

WOOD FUEL AND COAL SHORTAGE.

The Dominion Fuel Controller has repeatedly called attention to the urgent need for increasing the production of wood. Provincial Governments have expressed the keenest desire to co-operate in every way, and are definitely at work on the problem. City and municipal governments have, in isolated cases, taken steps to accumulate a reserve of wood fuel to supplement the dealers' stocks. Winnipeg purchased a large reserve of wood and the mayor of that city reports that this action proved an important factor in averting a local fuel crisis. In Ottawa, similar action has for some time been under consideration, and authority is now being sought for the purchase of a reserve supply of fuel by the city. In a limited number of towns, mostly in Ontario, action of a similar character has been taken or contemplated. In general, however, the situation so far as wood fuel is concerned has not received anything like the attention which its importance justifies. As in practically all other lines of war-effort, special organization is essential to results.

Surely, if special organization all along the line is essential in the United States, to stimulate the production and consumption of wood fuel, to reduce the demand for coal, similar action is even more necessary in eastern Canada, or may be expected to become so before next winter. A campaign of publicity, through the press and otherwise, should be instituted, practically parallel to the extensive campaign for food conservation. It is the order of the day to relieve the strain upon war-essentials through the wider use of available substitutes.

Each city and municipal government should investigate carefully the local situation and determine to what extent it is necessary to supplement the efforts of the regular dealers, in order to maintain a suitable reserve of wood fuel for emergency use. All accessible sources of supply should be considered, as well as what measures are feasible to make the necessary amount of wood available for use. Under some circumstances, the city or municipality should purchase a reserve supply outright. In other cases, some form of guarantee against loss by local dealers may be found practicable, such as would justify the purchase of a stipulated quantity of wood at a fixed price.

Farmers and rural communities generally should revert, so far as possible, to the use of wood fuel. Farmers should also be urged to cut additional supplies of wood for sale for town and city use. This, in the aggregate, would help tremendously in relieving the coal shortage.

The provincial governments, on the other hand, may render a great public service by entering vigorously into this campaign. Some one familiar with conditions, preferably working under the direction of the Provincial Forester, should take these matters up actively with city and municipal governments. A campaign of education may be expected to stimulate both the production and consumption of wood fuel.

The aim should by all means be to secure an actual increase in the amount of wood cut and to supplement the supplies that would in any event be handled by the regular dealers for the limited normal supplies of wood will not improve the situation in the least, and might seriously injure it, by driving the latter partially or wholly from the field. It is perfectly obvious that an increased consumption of wood can follow only from the tapping of new sources of supply, or from a material stimulation of production from normal sources. City and municipal governments should, as already indicated, consider carefully the laying in of a reserve supply of wood fuel, to be held for emergency use, when coal and wood supplies of the regular dealers have become seriously depleted. An investment of this character is simply a reasonable form of insurance against possible disaster.

The really essential thing is that there shall be definite recognition that an emergency exists, which can in part be met through the wider use of wood fuel; also that there should be provision for centralized organizations in the several provinces to determine what specific action is necessary and feasible, and for seeing that such action is taken. Steps now under way in this direction will no doubt meet with the full support of the public.—Commission of Conservation.

THE FUEL SHORTAGE.

The article by Mr. Harry Bragg in last month's issue proved very correct in at least one particular, that is, in its reference to the shipment of rubbish along with coal by the mine operators.

A United States Federal Enquiry has demonstrated that, instead of sorting and washing the coal, so as to remove the dust and slate, the mine operators have loaded into the cars "everything black" and even worked off a quantity of the "culm" or dust, which has accumulated near the mines, and which can only be utilized in specially constructed factory boilers. This is a radical and dishonest departure from the standard of 1914, which allowed up to 10 per cent of slate in pea coal, and not more than three per cent in chestnut and the larger sizes.

As a result of this enquiry, the Fuel Controller has issued orders in two mining districts which prevent this "glaring perpetration of fraud" on the users of coal, who are largely householders.

Anyone who has used what has been sold as chestnut this season, will have noticed the large percentage of slate and dust. And this is the result of allowing the slate to remain, and of adding so much from the "culm" heap to each car.

Now, according to the Order, the coal must be passed over the breakers, for the purpose of sorting it into sizes, and also washed, so as to remove the dust. And for this, the consumers will bless the Fuel Controller, while cursing the greed of the coal barons.

If the Controller had been able to secure only this single relief for the public, his appointment and heavy work would have been fully justified.

One very suggestive feature, as showing the absolute and dishonest greed of the coal operators is the fact which has been discovered, that while the quantity of coal mined has been no larger than last year, the shipments have been much larger. The difference has been made from the amount of dust and rubbish taken from the waste piles, and added to the cars of freshly mined coal.

Another interesting feature of the situation is reported by the New York "Commercial." It is that only about one-half of the coal bearing lands are being operated, while the idle land, held for still higher prices, is being taxed at the same rate as ordinary land.

Is not this worth another Enquiry?

The conservation of coal by the utilization of water power, as we stated, is being urged, and will, no doubt, be adopted more largely. But a very striking example of what has been already accomplished by one loyal firm is seen in the way in which the Dominion Rubber System has conserved coal, for the benefit of less progressive factory owners, and more especially to the advantage of householders.

Out of a total requirement of 11,699 horse-power required in their different factories, only 150 is generated regularly by coal. This means an enormous annual saving of coal in the working of these factories, which can be used by others who can not, or will not, use water power.

If this example could only be followed by the factories that can secure water power, conveyed by electricity, what an enormous amount of coal would be available for paces where its use cannot, as yet, be avoided.

In England plans are under discussion for establishing sixteen central stations for producing electricity, which will effect tremendous saving over the many small plants now in operation.

DISCUSSION ON FUEL.

The Toronto Branch of the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers is starting work in good time, and has called its First General Professional Meeting for the 26th and 27th of this month.

The programme contains a good number of papers, by the leading men of the profession, all of which bear upon the very important subject of fuel, the one exception being an illustrated address on the Quebec Bridge by Mr. Geo. F. Porter, at the evening meeting.

Mr. Magrath, Fuel Controller, has been invited to be present, and is expected to give an address. Particulars can be had from the Secretary, Mr. Geo. Hogarth, 514 Markham Street, Toronto.

No less than 2,017 public and high school boys worked on Ontario farms last year.