

Then again the cry is raised that, with the mines all under one control, the price of coal will be instantly raised and a heavy burden thus imposed on Canadian manufacturers and upon consumers generally. This objection again, it appears to us, is more or less of a "bogey." The same competition that regulates prices at present will still operate to prevent anything like extortion, under the new regime. It has been an "open secret" that all the Cape Breton mines have, for some seasons past, been acting in concert in regard to the prices of coal, both f.o.b. and delivered in Montreal and elsewhere. Is it not naturally to be supposed that they have got as much as they could safely ask for their coal during this period? The result of this wise policy on their part has not resulted in any hardship, but, on the contrary, in good to all concerned. Fair dividends have in most cases been paid upon the capital invested, fair wages paid to employees, and we are not aware that any consumer has complained of having been pinched by the combination that has thus practically existed. Can the new combination do much more than the old one did in this direction? It is well known that in Montreal and the St. Lawrence generally—whither the bulk of the coal from Great Britain is sent—prices cannot be forced beyond a certain point without at once letting in Scotch, English and American coals. So far from having the effect of raising prices in this market, the prospect is held out of very considerable reductions being made in the cost of transportation and landing of the coal and also in the price to be charged consumers, while Montreal may become a distributing point for coal for districts now altogether monopolised by our American cousins. These two objections are the most terror-striking of the numerous ones advanced, and, so far as we can judge, there is not much to them.

The further objection, adroitly used to cause a scare among the laboring classes, that it is the avowed intention of the new concern to take advantage of the most improved methods for saving labor and cheapening production, is not worthy of this nineteenth century in which we live, and is hardly worthy of notice. For one thing we strongly doubt its having the effect sought to be indicated, and anyway, the march of science and progress cannot be interrupted. It must and will go on, in spite of any interested clamour to the contrary. We are decidedly of the opinion that the quiet and self-respecting mining classes, now resident in Cape Breton, would welcome all the modern labor-saving machinery with more heartiness than they would the horde of Poles, Hungarians and Italians, with which the North Sydney *Herald* threatens them, presumably as the alternative for the said machinery.

In conclusion, while perhaps it is inevitable that individual interests will suffer here and there in a big deal of this nature, we cannot but think that on the whole, it is calculated to bring prosperity to Cape Breton and to give to the development of its mineral resources—coal being only one of them—an attention and prominence which it has hitherto lacked, and which it has been loudly calling for.

EN PASSANT.

When, at the last of the Session a year ago, clause 156 was unexpectedly added to the Mines and Minerals Act by the Government of Nova Scotia, those who had followed the legislation in connection with mining, at once remarked, "There is a nigger on the fence somewhere." Whereabouts they were in doubt but a short time, for very soon afterwards it began to be whispered options were being given of certain coal mines in Cape Breton, and that a deal to concentrate the mining interests in that country was in contemplation. While the clause in question at the time of its passage seemed to offer sufficient protection to the manipulators of the proposed deal it became evident to their cautious advisors that other safeguards to their title to the minerals in Nova Scotia were desirable, after the CANADIAN MINING REVIEW had so fully and clearly exposed the willingness of the Provincial Legislature to exercise their sovereign power and override prior obligations when impelled by pecuniary necessities. A power that could and did refuse to submit to the decision of a legal tribunal when lessees of mining areas complained that the sanctity of contracts made by them had been assailed by the arbitrary increase of "royalty" to be paid that Government during the currency of their leases. The lessees prayed that the good name of the Province of Nova Scotia should be cleared, by an appeal to the courts, of the charges of repudiation which was made on the passage of the Act increasing the rate of royalty, but this step the Government refused to sanction. Seeing this it became evident to the syndicate to ensure their title and to guard themselves from treatment similar to that which had befallen the capitalists who had been induced by the Legislature of 1866 to sink money in Nova Scotia mines, that they, as lessees, should have in the event of dispute with the Legislature of Nova Scotia as lessors an appeal to arbitration or the courts. For this purpose they applied for special legislation, which the Government was not only willing to grant, but even to call a special session of the Legislature to confer, provided the syndicate was willing to pay for it. The terms asked by the Government were a royalty per ton of twelve and a half cents and a minimum amount based on the output in 1891 of the mines over which they should assume control. These terms were accepted and the Government have confidently appealed to the Legislature to confirm them in the belief that the bargain is a good one for Nova Scotia.

The situation has made the coal mines of Nova Scotia the talking-stock of the continent, and the Opposition, who have of course objected to the Bill, have contended that the ultimate object of the syndicate is to play into the hands of American monopolists, and cut off competition from Cape Breton. A calm and independent consideration of the question leads us to conclude that the immediate effect of the com-

bination of the mines will be to modernize their equipment, and reduce the cost of transportation of coal to chief centres of consumption. That this will be accompanied by a moderate advance in the price of fuel to the local consumers, is most probable. But instead of a reduced output, as foretold by the Opposition, we expect to see an enlarged trade and an extension to points of late beyond the access of the independent but small operators. We have, however, to agree with the Opposition that Nova Scotia is, for present advantages, discounting the future at a high rate, to tie up such a property as the coal field of Cape Breton for so long a term as 119 years, is undoubtedly unwise. The possibilities of that limited field are very great, its position on the sea coast and the cheapness with which its large seams can be worked, give it exceptional advantages which should not be tied up for so long a time.

It is amusing to see how the opinion of our good friend Attorney-General Longley veres to the necessities of the occasion. On January 12th, 1892, he desired to show that all previously existing leases terminated in 1886, and that what the lessees called "renewed leases" were "new" leases, and came within the scope of the Legislature of that date for new leases, and he wrote: "When August 15th, 1886, arrived, as I understand it, the Government of Nova Scotia were at liberty to take exactly the same course in respect to the coal mines of Nova Scotia and in respect to coal royalties, as they were in a position to take prior to the lease of August 15th, 1826. The Act of 1885 also * * * was a notice * that the Province not only had a right to absolute control in the amounts of royalty imposed, but * * held itself at liberty to exercise this right whenever it chose."

On January 25th, 1893, eager to justify the granting of an absolute lease for 99 years, with an extension of 20 years to the Whitney Syndicate, he, on the floor of the House when speaking of the existing leases, said: "By virtue of these leases, which are practically for 80 years, because in each of them there is compulsory right of renewal." Leases that in January, 1892, he says, were absolutely "new" in 1886, he declares in January, 1893, to be for 80 years from 1866.

In connection with the petition of certain lessees for disallowance of the Mining Act of 1892, we would respectfully call the attention of the Department of Justice to this change in the opinion of the Attorney-General of Nova Scotia.

A new principle of electrolytic separation of metals is said to have been shown by Freudenberg. According to Le Blanc, in a solution the amount of the electric charge is identical for one and the same ion, and that, therefore, the point of decomposition of an electrolyte may be exactly determined. As this value differs very considerably for the various metals, the author thought it probable that their separation may be brought about by employing currents of different E.M.F.'s, and the experiments already made