

ing. . . We want geology, but only its most practical side. We want labour, but only its intelligent use; and last, but not least, we want solid financial backing."

STATISTICS AND CONSERVATION.

No one mineral commodity is subject to more extraordinary waste in mining, storage, transportation, and consumption than coal. In Nova Scotia, for instance, it can be proved that a large percentage of coal that was once available in the mine is now of no commercial value to the owners. Also there has been large waste through deterioration in storage. The same applies to our western collieries.

Both in Canada and in the United States the wasteful bee-hive even yet obtains—and for this there is yet good reason. The remedy for this condition can be only applied in homeopathic doses. No sweeping change is possible. But it is certain that the bee-hive will gradually be superseded by the retort oven, as witness the fact that 6,254,644 tons of coke were made in by-product ovens in the United States during 1909, while ten years ago the production was 1,075,727 tons. Some significance also may be attached to the fact that whereas in 1880 an average of 3,140 pounds of coal was used in making one ton of coke, only 3,020 pounds being used per ton of coke in 1909. These figures, are taken from Dr. E. W. Parker's report to the U. S. Geological Survey. Dr. Parker attributes this improvement entirely to the increased use of retort ovens.

Many more facts could be adduced from the same report. Our point, however, is that the cause of conservatism is definitely strengthened by means of carefully compiled statistics. Coal is at once our most important and our most largely wasted natural resource. Every unmined ton is appreciating yearly in value. We have only a vague idea of where we stand, of how large our reserves are, and of how enormous our waste. There could well be established at Ottawa an off-shoot of the Mines Branch to guard our natural stores of fuel.

THE WESTERN COAL STRIKE.

The strike of coal miners in Alberta and eastern British Columbia was declared on April 1st. Not less than 7,000 men are directly concerned. About 5,500 of these are members of the U.M.W.A. The mines that are closed produce an annual aggregate tonnage of about 4,300,000 tons. The suspension of coal production naturally entails the cessation of operations at the mines and smelters of southeastern British Columbia. Thus the copper industry of the west, giving employment to probably 4,500 men, will be temporarily closed.

The smallest item in all the train of suffering that strikes bring is loss to the investors. The largest is the misery that is brought upon the families of the thousands of workers directly and indirectly affected. A protracted strike breeds crimes of violence. No one

can foresee the final outcome. To our mind the strike is a grotesque anachronism. That it should still be permitted in this country, despite our elaborate preventive machinery, is tragical.

Already many of the unemployed miners are moving to the coast in search of employment. Soon the careless good-nature that characterizes the inception of hostilities will be replaced by rancour and open hostility. The longer the life of the strike, the less will that mischievous organization, the U.M.W.A., be able to carry out its pledges of financial support. When the pinch of short rations is felt then also is felt the desire for blood. The miserable drama, whose closing scene is even now being enacted in Nova Scotia, is evidence a-plenty of the moral irresponsibility of the U.M.W.A.'s leaders. To them the imposition of easily avoidable hardships upon numbers of women and children is a negligible incident.

In the present crisis the attitude of the Department of Labour is not reassuring. With some regret we are led to believe that the Hon. Mr. King fears to give the Lemieux Act a thorough trying out. We hope that this belief is not well-founded. But it is quite apparent that the U.M.W.A. intends to have its own way and to flout openly any efforts of the Department that are not in accord with U.M.W.A. ambitions.

Whether there shall be or shall not be "open-shop" is nominally the main issue. In reality, the objective of the U.M.W.A. is supreme control of the coal-mining situation in the west. How catastrophic such an eventuality would be, we can judge by results in the east.

In any rational and continued movement towards better conditions of work and living the coal miners of Alberta and British Columbia will have the moral support of the Canadian public. In following the lead of vicious foreign demagogues the miners lose all claim upon the sympathy of their fellow citizens.

UNTECHNICAL WRITING.

In the course of our duties we are called upon to read a large number of professional reports and a considerable volume of correspondence. Naturally these documents vary through a tremendous range of merit, demerit, and awfulness. In the main it is safe to assert that hardly one report out of ten is properly written. Even the tenth, excellent as it may be in a technical sense, falls short of what it might be because of the careless use of the English language.

Undoubtedly many serious losses have been incurred through the use of loose and ambiguous phrases. A misplaced comma may alter the whole meaning of a sentence. Trivial typographical blunders may bring ruin in their train.

As a signal example of obscurity we append a copy of a letter received by a Canadian mining engineer. We can vouch for the authenticity of this letter. It has been reproduced as closely as possible in the image of the original. Here it is, and we defy our readers