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CONTENTS.

Editorials—	Page
(a) Mr. Clifford Sifton and Natural Resources	97
(b) Engineers and Institutes	98
(c) The Portland Canal Mining Company	98
(d) The Tye Copper Company, Limited—A Correction	99
(e) The Cost of living	99
(f) The Davis Handbook of Cobalt	99
(g) Editorial Notes	99
Sheep Creek District, B.C. By A. H. Gracey	100
Exchanges	101
Hours of Work in Belgian Coal Mines	101
Costs of Producing Compressed Air in a Canadian Mining Camp. By R. L. Webb	102
Our London Letter	111
Mining Engineers and Mining Institutes. By A. B. Willmott	113
Legal Column	114
Industrial Section	115
Bruce, Peebles & Co.	116
The Largest Rock Crusher in the World	117
Correspondence	117
In the High Court of Justice	118
Special Correspondence	119
General Mining News	123
Mining News of the World	124
Company Notes	125
Statistics and Returns	127

MR. CLIFFORD SIFTON AND NATURAL RESOURCES.

For the position of President of the Commission on the Conservation of Natural Resources, the Hon. Mr. Sifton is specially fitted. His executive ability and his business acumen have been proved and amply recognized. While his appointment as president is acceptable to Canadians, it is obvious that in labours so wide and so diversified he must have the advice of strong and disinterested specialists. This statement is borne out by the recent utterances of Mr. Sifton himself.

In his exceptionally forceful address, delivered at Ottawa on January 18th, Mr. Sifton covered a great deal of ground. He dealt with many matters of moment. With only one of these are we concerned. Mr. Sifton made certain specific references to mining and minerals. Several of these are absolutely incorrect, one or two are absurdly wrong, and others are tinctured with error.

Before discussing these in detail, it is well to state that we are perfectly in accord with the spirit that pervades Mr. Sifton's address. It is obvious, however, that in facts and figures relating to mining some one has been leading him very much astray. For various good reasons, including strong internal evidence, we believe that Dr. Haanel is responsible. As a former protegee, and as a present friend of Mr. Sifton, Dr. Haanel has been permitted to retain a position that he cannot fill. His past and present relations to Mr. Sifton warrant a strong assumption that it was he who supplied the "dope." In any case, Mr. Sifton should be long in forgiving the fatuous offender who put him so much off the track.

We shall now proceed to quote: "In the Cobalt camp," says Mr. Sifton, "the mine owners are largely at the mercy of foreign smelters and refiners. Much valuable mineral . . . is lost to the owners and to this country because there is no effective method of treating these ores in Canada. Thorough investigation by experts is highly necessary. Probably the valuable mineral lost in the Cobalt camp in one year would pay for the whole investigation and build the plant necessary to treat the ores under proper guarantees."

This is awful. Look at the facts—and how shall we excuse Dr. Haanel for blinking them! The Ontario plants at Copper Cliff, Thorold, and Deloro can treat all the high-grade ore produced at Cobalt. Moreover, as these plants purchase by far the greater part of the high-grade ore of the camp, it is self-evident that they can treat that ore more economically than can foreign plants. Therefore, also, the Ontario plants pay higher prices.