

those expressed, no criticism is possible of the spirit which characterizes the article. The proper ventilation of any coal mine, worked on a big scale, and having hundreds of ramifications through which the air must travel, or be carried, is a subject attended with tremendous difficulties. If a mine consisted of only long levels or roads, then ventilation would be child's play. It is these ramifications that cause the trouble. No one would engage in mining if a condition was that every section of the mine, however limited the area, should have an independent intake and return air course. In almost every mine there are parts that get more air than necessary, while there may be some that do not get as much as desirable. They, conditions in a mine are variable; a supply of air sufficient for to-day, and ordinary days, may be insufficient for to-morrow, and days when conditions are abnormal. One of the largest collieries in France, if not in Europe, had several years ago, so high a reputation for being well conducted that a delegation of experts was sent from Britain to examine and report upon the mine, so that, if the system of operation was found to be in any way in advance of those in Britain it might be adopted. The delegation brought back a report which eulogized the system and recommending the adoption of certain features of it in the British mines. Not very long after this most favorable report had been published, an explosion occurred at this very colliery, considered to be a model, which resulted in an appalling loss of life.

Not long ago the writer had a talk with a high official of the Government on this subject. The remark was let fall that it was impossible to keep certain mines free of gas. To this was made the retort, "If that be so, then why should Rule 1 of General Rules, remain on the statute books. Why not remove it wholly, or have it amended that it will not ask an impossible thing must be done?" Rule 1, Sec. 46, C. M. R. reads:

"An adequate amount of ventilation shall be constantly produced in every mine to dilute and render harmless noxious gases, to such an extent that the working places of the shafts, levels, stables and workings of the mine, and the travelling roads to and from such working places shall be in a fit state for passing and working therein."

If this rule could be complied with there would be no purely gas explosions. Can it fully at all times? Our contemporary in the opening sentences of the article says:

"The terrible disaster at the Allan Shaft demonstrates anew that the Government should take charge of the way mines are operated. We do not mean that the Government should operate the mine, but that they should lay down positive rules for operating them. Without going further away than this county there have been warnings enough to show that there is something radically wrong in the system under which they are operated. Take, for instance, the Allan Shaft with the repetition of the tragedy of the Ford Pit. The coal in that mine is valuable, but the mines are permeated with inflammable gas—the cause of all the trouble so far as men on the street know."

The Record is afraid too much is asked of the Government in the above extract. Can positive rules be formulated and acted upon? We are afraid not.

Rules can only, in a majority of cases, be general, much being necessarily left to the judgment, common sense, of the mine officials. The ablest mining men in the province are in the service of the companies, fully as competent as men in the United States or elsewhere, to intelligently conduct mining operations. Where would the Government get men to frame and see to the carrying out of positive rules? The question is beyond the Record.

CAUSES OF DECREASE IN OUTPUTS.

Lately, in a speech, the President of the Halifax Board of Trade, Mr. McGillivray, made the following reference to the decreased coal production of the province:

"The decrease in the production of our coal mines was the most disappointing feature of our industrial position, and every well wisher of the Province of Nova Scotia will hope that the management of the mines and the miners themselves will be able so to co-operate that this vital industry shall in future be kept at its maximum production."

Mr. F. W. Gray in no censorious spirit criticises the reference. Being an official of the biggest company he cannot speak with that abandon which is the privilege of the Record. He must tread gently, lest he trample on the toes of any body of workers, or their leaders. Mr. Gray demurs to President McGillivray's suggestion that there was a lack of co-operation between mine workers, and mine operators, and that this lack was responsible, in part, for the aggravating reduction in output in 1917. Mr. Gray proceeds to give what, in his opinion, was the chief factor in the diminished output. With this no possible fault can be found; on the contrary, every statement which throws light on the vexed question should be welcomed. The question, then, naturally arises, Had President McGillivray any justification, any reasonable grounds, for his statement? The Record is inclined to think he had. Through the Halifax press the public of Nova Scotia were unhesitatingly told that but for the favoritism displayed, or from the discrimination practiced by the officials of the Dominion Coal Co. towards certain of their employees, the output would be, oh, ever so much larger, and all diminution removed; in short, that there would be an increase in output that would astonish greatly the community. Of course that was all the most bellying kind of bunkum. There was, however, no contradiction; the assertion was passed unnoticed by those it affected most, and little wonder, then, if President McGillivray came to the conclusion that what the press said, on the authority of a labor leader, was the unvarnished truth. The name of the one who made the assertion that there was lack of co-operation, was given in the press, and this was a challenge for a denial, if one was possible. Mr. Gray now makes the assertion that the statement was incorrect. Pity it had not been made previously. Presumably it was not contradicted on the assumption that no one would believe it. The fact that so astute a man as President McGillivray took it as a truth, bears out the contention in the last Record, that silence at times is, well, say, sinful. The Record agrees with Mr. Gray that shortage of men, due to enlistments, was the chief factor in the