

the country because of local conditions. While the first Water Act of British Columbia was undoubtedly a valuable piece of legislation, we found that as the country grew, as irrigation systems were being developed, and as the water-power of the country was being called upon for industrial purposes, there must be amendments to the law as originally passed; and since the first Act was passed, upwards of eighteen years ago, we have passed two Acts in consolidation and in amendment of the original legislation. The last consolidation and amendment was passed by the House finally four weeks ago. In this last Act of Parliament for the conservation and administration of our water-power, we have tried to provide very simple and easily-enforced laws. Any gentlemen present of the legal fraternity, who have had to do with water rights, must understand how involved questions relating thereto must always be, especially in a new country where there has been rapid development and where there have been different governmental agencies in charge. In one generation, we had the Colonial Government, in another the Provincial, and another the Federal. These created complications and involved problems that are a little bit difficult at times to unravel satisfactorily to the public. On the whole, notwithstanding all of these difficulties, I think that our last Act is a fairly workable one and wise in its provisions, and that it will bring good results to the farmer, the lumberman and the captain of industry. What we propose to do with our water in British Columbia is this: in the first place, to prohibit corporations and individuals from filing water records unless it be their intention to make use of the water when taken over. We found that in the West and in other parts of the continent there was a disposition frequently on the part of private individuals and corporations to secure reserves of water-power, not with a view of immediate operation but in order to anticipate the future and to hold what is part of the natural wealth of the country on account of some speculative venture that may be deferred many years in its fruition. To overcome the development of any situation of this kind in British Columbia, the first policy of our Water Act is this: that if you stake off water, no matter who you are, you must be prepared within a reasonable time to use that water or to surrender it back to the people of the country. We have found that by the strict enforcement of a doctrine of this kind, a great deal of troublesome and mischievous staking of water records has been done away with, and only the legitimate and active man, who more particularly proposes to use the water, has been dealt with. Instead of files and records being encumbered with what you would call speculative applications, the question is now one of business and to get the best results. In the next place, in disposing of the water we have tried to arrange a schedule of fees and licenses—to which no one can object—that is fair to the public and fair to the operator. In the next place we have tried to devise regulations, so that the greatest efficiency may be derived from the water in use. If it be for the purpose of irrigation let every inch of water do its duty; and if it be for the development of power let us see that the works are so carried on as to get from the investment, and from the water conserved, the very best and most profitable results. We are still studying and watching closely the work of Australia, as well as of the United States of America, and other sections of the world where conservation is the first consideration. I cannot claim, while I have already pointed out that our laws are fairly satisfactory, that we ourselves are of the opinion that we have reached the era of perfection. We feel in British Columbia, gentlemen, that in this respect, as in respect to the lumber industry, there is a good deal left for us still to do and to learn, and that we can well afford the time and the expense of studying other provinces and other countries year after year so that we may be able to take advantage of all the latest developments at home and abroad. In a sentence, the policy of the Government is to control water as a provincial asset and retain it for the beneficent use of the people.

With respect to the mineral wealth of the country, I have had the good fortune for upwards of fourteen years now, with the exception perhaps of a term of twelve