

preciation of the real importance of the Fort Norman oil-flow, which follows so soon upon a previously expressed adverse opinion. The statement of Mr. Camsell, the Deputy Minister of Mines, that "Canada is a continental area, only partially prospected," is in these days being amply demonstrated.

THE INTEREST OF THE COAL PRODUCER IN COAL DISTRIBUTION.

Our British Columbia correspondent gives some particulars of the cost of marketing domestic coal on the Pacific Coast that are fairly typical of the customs of the coal trade in general.

The price at the mines to dealers is given as \$8.93 per net ton, which seems high. The cost of mining coal in Vancouver Island is, however, quite high. Except in some favored localities, the Island coals are characterised by a high percentage of discard in the preparation process at the mines, running in some cases from 25 to 30 percent. The seams are also disturbed by rolls, and the work of development is extremely costly. The difficulties under which mining is carried on in some Vancouver Island districts are indeed such as would dishearten those accustomed to continuous, regular coal seams.

The process of getting the coal to market in Vancouver includes the following operations, towing and unloading scows, screening and sacking, cartage and packing. These total a cost of \$4.37, or about half the mine cost of the coal, and they represent largely the cost of inefficient and superfluous handling. Customers demand screened lump coal, and to supply this demand, runmine is screened, leaving a residue of slack of little value. Ordinary runmine should be good enough for most domestic purposes. Sacking is another practice that is only necessary where coal has to be delivered in extremely small quantities. The items of towing, unloading scows, wharf rent and overhead charges, indicate that much could be saved by bringing coal cargoes to Vancouver in larger bulk, and unloading by modern devices.

The suggestion that Alberta coal should be brought to Vancouver and sold by the city in a municipal yard is not one that commends itself to many, but it does indicate that the effect of large areas of coal that can be very cheaply mined is commencing to be felt, and Vancouver people should not overlook the fact that some day their city is likely to be a point of much importance in the export of Alberta coal by water. The obvious remedy for any inefficiency that may exist as a result of competition among Vancouver Island mines in the Vancouver domestic trade, is the consolidation of the sales organizations, a concentration of the freighting, discharging and marketing arrangements; and the absorption of the business of the retailers by the coal companies.

Even on their own showing, the retail dealers in coal in Vancouver take a profit on \$1.20 per ton on lump coal. It is safe to say that no coal company in Vancouver Island ever made such a profit over any representative period, after deduction of all legitimate charges. It is also safe to say that a coal company would consider itself justified in spending many thousands of dollars to effect a producing-cost saving of ten cents per ton, and they should not contemplate—without some consideration of its repercussion on their own interests—a charge of \$1.50 per ton for "cartage and packing" of domestic coal. He may not deserve it, but the coal producer will always be blamed by the ultimate customer for the high cost of coal, and the necessity for action in self-defence is quite clearly indicated.

LOW FATALITY RATE IN BRITISH COAL MINES.

In pleasing contradistinction to the many difficulties that at this time beset British coal-mining is the fatal accident record, which in 1919, for the first time in its history, showed a ratio of mortality from accidents per thousand persons employed that fell below unity, the figure being 0.94 per 1,000 persons. The number of persons who lost their lives by explosions of fire damp and coal dust, was 27, out of 1,191,313 employed, or 0.03 per thousand, a record that was only bettered in 1917, when only 20 deaths occurred from these causes.

Twelve of the deaths from explosions occurred in Scotland, where the use of naked lights is common. In the English mines, the practice may be said to be virtually extinct.

Another notable fact is that not a single person was killed in Great Britain in 1919 through breakage of ropes and chains in shafts, and only six fatalities are attributed to the use of electrical plant underground.

As compared with our friends in the United States, British mining engineers pay a high price in restrictions on output and in increased cost of production because of the operation of regulations forbidding naked lights, naked power wires, black powder, underground trolley-haulages, and other practices that are permitted in the coal mines of the United States, but while this journal shares in the innate dislike of coal miners to any appearance of congratulation upon freedom from fatalities, it can hardly be doubted that the very favorable record of the British coal-mines is to a large extent due to observance of the Coal Mines Regulation Act.

The owners and managers of British coal mines have been accused of carelessness in regard to the safety of employees, and it has been freely stated that the after-war conditions of the collieries was poor. The accident record does not bear out any such ideas, and altogether the achievement is one that reflects credit on all concerned, and particularly on the mines inspectorate.