

With respect to the possibility of closing the mines, the law as it stands does not give us any special power, and if every mine in the province were to be closed by the lessees I do not see what we could at present do to prevent it. There was a time when we had a forfeiture clause in the law to meet cases of non-working, but we found that if it had been carried out to the letter we would have been all the time forfeiting leases. For a time there was a limited demand for coal. We could hardly force men to operate the mines when there was no market for the product ; and of late years the Legislature has not adhered to the forfeiture clause for non-working. Instead of that it has said that so long as a man pays royalty or rental he shall not have his lease forfeited. I am asked what would you do if the mines were closed ? I reply that as in the case of existing leases, we do not legislate to meet such a contingency as that, so, in regard to this lease, we do not make special legislation except in regard to payment of royalty. But if people should enter into a combination of the character talked of, and shut up our mines in order to give employment to men in a foreign country, I have no hesitation in saying that in the event of such a thing as that being done, any men who meet in this Legislature would have to regard it as an act of war, and that it would be their duty to protect the public interests at any cost. That statement I do not hesitate to make. But we do not anticipate such things with respect to the mines working to-day, and we do not see why we should deal differently with the enterprise proposed by Mr. Whitney.

A HEAVY PENALTY.

Close the mines ! The thing is ridiculous. Does anyone consider what the consequences would be ? Mr. Whitney would be compelled to pay the Government royalty on a quantity of coal equal to the total output of 1891. And this would not be royalty equal in amount to that paid in 1891, but royalty on the same number of tons at $12\frac{1}{2}$ cents per ton, that being the amount of royalty established by this lease. Let us consider for a moment how that works. There were taken out of the mines of Cape Breton county, within which Mr. Whitney is free to pursue his operations, in the year 1891, 982,392 tons of coal. If we apply the $12\frac{1}{2}$ cents per ton rate to that we find that for the privilege of closing up the mines of one county Mr. Whitney would have to pay the Government the sum of \$122,799 per annum. That is a pretty heavy penalty. Most people will say that when we have provided a fine of \$122,799 per annum as a penalty for