses by the parliamentary Mines Committee, 1914, the British law regarding systematic timbering was adopted verbatim and became law in regulation 56 under the Coal-mines Act, with an extra clause that an Additional Rules Committee, if set up by the Minister, might have power to vary the regulation, which now provides that where timber is used to support the roof at the working-face, and all parts of a roadway the roof or sides of which require support, shall be systematically and adequately supported at such regular intervals and in such manner as shall be specified in a notice by the mine-manager. It is also provided that if the Inspector considers the system of supporting the roof and sides adopted in any part of a mine is unsatisfactory he may require the manager to fix some less distance or otherwise modify the system, and the manager shall comply with the requisition. If complied with conscientiously the regulation regarding systematic timbering is probably one of the most satisfactory measures ever introduced in this Dominion for the safety of persons employed in our coal-mines. Inspection shows, however, that miners on the West Coast frequently neglect to erect timber within the specified distance of the working-face, with the result that lives are being lost chiefly through the carelessness of the sufferers. Hitherto there has not been any appeal by miners to an Additional Rules Committee to vary the specification regarding the maximum interval and manner of timbering notified by the manager and approved by the Inspector.

The following are the maximum intervals allowed at the principal collieries :—

Systematic Timbering. (Vide Regulation 56.)	Name of Colliery.													
	Millerton and Dunston.	Westport- Stockton.	Blackball.	State Collieries.	North Brunner.	Paparoa.	North Cape.	Puponga.	Hikurangi.	Waipa.	Northern.	Katangata and Castle Hill.	Nightcaps.	Freeman's.
Between each row of props	6 0	6 0	6 0	6 0	4 0	...	3 6	6 0	4 0	5 0	4 0	6 0	6 0	6 0
Between adjacent props in the same row	6 0	6 0	6 0	6 0	4 0	6 0	3 6	6 0	5 0	6 0	4 0	6 0	5 0	6 0
Between the front row of props and the face	7 6	7 6	7 6	7 6	..	7 6	4 6	6 0	5 0	6 0	4 0	6 0	6 0	8 0

The distance between holing props or sprags, also between face-sprags, is 5 ft. in accordance with Special Rule 36.

The penalty for breaches of the regulations shall for a first offence not exceed £5, and for a second or subsequent offence shall not exceed £10.

I have, &c.,

FRANK REED,

Inspecting Engineer and Chief Inspector of Mines.