

Centre Star mines to show that there was not sufficient inducement in the business situation apart from the labour market to justify for one moment the course taken. Therefore when it and the coincident action taken by other companies are considered together it is clear that the cause in this case at least must be some factor in the situation common to all of the companies: and that factor is not to be found outside the labour situation.

When we turn to the Le Roi the excuse for closing down production is more absolutely flimsy than in the case of the War Eagle and Centre Star. The Le Roi it is true, as has been frequently pointed out in these columns, has been working under grievous disadvantages in having to hoist all its ore through the old crooked prospecting shaft. But these disadvantages are almost completely done away with, and will shortly have ceased to exist. The efficiency of the mine is vastly greater than it was when the Le Roi was pushing its output to the full extent and will soon be as perfect as can ever be hoped for. There was nothing to prevent the Le Roi from continuing its output except the possibility of saving perhaps 50 cents a ton on the cost of mining and hoisting during the next sixty or ninety days. The Le Roi is governed by what may be called stock-broking considerations. The market is at present dead, there is no hope of floating any of the other properties of the B. A. C. Consequently injury to the credit of that corporation of the governing influence of Canada's greatest mine might be partly compensated by a good showing made when times are better. And it may be expected that Mr. Whitaker Wright is planning a grand coup to come off next autumn when the market is better and the Le Roi meting is at hand. But again it is clear that the compensation is not sufficient were there not some ruling factor in the action of the management of the Le Roi not brought out in the reasons given for it, and that factor cannot be found except in the labour question. But as to the duration of this action on the part of the Le Roi Company it must not be forgotten that in order to earn a satisfactory dividend upon its enormous capital the Le Roi Company must produce ore at the rate of 20,000 tons a month. Nor is it easy to see how the B. A. C. can expect to successfully promote its other properties unless it justifies the promoters of the Le Roi by the increase and maintenance of its output to that amount. The Le Roi may close down production for a short time to affect the labour market but it cannot maintain that attitude in view of its financial exigencies and those of its parent company for any length of time. Of course there is another explanation of the action taken by the War Eagle, Centre Star and Le Roi companies, an explanation the acceptance of which is in fact the method by which the injury done to British Columbia and to the credit of the mines themselves will be effected. It is that the mines are out of ore, have been maintaining production during 1899 in excess of their capacity, have in fact, been vastly over-rated and vastly over-capitalized. However little this explanation may be justified by the facts it will have a wide currency and a very bad influence on the credit and prospects of mining in British Columbia until it has been demonstrated false. There are certain considerations, however, which although they may not affect the popular opinion on which the country depends for capital are nevertheless reassuring to those who will take the trouble to weigh them. The

War Eagle management maintains that there is plenty of ore in the mine, although it admits that the dead work necessary to extract that ore economically has fallen behind through defective power. The Le Roi management has always stated that shipments have during 1899 been carefully subordinated to development work and that reserves of ore have been accumulating. Into the quality of confidence engendered by these statements the personal equation enters, and they must be taken for what they are worth. But the closing of both mines at the same time would be a very remarkable coincidence if it were exhaustion that occasioned it. This argument is strengthened by the fact that another mine in a different part of the country acted upon the preconcerted signal also. While in the case of the Centre Star the ore in sight when it was purchased has not even begun to be exhausted. The plain conclusion is that the Rossland mines closed down to strengthen the hands of employers of labour throughout the country because they could do so at the present time without serious loss to themselves except the loss of credit which may be made up by increased production later on, but that they cannot maintain this attitude for any great length of time without the most serious consequences to themselves and to the mining industry. The Hall Mines, Ltd., is in an entirely different position. From the beginning this corporation has manifested all the vices and none of the virtues of the London management of mines. It has long been known that the mine was rapidly undergoing a process of exhaustion and being reduced similarly to a condition involving the doubtful expenditure of a large sum to restore it. It was galvanized into activity by Mr. Hardman's report. His suggestions apparently have not been carried out in full and it is very questionable whether it would have made a difference if they had. In this case the eight-hour law has really been a serious blow, not perhaps, directly as regards the mine at which under any circumstances work might have been suspended in consequence of the loss of ore-bodies and the depreciation in values; but the last remaining hope of the Hall Mines was in the operation of their smelter on Slocan ores, and the closing down of the Slocan mines has practically destroyed, at least for the present, these prospects.

If it is certain then that in their present action the mining companies have in view of the re-establishment of the equation on a fairer basis between demand and supply in the labour market, and the evidence is fairly conclusive—it is an interesting question whether their action will have the effect desired. There is nothing that will permanently affect the labour market except increase of population which increases the supply or decrease of production which reduces the demand. Now, of course, while the closing of the main mines in British Columbia must cause a temporary reduction in the demand for labour the mining districts are growing fast enough to speedily absorb many more men than have been released. Some of them will go to Cape Nome, some of them to Republic, some to Sumpter, some to Boundary, some to Slocan. They will be drained away from Rossland and Nelson but their presence in other parts of the great Northwest will hardly be felt. At the same time as a demonstration that the conditions of industry may become too burdensome upon the capitalist there may be a certain moral effect visible, that is to say the men as organized in unions may be