

MARITIME MINING RECORD.

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CLOSED COAL MINES.

Mr. J. C. Douglas, M. P. P. for Cape Breton, gave notice in the House of Assembly last Friday of the following motions:—"that an order of the house do issue for a copy of all correspondence between the government or officers thereof, and all others, in respect to the property of the Cape Breton Coal, Iron and Railway company at Broughton, Cape Breton county, during the year 1915 and 1916 up to the present time, together with all correspondence from the mines department or officers thereof, of members of the government, to this company, its officers or agents, or inspectors of mines, or others, in reference to the conditions, operations and productions of the said company."

Mr. Douglas has also tabled a series of questions relating to the colliery at Bridgeport, Cape Breton, asking when it was closed down, and the reason therefor; whether there is any correspondence on file relative to the matter, and whether the government has any intention of taking steps to see that the colliery is reopened.

Mr. Douglas follows these questions up with others relating to other mines which have ceased operations in different parts of the province. He asks for a statement of the number of coal mines now closed, with particulars as to location, the date and the reasons of the closing, and the steps, if any, the government has taken to get them in operation again.

He also tabled questions relating to mining certificates. He asks the government for the names of the districts or territory over which they severally have jurisdiction. He also asks for a statement of the number of certificates issued in each case, with the fees and salaries received by the issuers thereof. He also seeks information as to the number of certificates refused, with the names of the persons to whom they were refused, and the reasons for the refusals.

Mr. Douglas also seeks information as to the names, addresses and nationality of all persons granted mining certificates in the year 1915, and asks whether the examinations on which the certificates were issued were held in public, and if so, when they were held, and at what stations."

It is well to have at least one member of the House of Assembly who manifests keen interest in the coal industry. What Mr. Douglas is after, presumably, is for an official declaration as to the closing down of the collieries named, for we have too high opinion of Mr. Douglas' intelligence to assume

that he is not aware why the work at Broughton was abandoned. The chief reason for the closing of Broughton was shortage of capital, and the inability to procure it owing to the outbreak of the war. There may have been other reasons, known to the Department of Mines, which the questions may disclose. As for Bridgeport, it was known years before it closed that its days were numbered, due solely to the fact that the coal was becoming exhausted. No doubt there is some coal in the old pit, and Mr. Douglas may wish to put the Department to the test as to its knowledge of why the pillars, etc., have not been removed. It is not to be thought of that Mr. Douglas wants a commission to find the quantity of coal that might still be available at Bridgeport. If there were a likelihood of any tories being appointed on the commission it would be another story, but knowing that commissions are composed of staunch grits, people do not see why Mr. Douglas should be so solicitous to provide nice little jaunts and fair emolument for political opponents.

Do Mr. Douglas' questions, as to certificates and examinations, imply that he would like to see the examinations open to the general public? Examinations in public would not tend to the comfort of the candidates, nor the edification of the auditors. The examiners do not examine the candidates. They hand the candidates papers on which are printed questions to be answered by each. The principal duty of the examiner is to prevent any surreptitious references to tables, etc., or copying the one candidate from the other. The answers to the questions by Mr. Douglas may, of course, be more or less informative.

Commenting on Mr. Douglas' questions propounded in the House of Assembly, the Herald says: "The large number of coal mines which have been closed down in the last few years, or for one reason or another have been operated in a very restricted way, has had a marked effect 'n the falling-off in the production of coal. The opposition take the ground that the government has been singularly remiss in looking after the mining interests of the province."

And then the Herald refers to the mines closed down in addition to Broughton and Bridgeport, viz: Port Hood, Mabou, and Thorburn. The Herald, in asserting that the closing down of the mines has had a marked effect in the falling off of production, is probably in error; at least the assertion must not be allowed to pass unchallenged. Had the men at these mines been thrown idle then there might be cause for the assertion. But the fact is that when Bridgeport shut down the men were absorbed in other collieries of the company. When the Drummond colliery was closed, on account of the fire, many of the men found work in Stellarton, and the same may be said of Thorburn. The falling off in shipments at some points, owing to closing of the mines, tended to increase shipments at other points. The falling off in shipments in the early part of 1915 was due to lack of orders. There were increased shipments the latter part of the year, and these would have been much greater but for the scarcity of labor. How much would shipments increase if the whole dozen closed mines were to reopen next week? Very little, for the reason that the