

Business Report

By HUGH ARMSTRONG, Business Editor

A Search For Chromite

With mining attention focused on copper developments in the Highland Valley area, a privately financed British Columbia company, at work on a chromite deposit, has been overlooked in the rush.

Eighteen miles northwest of Ashcroft, Western Chrome Mining Co. Ltd. (formed seven months ago) holds 19 claims at Scottie Creek, a further 20 claims at Ferguson Creek.

Through the years a number of chromite discoveries have been made in this province but due to lensing (a tendency for the ore to occur in small pockets) the deposits have been considered non-commercial. Western Chrome's management has set itself an ambitious goal: to make the company the first economically producing chrome mine in B.C.

Hadden W. Agnew, the company's managing director and geologist, says he expects to have a geophysical survey under way by the end of this month. The survey will be followed by a diamond drilling program. If results are up to expectations, says Agnew, "then we plan to convert



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to a public company."

The economics of production, as outlined by Agnew, are basically simple. Thus far indicated tonnage, including chromite exposed by surface showings and through underground work completed some years ago, totals 70,000 tons grading about 15 percent. The company calculates it has to double that figure in proven tonnage before considering installation of a mill. Grade of the ore should also come up to about 20 percent.

Chromite deposits are by no means new to the Ashcroft area. In fact, Western Chrome's holdings were first recorded about the turn of the century. An old minister of mines report had this to say: "I have to report the discovery of chromic iron ore, of which there is a very large deposit, on a tributary of Scottie Creek. . . . One of the samples contained 47.11 percent of chromium sesquioxide, another taken about 500 feet from the first contained 39.94 percent, while a third, which was taken about 1,200 feet from the first . . . contained 31.26 percent.

In those days there were several excellent reasons for putting off further development work. Low prevailing prices for chromite coupled with the expense involved in the long freight haul to Sault Ste. Marie (nearest smelter for chromite ore) were at the top of the list.

Good Chance For Success

Since the war chromite has enjoyed a steady but unspectacular price rise from about \$42 per ton to a current level just over \$50. More important, say Western Chrome officials, is the comparatively new ferro-chrome plant of Pacific North West Alloys Corporation (a subsidiary of Chromium Mining and Smelting of Sault Ste. Marie), near Spokane.

With a smelter 3,000 miles closer to the occurrence and increased prices for the product, says Agnew, we feel that both the Scottie Creek and Ferguson Creek deposits should get special attention.

If the company is able to follow through to production, he outlines two possibilities for transportation of concentrates to market. 1. Shipments from the properties could be made by means of semi-trailer truck travelling direct from the mine to the smelter, a distance of 432 miles. 2. They could be made by truck from the mine to Ashcroft, from there to the smelter by rail.

Current major sources of chromite supply for this continent are Turkey and Rhodesia and, says

Mr. Agnew, foreign ores are being imported into the U.S. at ever-increasing rates. Imports of chromite to the U.S. this year will surpass the 2,000,000-ton mark—while domestic production will be less than 150,000 tons. Today more than three-fifths of all chromite used in the U.S. goes into the manufacture of stainless steel. These figures add weight to Mr. Agnew's enthusiasm over future demand prospects.

"If we can find the ore," says Agnew, "we won't have any trouble marketing it. I think our chances are good for coming up with a commercial producer."

Directors of Western Chrome, in addition to Mr. Agnew, include Arthur Hewitson, president; Hugh Walter, secretary-treasurer, and Ernest Isaac, all of Vancouver.

The B.C. Chamber of Mines reports that the only other interest in chrome in this province is in the McDame Creek-Cassiar far north area, where Kelowna Explorations (until recently producing gold at Hedley) has been examining a prospect in association with "a large U.S. company."