

ZINC MINING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.

ZINC MINING did not make progress in British Columbia in 1906 as had been expected it would do. On the contrary, the production of zinc was small as compared with that of 1905. The reasons for this practical failure of efforts to build up a profitable zinc-producing industry are stated in the memorial printed on another page, and in the following article taken from the *Nelson Daily News*:

"During the eleven months ending on November 30, last, so Mr. S. S. Fowler informs us, the average price of spelter in London was £26 18s. 7d. (equivalent to \$5.82 per 100 lb.) the highest average for more than 35 years. But notwithstanding the price obtainable, British Columbia zinc ore production has decreased to about 2,885 tons as compared with about 8,500 tons shipped during 1905. The shipments of 1906 were distributed as follows: Frank, Alberta, 825 tons; American smelters, 1,400 tons; European smelters, 660 tons. The reasons for this decreased output of the mines are several. First, and probably the most important one, is that British Columbia is now practically excluded from the American market by the enforcement of the Dingley tariff. This tariff imposes a duty of 20 per cent *ad valorem* on zinc ores, other than calamine, and the Customs authorities have ruled that the value is to be determined not only by the zinc contained in the ore, but by the zinc plus the lead and silver. This decision of the board of appraisers has been appealed from by the smelting interests of Colorado and Kansas and the matter is still under advisement.

"In the meantime the American smelters are taking a very limited amount of ore from British Columbia, fairly low grade in zinc and containing considerable quantities of lead and silver. No ore of high grade in zinc is being mined at present.

"Under the existing conditions, with a high price but no nearby market available, it would seem natural that zinc of high grade should be sold in Europe to a greater extent than it is; but there are many details which make that market unattractive to the producer as a direct purchaser.

"It was hoped a year ago that the smelter at Frank, Alberta, owned by the Canadian Metal Co., would have been in condition to be operated successfully by the middle of 1906, and thus afford an outlet for the Kootenay product. Indeed, the Frank plant was run for a short time during the summer, producing several carloads of excellent spelter. The operations, however, revealed the fact that efficiency was not attainable when working on a small scale, nor without considerable alteration of the plant. It was therefore decided to close the works pending the making of necessary changes.

"In the meantime, the Blue Bell mine, owned by the Canadian Metal Co., is being extensively developed and is about to be equipped with a plant for the concentration of its ore, for both zinc and lead. The zinc output will be quite sufficient to insure

continuity of operations at Frank, and thus, with an adequate and constant supply of raw material, it is expected that the cost of operation at Frank may be so reduced as to afford a permanent local market for Kootenay zinc producers.

"The 'Report of the Zinc Commission,' which was published about November 1, has proved to be a valuable work, containing, as it does, a compilation of a vast amount of general information as to zinc, together with the results of many and extensive experiments on various zinc-bearing ores. It is evident from the report that we have an extensive latent resource in zinc, and that, were the more important properties worked and the product smelted in Canada, the product would fill the Canadian demand many times over. Foreign markets are therefore essential, and in these the world's price for spelter must be met.

"The 'Report of the Zinc Commission' plainly indicates that, with spelter at not above 5 cents per lb., and without conditions considerably more in our favour than they are now, the zinc mining and smelting industry, if unaided, must develop but slowly. If it can be fostered and well established, when prices of the metal are high as at present, we believe it quite probable it will become so well entrenched as to be able to live through periods of lower ranges of price. Now is the time for help."

Regarding the prospect of assistance being given this industry, the following press despatch, sent from Ottawa on December 31, will serve to indicate the position at that date:

"F. J. Deane of Nelson, British Columbia, who with W. C. Dalgleish has been here for some time past in connection with a proposed bounty for the encouragement of the zinc industry in British Columbia, had a long conference this morning with the finance minister, Hon. W. S. Fielding, and Hon. William Templeman, in reference thereto. The matter was fully discussed, Mr. Fielding evincing a cordial interest and promising to give the project thorough consideration at a later date, when Mr. Deane shall be in a position to present data not as yet available. Further discussion of the subject with the finance minister will be deferred for a few weeks, his time just now being fully occupied with the tariff, and the subject being one that can be taken up more conveniently later in the session. Whilst Mr. Fielding did not hesitate to express his anxiety to assist in every way possible the mining industry in British Columbia, he pointed out plainly that there is now prevalent a feeling of hostility to bounties, and that it would be necessary to establish a very strong case in order to secure aid of this nature."

A press despatch lately received from Ottawa states that Hon. Wm. Templeman is greatly interested in the movement to establish the zinc industry on a profitable basis in British Columbia, and will lend his hearty support to any proper effort in that direction.