

The Mining Record.

Vol. VII.

SEPTEMBER, 1900.

No. 9.

BRITISH COLUMBIA MINING RECORD

Devoted to the Mining Interests of British Columbia.

PUBLISHED BY

The Mining Record Limited Liability.

ADVERTISING RATES ON APPLICATION.

H. MORTIMER LAMB, Managing Editor.

London Office : 24 Coleman Street, E.C.
Montreal : Gray's Agency.
Denver, Col. : National Advertising Co
San Francisco : Dake's Agency.

SUBSCRIPTION TERMS:

Canada and the United States, one year - - \$2.00
Great Britain and Foreign, " " - - 2.50

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THE MONTH.

THE proposal of the Government to appoint a commission with a view to investigating the working of the mining law, has met, in certain quarters, with much strenuous objection and adverse criticism. This would be justified were the motives for holding such a commission such as are generally supposed.

NECESSARY TO THE AMENDMENTS MINERAL ACT.

We are, however, assured on very excellent authority that the Government has no intention of interfering with existing industrial conditions, nor would the much-vexed question of the "eight-hour law" be again opened. Moreover, neither the mine-owners nor their association are in any way responsible for the origination of the idea, which emanated entirely from the Department of Mines. In short, the object of the enquiry is to discover and remedy technical faults in the mining law, to suggest improvements and changes in regard to the Placer Act, which at present is far from a perfect measure, and to frame suitable clauses applicable to hydraulic mining leases wherein the present act is deficient. No serious objections can surely be raised to the suggestion if carried out upon these lines, provided always the men appointed to sit as commissioners are unbiased and properly qualified to deal with the subject in hand. It is the "if" in this case, however, that is all-important. Meanwhile a commission rightly composed would undoubtedly accomplish a great deal

more effectively a task that under ordinary circumstances would be entrusted to the Mining Committee of the House, many of whose members are ignorant of mining in the practical sense. In fact, the idiotic "tinkering" to which the mineral acts have been subjected may be largely attributed to the ignorance of the so-called Mining Committees in the past. The mining industry in this country has now been sufficiently long established to admit of a very fair opinion being formed of its requirements from a legislative standpoint and there should therefore be no occasion for the constant changes in the law that nearly every session of the local Legislature brings forth. But notwithstanding amendment following amendment, and repeal following repeal, the Act is still woefully inadequate and inapt in many important particulars. Hence the need of a thorough revision once and for all by a commission or board of practical men of experience and judgment. It would be impossible within the limits of a short article to point out the many advantageous improvements that could be made in both the acts relating to mining, but in view of recent occurrences one suggestion at least is permissible. The clauses in the Mineral Act relating to the observances imposed on the holder of un-Crown grant mineral properties are much too stringent. A case in point was the jumping of certain fractions adjoining the Velvet mine and belonging to the company operating the Velvet. Here is brought into strong relief the risks of grave injustice which follow from the various forfeitures of title which bestrew the Mineral Act. It does not appear just that mineral ground, undermined by many thousands of dollars' worth of work, in active operation and having upon it expensive mine buildings should be subject to the total risk of forfeitures by reason of failure to make what in such an instance is a purely conventional declaration of certain work done and the payment of a fee of \$2.50 for so doing. Were this an isolated instance it might be argued that some extraordinary negligence on the part of the company had taken place and that if people would not pay \$2.50 to preserve title to very valuable property they fully deserved to lose it. Which is very true, but unfortunately this is by no means an isolated case. Others have occurred and have had a bad effect on the interests of British Columbia through disgusting men who had invested large sums of money in this province. And this is the point of view from which the matter should be judged, not that it is the business of the Legislature to protect those too negligent to carry out the conditions under which mineral rights are held, but to protect the interests of the province by making these conditions as plain and simple as possible, and by minimizing the risk of forfeiture and its heavy losses as much as possible. Another recent instance was that in which \$20,000 was invested in