

MINE RESCUE TRAINING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

By E. Jacobs.

In August Mr. Thomas Graham, Chief Inspector of Mines, presented to eighteen men employed at the Jingle Pot coal mine, near Nanaimo, Vancouver Island, Provincial Government certificates of efficiency in mine-rescue work. The recipients of the certificates took their mine-rescue course at the Government training station at Nanaimo. There are now 161 men who have similarly qualified and obtained Government certificates, beside a considerable number who have successfully passed examination after training in one or other of the mine owners' rescue stations.

Late in 1912 Mr. W. J. Dick, of Ottawa, mining engineer to the Commission of Conservation, Canada, presented to the secretary of the commission a report on "Mine-Rescue Work in Canada," which report was afterward printed by the commission and widely distributed. At that time, as mentioned by Mr. Dick, British Columbia was the only one of the coal producing provinces of the Dominion requiring rescue apparatus to be kept at coal mines. The following is an excerpt from the detailed information given in Mr. Dick's notice of British Columbia in that report:

"The Coal Mines Regulation Act, 1911, makes provision for mine-rescue apparatus, as follows:

"There shall be established by the owner, agent or manager of every colliery such number of oxygen helmets or some form of mine-rescue apparatus as may be approved by the Minister of Mines.

"Such mine-rescue apparatus shall be constantly maintained in an efficient and workable condition, and shall in all cases be so stored or placed in or about the mine as to always be available for immediate use.

"The Lieutenant-Governor in Council may from time to time establish mine-rescue stations for the purpose of supplementing, in case of need, the colliery installations of mine-rescue apparatus, and also for the purpose of training holders of certificates of competency under this Act in the use of such mine-rescue apparatus as may be approved by the Minister of Mines; and it shall be incumbent on the owner, agent or manager of every operating mine to have all certificated officials who are physically fit, and not less than three per cent. of such number as the Chief Inspector of Mines may deem sufficient of the workmen, trained in the use of such established mine-rescue apparatus.

"Provided that in cases of emergency such stations shall be available for the use of any trained corps of mine-rescuers, duly qualified medical practitioners, or corps trained in the work of first aid to the injured, subject, always, to the order of an Inspector of Mines."

"Although this Act has only been in force a little more than a year, the mine operators, as well as the Government, are doing all in their power to lessen the number of fatalities incident to mine explosions and mine fires in so far as this can be accomplished by trained men equipped with suitable breathing apparatus."

Mr. Dick further gives particulars of the training work necessary to obtain a certificate of competency at several of the collieries; also the forms for "Physician's Examination," and the "Mine-Rescue Training Record."

In the report for 1912 of the Chief Inspector of Mines, included in the "Annual Report of the Minister of Mines" (pp. 204-8), it is stated that much pro-

gress was made in mine-rescue work in 1912; mention was made of the Canadian Collieries (Dunsmuir) Ltd., having built commodious and well arranged stations at its Extension and Cumberland collieries, respectively; that the Provincial Government had built, and on November 1 opened, a station and had appointed an instructor; also that a site had been purchased at Nanaimo and erection of a station was in progress. Mr. Graham added:

"Much progress in training has been made by several of the local companies, some of whom issue diplomas to their employees who take a course of training.

"On May 10th last, the writer, on the invitation of the Western Fuel Co., had the honor and pleasure of presenting forty-one employees of that company with certificates of competency in mine-rescue work. This company has issued sixty-three certificates of competency since the opening of its station.

"In November last Inspector Strachan had the honor and pleasure of presenting fourteen employees of the Nicola Valley Coal and Coke Co. with certificates of competency earned at that company's station."

Concerning mine-rescue work in 1913, the Chief Inspector reported (see "Annual Report of the Minister of Mines, 1913"):

"The Government now has two fully equipped mine-rescue stations in the Province; these stations are equipped with mouth-breathing type of the Draeger apparatus. The equipment consists of sixteen two-hour apparatus, eight half-hour apparatus and four pulmotors. During the year twelve C. E. A. G. electric safety lamps were added to the equipment.

"Training was actively conducted most of the year at the Fernie (Crowsnest pass) station, with George O'Brien as instructor, and Government certificates of competency were issued to seventy-three persons from this station.

"The Nanaimo station was not taken over until late in the year and little work was done at it, but pending its completion, the instructor, J. D. Stewart, was sent to Merritt, and, through the courtesy of the Nicola Valley Coal and Coke Co., which granted the use of its station, Mr. Stewart, assisted by Frank Bond and Inspector of Mines Robert Strachan, instructed a class of twenty-nine men, each of whom was granted a certificate of competency. There were, therefore, 102 Government certificates of competency in mine-rescue work issued during the year. The equipment maintained by the operating companies was supplemented during the year by two-hour Draeger apparatus. For the use of 5,500 underground employees there are in the Province sixty-six sets of two-hour and twenty-six sets of half-hour apparatus, or one for every sixty persons."

It is of interest to note that the Chief Inspector of Mines and several of the mine inspectors under him are fully qualified for mine-rescue work, some of them having taken their training course at the United States training station at Seattle, Washington, prior to the establishment of stations in British Columbia; also that a number of mine officials and other holders of first class certificates of competency under the Coal Mines Regulation Act, are similarly qualified for mine-rescue work.