

RELATION OF GOVERNMENTS TO MINING*

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(Continued from last issue)

Since the United States, although occupying less than six per cent. of the continental land area of the globe, and containing a little over six per cent. of its people, produces, roughly, over one-third of the world's minerals, we should expect to find among its citizens full appreciation of the importance of the mining industry, and on its statute books the best and wisest and most up-to-date provisions for the encouragement and perpetuation of this great industry.

The following statement is reproduced with slight changes from the report (No. 694) by the House Committee on Mines and Mining, Sixty-third Congress, second session, submitted May 20, 1914:

"That the mining industries of the country, and especially the metal-mining industries in our public-land States, are not keeping pace with the normal development of the country is clearly shown by the following data:

"In the population of the public-land States west of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers there was an increase from 14,800,000 in 1900 to 19,600,000 in 1910, or 32 per cent.

"The agricultural crops of the public-land States had a valuation in 1900, of \$921,000,000, and a valuation in 1910 of \$1,950,000,000, an increase of 112 per cent.

"During similar periods the average annual valuation of all the mineral products in the public-land States increased from \$287,000,000 during the period of 1901-1905 to an average annual valuation of \$358,000,000 during the period from 1906-1910, an increase of less than 25 per cent.; whereas the production of the precious metals in the public-land States decreased from an annual average valuation of \$136,000,000 during the earlier period (1901-1905) to an average valuation of \$127,000,000 during the latter period (1906-1910), a decrease of nearly 7 per cent.

"No better illustration could be given of the contrast in the treatment of these two great national industries than the fact that in spite of this lagging behind in the mining industry during this 10 year period the National Government expended for the reclamation of agricultural lands in these public-land States not only all the money received from the sale of public lands for agricultural purposes, but also nearly \$7,000,000 received from the sale of mineral lands in these States.

"The reduction in the number of men employed in the different metal-mining industries in the public-land States tells even more clearly than do the figures of production the falling behind of the mining industry. The figures from one of these States may be taken as an example. The average number of men employed in the metal-mining and metallurgical industries in the State of Colorado for the 4-year period, 1900-1903, was 36,189; during the period from 1904-1907 the annual number of men employed was reduced to 34,364; and during the 4-year period from 1908-1911 the number of employees was further reduced to 22,560.

"Among the causes of this lagging of the mine development are the following:

"(a) The approaching exhaustion of many of the more easily discovered and richer ore deposits, and the fact that not enough other rich deposits are being discovered to supply ore to replace that now being extracted; (b) the absence of known methods of profitably working many low-grade ore deposits; (c) the wasteful methods now followed in some mining and metallurgical operations,

which, although they may bring temporary profits to mine or furnace operators, are reducing the national wealth in a manner that can be remedied only by the discovery and use of more efficient methods.

"Of a number of our important mineral resources, we have for both the present and future needs of the Nation only an adequate supply. The utilization of certain of these resources, such as coal, oil, and natural gas, destroys them. Common prudence demands, therefore, that through the necessary researches the Nation should learn how to use this one supply of its mineral resources more wisely and more efficiently.

"The loss of life in the different branches of mining industry is a discredit to the Nation. It calls for more extended inquiries and researches on the part of the Federal Government, and a proper dissemination of the results obtained; it calls for more stringent police supervision or inspection by the State, and for more determined cooperative effort on the part of both the miners and the mine owners in the way of mining and enforcing safety regulations.

"The National Government should do its full duty in this matter without further delay. It should lead in a great movement for the practical conservation of life and resources.

"Congress is now appropriating as an aid to agricultural advancement about \$28,000,000 per annum. These funds are being expended and the work authorized is being carried forward through a well-organized department with a Cabinet head and with nearly 14,000 employees.

"That these large expenditures have resulted in still larger benefits to the country there can be no doubt, and one of the evidences of the benefits is to be seen in the large increases in the aggregate value of the farm products of the country, which had an estimated value of less than \$5,000,000,000 in 1898 and nearly \$9,000,000,000 in 1912.

"The conditions underlying agricultural progress differ as to many details from those associated with mining, but the broad general principles of progress are the same, and the favorable response to the national aid for agriculture is itself an evidence of the favorable result that can be depended upon if similar aid is extended to mining. Furthermore, the less extended actual experience growing out of the more limited expenditures through the United States Geological Survey and the Bureau of Mines on behalf of the mining industry furnishes specific evidence of the larger benefits that may be expected to result from larger expenditures for mining investigations. Thus, under the Bureau of Mines, through a small expenditure, the saving in national wealth through stopping the waste of natural gas in one and one-half years has aggregated more than \$15,000,000, which is several times the total cost of the maintenance of the Bureau of Mines from its beginning.

"The benefits that may be expected from more liberal aid to the mining industry will come (1) through a better safeguard of the health and lives of those engaged in mining and metallurgical operations; (2) through the lessening of the unnecessary waste in the mining and treatment of the various mineral products; (3) through increased efficiency in mining operations by the improvement of health and safety conditions; (4) through the development of more efficient and cheaper methods in the treatment of low-grade ore deposits, which are either not now worked at all or worked only in their richer parts or pockets.

*A paper presented at a meeting of the International Engineering Congress, 1915, in San Francisco, Cal., Sept. 20-25, 1915.