THE OMAHA ILLUSTRATED BEE

NUMBER 328. Entered Second Class at Omaha Postoffice—Published Weekly by The Bee Publishing Co.—Subscription, $2.50 Per Year. DECEMBER 10, 1905.

How Omaha Keeps Its People Warm and Comfortable in Winter

Some Interesting Facts on the Local Coal Supply and the Way in Which it Goes Up in Smoke On Cold Days When the Thermometer Hovers Around the Zero Point for Weeks at a Time

FAMILIAR STREET SCENE IN THE WINTER.

OMAHA people pay for coal during the seven months of the year the sum of $1,575,000. A few figures taken as a comparison show how large an amount of money this really is. It would take more than five times the entire population of the city working at $2 a day to pay the coal bill merely for one winter. In other words, it would take 787,500 men working at $2 a day for one day to make that much money. Working at the rate of $2 a day it would take one man 2,187.5 years to complete it.

These figures, of course, are based on the most reliable information that could be secured. While it may seem strange to the people of this city, out of a large number of coal dealers asked in regard to the matter, none of them could tell, or would tell, the exact amount of coal he sold during a winter, but each was willing to tell what he thought his competitor sold. So it is a fact that not a coal dealer in Omaha knows the amount of coal sold here in a year. One dealer, after making estimates of what his competitors sold, said: "I do not know what my firm sells during a year. We have never kept an accurate account of the matter, and the nearest we could come to the exact amount would be an estimate." A competitor told how much this dealer sold, so the figures above are practically correct.

Fifty Cars a Day for Omaha

In Omaha an average of fifty coal dealers do business during the winter months, some of whom sell coal at wholesale and have men out over the state as agents, others cater to a strictly retail trade and deliver coal in wagons throughout the city, while another class handles only a small amount of coal and it is delivered from their places of business, in most instances, in baskets. At least one car of coal is sold in Omaha each day during the winter months by each dealer. This means that fifty cars of coal are burned daily in this city between the months of October and April. A car of coal is equal to thirty tons, making 1,500 tons of coal used daily, or 3,000,000 pounds shoveled into furnaces and stoves by workmen and housewives and others every twenty-four hours during the winter.

As there is no coal mined in Nebraska it is necessary for Omaha as well as the remainder of the state to ship in all that is burned. To supply even the people of the metropolis many states are called upon. In fact, Omaha gets its coal supply from more states than any city of its size in the United States. It is shipped in here from Pennsylvania, Missouri, Iowa, Kansas, Wyoming, Ohio, Colorado and Illinois. This means that the people of Omaha sent out to other states each winter through the coal dealers the sum of $7,500 a day, or $1,575,000 a winter, less, of course, the profit of the coal dealer, which has never been figured out so far as the Oldest Inhabitant remembers.

A Nebraska coal mine which furnished Omaha's supply would have to be capable of producing several different kinds of the fuel. Omaha uses hard coal in its residences, and steam coal and soft coal under its boilers. The hard coal is retailed on an average at $10.50 a ton, soft coal from $4.50 to $7.50 a ton and the steam coal for $3 a ton. In South Omaha, which is not included in this calculation, the packing houses use from three to five cars of coal a day, as does the smelter works in Omaha.

When the Dealer Gets Even

Complaint has frequently been heard because the coal dealers usually tack on 10 cents a ton for coal which is not ordered during the summer months and consequently not delivered during the warm weather. This was explained in this manner by a large coal dealer who lays in his supply during the hot summer months.

"It is necessary for us to look ahead and be prepared to supply our customers when cold weather sets in. If we did not we would find ourselves unable to secure cars in which to ship the coal into Omaha. About the time we would be wanting cars for coal, the farmers and grain men would be wanting them to move the grain crop, so we have to get a supply of coal in advance and have it on hand. Now, as we have to invest our money in this coal, and as we have to store it away until it is sold and delivered, we put on a charge of 10 cents a ton to pay the interest on the money and the storage."

This 10 cents a ton amounts to $3 a car. Before that 10 cents comes the freight bills, and as every little additional expense is charged up to the consumer, by the time he gets his coal supply for the winter he has a large number of bills to pay besides the mere cost of the coal at the mine. Another charge laid at the door of the coal dealer is that he "catches 'em a goin' and a comin'" because he sells coal in the winter and sells ice in the summer. But this is true of only five of the large firms in Omaha.

Army Given Employment

But whatever the jokes poked at the coal dealer and the ice dealer, his kind gives employment to an army of men in this city. It is estimated that it requires fully 400 teams (800 horses), and 400 wagons to keep the people supplied with coal, after it has been dumped into the coal yards. These are employed constantly during the winter months and a portion of the summer. It requires one man to do the driving and the unloading; five of the large firms employ in their offices constantly seven men each; other dealers have on an average of two men to the office. Some of the dealers have three men on the road all the time, while the five largest dealers have a total of twenty-five men out all the time. These twenty-five men do nothing but take orders for coal, while another man is employed by each of the five big dealers to do nothing but collect. Besides the employes enumerated, a far greater number of men own their own teams and haul coal for the dealers at a stipulated price per ton. Some of the dealers say it is better to employ men with teams to do the hauling, but those who own their own teams declare the only system is for the firm to own its teams.

Life of the Coal Hauler

Men who are employed with their teams report at a coal office each morning for orders and are assigned the day's work. It sometimes happens, of course, there is nothing for the teamster to do, but the good driver who never makes a mistake in an address usually finds plenty to do during the winter months. His pay, too, is good, depending entirely upon the amount of coal he hauls. A number of the drivers make as much as $35 and $40 a week, out of which, of course, they have to pay for the feed for their teams, but the average driver, of a number interviewed, makes from $18 to $25. All this, of course, adds to the price of the coal to the consumer.

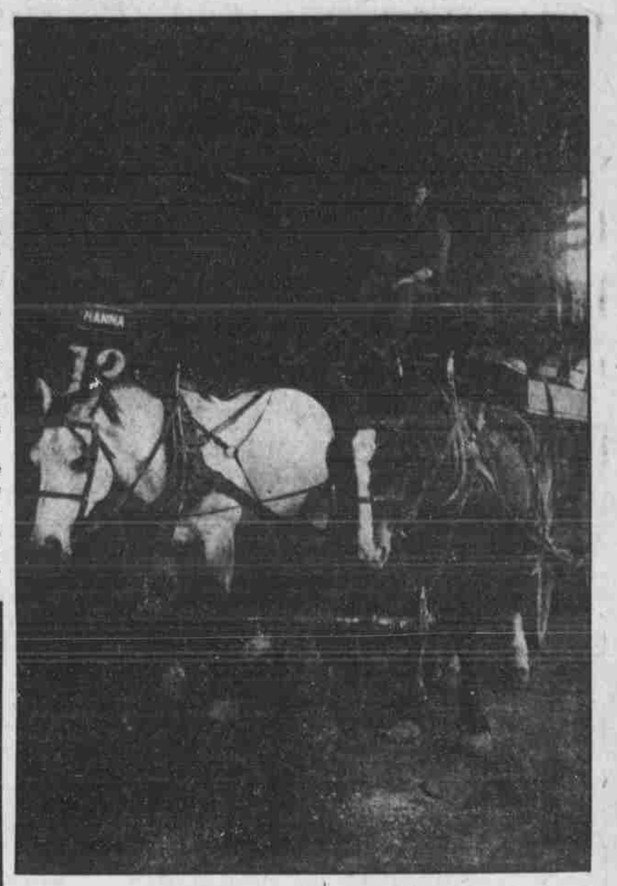
But before the teamsters get a hold on the coal supply of Omaha the railroads get a chance at it. All of the best coal used in Omaha comes from the mines of Pennsylvania, so the freight charges amount to considerable. A little calculation shows that to bring in a day's supply of coal would take a train which would cover in the neighborhood of 2,000 feet. To bring in a year's supply of coal the train, were it in one section, would reach a distance of about 146 miles, or three times the distance from Omaha to Lincoln. So a cent reduction in freight rates on coal into Omaha means considerable in a year's time, though it sounds small.

Large Stocks Carried On Hand

A majority of the dealers keep constantly on hand from 1,000 to 1,500 tons of coal, while the smaller dealers carry about 300 tons and less. All of the dealers, of course, sell coal that is "absolutely free from dirt and dust," and in one instance the coal is treated to remove all dirt and dust. This is done by one of Omaha's largest firms. The coal is loaded into a bin whose floor is many feet above the ground. When it is shoveled out of this pit it goes over a screen, which is above another pit, and thus most of the foreign matter and the smaller particles are removed.

Hard work is attached to every phase of the coal business, of which the coal heaver and driver, in so far as manual labor is concerned, of course, get the worst end, but these drivers are satisfied. A number were interviewed and every one of them expressed sympathy for the man behind the desk. "It is outdoor work in mine," most of them said, and the fact that the man with the team clears more money each month out of his salary than does the average man behind the desk, the outdoor work has its attractions as well as its drawbacks.

As a result of the efforts made by business men to save coal, the heating of an office building in Omaha has been reduced to a science and in some of the large office buildings engineers of recognized ability who command large salaries are employed. In many places in Omaha people walking along the streets pass over, without their knowledge, immense boilers where steam is generated for heating and lighting purposes. Excavations are made under the sidewalk to the curb line, leaving the walks supported by arches, which are placed upon large iron pillars. The excavation is walled with brick or stone and in some instances the excavations extend the entire length of the building.



WHERE THE WAGONS ARE LOADED.

Every piece of machinery is bought and installed with a view of saving coal and with a view to using every particle of steam. Pumps are used to send the hot water through the pipes and back again into the boilers and thus every drop of water is made to do all that it can be gotten from it. Some of the buildings use direct and others indirect systems, that is, the water is sent through the buildings in the pipes to radiators in the former case and in the latter case the air is heated by being brought into the building and heated by means of coils of pipe in a separate room. Fans are then used by which the air is forced into the rooms which it is desired to heat. The High school has both systems installed. Most of the office buildings which are not large have the direct system and carry only a low pressure of steam, and the engines and boilers can be managed by one man, who is required to remain at his post of duty every evening. In these smaller buildings the boilers are not more than fifteen horse power. In instances the pressure of the water furnished by the water company is sufficient, but in others the engineers keep a tank of water on the top of the building to make the pressure greater. Engineers who are employed in these buildings are required to pass a rigid examination and are granted a license before they can take the position of engineers. Their pay ranges from $60 a month for a second grade engineer to a much higher amount, dependent upon the man and his employer.

THE MAN BEHIND THE HEATING PLANT.

CLEANING COAL IN OLD-FASHIONED WAY

Uncle Sam's Up-to-Date Plant

In the federal building perhaps there is the most economical, as well as the most up-to-date, heating and ventilating plant in this city. This plant occupies the entire basement of that large structure. In this building only is the thermostat used. This apparatus automatically regulates the heat in every room in the building. It is a small attachment consisting of two disks, flattened almost together, but between which there is a liquid which freezes at a temperature of 55 degrees. The action of the air against this disk contracts or expands it, as the case may be, and this expansion or contraction regulates the air which goes into the radiator. Should a federal officer desire his room kept at a temperature of 70 degrees he so sets the apparatus by a dial on the front of it. When the temperature drops to 69 degrees the sides of the thermostat open and allow the hot air to go into the radiator. Should the temperature reach 71 degrees the thermostat closes and the hot air is shut off, and thus is it possible to regulate the heat almost to a degree. So delicate is this apparatus that Chief Engineer Baxter moved it by merely breathing against it.

The five boilers in the federal building are supposed to heat 5,000 feet radiation each, but during last winter only three boilers were used, supplying a radiation of 30,000 feet. Mr. Baxter believes this is due to the fact that the heat is regulated in each room, and as some people require much less heat than others, though the heat is turned off only a short time on each occasion, it means much in the year's coal bill.

Even the Air is Filtered

The air furnished the occupants of the federal building is even purer than that which the people breathe upon the streets. It is first inducted into the building through screens of cheesecloths and from these screens there is removed each twenty-four hours fifteen to thirty-two pounds of soot, coal dust, dirt and other particles which are breathed every day by the out-of-door people. The air is then forced into a room in which are located hot water coils and in its meanderings through these coils it becomes hot. Then it is forced into the fans and sent through ducts into a small room, where it is mixed and cooled to be sent on through ducts through the length of the basement into other mixing vats and then to the offices. The velocity of the air as it is sent from the fans through the cooling room is like a small cyclone, and travels at the rate of 32,000 cubic feet a minute.

New Economies Always Welcomed

In the federal building, as in all other buildings where coal is used, the chief engineer is constantly on the lookout for inventions which will reduce the coal bills. In one of the large office buildings eleven tons of coal is used every day and the building does not remain open at night, either. This amount of coal, however, supplies also power for the electric light plant. This heating plant covers the entire basement of a building a quarter of a block in area and it contains enough machinery to furnish heat and light for a small town. One engine is kept merely to raise heavy safes and office fixtures which may be needed in the building. Heat and light is furnished to every room and to supply the demand four large boilers of 100 horse power each are used. Two large engines are also used, supplying power to run the elevators. It requires a chief engineer and three assistants to run this plant, more than is necessary to manage an electric light plant in a country town. Every particle of steam is used in this building, not a pound escaping until after it has performed its function.

While in a majority of instances the lighting plant is in the basement of a building, it is not unusual for the heating plant to be separate and apart from the main building and the heat piped into the building.

Folk on the Rights of the Insured

Missouri's Reform Governor Interprets the Startling Disclosures of the Insurance Investigations

IN considering the proposed action of the state of Missouri against the New York Life Insurance company and other insurance organizations which may be convicted of carrying on fraudulent practices, it is a mistake to suppose that the individual state has not authority to supervise the business of insurance companies. Insurance is not interstate commerce; it may be regulated by each state. The state has a right to permit foreign insurance companies—that is, insurance companies incorporated under the laws of another state—to do business within its own boundaries, and it has an equal right to exclude such companies. In pursuance of this power the state can authorize its own official to examine an insurance company in another state, and if this official finds that the company is in such condition as to make it hazardous to the citizens of the state for it to do business within the state, then its license can be taken away.

Scope of State Supervision . .

Missouri has provided by law for an insurance commissioner, who licenses all insurance companies that do business in the state. Whenever he thinks the interests of the policyholders are jeopardized by any company continuing to do business in the state, the insurance commissioner can revoke the license of such company. The state in this manner exercises supervision over all of the insurance companies doing business within its limits, although these companies may be located, and most of them are located, in other states.

The funds of a mutual company constitute a fiduciary trust, held and administered for the sole use of those named as beneficiaries, many of whom are or will be widows and orphans; and many thousands of people have taken insurance in such companies because of this very fact and the assurance that every dollar of assets belongs to the policyholders. That any portion of the policyholder's premiums, or profits on premiums, should be diverted to political purposes or other uses not contemplated when the premiums were paid in, and not consistent with the avowed purposes of a life insurance organization, must be considered by all right-thinking people as a gross violation of a sacred trust.

It has been learned that life insurance companies of New York, controlling many hundreds of millions of dollars, have been attempting to dictate elections by contributing immense sums of money to political campaign committees, which the officials who contributed it took from the trust funds placed in their care, with no more authority than the treasurer of a state would have to use the public funds for that purpose. Worse than this is the startling revelation that three of the largest insurance companies have for years maintained a trust to control legislation of the states and to elect and defeat men for office according to the wishes of these companies.

Companies Practically Control Money Supply

In the testimony before the New York investigating committee it was established that a bureau was organized in 1895 to control legislation. One man was put in charge of the legislation of the United States and Canada. He would select the best men to handle legislation in each state. No vouchers were required of him except his requisition, and he was expected to deal with men who could produce results. It was his province to bring pressure to bear and prevent re-election of men who were not to the liking of the insurance magnates. There was paid him by one company alone in the last four and one-half years $45,000 as salary and $981,000 for various other purposes, of which the sum of $476,000 was for work as legislative agent.

Immensity of Insurance Boodle Fund

It will occasion no surprise to learn that one of the companies sent $2,500 for this purpose to Missouri four years ago. The legislative agent had absolute authority to draw on any branch office for any amount of money that he wanted, and was not required to give any information as to what the money would be used for. The checks showing how some of this money was spent were very prudently destroyed. To anyone familiar with legislation and the ways of those who seek to influence legislation by corrupt means it is manifest that the fund so raised was for the purpose of influencing legislators directly or indirectly.

With these companies in practical control of the money supply of the United States, having more power over the money market than the government itself, they could in the course of time have absolutely owned state legislatures, and their avarice might have gone further in securing the election or defeat of state and national officers. In the course of time, instead of having a government by the people and for the people, it would have been a government by the few, with wealth enough to purchase official favors. No man who loves his country can but be alarmed when he contemplates the possibilities if there had been no interruption in the operation and methods of some of these companies.

I do not believe any company whose officials divert funds without objection on the part of the directors, or that is willing to corrupt our legislators, should be allowed to do business in this state. They should do honest business or no business. If they cannot exist without surreptitious violations of law or bribery it is better for the people that they be excluded from the state entirely. The laws cannot be too strict and enforced too aggressively in regulating the conduct of those intrusted with such power as those have who handle the insurance millions, and they should be held to the same degree of accountability before the bar of justice as public officials are.

Breach of Trust is the Offense

It is not wealth about which the people complain; wealth in itself is a blessing but the abuse of wealth is a curse. It is not insurance companies the people object to, but the breaches of trust on the part of some of those running the insurance companies. The people understand these things, and know while some insurance people are crooked, it does not follow that all insurance men or all bankers are without honor. While demanding the exposure and punishment of insurance crooks and crooks of every other kind, the people of Ohio the other day elected a president of a life insurance company as governor of their state. He is an honest man, and eminently qualified and worthy of the place. This shows that the people are not so blinded by the exposures as to strike madly at any connected with the same line of business. They can discriminate between the good and the bad.—New York Independent.