The Part of the Coalfield of the West in Canadian National Development

A Paper prepared for Presentation at the Second Annual Western Meeting of the Canadian Institute of Mining & Metallurgy, October 25th to 28th, 1920, Winnipeg.

By F. W. GRAY.

At the Toronto Meeting of the Institute in March last, the writer developed the argument that Canada could become self-supplying in bituminous coal.

The events of the Summer have gone far to establish the necessity, if not the soundness of this aim. We have read on the one hand the statement of the Minister of Railways that Nova Scotia coal should be brought to Ontario, and we have seen, on the other hand, the greatest extension eastward of the use of western coal yet recorded in Canada, accompanied—under emergent conditions it is true—by definite proposals for the forwarding of Alberta coal to Ontario.

Existing Fuel Situation is Unrepresentative.

The present bituminous situation is not representative. In Nova Scotia the existing output does not represent the capacity of the mines. Neither is the transportation deficiency to be considered representative that has brought about a coal supply emergency in those districts of North America that lie furthest removed from the great central coalfield of Pennsylvania and Virginia.

These are post-war conditions of limited duration.

The western coalfields have been so slightly and so recently developed that a statement of existing production is interesting only as a contemporary record, and has no bearing on the future.

What then is the outlook for making Canada self-supplying in bituminous coal, and what in particular the role of the western coalfield?

Bridging the Gap between our Bituminous Fields.

There is no doubt as to the presence within the borders of Canada of sufficient bituminous coal to supply not only our present population, but also that of the future, whatever it may be. Unfortunately a gap of 2,000 miles intervenes between the eastern coalfield and the beginning of the Saskatchewan lignites along the international border.

This gap can be bridged, if we adopt a national policy on coal supply, but not immediately. Two things are eminently required to achieve this end:

(a) An extension of the Great Lakes waterways that will enable Nova Scotia coal to enter Lake Ontario by water carriage without breaking bulk.

(b) Adoption by the railways of a comprehensive programme for the annually increasing transport of coal from the western coalfield, as a permanent feature of traffic.

The following tables are self-explanatory, and show the existing and possible production of bituminous coal in Canada, with existing mine openings and colliery equipment, and the very substantial improvement that even full utilization of existing development would bring about.

The total possible production estimated in Table 2 is, curiously enough, what the total production of Canada should have been in 1920, had the curve of rising coal production before the war continued uninterrupted.

Table 1

BITUMINOUS COAL

Present Output Position of Canadian Coal Mines, showing their ability to supply Home Markets, within proved economically transportation distances

Short Tons W- Western Mines E- Eastern "

Province	Consumption	Production	Surplus for extra-provincial use	Deficit necessary to be Imported	Present Source of Supply of the Deficit: Canadian Mines	Present Source of Supply of the Deficit: United States Mines
Nova Scotia + P.E. Island	4,300,000	5,800,000	1,500,000		–	–
New Brunswick	1,000,000	200,000	–	800,000	800,000 (E)	–
Quebec	4,000,000	–	–	4,000,000	–	4,000,000
Ontario	11,000,000	–	–	11,000,000	–	11,000,000
Manitoba	3,000,000	–	–	3,000,000		
Saskatchewan	1,500,000	400,000	–	1,100,000	2,200,000 (W)	1,900,000
Alberta	3,300,000	5,500,000	2,200,000	–		
B. Columbia	1,800,000	2,500,000	700,000	–		
Totals	29,900,000	14,400,000	4,500,000	19,900,000	3,000,000	16,900,000

Leaving for Export from Canada in 1920

Nova Scotia	700,000
British Columbia	700,000
Tons	1,400,000