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Mineral Production of British Columbia in 1917

Preliminary estimate shows production of \$37,182,500, a decrease of \$5,107,892 from 1916. Heavy loss in gold—Strike troubles an important cause of decline.

The Honorable William Sloan, Minister of Mines has issued a preliminary review and estimate of the mineral production of British Columbia for the year 1917. This report is prepared by the Provincial Mineralogist, Mr. William Fleet Robertson and contains in addition to the estimate of production a review of the various metals mined in the Province and short reports from the six resident engineers appointed under the Mineral Survey Act, passed by the government last year. Mr. Robertson in giving his estimate says:

This bulletin has been prepared before the receipt of the official reports for the year 1917 of the Gold Commissioners and Resident Engineers of the Province, and the customary returns of mineral production annually made by managers of mines and reduction-works; consequently it must necessarily be regarded as being simply a preliminary review of the progress of the past year, together with an estimate of the quantities and value of the several mineral products of the Province, which it is believed will prove to be approximately correct.

The accompanying table shows an estimated mineral production during 1917 of a total value of \$37,182,570. It will be seen that the total value of the production of 1917 as estimated is \$5,107,892 less than that of 1916 equivalent to a decrease of about 12 per cent.

The decrease in total value of the 1917 mineral production as compared with that of the previous year would appear at first sight to show a very serious decline in the mining industry; this condition, however, was not due to any decline in mining itself, but to the cumulative effect of several adverse influences acting on the mining industry as a whole. It must be remembered that the year 1916 was a record one of high metal prices and of demand for metals which therefore made the year a banner one for mining, not only for British Columbia, but for the whole American continent. In comparing the estimated 1917 production with any previous year excepting 1916, it is seen that

the 1917 output easily exceeds any other; for instance, it is nearly \$5,000,000 greater than the former record year of 1912.

The adverse influence which retarded mineral production in 1917 may be summarized as industrial troubles, reduced metal prices in the last quarter of the year, a very much lessened demand for lead and zinc for munition purposes, and the economic conditions which severely handicapped the mining of gold.

Industrial troubles in 1917 were more frequent and extensive than usual; in the early months of the year a protracted strike in the Crowsnest district not only cut down the output of coal and coke, but forced the copper and lead smelters to close for lack of fuel, and, as a direct cause, stopped mining in the most productive parts of the Province. This strike was followed by another one at Rossland, which stopped production from the big gold-producers of that camp.

The great decrease in gold production this year is mainly due to the heavy falling-off in the Rossland output which usually makes over one-half the yearly output of the Province. Early in November another serious strike occurred at the Trail smelter, which closed the whole plant until practically the end of the year; this in turn stopped productive mining during that time throughout East and West Kootenay.

The reduction in metal prices was confined mainly to lead and zinc, as the average price for copper was practically the same as for the previous year, while silver advanced in

price. A larger production of lead, however, could have been made by the Trail smelter, but for the inability to market the product, due to the curtailment of orders by the Imperial Munitions Board.

Gold-mining suffered also from increased costs of labour and supplies, with no corresponding increase in the value of the metal produced, thereby causing a smaller margin of profit, and, in many cases, making it unprofitable to mine gold.

But for these untoward circumstances the hope anticipated at the commencement of the year, that the mineral output of the Province for 1917 would reach the \$50,000,000

MINERAL PRODUCTION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA IN 1917.

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