

localities. It is sincerely to be hoped that the Provincial Government will awaken to the importance of, at least, contributing towards the maintenance of schools of mines in our principal mining centres—that at Rossland being particularly deserving of support.

The adjustment of the labour difficulty in the Slocan and Nelson divisions is apparently as far off as ever, and the outlook, at least as regards the prospect of a creditable silver lead output from West Kootenay this year is particularly gloomy and unsatisfactory. The present unfortunate state of affairs is directly due to the ill-advised and hasty action of the Provincial Legislature last session in the passage of the eight-hour law; yet, notwithstanding, the wage question might have been amicably settled on the lines of mutual concession, but for the obstinate and unreasonable stand assumed at the outset by the few agitators who regrettably occupy positions as leaders of organized labour in this country. The inconsistency, meanwhile, of Miners' Unions in the Slocan is sufficiently illustrated in the fact that members of these bodies are permitted to remain at work in the Ainsworth mines and in one only of the Nelson mines, when the wage paid is on the basis of three dollars per diem, while in the Sandon and—with the solitary exception referred to—Nelson mines, the men are called upon to go out on strike unless they are paid the additional fifty cents demanded by the union for an eight-hour day. This anomaly is explained on the ground that before the eight-hour law came into force, Ainsworth was a "three-dollar camp." But if this is correct, it merely puts the Union in a less advantageous light. Having approved of three dollars a day of ten hours in Ainsworth, it is now coolly admitted that men working eight hours under precisely similar conditions in a neighbouring camp are entitled to a higher wage for shorter hours! The Slocan miners, we are told, are standing out for the pay they have been accustomed to receive in the past. This, however, is far from true. The men have been offered and have refused a higher ratio of pay than that formerly established, but they demand more. One has only to apply the *reductio ad absurdum* to their argument to demonstrate the correctness of this assertion. Suppose, merely for the sake of example, a meddlesome and idiotic Legislature introduced a measure with a penal clause, regulating the hours of underground labour to four or two or none at all in the twenty-four, it would still, if we accepted the premises as in all seriousness set out by the Sandon Miners' Union, be the bounden duty of mine-owners to pay the men just as much for working "no hours" as they (the miners) might reasonably expect to get for "putting in" a good ten hours a day. And on such grounds as these organized labour in the Slocan is "on strike." All mining operations in this district would have been, ere this, entirely suspended but for the absolute necessity of keeping the workings in the principal Slocan mines in order in anticipation of the resumption of work when miners from the outside will be engaged to take the place of the "strikers."

It does not seem so long ago since the mining industry of Canada was threatened with disaster through the imposition of an export duty on ore, aimed chiefly, so far as the western part of the country was con-

cerned, at the establishment of a smelter to handle exclusively Canadian ores on United States territory at Northport. The experience which the country has had with the Northport smelter ought to place it beyond the power of the most prejudiced and least acquainted with the necessities of the industry to ever advocate such an expedient again. Had there been no Northport smelter there would have been no \$4.50 rate for freight and treatment, and consequently the tonnage and prospective tonnage of the Rossland district would have been less. The projectors of the Northport smelter were influenced by purely economic considerations in placing it where it is without reference to the 47th parallel. And a purely extraneous consideration like that of the existence of a boundary line, had it been used to prevent the erection of a smelter there, would just in so far as it discriminated against the most economic smelting have added to the cost of treatment, and accordingly reduced the tonnage of ore and diminished the returns on what was treated. This might have had the most far-reaching and damaging effects because the future of English capital in British Columbia depends very largely at the present time upon the returns Le Roi shareholders receive, and any cause injuring their interests would have injured British Columbia for an indefinite time. It is not safe to meddle with economic laws to obtain a temporary advantage. Much more is lost in presently unseen and unexpected directions.

It will now remain to be seen whether the British Columbia smelters will be benefitted to the degree anticipated by the re-admittance of lead, the product of Canadian mines and smelters, but refined in the United States, into this country free of duty imports. By an Order-in-Council the Dominion Government has granted this concession in consequence of a strong appeal from our principal lead smelting establishments; but, in our judgment, while the rebate of the duty may serve to counter-balance the advantage the American smelters have over their Canadian competitors in being enabled to sell in the New York market a proportion, or 10 per cent. of the Canadian lead they import, it is extremely doubtful whether, as is claimed, the renewal of the 15 per cent. Canadian import duty on lead bullion will to any appreciable extent assist in building up Canadian lead manufacturing, unless the present duties on manufactured lead are considerably increased; and until we are in a position to turn the entire product of our lead mines to manufacturing uses, our lead smelters must be prepared to face a keen competition from the States.

It will probably interest British Columbians to learn that the cylinders of the U.S. battleship *Oregon* were made from iron mined on Texada Island, and although so little is known locally concerning these iron deposits, it is, according to a Mr. Abraham Hal-sev, secretary of the Puget Sound Iron Company, who publishes a letter on the subject in *Iron and Steel*, a remarkably promising property, yielding after treatment a very superior charcoal iron, which sells in San Francisco at from \$25 to \$35 per ton. The Puget Sound Iron Company own 2,400 acres of land on the Island, and it is stated, have on this property five million tons of iron ore, assaying 68 per cent. of metallic iron in sight. The mine has, however, not been systematically worked for some time, and the present