work done. Any employer of labour is of course entitled to get his work done as cheaply as he can, but he is not entitled to use a law as a lever to effect its cheapening. If $3.50 per day was as much as capital could afford to pay under the old scale of hours then the new scale of hours should have brought about a sufficient reduction to leave the unit of work costing the same as it did under the old system. But no further reduction was legitimate. Here, then, was the Slocan dispute in a nutshell, the men were trying to use the law to extract a higher rate of pay per unit of work, the owners were attempting to enforce a lower rate. It was obvious to the least instructed human being outside the area of dispute that the ultimate result must be a compromise on a basis of $3.25 per shift of eight hours. But it took eight months before the parties to the dispute abandoned the ground they took up at the beginning. Eventually, however, an offer was made to the men of a permanent settlement on a basis of $3.25 for an eight-hour shift. The acceptance of this was complicated by the fact that a number of men were working at the old scale on development work in the mines. The union's answer to this offer was unsatisfactory for two reasons, first, in only accepting $3.25 for stoping work, retaining $3.50 as the scale for drifts, shafts and raises, and second, in endeavoring to impose conditions upon the mine owners regarding the employment of union labour only. The first of these stumbling blocks could probably have been got over. The class of work for which $3.50 was demanded was all such as could be contracted for by the mine owners, and in any case the stipulation was only entered in the reply to secure the adhesion of the men at present at work. So for as the union's reply was concerned it was broadly an acceptance of the $3.25 rate, or at least an abandonment of the principle of the same wage as before the passage of the law. The owners, having abandoned the attempt to enforce a $3.00 scale, and the men having given up the $3.50 scale as a matter of principle there was nothing in the wages question which did not admit of very easy adjustment. The union's demand, on the other hand, for the employment only of union labour was not only unfair to the employers but absolutely at variance with the principles of trades unionism itself. A master should have no more to do with whether a man is a member of a union or not than with whether he is a member of a church or not. Nor should an employer be used as a lever to enforce adhesion on the part of his men to a union. Unless a union can show enough of benefits to the working man to secure his voluntary adherence it is not entitled to his support. Union men may object to working with non-union men and may, if they choose, refuse to do so. But it is merely destructive of the union's usefulness to make the masters its recruiting officers. Upon this question the dispute in the Slocan goes on. The actual matter of the dispute has disappeared. Rancor and distrust alone keep it up. Because these undesirable qualities are at the bottom of the men's demand. Surely there is common sense enough left on both sides to perceive that it only requires a little mutual confidence, a little mutual concession, to settle matters upon a firm and lasting basis and to restore the promise of the silver-lead mining industry in this country.

There are many curious things in connection with the mining law of British Columbia and even more curious things in connection with the way it is carried out. Recently a regulation has been made in relation to the issue of Crown grants which is at once petty, useless and excessively vexatious. It appears there is a clause in the Act which provides that a certificate of improvements may be issued when $500 worth of work has been done and recorded. This has lately been interpreted to mean that a certificate of improvements may not be issued unless five separate assessments are duly recorded at $2.50 per head. Let us for example take a claim staked in June, 1899. During July $500 worth of work is done, the claim is duly surveyed and the description of the work put in. The new ruling requires that five separate records must be made before the certificate of improvements can be issued. Anything more paltry or idiotic could not well be conceived. It is too much exasperation to inflict upon claim owners and surveyors merely for the purpose of enriching the Government by $10.00. The work must be split up into five parts and a solemn record made upon each. Could anything be more nonsensical? The amount of delay, expense and trouble this has occasioned in several instances is very great. The resultant advantage, except the miserable fees, supposed to be payment for registration of title not taxes, is absolutely nothing. It is the trick of a second rate lawyer's office to expand a bill of costs. The whole matter originated in the office of the Nelson Gold Commissioner, Mr. J. A. Turner, upon the 22nd of May last.

A VEXATIOUS REGULATION

Application was made by a surveyor to the mining recorder at Nelson for a certificate of improvements upon a claim on which only three records of assessment had been filed. It was refused by the recorder acting under the instructions of the Gold Commissioner on that ground. A lengthy correspondence followed during which the Minister of Mines was appealed to. The following letter gives the ruling of the Department after consultation with the Attorney-General:—

"Department of Mines,
Victoria, 11th August, 1899.

"Sir:—I beg to acknowledge your letter of the 7th inst. with respect to your application for a certificate of improvements on the ———— mineral claim.

"I regret not having replied to your letter of the 23rd June earlier, but this question has been under the consideration of the Hon. the Attorney-General.

The clauses in the Mineral Act are somewhat ambiguous as to the recording of assessment work before Form 1 can be issued, but as I understand that it has not been customary in the majority of the mining divisions to require such records to be made I have decided to instruct the mining recorder at Nelson to issue a certificate of improvements without requiring these records to be made provided he is satisfied the work has been done and the other requirements of the Act complied with.

"I am, sir, your obedient servant,
"J. FRED HUME,
"Minister of Mines."

It might naturally have been expected that this would have settled the matter. But on September the 2nd the following letter was received from the mining recorder at Nelson:—

"Nelson, B.C., September 2nd, 1899.

"Sir:—Referring to your letter of the 29th ultimo, I would say that as the above claim remains the same