

THE FUEL SITUATION IN THE WEST

Although some United States coal is now assured for Western Canada, the fact remains that local supplies will be increasingly relied upon. Without doubt, the mines in operation in Alberta and British Columbia can meet all requirements, for domestic and steam coal, of the whole country to the head of the lakes; but the question remains, will they? It will not soon be forgotten that the West, outside of Alberta, was in serious danger of a coal famine last winter, owing to labor troubles at the mines during the summer of 1917, and the car shortage during the winter months. Manitoba certainly needed all the anthracite in hand during the extreme and long winter of 1917.

Nevertheless, Alberta alone could meet the entire demands of the West were its mines adequately operated and the danger of a car shortage overcome. Saskatchewan has immense deposits of lignite; and the recent Dominion grant of \$400,000 for carrying on experiments in briquetting this coal, may make it largely self-dependent in the near future. It is interesting to know, in this connection, that Professor McLaurin, of the University of Saskatchewan, has for some time been engaged on the problem of furnishing light, heat and power to farmers in that province through the utilization of straw which is now largely wasted. While this work is still in the experimental stage sufficient is known of probable results to raise high hopes that ultimate success will be achieved. This will mean even more to the prairie provinces than the hydro-electric enterprise to Ontario.

A few weeks since the Edmonton "Bulletin" issued a special supplement covering the coal problem in Alberta, in particular, and in the prairie provinces in general. One feature of this supplement is the material and data furnished on the coal resources of Alberta, so far as these have been developed, and their relation to the economic life of the West. The "Bulletin" takes umbrage, and with a certain amount of justice, at a recent statement of the Commission of Conservation on the western fuel problem; and particularly at the commission's observation that "it is inconceivable what would happen if the importation of hard and soft coal from the United States were prohibited." In 1916, 533,000 tons of anthracite and 2,376,000 tons of bituminous coal were imported from the United States into the Canadian West. Especially during the stress of war there would be no hardship either with respect to prices or supplies, through the cutting off of these imports, provided Alberta and British Columbia grappled whole-heartedly with the problem. In a word, Will Alberta mine-owners guarantee to supply the fuel needs of Manitoba and Saskatchewan under these conditions?

However that may be, a distinct service has been performed in impressing the situation on the public. Naturally enough, Canadians east of the lakes know little of western resources. Westerners hold the advantage, so many of them having come from the older Canadian provinces. One rooted belief in the East is that the prairies are devoid of fuel supplies, both of coal and wood. The truth is, the prairies have both—of coal especially there are, in Alberta, inexhaustible supplies. The lignite and sub-bituminous areas of that province are sufficient to fill the requirements of the West for decades and generations to come.

Alberta coal has been found admirably adapted for all domestic purposes—for cookstoves, fireplaces and raising steam, although Crow's Nest coal is better for steam uses.

Many westerners who have used both anthracite and Alberta coal for domestic purposes prefer the latter, as it holds the fire longer and gives off less gas. It is greater in bulk and produces more ashes than anthracite; but on the other hand, there is less of cinders and clinkers. Of course, furnaces built to burn anthracite will not give satisfactory results in burning Alberta coal; but that is the fault of the furnace, not the coal. And just here it may be mentioned that valuable experimental work is being carried on to perfect a furnace that will give good results in burning the lower grades of bituminous coal and lignite.

Alberta mines have splendid railroad connections with both Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Anthracite is normally carried from Fort William as far west as Moose Jaw; and the transportation problem in distributing Alberta coal throughout the prairie provinces involves no greater difficulties. The Edmonton "Bulletin" argues that imports of coal from the United States should be permanently cut off; as it is unfair to expect the Albertan mines to rise to the demands of emergencies, and meet them without friction and loss of time. That is a big question which must be decided, in the future, on its merits. What Moose Jaw, Regina, Brandon, Winnipeg and other western cities—not to mention the hundreds of thousands of consumers on the farms—want to know here and now is simply this: Will the Alberta mine-owners deliver the goods?

POSITION OF BANKS IN ENGLAND

Among the oldest and strongest of the great banks of the world must be numbered Lloyds Bank, Limited, of England, which has completed its 60th year of business. Since its commencement the bank has grown until at present it occupies a position among the leading financial institutions of the world. Since 1865 no less than 48 other banking corporations have been acquired, some of them joint stock banks and some of them private banks. In 1884, entrance into London business was obtained by the acquisition of the businesses of Messrs. Barnetts, Hoares & Company, who had been established about 1677 and Bosanquet Salt & Company, who had been established in 1796. Following this year, rapid expansion characterized the bank's activities. In 1865 the number of offices was 14, by 1880 it had increased to 45, and by 1884 to 53. Within sixteen years from that date the number mounted up to no less than 312 and in 1903 to 411, while at present the number is over 600. Correspondents are maintained throughout the world. The Canadian agents and correspondents are the Imperial Bank of Canada, the Canadian Bank of Commerce, the Bank of British North America, the Bank of Montreal, the Dominion Express Company and the Royal Bank of Canada. An ordinary banking business, as we know it, is transacted. The bank and its branches also executes purchases and sales of stocks and bonds, and is prepared to act as executor and trustee of wills, etc.

The report presented at the 60th ordinary general meeting, held in Birmingham, on the 5th of February, indicates the sound position in which banking is at present in England. The profits for the year, after payment of salaries, pensions, contributions to the provident and insurance fund, and making full provision for rebate, income tax, bad debts, contingencies, etc., was £1,463,125. The sum of £107,204 was brought forward from the previous year, making a total of £1,570,330. Dividends at the rate of 18½ per cent. less income tax.