

Abstracts of Additional Energy Minerals Session Papers

Growth of Coal Industry in British Columbia

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The occurrence of coal in British Columbia was first reported by early explorers in the foothills of the Northern Rocky Mountains in 1801. It was the discovery on Vancouver Island, however, which led to the first exploitation of coal in the province in the middle 19th century, continuing until 1967 to supply essentially a thermal market. Meanwhile coal had been discovered in the Crowsnest Pass in the Rocky Mountains in 1873, and was first produced at the turn of the century for coking purposes. Coal production has grown in this area to

become the sole supplier for today's export markets.

A notable increase has occurred in the production of coal since 1970 from 0.937 to 12.9 million tons (0.85 to 11.7 million metric tons) in 1981. Since the end of the moratorium on the issuance of coal licenses on February 10, 1978, a concentration of effort on exploration and development has taken place mainly in the southeast and northeast of British Columbia. Government policy was revised to meet present-day requirements with the passing of the Coal Act in 1974 and the Coal Act Regulations in 1979.

Based on the signing of contracts at the beginning of this decade, the projected production will increase to a total of about 27.5 million tons (25.0 million metric tons) in 1985 and possibly to 38.6 million tons (35.0 million metric tons) by 1990.

The coal measures are Cretaceous and Tertiary in age, the former is essentially coking whereas the latter is mainly thermal. The new mines will be in the Cretaceous measure in northeast and southeast British Columbia; some 85% of the production will be used for metallurgical purposes and the remaining 15% of oxidized coals will be used for thermal purposes.
