

other countries. But her duty is first to protect her own citizens. Canadian labour can best be protected by measures that will eradicate the imported agitator who makes the Conciliation Act a stumbling-block and arbitration a vain thing.

Our newly appointed Minister of Labour could signalize his advent to office most fittingly by restricting the application of the Act to Canadians.

The Dominion Coal Company never had a strike, never erected fences for protection, never called in the police until the U. M. W. made it appearance in Nova Scotia.

ASBESTOS ONCE AGAIN.

Quebec asbestos mining is suffering more than its fair share of promotion. On the heels of the huge Amalgamated flotation comes news of a new "merger"—the Black Lake Consolidated Asbestos Company, capitalized at \$5,000,000. The holdings of the latter concern cover some 5,000 acres of territory, only a small fraction of which is developed. Not one of the properties has been worked at a profit. Further, development so far has given little indication that the properties are valuable.

We believe that shares in neither Amalgamated nor Consolidated will find a ready market in this country. If they are placed successfully in London it will be due to the ignorance of trans-Atlantic investors as to the condition of affairs in Quebec.

The asbestos industry of Quebec is, per se, a vigorous, sound, and progressive branch of mining. Until recently, Canadian producers have been able practically to control the market. As mentioned before, however, Russia is becoming a formidable competitor. South Africa will sooner or later enter the field with a high-grade article. Other countries will also take their quota of the trade.

Quebec producers will continue pre-eminent for some time. They have reached a stage of development and equipment that new districts cannot approach for several years. We hope that Quebec will always maintain a leading position. But it is futile to ignore the developments that are taking place in other lands; and it is criminal for promoters to discount the future with no regard to the inevitable competition of foreign producers.

It is justifiable, then, to look upon the present asbestos flotations as untimely, unprofitable, and inflated to a degree that will do positive and immediate injury to the industry. Consolidation is often wise. Often it is necessary to the reduction of working and administrative costs. We do not believe that working costs in the Quebec asbestos mines will be lowered one cent under the control of the new corporation. We know that fixed charges will be very considerably increased. The new organizations have been called into being not to cheapen production, but to line the pockets

of promoters. Not consolidation, but inflation, is the keynote of the Amalgamated Asbestos Corporation and of the Black Lake Consolidated.

It is pertinent to add here that within the past quarter there has been a notable reduction in the selling price of all grades of asbestos. Overproduction, a deliberate preliminary to promotion, has surfeited the market. Information has reached us from producers and from consumers signifying that the drop has been heavy, in some instances amounting to more than 25 per cent., a reduction that will wipe out all profits. Production is being increased, despite this falling market. The object of this is clear. It is literally manipulation to aid in the disposal of Amalgamated shares, by giving a false colour of activity.

SCOTCH OIL-SHALE COMPANIES.

The present condition and future prospects of mining companies operating the oil-shale deposits of Scotland are noteworthy. Of late the large possibilities of the New Brunswick oil-shales have received wide advertisement. It is probable, indeed, that, ere long, capital will be supplied for the purpose of mining these shales and marketing their diversified products. The Scotch oil-shale industry, as it stands to-day, is a monument of persistent, intelligent, and successful endeavour. Its history will afford guidance and encouragement to those who undertake the exploitation of the New Brunswick deposits.

The past financial year was one of general prosperity for the five companies engaged in the Scotch mineral oil trade. The lower prices obtained for their products were offset by lessened cost of production, due largely to cheaper coal and lower wages. Thus, in spite of keener competition on the part of the Standard Oil Company, aggregate profits amounted to £380,207, as against £372,343 for the preceding year. In addition to profits earned, the plants of the various companies have been enlarged and improved.

The strong financial position of the leading concern, the Pumpherson Company, is noteworthy. Although there was a slight falling off in its profits last year, yet it has been able to maintain its dividend of 50 per cent., to carry forward a larger balance, and to write off the sum of £41,758, the amount expended in improvements. This company has built up a reserve fund of £100,000, and a fire insurance fund of £10,000.

The other companies report increased profits and growing reserves. In every case ample amounts have been allotted to cover depreciation and to build up reserves.

Heretofore, the oil companies have relied upon wholesale dealers to market the oil. One company, the Oakbank, is now attempting to undertake its own marketing. The experiment, if successful, will lead to the organization of a central selling agency that will market the products of all the companies.