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Mineral Production in British Columbia in 1919

Preliminary Estimate by Provincial Mineralogist Shows a Production of \$33,421,333, a Decrease of \$8,361,141 From 1918—Heavy Decrease in Copper Production.

Mr. William Fleet Robertson, Provincial mineralogist, is in the habit of presenting an estimate of the mineral production of British Columbia the earliest of any mining department of which we have record, and his guess is in the habit of being remarkably close to the definite figures as published in the annual report of the Hon. Wm. Sloan, Minister of Mines. In connection with the estimated production, the department issues an annual bulletin, being a preliminary survey of mining development and progress for the year. This is just off the press of the King's Printer, Victoria. The estimated mineral yield of \$33,421,333 is larger than expected, because of heavier production during November and December. Mr. Robertson says:

This bulletin has been prepared before the receipt of the official reports for the year 1919 of the Gold Commissioners and Resident Engineers of the Province, and the customary returns of mineral production annually made by managers of mines and reduction works; consequently, it must necessarily be regarded as being simply a preliminary review of the progress of the past year, together with an estimate of the quantities and value of the several mineral products of the Province, which it is believed will prove to be approximately correct.

The accompanying table shows an estimated mineral production during 1919 of a total value of \$33,421,333. It will be seen that the total value of the production of 1919, as estimated, is \$8,361,141 less than that of 1918, equivalent to a decrease of about 20 per cent.

This decrease in production, as compared with the preceding year, loses its adverse significance when it is considered that the 1919 production is still materially greater than that of any year prior to 1916, and that the larger productions of the years 1916-17-18 are due to the stimulus of war and the inflated metal prices attendant thereon.

So that any feeling of regret at this year's output being

less than that of the previous three years is completely obliterated by the consideration of the removal of the cause of the abnormal outputs of these three years—the war—and it becomes a matter of congratulation that, with the return of something approaching normal conditions, we should still find this year's mineral output showing a very material increase over those of former normal years.

It will be noted from the accompanying table showing the details of production that this year's decrease is almost entirely due to copper—to the lesser quantity produced and the lower market price obtained for such product. To this must be added the consequent lessening of the production of both gold and silver to the extent that these metals would be contained in the decrease of tonnage of copper ore mined.

As the position of the copper output is the important feature for consideration in this year's summary of production, it may be well to outline the conditions surrounding the marketing of this metal during the past few years.

Copper is such an essential war metal that all the Allied nations had felt obliged to accumulate within their borders a sufficient supply of the metal for war needs for a considerable time in advance, in case transportation facilities should cease.

The sudden coming of the Armistice in the fall of 1918 found all the great nations with these very large stocks of copper on hand, and no further demand for war supplies. It was estimated roughly that the stocks on hand were sufficient to supply the demands on a peace basis for about two years

without further production by mines.

As a consequence of the war the copper market of the world has been, during the whole of the year 1919, in a thoroughly demoralized condition and with no certainty as to the near future.

During the latter part of the war the market price of copper had been fixed by the United States Government, and, as the United States produces about two-thirds of the world's copper supply, the American price formed the basis of the world price. The price thus set during the latter months of the war was 26 cents a pound at New York.

MINERAL PRODUCTION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA IN 1919.

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