

Canadian Coalfields All Sufficient

Part that the West Must Play in National Development. — Western Coal an Assurance of National Independence.

(By F. W. GRAY, Editor Canadian Mining Journal).

At the Toronto Meeting of the Mining Institute in March last, the writer developed the argument that Canada could become self-supplying in bituminous coal.

The events of the Summer have gone far to establish the necessity, if not the soundness of this aim. We have read on the one hand the statement of the Minister of Railways that Nova Scotia coal should be brought to Ontario, and we have seen, on the other hand, the greatest extension eastward of the use of western coal yet recorded in Canada, accompanied—under emergent conditions it is true—by definite proposals for the forwarding of Alberta coal to Ontario.

Existing Fuel Situation is Unrepresentative.

The present bituminous situation is not representative. In Nova Scotia the existing output does not represent the capacity of the mines. Neither is the transportation deficiency to be considered representative that has brought about a coal supply emergency in those districts of North America that lie furthest removed from the great central coalfield of Pennsylvania and Virginia.

These are post-war conditions of limited duration.

The western coalfields have been so slightly and so recently developed that a statement of existing production is interesting only as a contemporary record, and has no bearing on the future.

What then is the outlook for making Canada self-supplying in bituminous coal, and what is particular the role of the western coalfield?

Bridging the Gap between our Bituminous Fields.

There is no doubt as to the presence within the borders of Canada of sufficient bituminous coal to supply not only our present population, but also that of the future, whatever it may be. Unfortunately a gap of 2,000 miles intervenes between the eastern coalfield and the beginning of the Saskatchewan lignites along the international border.

This gap can be bridged, if we adopt a national policy on coal supply, but not immediately. Two things are eminently required to achieve this end:

(a) An extension of the Great Lakes waterways that will enable Nova Scotia coal to enter Lake Ontario by water carriage without breaking bulk.

(b) Adoption by the railways of a comprehensive programme for the annually increasing transport of coal from the western coalfield, as a permanent feature of traffic.

The objective of the Canadian coal miner is of course to limit the importation of United States coal to the smallest area possible. The extent of this area depends on the radius of distribution of Nova Scotia coal in the East, and on the radius of western coal east of Calgary and Edmonton.

The difference between the East and

the West is that the coal resources of Nova Scotia are not large, while those of the western coalfield are as large as it is desired to make them.

In the case of Nova Scotia, there is distinctly a limit to the quantity of coal that can be mined annually, and this quantity cannot probably much exceed 10 million tons.

The limits to production from the western fields are set by availability of labor and money, by distance and markets, but not by the available quantity of coal.

Coal Salvation comes from the West.

Canada's salvation in coal supply must therefore come from the West, and the vision of western coal miners, when considering the future, should be as wide as the possible markets, and detached from present-day conditions, for these are very ephemeral, and very different from the conditions that are to come.

It is evident that at this time the domestic requirements of the four provinces west of Fort William do not require any enlargement of existing collieries, these being already more than sufficient to supply the home demand to the entire supplanting of United States coal by the native product.

Export Market for Western Coal.

An export market is therefore desirable, and the statistics of the Ottawa Mine Branch disclose substantial beginnings of coal export, both in Alberta and in British Columbia.

	1917	1918	1919
Alberta.			
Exported to the U.S.	90,239	137,765	121,264
British Columbia.			
Exported to U.S.	845,128	842,986	
Other countries	42,796	65,427	852,704
Totals	978,163	104,178	973,968

The exports of 1920 will in all probability be larger than in any previous year. British Columbia, in particular has found entirely new markets.

There is very little good coal on the Pacific Slope of this continent, except in Vancouver Island and British Columbia, and the whole Pacific Slope should provide a market for British Columbia coal, not excluding South America.

An inspection of the map will show that the better-grade bituminous coals which are found at high elevations in the Rocky Mountains are relatively near to the Pacific Slope, being only one-third the distance from, say the Crow's Nest Pass, to Winnipeg.

Coal is an article that in the future, because of its relative scarcity, will stand much longer rail-hauls to a shipping port than has hitherto been considered reasonably economically possible, and Alberta coal is not much further from tidewater than is West Virginia coal from Atlantic ports. The position of the port of Vancouver has been much improved by the regular use of the Panama Canal route, and the projected port improvements are fully justified at Vancouver, being indeed undertaken rather too far behind those of Seattle.

The coal deposits of the West are so large and the world need for coal so pressing, that it may well turn out that an export trade in coal will precede the development of the western coal field for the purpose of providing fuel for local manufacturing industries, and, because it has hitherto been unusual, the possibility of rail-hauling western coal for export shipment at Vancouver, and at Prince Rupert, is not thereby lessened.

The markets held by the British collieries hitherto, such as South America, the Levant and Scandinavia, are being rapidly lost to them by the unreasonableness of the miners' demands and the diminishing productivity of the remaining coal seams. United States coal is rapidly supplanting British coal in markets previously exclusively supplied from Britain.

It might be suggested that the position of the Alberta Collieries with reference to Vancouver, and those of Northern British Columbia with reference to Prince Rupert is not dissimilar to the relation of West Virginia collieries to Atlantic ports—as previously mentioned—and the opportunity to enter British markets is open to any coalfield in North America that can get its coal to tidewater within commercial limits of cost of rail-haul.

Western Coalfield An Assurance of National Independence.

No country, however, achieves lasting prosperity or national permanence from mere export of raw material, and while the search for an export market is suggested as an immediate requirement for the healthy development of the western coalfield, the real role of this field will be played when, in the inevitable course of events, it has become the site of industries, metallurgical, chemical, ceramic and textile, based upon bituminous coal.

Then, and only then, will the West rise to its full dignity as a pillar of Canadian nationhood and the most stable guarantee of our political permanence as an independent people. But for the coalfield of the West, Canada would sooner or later be compelled to subscribe to that political ascendancy and tutelage which is the certain outcome of economic subservience, and inseparable from dependence on another nation for so essential a commodity as coal.

The coalfield of the East has assisted and will continue to assist in relieving our national fuel inadequacy, but its extent is too small to build a nation on.

The coalfield of the West is fortunately not small, but worthy to be called large, even in comparison with the generous fuel resources possessed by the United States.

In advocating maximum independence of the United States in the coal supply of Canada, it is perhaps necessary in order to avoid misapprehension, to emphasize that this advocacy is based upon no unfriendly or envious feeling. As between individuals, so between nations, dependence involves Canada in other peoples' affairs, places us in the position of the poor relation who is blamed for

the sins of the family, but dare not express his mind because his allowance may be cut off.

A restoration of our international coal balance-sheet to the fifty-fifty basis of previous years would go a long way to restore Canadian self-respect, to bring our dollar nearer parity, and to remove the inhibition on our freedom to talk and act nationally without the repressive dread of a coal shortage.

This is where the West will serve this nation most effectually, for it possesses in greatest abundance that article without which no modern nation can survive except on sufferance.

Anthracite Supply not Considered Vital.

No consideration is given in the foregoing remarks to anthracite supply. Where bituminous coal is available in Canada, from Canadian mines, anthracite can be dispensed with, at the sacrifice of convenience, and its use under these circumstances, however desirable, is nevertheless a luxury.

Fuel Role of the West a Predominating One.

There is another consideration. The entire mineral production of Canada in 1919 was valued at 173 million dollars. The value of our imports of coal, iron and steel, and petroleum, totalled 273 million dollars.

The West, containing as it does 99.3 per cent of Canadian coal resources, and apparently containing some oil also, must assist in our national fuel problem correspondingly to its fuel resources, or default in its share of national development. This is the part that the West must take.

G. T. P. HOLDERS ANXIOUS.

The financial editor of the London Times says that the holders of Grand Trunk Pacific four per cent. debentures are still anxiously waiting to know their position. An informal committee of holders after interviewing Sir Alfred Smithers, chairman of the Grand Trunk board, has resolved to take no action for the present. The agreement of the Dominion authorities, adds the Times, did not specifically state that the Grand Trunk Pacific liabilities would be taken over, but that was the assumption all along, and it was hard to believe that the Government would refuse to meet the interest on the debentures, including accumulated arrears.

MUNICIPAL FIRE INSURANCE

The Belleville City Council has referred to the Chamber of Commerce for a report the matter of municipal fire insurance, which has been suggested to it by J. N. Pringle and W. C. Mikel. The latter contended that some new means of increasing revenue without adding burden to the taxpayer should be devised. He believes the city could save \$25,000 or \$50,000 in a year. The insurance could be made compulsory, and the premiums collected with the taxes. The fire losses are small in similar cities. He stated that the question, if approved of, could be made a Provincial matter.