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At a recent conference with mining engineers in New York, Mr. R. V. Norris of the fuel administration said in regard to the coal shortage that the situation is serious and is going to continue to be serious. With a shortage of labor amounting to 30% production has been increased 20%; but greater increase is necessary. The railroads have done well and Mr. Norris stated that "the zone system of distribution has saved us 160,000,000 car miles a year."

The labor problem in every producing district is a serious one; but it is folly to attribute all our troubles to labor shortage. As has been shown by the coal operators in Western Canada, our coal mines could produce a much larger tonnage if the demand warranted continuous operation throughout the year. While men and machinery were idle at Western Canadian mines last summer, the Canadian railroads were busily hauling Pennsylvania coal westward to Winnipeg and beyond. This state of affairs has very properly been exposed and has resulted in action being taken by the U. S. fuel controller.

DANGER OF COAL SHORTAGE IS NOT YET REALIZED.

There has been a complete failure on the part of the public and (as the Government of any democratic country merely reflects the opinion of the general public) there has also been a failure on the part of the authorities to realize the fundamental importance of coal in the prosecution of the war. Great Britain, the United States and Canada all show a falling off in the production of bituminous coal this year as compared with 1917, and what the coming winter has in store for us it is not pleasant to contemplate. Governmental action so far has consisted in suggesting increased production through increased efficiency of the remaining workers, in the greater use of mechanical appliances, and in the adaptation of the transportation facilities to the seasonal demands for coal, with particular reference to the needs of domestic consumers. All these measures are but palliatives, and no one seems to have had the courage as yet to tackle the root of the trouble, which is the shortage of men digging coal at the face. There is the neck of the bottle; there is the true restriction and limitation of bituminous coal production which threatens worse troubles next winter than were experienced last winter.

Under the circumstances it would be amusing, if it were not so serious, to read of discussions in Winnipeg and other Western cities as to the hardships inflicted upon the householder by enforcing the substitution of soft coal for anthracite. The Winnipegger will be glad to get anything that will burn next winter. The Fuel Controller is doing all he can to alarm the people of the western cities as to the necessity to get in their winter coal during the summer, but apparently some wise people think the Fuel Controller is a bugaboo. It is not possible to exaggerate the dangers of disregarding the Fuel Controller's advice in this matter, nor is it possible to overstate the importance of the collieries of the Canadian West raising every pound of coal that can be mined before the frost comes.

In the recent registration questionnaire it was evident that the Government realized the importance of farming, but what will be the advantage of raising wheat and other produce if there is no coal to transport it? Coal is the first need of modern warfare. It comes before man-power, food production, munitions or anything else, because without it all these other departments of war's varied needs are immobilized or non-existent. As Lloyd George has inimitably phrased it, "coal is the paramount lord of war." It is strange when the leader of our democracy expresses so clearly the place of coal to-day that so little attention has been paid to the increasing of its production, and that the authorities have been principally exercised over the suffering of the individual householder that arises from a coal shortage. That is sufficiently dreadful, of course,