

## BRITISH COLUMBIA DISCOURAGES CAPITAL.

There is one aspect of the proposed monopolistic and socialistic workmen's compensation legislation in British Columbia, which is not immediately obvious, but which those concerned in pushing this legislation would do well to bear in mind in the future interests of the Province. Insurance companies operating in the Province in the past, and among them the casualty companies, have performed services of considerable economic value. They have carefully built up large organisations which have given much employment, have occupied much space in office buildings and above all have invested very large amounts in securities originating in the Province or in some way or other connected with its necessary development. They have, in fact, been substantial contributors to the activity and development in British Columbia which have followed the introduction of capital into the Province, and in many cases, it may well be supposed the investment interests of the insurance companies in British Columbia have been and are considerably in excess of the proportion of insurance business to their whole business which British Columbia gives them.

### UNWARRANTED TREATMENT.

Undoubtedly, the companies would not have made these large investments of capital had they not had confidence that their interests as investors would be reasonably safeguarded by the Provincial Government. But now they find the Provincial Government calmly taking up a scheme of workmen's compensation, the effect of which is to freeze them out of this field altogether and to put on the scrap heap their organisation, to which many years' time and energy and considerable expenditures have been devoted. The companies would have, perhaps, little reason to complain of this, did the scheme of Government monopoly now put forward promise to give to the employers and workmen of the Province a better service than the companies are capable of rendering. But, in fact, there is no guarantee in the new scheme of any such superiority. Apart altogether from the fact that there is a considerable amount of doubt as to whether the proposed scheme is workable owing to the local circumstances of the Province, lack of variety of industries, and lack of statistics regarding the payrolls of those industries, there is yet no conclusive evidence from schemes of the same character which have been put into force elsewhere that they can be conducted so as to put the matter of workmen's compensation on a more satisfactory basis than when it is conducted by companies. Neither in security nor economy of administration has any superiority been proved, and the fact that these Government schemes do not sufficiently discriminate between the careful

and careless employer, whereas the companies give full credit to the careful and encourage the careless to become less careless, stamps them at once as inferior in the social service which they render.

### DISCOURAGING CAPITAL.

If this scheme goes through, the British Columbia legislators need not be surprised if those outside the Province controlling investment funds begin to view British Columbia with some degree of suspicion. Already they are painfully aware that some of the wildest financing that flourished during the palmy days of the last boom was connected in one way and another with British Columbia, and the fact that in some cases it was beyond the power of the Provincial Government to put a stop to the orgy of rotten flotations does not prevent a considerable shadow falling upon the Province in this connection. If to this there is to be added a case of what amounts to high-handed confiscation of vested interests against which no allegation as being against the public morality or well-being can be made, the effect upon capital outside the Province which would in the normal course seek investment there, cannot but be marked. Can British Columbia thus afford to discourage capital from the Province? It is obvious that she cannot, but that on the contrary she needs a very large amount, wisely placed, to enable the development of vast resources to be undertaken, and that a policy of encouragement and not discouragement is what is required in the best interests of the Province. The Coast legislators and British Columbians generally may well give serious thought to this aspect of the matter before committing themselves to a fancy scheme, which would be a rash experiment at best, and would re-act most unfavorably upon the Province in the present connection.

### COMMISSION OF CONSERVATION'S ANNUAL REPORT.

Even casual reference to the annual reports of the Commission of Conservation indicates the wide range of interests with which the Commission is concerned. In this respect, the Commission's sixth annual report, which has just been issued, is no exception. Well-informed discussions are given concerning Canada's resources in forests (and their preservation from fire), fields, mines and streams and important papers are included on technical education, agricultural instruction, providing sanctuaries for birds and housing and town planning.

In the conservation of forests steady progress has been made. Inventories of Canadian forests are being compiled by the Commission for the first time, and much has been done during the past year to lessen the number of forest fires along railway lines. With but few exceptions, the Commission has had the hearty support of the railways in this work. As a result, great forest areas undoubtedly have been saved from the ravages of fire.

The report is splendidly illustrated, and a carefully prepared index makes it of unusual value for reference purposes.