

Canadian Coal.

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AMONG the most abundant of Canada's natural resources, coal is near the head of the list. A comparatively recent estimate placed the coal reserves of the Dominion at more than 1,234,000,000 metric tons, or about 16 per cent of the world's coal reserves.

The principal coalfields of Canada are in Nova Scotia, Alberta, and British Columbia, while the chief centres of industry and population are in Ontario and Quebec—2000 miles to the east and 1000 miles to the west. The great coalfields of the eastern United States lie only 300-500 miles to the south of the southern boundaries of Ontario and Quebec, and from those fields these two provinces import most of their coal, because it is more economical to do so. For the past thirty years Canada has imported from 50 to 60 per cent of its total coal requirements from the United States.

Ever since Confederation in 1867, it has been the aim of every government to make it possible for Canadian mines to obtain a larger proportion of the total coal business. Until recently, efforts in this direction have been confined to the imposition of protective tariffs, but lately this has been supplemented by more direct forms of assistance, such as by the Dominion Government paying a share of the freight rates on coal from western and eastern mines in Canada to points in Ontario, Quebec, and Manitoba; also by extending some monetary aid under the Domestic Fuel Act of 1927 to by-product coking plants.

Nine years ago, an organisation known as the Dominion Fuel Board came into being by government regulation. It was formed to make a thorough study of the underlying causes of recurring coal shortages and of the methods by which they might be counteracted. Since then the Board has been largely instrumental in stimulating the provision of fuels alternative to American coal for Ontario and Quebec, and is chiefly responsible for the greatly increased importations of British anthracite in the last three years.

Of the Canadian coal production in 1930, amounting to 14,799,000 tons, less than 750,000 tons was exported, and it does not appear that there is much likelihood of the export market being increased. The possibility of extending the home market by supplanting American coal with the Canadian product has been engaging the attention of the Fuel Board. To the end of 1930, government assistance in the form of subventions and the operation of the Dominion Fuel Act have resulted in the placing of 900,000 tons of Canadian coal and coke in markets previously held by foreign coal.

The character of the mining problems presented in the coalfields of the maritime Provinces indicates that the present production of between six and seven million tons cannot be increased more than perhaps 50 per cent above present figures. If this were accomplished, the total production of these fields would still fall short of supplying the present requirements of Canada, east of Ottawa and Kingston, by from one to two million tons per annum.

At the present time, maritime coals supply approximately seven million tons out of a total consumption of eleven and a half million tons. It is evident, therefore, that eastern Canada must look to other countries for a considerable part of its needs.

In the west, the capacity of existing mines is far in excess of present needs. Total requirements of the western provinces are about ten and a quarter million

tons. About half a million tons are imported from the United States, chiefly to Manitoba. British Columbia in past times had a good export market to California, but this has diminished greatly. Total exports of Canadian coal from the western fields are now only about 400,000 tons.

The lack of coal resources in Ontario and Quebec has been compensated to a large degree by the development of the abundant water powers of these provinces. There is now approximately six million horse-power developed. In terms of coal, this is the equivalent of eighteen million tons, an amount more than the total Canadian coal production.

The use of fuel oil is increasing rapidly. In 1929, the latest year for which complete figures are as yet available, the total consumption of fuel oil in the Dominion outside the refineries was more than 413,000,000 gallons—an 18 per cent increase over 1928. The consumption of fuel oil in 1930 is expected to show a small increase. The coal equivalent of the present consumption is approximately three million tons. The competition of fuel oil is being particularly keenly felt in British Columbia coal mines. Cheap oils from California and Peru have replaced nearly one million tons of coal in British Columbia. The bulk of this oil is used by the railways.

In 1930, Canada imported 17,728,991 tons of coal, of which 13,463,601 were bituminous and 4,265,390 anthracite. Of the total imports of bituminous coal, 13,217,369 tons were from the United States and 146,232 tons from Great Britain. Of the anthracite imported, 2,965,254 tons were from the United States, 996,127 from Great Britain, 292,529 from Russia, and 11,480 from Germany.

Last year, Canada consumed 31,870 tons of coal and 3,385,000 tons of coke—a decrease of 3,000,000 tons from the average consumption of the previous two years. Central Ontario consumed approximately thirteen million tons, Quebec five millions, Alberta four and a half millions, and Nova Scotia three and three-quarter millions.

Of the total Canadian coal production last year, the mines in Nova Scotia accounted for 6,247,761 tons; New Brunswick, 208,405; Saskatchewan, 571,632; Alberta, 5,682,487; and British Columbia, 2,089,052; a total of 14,799,337 tons valued at £10,600,000. The coal mining industry in Canada represented at the end of 1929 a capital investment of £28,400,000. There were at that time 29,739 employes in the industry, whose salaries and wages bill totalled for the year £8,475,000, or about £285 per employe.

As a step towards the more economical utilisation of domestic fuel supplies, pamphlets have been published dealing with the advantages to be gained through proper insulation of houses and factories, and the maintenance of adequate humidity in them. The question of proper humidity in houses subject to a Canadian winter climate is one which closely affects standards of health as well as fuel economy, and investigations on these subjects are being continued.

Canadians are fully aware of the advantages to be gained through the development of a national fuel policy, which will assure to them the fullest possible use of their own fuel resources consistent with reasonable economy in the distribution of them. Where factors of transportation prohibit the realisation of this aim, effort is concentrated in finding a source of supply within the British Empire. That these aims have met with a measure of success is evidenced by the increasing imports from Great Britain.

* This article is based upon information derived from various official documents and the records of the Department of Mines, Ottawa.