

to send in quarterly returns of tonnage and values. We are satisfied that then no reasons for non-compliance would be advanced; but in such an event compulsory measures should be resorted to. The Mines Report as at present constituted has little practical value beyond that attaching to historical records, and the files of some newspapers published in the Province not only serve that purpose, but also contain information that is not only more original, but also possibly more accurate. If we except the really reliable and useful data, such as the statistical tables, special reports of the Provincial Mineralogist and the Mine Inspectors, which represent a relatively small proportion of the work, nothing remains, as we have previously pointed out, but reports by Gold Commissioners and Mining Recorders, who in general have themselves no actual mining experience or knowledge, and the information supplied to the Government from this source is therefore nothing much better than mining camp gossip officially served. In justice to the mining district officials it should, however, be mentioned that they represent an extremely capable and hard-working branch of the civil service; but their duties are chiefly clerical, and it is hardly fair to expect them to go outside of those duties. If this feature were eliminated from the Mines' Report altogether, and the reports from Mining Recorders were confined to office statistics from each district only, the Province would certainly not suffer any greater inconvenience or loss thereby. On the other hand, the King's Printer would be saved much useless labour. The work of preparing the annual report is, we understand, not commenced until a month or so prior to the date of proposed publication, or at a time when the House is sitting and the Government Printing Office is taxed to its fullest capacity. Thus, as on this occasion, the publication of the work is unduly delayed. If the Department would act upon our suggestions in respect to the periodical publication of mine statistics, and in the issuing from time to time of bulletins prepared by the Provincial Mineralogist, dealing with progress and developments in various sections of the country, little more would be required in the preparation of an annual report than the compilation and arrangement of the material already thus available, together with the addition, of course, of the Mine Inspectors' and district office reports. The printing of the Annual Report would, if this plan were adopted, not only be very considerably facilitated, with the result that it would appear in proper season, but the work itself would be infinitely more serviceable than it is at present. The Hon. the Minister of Mines, in Mr. Dunsmuir's Government, Lt.-Col. Prior, assumed office but a few months ago, and he has hardly had time as yet to introduce departmental reforms of so radical a description as those we advocate, but as he, unlike his predecessors, has the advantage of a practical mining knowledge, and is, moreover, ac-

quainted with the conditions and requirements of the industry in British Columbia, he may well be trusted to take such measures as are necessary to increase the serviceability and efficiency of the Department over which he presides.



THE STRIKE OF COAL MINERS AT FERNIE.

THE coal miners' strike at Fernie was an event of far-reaching importance, because it affected not only the four hundred men, directly concerned in it, the Crow's Nest Pass Company and their employees, but the operations of the smelters depending upon Fernie for their supply of coke; and anything curtailing the capacity of smelters must inevitably, after a time, reduce the output of the mines, which send ore to them. Thus the whole metalliferous mining industry of the Boundary district was injuriously affected, and in the event of a prolonged strike might be paralyzed and all its business interests greatly injured by such action as that of the coal miners. So interwoven are the various mining interests, and so fundamental to their prosperity is the production of coal for coking purposes, that nothing of a business nature would have so disastrous a result, so far as Southern British Columbia is concerned, as a prolonged strike of coal miners. It appears that the Boundary smelters, the largest consumers of Fernie coke, were able after some delay to secure a partial supply of coke, but this is a detail only, and does not affect the great principle involved in such a strike as that now under consideration. The following extract from the Phoenix Pioneer of July 12 states this aspect of the case clearly and forcibly, and is the more valuable because it is from a paper published in the heart of the copper mining district:

The chief industry of the Boundary—that of mining—which gives employment to a thousand men, and support to five thousand more, is in a crisis. The men are not dissatisfied with the wages paid, nor the hours of work nor the way in which they are treated. There is plenty of ore, and capital stands ready to do business. Three smelters are prepared to handle from 2,500 to 3,000 tons of ore daily. There is no strike, no trouble here of any kind. And yet the mining business is temporarily at a standstill, because a few men, some 300 miles from here, with whom we have nothing to do, and over whom we have no control, have seen fit to so decree.

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Let us review the situation, which we hope will be in process of adjustment before these lines are before our readers. Boundary smelters require about 350 tons of coke per day for fluxing purposes. This coke must come from the Crow's Nest collieries, where we were told not long ago there are illimitable quantities of suitable coal. Boundary ores are of such low grade that the coke must be laid down at the lowest possible rate to admit of the ores being smelted at a small profit. Therefore, only Crow's Nest coke can be used to advantage.

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Millions of dollars are invested here, and thousands of persons are dependent on the mining industry for a living—none too good a living at the best. Even the C.P.R., great