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Progress of Mining in British Columbia in 1919

Results of Year Though Showing a Decrease of Twenty Per Cent From the Previous Year Holds Out Much Promise for the Future.

The annual report of the Hon. William Sloan, Minister of Mines, Victoria, is recently off the press of the King's Printer, and continues to be a mine of information on this most important Provincial resource, as its many predecessors. Not only does it record in 393 pages and illustrations the progress of mining in 1919, but it gives a full treatment of existing conditions in the various districts of the Province and also of the individual mines. The report is under the direction of Mr. William Flect Robertson, Provincial mineralogist who presents the statistics for the year, the progress of mining and summarizes the results of the year in the various metals and products mined. In addition the report covers the reviews of the six district engineers together with those of the gold commissioners and mining recorders throughout the Province.

Mr. Robertson in discussing the progress of mining says:

The gross value of the mineral production of the Province for the year 1919 was \$33,296,313, a decrease from that of the preceding year of \$8,486,161, or equivalent to a decrease of about 20 per cent.

This decrease in production, as compared with the preceding year, loses its adverse significance when it is considered that the 1919 production is still materially greater than that of any year prior to 1916, and that the larger productions of the years 1916-17-18 were due to the stimulus of war and the inflated prices attendant thereon.

So that any feeling of regret at this year's output being less than that of the previous three years is completely obliterated by the consideration of the removal of the cause of the abnormal outputs of these three years—the war—and it becomes a matter of congratulation that, with the return of something approaching normal conditions, we should still find this year's mineral output showing a very material increase over those of former normal years.

The gross value of the metallic minerals produced in 1919 was \$20,036,998, which represents a decrease from last

year of \$7,873,280, a decrease of about 28 per cent.

It is apparent, therefore, that the decrease for the year is chiefly due to the smaller production of the metallic minerals from the lode mines, which calls for some explanation.

It will be noted from the accompanying table showing the details of production that this year's decrease is almost entirely due to copper—to the lesser quantity produced and the lower market price obtained for such product. To this must be added the consequent lessening of the production of

both gold and silver to the extent that these metals would be contained in the decrease of tonnage of copper ore mined.

As the position of the copper-output is the important feature for consideration in this year's summary of production, it may be well to outline the conditions surrounding the marketing of this metal during the past few years.

Copper is such an essential war metal that all the Allied nations had felt obliged to accumulate within their borders a sufficient supply of the metal for war needs for a considerable time in advance, in case transportation facilities should cease.

The sudden coming of the armistice in the fall of 1918 found all the great nations with these very large stocks of copper on hand, and no further demand for war supplies. It was estimated roughly that the stocks on hand were sufficient to supply the demands on a peace basis for about two years without further production by the mines.

As a consequence of the war the copper market of the world has been, during the whole of the year 1919, in a thoroughly

demoralized condition, and with no certainty as to the near future.

During the latter part of the war the market price of copper had been fixed by the United States Government, and, as the United States produces about two-thirds of the world's copper supply, the American price formed the basis of the world price. The price thus set during the latter months of the war was 26 cents a pound at New York.

With the sudden disappearance of the cause of the great consumption, and with large stocks already distributed, it became at once evident that the fixed war price could not be maintained.

PROGRESS OF MINING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA IN 1919.

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