

(c) ELECTRICITY AT COLLIERIES.

(Regulation 243.)

The following is a summary of the annual returns, in accordance with Regulation 243 (c), regarding electrical apparatus at collieries :—

Number of collieries at which electrical apparatus is installed	..	..	24
Number of continuous-current installations	..	..	10
Number of alternating-current installations	..	..	16
Number of collieries electrically lighted	..	..	21
Number of collieries using electrical ventilating-machines	..	..	19
Number of collieries using electrical pumping plants	..	..	19
Number of collieries using electrical haulage plants	..	..	13
Number of collieries using electrical screening plants	..	..	6
Number of collieries using electrical miscellaneous plants	..	..	14
Number of collieries using electrical locomotives	..	..	1
Total horse-power employed from motors on surface	..	..	2,933
Total horse-power employed from motors below ground	..	..	3,633

(f) PROSECUTIONS.

There were eight prosecutions by the Department's Inspectors during the year.

1. An engine-driver was convicted and fined £1 and costs because he acted in the capacity of a winding-engine driver while not possessed of the necessary certificate.

2. A deputy who was also the shot-firer was convicted and fined £1 and costs for deputing miners to fire a shot in their working-place.

3. A mine-manager was fined £1 and costs for failing to appoint a competent person to examine a safety-lamp before it was taken into the mine.

4. A mine-manager was fined £2 and costs for failing to provide a safety-lamp of an approved type.

5. An acting-deputy was fined £1 and costs for failing to make a report of the result of his morning examination of the mine.

6. An acting-deputy was fined £1 and costs for using a safety-lamp which was not of an approved type.

7. An acting-deputy was fined £1 and costs for using a safety-lamp which had not been examined by a competent person since previously used.

8. A mine-manager was fined £1 and costs for using threatening language to a workman.

SECTION V.—LEGISLATION AFFECTING COAL-MINES.

The Coal-mines Act, 1925, came into operation on the 1st April, 1926 ; there were no amendments during the year.

New regulations regarding the Coal Miners' Relief Fund were gazetted on the 1st April, and regulations regarding Mine-surveyor's certificates on the 2nd September.

The effort to get better mining methods adopted was continued during the year. Changes in method put into operation at the instance of the inspection staff in the previous year have shown by the results obtained that they were an improvement on the previous practice. The best method of pillar-extraction has been investigated, and a method is now under trial ; so far it is proving successful, and it is hoped by this means to materially reduce the risk of underground fires and consequent loss of coal, and at the same time to attain greater safety when extracting pillars in very thick seams.

Stone-dusting of roadways was extensively practised in the mines in the Huntly district during the year. In the other districts the mines have been sampled to determine their condition, and after discussion with the owners and workmen a material alteration to the Stone-dusting Regulations was agreed on, which it is hoped will render the mines safe from the dangers of coal-dust explosions.

I desire again to acknowledge the efficient help and co-operation I have received from the District Inspectors during the past year. Mr. C. J. Strongman resigned the position of Inspector of the West Coast District in order to fill the position of local manager to the Westport Coal Co. at Granity ; he was succeeded by Mr. O. J. Davis, who took over the duties of Inspector on the 1st December.

I have, &c.,

J. A. C. BAYNE,

Inspecting Engineer and Chief Inspector of Coal-mines.