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TAXING MINERAL RIGHTS.

The Toronto Globe vigorously insists that the present Government of Ontario should impose a tax upon mining rights as distinguished from surface rights, alleging, and with reason, that it is inimical to the public good that speculators should be privileged to hold such mining rights without attempting to utilize them, and without paying a cent in taxation. The Globe is right. But the Globe goes too far in blaming the present administration for this state of things. Present conditions were inherited from the late Government which was in power for over thirty years, and which did nothing to remedy the evil complained of. On the other hand, the Whitney Government has made a beginning in endeavouring to eliminate an insidious, because hidden, evil that is seriously injuring the progress of the mining industry of Ontario. By substituting for the old Algoma tax of one cent an acre, a levy of two cents per acre on all mining lands or mining rights in the unorganized territory a certain stimulant, though perhaps not a very energetic one, has been supplied to the exploitation of such properties. That a tax of even two cents an acre is sufficient to cause many owners of undeveloped lands to lay down their burden is apparent from the long list of lands recently published in the Ontario Gazette as having been forfeited for taxes in arrears.

The Government, of course, must go a step further and extend the tax to mining lands and mining rights in organized municipalities. In the mining regions of Eastern Ontario there are many cases where the mineral rights have been severed from the surface rights when the owners have parted with the latter. Nothing is done by the proprietor of the mineral rights to ascertain whether valuable minerals are or are not there; the surface owner has no incentive to prospect for them; the mineral rights are not taxed; and in the course of years the owner dies or moves away. Thus, no matter how promising a deposit may be brought to light, no one can obtain the legal right to work it.

Again, in the Southwestern peninsula the oil and gas rights reserved or claimed by the Canada Company in farmers' lands have been a fruitful source of trouble and controversy. Not being assessable by the municipal or provincial authorities, they cost the company nothing to carry; but when strikes were made in the vicinity the company was at once benefitted by the enterprise of other people. Roads and other improvements are required when discoveries are made on mining rights, as well as when made on mining lands; and the owners of mining rights should be obliged to contribute to the cost as well as to pay the same taxes as