

In the West there have been coal strikes, and consequent delays and confusion, which have reduced to that extent the possible output. In Nova Scotia the shortage of labor, owing to enlistments and other causes, has been so great that it has been impossible for them to add to the production this year. On the other hand, the consumption demand in the Maritime Provinces has increased and the situation in that respect is that what is raised in the Maritime Provinces will not be more than sufficient to take care of the needs or demands of the Maritime Provinces. What formerly came to Quebec (quite a large proportion of it from the bituminous output of Nova Scotia), will have now to be supplied by imports from the United States.

Why Shortage is Feared

That is the situation in so far as Canada is concerned and therefore the situation in the United States becomes of more interest to us. What, then, in its brief and broad features, is the situation in the United States? The normal output of anthracite coal in the United States is between 67,000,000 and 68,000,000 tons—last year it was 67,700,000. The output of commercial bituminous coal in the United States, sold on the market, last year was 509,000,000 tons. The beginning of the coal year, the first of April, had found the supplies in stock not very large, but production, despite all difficulties, has increased from April up to the present time and the total amount raised, both anthracite and bituminous, for the period of the present coal year has been considerably in excess of what was raised last year.

The question comes: If there is any amount of coal in the United States and the output has increased as compared with last year, why the high prices and why the consequent fears of shortage? There are several principal reasons for it. In the first place there is a vastly increased demand in the United States for industrial and war purposes. The increase of steel which is computed to be necessary this year and which will be forthcoming, calls for an increase of 40,000,000 tons of coal for that special production alone. The cotton textile factories, the munition factories and other industries, stimulated now by war needs, are calling for increased quantities of coal. The railways have to do the hauling and it is computed that the railways this year will require thirty per cent. more coal for haulage purposes than they consumed last year, which works out at about an extra amount of 40,000,000 tons or over. That has to be taken into account and it is not possible or probable that the demand will be decreased. In proportion as industry carries on its work of war preparation coal becomes more and more necessary.

The Transportation Situation

One cannot understand the coal situation in the United States, even comparatively, unless he also takes into account the transportation situation which is so intimately connected with the distribution and even the production of coal, as tardy or speedy distribution forms a most important element in coal mining. There has been a comparative shortage of railway transport for coal purposes. Barges and ships along the Atlantic coast and barges and ships on the lakes have been transferred in large tonnage quantities from the carriage of coal to the carriage of more remunerative freights. Many of these vessels, both on the lakes and on the Atlantic coast, have been diverted into war activities, either by purchase or by charter. Thus there has been and is a shortage of shipping carriage for coal. With reference to the railways,

the demands upon them for the carriage of other freight than coal have been very great. They have not in the United States a co-ordinating body such as our Railway Commission, but, in order to cope with the situation, some months ago the railroad presidents of the United States met in Washington and voluntarily submitted themselves to the regulative control of a committee of five or six railway men. The American railroads are now administered as if all were under one system and managed by this railroad war committee. As a result of their work, voluntary entirely, they have cut out, up to the present, more than 16,000,000 miles of train services and have thus saved thereby 1,120,000 tons of coal, which motive power, man power, and fuel power can now be diverted to more necessary carriage. They have also taken hold of the car distribution and within the last three months have diverted 106,000 empties from railways where they could be spared to railways and districts where they were more necessary and where they could do better service. That shows the improvement that is taking place.

One point to be taken into consideration is that most of the mines in the United States have not storage facilities. They depend upon the coal being carried away as soon as it is raised; and it is the custom of the men in most of the mines, I am told, not to go under ground unless the cars which are to take the product away are there ready for loading; and if the cars are delayed and are not available for loading, no work, or less work, is done in the mines, and to a corresponding extent there is disorganization and confusion amongst labor itself. A part of the shortage which has occurred is, of course, due to the transference of alien laborers by hundreds of thousands from European countries to the colors of those countries.

Fuel Controller at Work

As to what is being done in Canada, the fuel controller and his aide are busy at work on two lines, first to co-ordinate the activities of the dealers and shippers and the transport facilities in Canada with a view to equal distribution of the coal when it once arrives at the border, and, second, to look after the supplies that are necessary in the various sections, to ascertain what they are and to make arrangements for their being filled. On the other side of the line the work of the fuel controller and his aide is to keep in co-operative touch with the authorities, the coal miners and operators, the transport facilities, and so on, as well as with the government authorities, to work in touch and unison with them, to get their sympathy and their aid so far as possible. These two lines of their endeavor are being carried on with great pertinacity I know, and I think with very considerable success.

From this short survey of the situation two things are patent as to what Canada will be required to do. It is not impossible, with the wide powers that have been conferred upon the President of the United States and with the work that is being done to ascertain and to regulate the prices and the output, and with the wide powers that we possess to regulate prices and tariffs, that, if activities are maintained as they now are, both the United States and Canada will be, to a certain extent, put upon rations with regard to coal, as distinguishing between absolutely necessary services and services which are not so necessary and which may be dispensed with. In Canada we are taking measure to bring about a complete co-ordination between the different railway companies as to the disposition of cars and the direction of traffic with the view to the saving of coal, just as we are saving in foods.