

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE MINERAL ACT.

SOME OPINIONS FROM UP-COUNTRY DISTRICTS.

IN the December issue of the MINING RECORD an article was contributed by Mr. Carlyle, the Provincial Mineralogist, on the "Location of Mineral Claims," the writer pointing out that the regulations now governing the acquisition of mineral lands in the province were open to abuse and suggesting the advisability of certain radical changes in the law to check the too-common practice of "wild-cat" staking. This article attracted a good deal of attention at the time of its publication, and in the main its suggestions were, we believe, approved by those whose opinions are always entitled to respectful consideration, as representatives of the mining industry of the country.

To ascertain, however, the correctness of this assumption, the editor of the MINING RECORD addressed a number of leading mining men throughout the country asking them to express their views on the question. In compliance with this request we have received some thirty replies, the majority of which favoured the amendments as proposed by Mr. Carlyle. Of course we do not pretend to say that our correspondents' views represent in any way the opinions of a majority of the class of men engaged in prospecting in the country, but they may be regarded as a very useful guide thereunto nevertheless. In some cases we have been asked not to publish the letters sent, but with regard to the following no such stipulation was made: Mr. J. C. Gwillim, B.A., Sc., writes:

I am not in a position to give you much information concerning the light in which individual mining men see Mr. Carlyle's proposed amendment, nearly all my time at present being spent in the mountains. However, prospectors, and this is chiefly a camp of prospectors, are probably a majority in favour of the old law now in force. Still a fair number can see far enough to see their own injury by the present free and easy staking of mineral claims. The real prospector or born wanderer who discovers new camps will never be bound to stay and work his prospects. The greater number of amateur prospectors who are after the mineral for the sale of what there is in it to better their positions, do not oppose the proposed amendment I believe. The chief objection comes from those who are not bona fide mine makers. It is a pity to limit the pioneers of prospecting who are genuine prospectors and not mine makers by causing them to do development, which is out of their line of operation. Such men do not stake the country wholesale. However, these are in a minority and the proposed amendment will certainly benefit the camps as a whole. This appears to be the judgment of those who have most interest in the permanent prosperity of the districts. At present the real resources of large tracts of country are just as nature leaves them, except that they are tied up by men who have not confidence or means enough to prove them.

Mr. Howard West, A.R.S.M., of New Denver, comments:

Realizing the vast importance to the mining community of the proposed alteration in the laws relating to the location and recording of mineral claims, as mentioned in your letter, I have given the matter

careful consideration personally and have also been at some pains to ascertain the views on the subject of as many mining men as possible.

A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. While it would be impossible to give everybody's opinion, and invidious to single out names in particular, it appears to be universally recognized

that in the interests of the majority, some change is desirable in the laws as they stand at present. Considered comprehensively, the idea proposed is regarded as a step in the right direction and unquestionably meets with the approbation of the better class of miners and investors in this district. At present the details given anent the alteration are somewhat meagre and admit of so many possible changes that the majority of men are chary of expressing a decided opinion either way. It may be taken for granted, however, that an amendment along the lines proposed would be gladly welcomed by both capitalist and prospector, provided the clauses inserted were not of so rigorous a nature as to become burdensome to the pioneer without means. The chief objection which I have heard expressed from the standpoint of the prospector is that as the time available for prospecting is of short duration, in many places situated high up, amounting to not more than three or four months in the summer, it would be preferable to devote this entirely to prospecting for mineral, and leave development until no further advantage could be gained from the investigation of surface indications. This objection is, however, in my opinion rather paltry, because not only is a prospector liable to overload himself with speculative ventures in this way, but he undoubtedly requires the surface indications for preliminary exploitation, before he can ascertain whether it is worth recording or not. Another objection which has been urged in certain quarters, is the loss to the revenue which will result from the fact of so many worthless claims not being recorded as formerly. This again, I must say, appears to me a very shallow argument, as in the end a corresponding gain is bound to be observable from the more thorough development and consequent larger mineral production of the province.

In any case it is poor policy to allow fifty-two acres of mineral-bearing ground to be tied up for the mere cost of recording it.

Personally, I think with the majority that some change in the laws is not only eminently desirable, but imperative if all development is not to be brought to a standstill.

I have refrained from including other than general opinions expressed to me, as I found most of those I consulted were averse to giving a written statement or having their names brought prominently forward in the matter. Discussion on such a subject could be prolonged indefinitely, so I have made no attempt to give more than a few passing comments on the question as it now stands.

Mr. W. Thos. Newman, of Kamloops, replies:—

In answer to your request for opinion of Mr. Carlyle's proposed amendment to the mining law compelling "\$100 worth of work to be done in three months," I would say that one year ago as one of the council of the Kamloops Miners' Association I was deputed to draw up a memorial asking to have the law changed on certain points which was forwarded to the Government after discussion by

A KAMLOOPS VIEW.