

viewed the Premier in order to ascertain what action, if any, the Government proposed taking in respect to the several important recommendations — suggesting the introduction of legislation of a remedial character — made by this organization during the past year. The deputation was received with courtesy, but beyond obtaining an assurance that it was the Government's intention to provide an alternative for the two per cent. tax, the interview was otherwise apparently resultless. On the subject of the crown-granting of placer claims, however, Mr. J. B. Hobson, one of the chief advocates of this measure who happened to be present, replying to an enquiry put by the Minister as to whether he would object to the imposition of a condition when title was issue requiring work equivalent to the expenditure of at least a hundred dollars to be prosecuted annually on each placer or hydraulic claim so granted, urged the desirability of providing some safeguard on these lines which would prevent large alluvial areas being acquired and held for purely

from the present leasing system. As is well known, we have yet in British Columbia a large extent of country to which access is difficult, but where the opportunities for mining appear sufficiently encouraging to warrant exploitation and possibly preliminary working. It might well happen in such a case that after a hydraulic mine had been opened up and equipped, that it was found to yield a very small, if indeed any, margin of profit under the disadvantageous conditions imposed by distance and inaccessibility, while with these disabilities removed, as they would be by, for example, the building of a railway, the mine could be made to pay a very fair return on the energy and capital expended. Under the present leasehold system the owner of such a mine is either obliged to continue working year after year at possibly a loss or else be penalised by the forfeiture of his property, others subsequently, when conditions are no longer arduous or hazardous, grasping the fruit of his toil. Surely then it should be only just and fair that so long as the



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speculative purposes. But to our mind the suggestion made by the Premier is absurd to a degree, for a conditional crown grant would not be a crown grant, while the expenditure of so small a sum as a hundred dollars per annum in the development of an hydraulic mine would certainly be of no advantage to anyone. Rather it would be a source of continual irritation and render title to placer ground less secure than at present. If we rigidly understand the contention raised by Mr. Hobson and other hydraulic mine operators, the chief objection to the leasing system now in force is that the Act limits the life of a lease to twenty years, and does not specifically state that upon the expiration of that period renewal shall be obtainable. Consequently title is not regarded as sufficiently stable to encourage outside capital to invest in this class of property. But there is also, we think, a still stronger reason in favour of crown grants or at least a change

principle of crown grants is admitted, and absolute titles are granted in the case of farm and mineral lands, that the rights of the hydraulic miner, he having afforded satisfactory proof of his *bona fides* by developing his property, should be also considered and respected. If crown grants to hydraulic ground are issued only after a sufficiently large expenditure has been made to prove their value, there need be no fear of advantage being taken of the change of system by speculators for their own purposes.

#### THE ZINC PROBLEM.

The establishment of a successful industry in zinc mining is of great importance to British Columbia. Zinc mining would, and to a certain extent already does, form a useful auxiliary to silver-lead mining, but its development presents serious, though not in-