

### Coal Production in Nova Scotia During the First Half of 1918

By F. W. Gray.

The production of coal during the first six months of 1918 in Nova Scotia shows a decline from the outputs of the corresponding period of 1917 of approximately 330,000 tons. The falling off is principally to be found in the production of the larger coal companies and it is slightly offset by one or two increases. The net result, however, is a decrease. In the writer's review of the Nova Scotia coal trade for 1917 it was forecasted that the yield of 1918 would in all probability show a decline from 1917 of 350,000 tons, and unfortunately this forecast has been almost realized in the first half of the year. During the next six months, barring accidents, it is not to be anticipated that the rate of decline will be quite so rapid as it was during the first six months, but no increase can be expected, and a further diminution of the rate of production is only too probable. It would look as if the 1918 figures would be about 400,000 tons below those of 1917.

Weather conditions in January, the explosion at the Allan Shaft Colliery, and some very minor labor troubles have partially caused this falling off from last year, but the real and important reason is the shortage of underground workers, and more particularly the insufficient number of men qualified to work at the coal face.

It has not been fully realized, how specialized is the occupation of the workman who "digs" coal, nor how largely the drain of voluntary and draft enlistments has fallen on this class of underground worker. In the organization of a colliery there are men who are classed as producers, and other men who are classed as "non-producers." The use of this last-named term does not imply any lesser importance of the work to which it is applied, but it is very essential that the respective proportions of producers and non-producers should be correct. Enlistments have taken away an undue proportion of the producing class, and while some readjustment is possible by transferring men from the non-productive classes to the productive class, this readjustment can only have a very limited range, as a large part of the underground non-productive class, and practically all the surface workers are unfitted for work at the coal face, either by being too young or too old, or by physical inability and in some instances by a distaste for the work of the actual miner. As the producers dig the coal, and the non-producers handle and prepare it for market, it is evident that the output of coal is limited and controlled entirely by the available number of producers. If all these men were taken away there would still be a very considerable number of workers left at the collieries, but there would be no coal for them to handle.

The disproportion between the respective classes has now become so great, that it can only be overcome by closing down some mines, and concentrating the workmen in the collieries selected for this purpose. If this readjustment is forced by the conditions existing, and it seems inevitable, then a certain number of older men, or physically ineffective men, will be thrown out of employment.

A statement issued by the Standard Silver-Lead Mining Co. in Spokane, Washington, indicates that that company operated at a loss of \$7,010 during the month of April, as against a profit of \$26,255 in the preceding month.

### EXEMPTION OF COAL MINERS CONTINUOUSLY EMPLOYED.

Coal mining is classified in Canada as a work of national necessity and coal miners are dealt with as a special class in the enforcement of the Military Service Act of Canada. The course to be pursued in regard to application of conscription to the miners has been a matter of serious consideration to the tribunals charged with power to grant exemptions, temporary and permanent, in British Columbia, and other western mining Provinces of the Dominion. The attitude assumed by His Honor Judge Thompson of British Columbia recently, may be taken as indicative of the generally accepted policy in this respect. In the Crowsnest Pass Coal District he was confronted recently with a blanket appeal for exemption for 36 men having the backing of the United Mine Workers of America and based on the contention that the appellants were engaged in a work of national importance. After hearing all the evidence as to the actual time being worked by each man, the amount of coal produced and the individual earnings, he allowed 31 applications for a limited period, renewal being conditional on their maintaining their average production of coal.

In giving judgment Judge Thompson established the following rules:

1.—In cases where I grant exemption it shall be conditional upon the appellant being continuously employed in his occupation, either that in which he is now engaged or some other occupation in the mine. Any person ceasing to work for more than 24 hours will be deemed to be not continuously employed, unless he can show some just cause or reason for his non-employment. This prohibition does not apply to recognized holidays and the holding of funerals.

2.—A lay-off of 24 hours without just cause or reason being shown shall not occur more than once a month. In case of illness a certificate signed by some medical practitioner must be produced within 48 hours and if demanded by the military or civil authorities produced and filed in the office of the chief of provincial police at Fernie, B.C.

3.—In the event of a strike or cessation of work by workmen other than exempted men whereby the latter are prevented from working, exemption shall cease, subject, however, to the provisions in rules 9 and 10. (These are certain rules laid down in the agreement subsisting between employer and employe in this District.) Judge Thompson here observes: "This may seem a harsh ruling, but it must be remembered that this appeal has been made by the United Mine Workers of America and it will be the duty of the officials of the brotherhood to see that no such strikes or cessations of work occur."

4.—No exempted man shall occupy an official position or carry on work which will necessitate his absence from work at his usual occupation in the mines. In the event of any person to whom exemption is granted desiring to change his employment from one employer to another he may do so upon application being made in writing to me and a certificate allowed by me.

5.—In the event of any dispute arising between the military authorities and any person to whom exemption is granted, or in the event of the military authorities drafting, detaining or arresting an exempted man for alleged noncompliance with these rules, or from any cause, the matter shall be brought before me as speedily as possible for determination.