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Mineral Production of British Columbia in 1916

Preliminary Review and Estimate of Provincial Mineral Production in 1916—Notable Increased Output of Metalliferous Mines—Total Production Estimated at \$42,970,555.

Mr. William Fleet Robertson, Provincial Mineralogist, has given out a preliminary review and estimate of the mineral production of British Columbia for the year 1915. This review is published in the form of a bulletin recently issued from the Government press:

This bulletin has been prepared before the receipt of the official reports for the year 1916 of the Gold Commissioners and Mining Recorders of the Province, and the customary returns of mineral production annually made by managers of mines and reduction-works; consequently, it must necessarily be regarded as being simply a preliminary review of the progress of the past year, together with an estimate of the quantities and value of the several mineral products of the province, which it is believed will prove to be approximately correct.

The accompanying table shows an estimated mineral production during 1916 of a total value of \$42,970,555. It will be seen that the total value of the production of 1916 as estimated is some \$13,523,047 greater than that of 1915, equivalent to an increase of about 45.9 per cent., which must be regarded as a very encouraging showing, particularly when it is remembered that the output for 1915 was only exceeded in amount by those of the years 1912 and 1913 in the history of mining in the province. The value of the output in 1916 is larger than that of 1912—the previous record year—by an estimated amount of \$10,529,755, or 32.5 per cent.

Had it not been that the Crowsnest Collieries, through a series of mishaps—accompanied by a serious shortage of labour due to the war, followed by a labour strike—was unable to make as large an output as expected and intended, the coal and coke production would have been much greater; but, as it was, there resulted such a shortage of coke as to partially close the copper-smelters, and these, in turn, compelled the copper-mines to very much curtail their outputs.

But for these untoward circumstances, it is certain that

the output for 1916 would have approached the \$50,000,000 mark, an amount which a few years ago would have been considered visionary.

Taken in the aggregate, our mineral production and development in the year 1916 and the future prospects of the industry are conditions for congratulation at this time.

The continued enormous demand for shells of all sorts for the Allies has continued the great consumption of copper, lead, and zinc, and the prices of these metals have continued very high.

In 1914 the average price of copper for the year was 13.6 cents; in 1915 it was 17.3 cents; while in January, 1916, it was 24 cents, and at the close of the year it was 32 cents; the average for the year being 27.2 cents.

The result of this great increase in price of the metal caused those prepared to make an actual production to increase their outputs to the limit, and in many instances enabled them to mine and smelt lower-grade ores which at the normal prices of the metal would not have been possible commercially.

The output of copper for the year 1916 is estimated to have been about 67,757,075 lbs., which is about 19 per cent. greater than the previous year. The value of the product was \$18,429,924, an increase over last year of \$8,594,424, or 87 per cent., and amounts to about 56.3 per cent. of the value of the metallic minerals produced this year.

The rise in the price of lead, while very considerable, has not been so phenomenal; the average price in New York for the year 1915 was 4.567 cents, while

for 1916 it was 6.777 cents, the year closing with an average for the month of December of 7.4 cents.

Silver is always associated with lead ores in British Columbia, and the price of this metal also had a great rise; the average price for the year 1915 was 49.68 cents, while for the year 1916 it was 65.66 cents, and for the closing month of the year it was over 75.75 cents.

The combined rises in the prices of lead and silver very greatly helped the silver-lead mines of the Slocan. The provincial output of lead this past year is estimated to be about 52,242,183 lbs., worth \$3,186,773, and that of silver was 3,366,205 ozs., worth \$2,099,838.

Zinc in 1916 sold at an average price in New York of

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