

MARITIME MINING RECORD.

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A DEMAND UPON NOVA SCOTIA.

The Toronto News of recent date had an article on the shortage of coal in Canada during the past eight or more months, and hints that the coal operators of the province must wake up or else the contract of the coal mines may be taken from them. Considering that the article appears in a paper published in an inland city it presents the matter not unfairly, though on one or two points it is astray. Here is the article:

"The coal problem is probably solved for the remainder of the present winter, but the fuel crisis through which the country has been passing points to the need of adequate preparations against the winter of 1917-18. Competent judges are of the opinion that the coal shortage in eastern Canada will be more acute next year than it has been this year unless effective means are taken to bring in sufficient supplies during the season of navigation. The largest possible quantities of Nova Scotia coal should be delivered at St. Lawrence river ports next summer and autumn.

"The acute situation in eastern Canada and the eastern States this year resulted from decreased production combined with increased consumption. The falling off in output at the Maritime province mines was the inevitable result of heavy enlistments of miners in the Canadian overseas army, and to removals through labor unrest to other fields. As less coal was mined than usual so less came up the St. Lawrence. When navigation closed last autumn the stores of coal in and about Montreal were considerably below the normal, and the extensive manufacturing industries of that district felt the restriction.

"The shortage of fuel has been emphasized by the need for unprecedented activity on the part of Canadian manufacturing enterprises. Hundreds of factories have operated night and day on pressing war orders. In addition to this we have experienced a winter of unusual severity. The present outlook is for a repetition next winter of this winter's difficulties. There appears to be an emphatic need for forehanded measures during the coming spring and summer if a serious deadlock is to be averted in the following autumn and winter. An estimate should be made

of the amount of coal which the railways and manufacturing industries will require and of the capacity of the Canadian coal mining companies as at present manned and equipped to meet this demand.

The danger is that the coal companies will be content to produce what coal they can with the labor at their command, or at best such quantities as will yield them the most profitable returns regardless of the market's requirements for war purposes. The largest producers are the Dominion Coal company and the Nova Scotia Coal company, which are part and parcel of the great steel industries with which they are respectively identified. The profits on both ends of these industries have been heavy despite the lessened output of coal, and the fear is that neither will make special efforts to enlarge production in face of a general labor shortage, a handicap which will not easily be overcome. Unless both companies and other producers present a plan showing that they can cope with the emergency and furnish coal in satisfactory quantities at satisfactory prices, there will have to be some measure of government intervention.

"The war is by no means over and the country cannot afford to face another season of fuel shortages. If necessary the mines can be operated under government direction. The companies can be required to secure an adequate supply of labor. It may even be advisable for the public authorities to fix the wages to be paid and the prices to be asked for the coal. Such pressure should be applied as will lead to a maximum output and to timely deliveries during the coming season at St. Lawrence river ports. It may even be possible to draw upon the Nova Scotia mines for some of Ontario's needs. A shortage of ships has to be overcome, but this is no time for half measures. Vessel-owners on the Great Lakes and the lower St. Lawrence can be directed to place some or all of their passenger steamers in the coal and freight trade. The railways will need large additions to their motive power and rolling stock if only to handle next season's coal, and next season's grain crop. As the capacity of Canadian locomotive works is wholly engaged until September, orders for freight engines may have to be placed in the United States. Space is available in Canadian shops for the construction of freight cars and as many should be contracted for as can be built in the next few months. They will be needed against next season's fuel and freight requirements throughout Ontario as in the Montreal district."

The News is correct in saying that the lessened production was due to the heavy enlistments of miners, but the statement that it was due in part to labor "unrest" and consequent removal to other fields is incorrect unless a wider meaning is given to the words "labor unrest" than is generally accorded. The word "unrest" when applied to labor means that labor is discontented, is disgruntled and out of harmony with the employers. Now this sort of unrest had no place among the Nova Scotia miners last year. They made certain demands upon the employers which were granted without vexatious bickerings, and therefore there was no room for discontent in the sense we have stated. There was, however, it must be admitted a new form of unrest. A small proportion of the miners attracted by the