

MARITIME MINING RECORD

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MR. DRUMMOND AND THE ROBBER BARONS

The following is from the press report of proceedings in the Legislative Council:

In introducing the report of the department of mines, it is customary to make some remarks by way of introduction, but I think it would be better that copies of the report should be handed around to the members before I make any remarks. (Copies distributed).

In presenting the report of the department of mines I shall make my remarks few as possible. I shall first refer to what may be termed the pleasing aspects of the report.

On page 4, and I would like the members to follow, you will find that the total revenue for the department of mines was \$614,576. Of this some \$10,000 was for rights of search, \$29,000 for rentals (other than gold and silver), and \$554,000 for royalty on coal amounting to, say \$590,000, leaving a balance of \$24,000 as the revenue derived from minerals other than coal. That is, the government of Nova Scotia received a revenue of \$590,000 from coal and \$24,000 for all the other minerals in the province.

THE TOTAL SALES

Coming to page 5 we find that the sales for 1910 were 4,896,000 tons of coal, an increase of about 281,000 tons over the sales of 1909. The increase would have been over half a million, indeed, I think it was half a million in Cape Breton, and it would have been half a million for the province, had it not been for the unfortunate strike at Springhill.

Turning to another table we find that the number of men employed—directly employed—in the coal mines of Nova Scotia was 11,000. That does not take into consideration the number of men employed in inland transportation, etc. It would be most interesting to have figures to show how many men were employed on the I. C. R. in Nova Scotia, what is the total tonnage carried in Nova Scotia, and what the proportion of the steel and coal tonnage to the whole. I think that such figures would serve to show to better advantage the great importance of the coal trade to Nova Scotia. In fact, I might say that we have not become alive to the importance of mining and manufacturing to this province.

I do not wish to broach any controversial subject, but here I may incidentally remark that I heard the statement made the other day, that of the population of Canada, eighty per cent. were farmers. Assuredly this proportion does not apply to Nova Scotia. I have gone more or less carefully over the twenty-four or twenty-five incorporated towns in the province, and I think that the total population in the incorporated towns, including Halifax and Sydney, which are cities, is over

200,000. This by the way, and just as a reminder that Nova Scotia should be tender of her mining and manufactures.

NUMBER OF ACCIDENTS

Coming to the aspects of the report which are not quite so favorable, you will find from the tables that there were 182 non-fatal and 29 fatal accidents. That was the price, the tale of lives, we paid for the mining of coal in Nova Scotia the last year. I am not sure the table is quite accurate as to the number. It is possible that one or two fatal accidents have found their way into the table which should not properly be chargeable to the production of coal, but let that pass. Take the total production of coal in tons and divide it by 29, and we find that there was a life lost for every 180,000 tons raised, or 2.23 per thousand men employed. That average is not so bad as across the line, but it is almost twice the rate in Great Britain.

A question is, what can we do to minimize the number of lives lost? We have excellent laws on the statute books. None better. I fear that some of the accidents must be chargeable perhaps to familiarity with danger on the part of the men. The greatest number of fatal accidents was from falls of stone or coal, and in my opinion there are many of them due to the fact that men will take a risk. The rate in England, if I am not in error, is a little less than 1½, 1.29 I think.

PROSPERITY OF COAL TRADE

We speak of the prosperity of the coal trade. If the year 1910 shows an increase of a quarter of a million or half a million, we speak of it in red headlines. There is no doubt that the prosperity of the coal trade, as regards sales and putting money in circulation, benefits the whole province at large. Merchants are benefited, manufacturers are benefited and the whole country is benefited, but there is another feature of the subject. But how fares it with the shareholders? The operators of the province have for a long time been called "barons." The word may have been first applied from the fact that the operators held their leases direct from the crown. This word has, however, become in later times associated with boldness and badness. In fact, it has been the custom of late to style the operators "robber barons."

Hitherto, I have hesitated to broach this aspect—the profits to operators in the coal trade—for one reason and for one reason only; and that is, I wished not to say anything that might hinder the investment of money in coal lands. But this cry of "robbery" has become so insistent that the time has come when it may be sinful to be silent. There is nothing in the trade for the operators. Let the members follow me while I run over the constitution of the several companies as affecting the shareholders.