

AROUND THE COLLIERIES.

Mr. Robt. Baxter, Vice-President of the A. M. W., is allowed on all sides to be a reasonable and prudent labor leader. The Record has always been of opinion that if Mr. Baxter would only assert himself there would be a great deal more good result to the society. Bob works and gets there, without guffaw.

The five most hazardous occupations for the three months ending January, are as follows. The figures are for all of Canada: Lumbering 25; Steel plants 27; Building 28; Mining 33, and Railways 69. Before, however, a proper estimate can be made one would require to know the numbers employed in these several trades.

The papers must have been in error when they announced some time ago that the A. M., U. M. W. would ask for legislation creating a new sick benefit society for mine workers, to which the operators would be compelled to pay 60 per cent., and the workers and the government 20 per cent. each. The workers, under a proposed new arrangement, will contribute the largest proportion.

A delegation from Cape Breton lately waited upon the government and placed before it a request, not embodied among those of the A. M. W., though it vitally concerns the interests of the workmen. At the request of the latter, or rather a minority of the Dominion Coal Co.'s employees, and some of the officials of the A. M. W., the Compensation Board refused to give a permit to the Dominion Employees' Relief Fund to carry on business, and so the workers came under the operation of the Compensation Board. The Record, at that time, hinted that the benefits accruing from the Compensation Act might not measure up to the workers' expectations, and it seems as if that has actually occurred. The lack of sick benefits and compensation for accidents, or death from accidents, occurring when the workmen were not engaged in the employees work, has turned out to be weak points in the Compensation Act as compared with the old benefit society, and therefore a new relief society, for payment of indemnities in case of sickness, and non-vocational accidents, is being attempted to be set in operation, the society to be supported primarily by the employees, and in a lesser degree by the employers and the government in something like the following proportion: Workmen a dollar a month; employers twenty-five cents a month, and the government at, say, a half cent per ton on the yearly shipments. Contributions at this rate should build up a society of sufficient financial strength to pay liberal weekly benefits, and indemnities in fatality cases. It is to be hoped the government will give the financial support requested.

An enterprising New Brunswicker, or one with a speculative turn, or needing some cash, sent to Halifax, some time ago, a car load of shale from Albert County. Possibly he had read that any old thing the color of coal would sell readily in N. S. Nova Scotians may have, under constraint, burned black rock, but there they evidently drew the line, for there were no purchasers for the N. B. shale, and the railway authorities, for some time, in vain, have been trying to secure a customer, to help cover railway charges; but there are no buyers. The shale burns freely but does not look pretty in a grate, and the super abundance of ash is against it as a domestic fuel.

There have, on several occasions in the past, been slack times in the industry, but the present slackness has features that have no parallel in past times. The slump in trade came, it might almost be said, with lightning rapidity. Less than six months ago coal scarcely could be had for love or money, while to-day it is declared that no coal can be sold. The demand for coal for the C. N. Ry. has ceased, and the steel works at Sydney Mines and Trenton are using, comparatively, very little coal, while industrial concerns are content to order supplies to meet no more than immediate requirements, and yet we hear talk in the press of the government, being asked to adopt measures for increased production. Production will be forthcoming as soon as the demand arises. Some may ask: "Would not there be more demand if prices were reduced?" Possibly, but the operators cannot sell at a less than present price, unless—well we must out with it—cost of production, that is, wages and material, are less than at present. The operators, and can they be blamed, say: "What benefit is there to us in selling at a price that yields no return, if it does not involve loss."

After explosions in the United States, involving much loss of life, it has been suggested, among other things, as a preventive, that firing or shooting, or blasting of the coal, should be done at night, when very few men would be in the pit. The suggestion, where practical, is an excellent one. The Record is pleased to learn that at some of the pits in Cape Breton the system of night blowing of the coal has been adopted. At Dem. No. 4 we learn not a shot is being fired in day shift, and this change has been effected without any loss of output. The men at this colliery went hand in hand with the officials in the inauguration of this system, and it has proven to be a great benefit to both men and management, in removing a great deal of anxiety. This change is a case of men and management working in harmony, in the right direction. Gen'l. Supt. Tonge is much pleased with the re-