

# Monetary Times

Trade Review and Insurance Chronicle  
of Canada

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## THE COAL SITUATION

Just as European nations have found themselves in a critical situation as a result of difficulty in securing food and other necessary materials, so the provinces of Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec have been faced with a shortage in fuel supply which is almost as essential to them. The general causes of shortage are in both cases similar,—a new situation has arisen in political relations involving labor shortage and transportation difficulties. The food crisis has been met by stimulating production, by alleviation of the causes which were restricting the supply, and by reducing, also, as far as possible, the consumption. Similar methods must be more fully applied to the present coal problem. We trust, of course, to continue to obtain from the United States the maximum coal supply that Washington will allot us. But incidentally it is worth remembering that the more we secure from the United States, the greater becomes that unfavorable balance of trade against Canada, which we are continually trying to reduce. It is futile, at present, to think of meeting the needs of these provinces by the importation of Alberta or Nova Scotia coal because the transportation factor presents an insurmountable difficulty; excepting, of course, in the case of portions of Manitoba and Quebec.

As regards the utilization of wood, this source is of real assistance in rural communities. We believe,—with the exception of certain striking instances where municipalities have acted,—that the possibilities of local relief from wood have not been adequately taken advantage of. In the United States, we understand, the Fuel Administration takes cognizance of the efforts made regarding wood when making allotments of coal. Wood, however, is an inadequate means of meeting either the present temporary exi-

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gency or the permanent fuel problem with which these provinces are faced.

With regard to stimulation of local coal production we, especially in Ontario and Quebec, can do nothing directly along these lines. We may, however, increase the development of hydro-electric power, making this available for purposes of industry and thereby release large quantities of coal for heating, for which purpose, as has been pointed out in previous articles, electricity is not economically suitable.

For the present at least, it almost appears that the combined effect of the various sources of relief just referred to cannot make up for the twenty per cent. reduction that has been made in Canada's coal allotment from the United States. It is necessary, therefore, that the fullest possible efficiency must be obtained through such regulation in the actual consumption of our coal supply as can be exercised by those in charge of the Fuel Administration, whether federal, provincial or local.

There are large numbers of people in the provinces of Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec, who have their usual supply of coal and who are using it in the usual way; there are many also who, through lack of foresight or through unexpected circumstances find themselves unable to obtain any at the eleventh hour. These latter at least are greatly interested in any measures which would secure them a supply. Shall we have to rely, as in the case of the food scarcity, upon a patriotic appeal, which does not at all reach considerable portions of the community?

If the fuel situation is as being represented in the public press, and we believe it is, then is not some form of drastic regulation a necessity? If so, how long will it be before adequate regulation is made effective? Our Public Health authorities found that provision and action with regard to the "Influenza" were rewarded by greatly relieving the distress arising from this epidemic.