

COPY

Montreal, June 19th, 1923

036864

Honourable Charles Stewart,  
Minister of Mines,  
Ottawa

Re Welsh coal for Eastern Canada and  
Government Boats for Transportation

Dear Sir/---

I desire to acknowledge your esteemed favor of the 2nd of June, and in reply would say that I am well aware of the fact that the coal dealers of Montreal are taking advantage of the low price of Welsh coal, 40 shillings per ton laid down in Montreal as quoted me last fall, and have been buying tens of thousands of tons, thereby insuring a more certain supply of fuel for the consumer than if depending entirely on American coal. But the question is this, is the consumer benefitting by the cheapness of the overseas coal, is he not paying the same price for the Welsh as for the American?

I do not wish to be too inquisitive, but would it be possible to obtain from the Fuel Board the various prices paid for American and Welsh coal which the dealers of Montreal and of other eastern points are paying?

What I think the Fuel Board is endeavoring to do is not only to insure to Canadians a fuel supply, but at the same time, to provide coal to the consumer at a lower figure, this especially in the interest of the poorer class who find the exorbitant price a great drain on their small incomes.

It is my opinion that if the Government wished to go thoroughly and sincerely into this matter, through their representatives, the Fuel Board, and set aside some of their vessels---which by the way do not seem to be paying expense of operation---for transportation, that coal could be purchased in large quantities in Wales and laid down in Montreal at a figure far below the present price of \$16.25 per ton, and that they would be serving the people in a manner such as they could not do in many other lines of necessities that both rich and poor must have to preserve life.

It seems rather strange that with this means of a fuel supply at a reasonable cost, there should be such a strong effort made to bring soft coal from the West, here to Eastern Canada, which cannot be laid down, evidently, at anything like as low a figure as that of the Welsh coal. While we feel it our duty, as Canadians, to patronise home trade and our Canadian National Railway, where railway carriage is necessary, it does not seem fair to the people of the East not to take advantage of the cheaper source of supply, and if the Government is going to give assistance at all in this matter, why not press for securing coal where it is the cheapest and at the same time within the Empire?

If I am wrong in my reasoning, please bear with me and set me right! But I have given this matter a good deal of attention, and I have come to the conclusion that if there are benefits for the public being overruled by the middleman, I for one would like to see steps taken to secure fair treatment for the people, even though it did mean less wealth in the pockets of the former through unfair profits.

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