

plish what it was intended to accomplish, namely, the active development of coal lands by companies with sufficient capital at their backs, but to bring about the tying up of coal lands for a small money consideration to the Government, by parties who desire to hold those lands for purely speculative purposes.

The first step in acquiring coal lands in British Columbia is to place a stake at the corner of each 640 acres which an individual or syndicate may wish to prospect over. This simple act gives a vested interest in the land so designated for 60 days, during which certain preparations have to be made to take out a prospecting licence. The prospecting licence costs \$50 for each section and is good for one year. That is to say, ten square miles of coal lands may be tied up for a year for a payment of \$500 and small incidental expenses. The law, however, goes further. At the end of the year the holders of the licences have only to prove to the satisfaction of the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works that they have looked for coal and have not found it, to have the licences renewed for another year at the cost of \$500. As the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works cannot be supposed to investigate the *bona fides* of every such application, we can only say that opening is left here for corruption on the part of subordinate officials, and for the evasion of the intention of the Act such as should not exist in any Provincial statute. We say this without making the remotest suggestion that in any particular instance it has been taken advantage of. This process of renewal may again be put in operation and the land tied up for a third year. This provision of the law seems to put a premium upon anything rather than the discovery and development of coal. It makes it possible to tie up coal lands for three years and two months, without any further definition of their area than a post to each square mile, and without any obligation on the part of the licensees except that of perfunctory prospecting, with a distinct inducement to speculative holders not to discover coal.

If the coal, however, is so patent that it cannot be overlooked, then the licence holders may apply for a lease. Their lease contains stringent provisions regarding continuous working, and so forth, and runs for five years at a rental of ten cents per acre. There is, however, no *locus standi* for any third party to attack this lease if its provisions are not carried out, and it is unlikely that the Government would do so unless the ten cents per acre was not forthcoming regularly. Certainly before the lease is issued the land must be surveyed. But the upshot of the whole matter is, that anyone desiring to speculate in coal lands, may tie them up for a period of eight years for a comparatively small monetary consideration, compared with the interest involved, and the more perfunctory discharge of certain duties. If, during this period, someone happens to come along who wishes to mine and use the coal why then, of course, the speculators fortune is made.

Such is the law regarding the discovery of coal in British Columbia except, indeed, that if eight years are

not long enough the land may then be tied up in perpetuity by purchase, subject to no taxation, except the Wild Land Tax of 25 cents an acre, unless the holder should be so foolish as to work the coal, when he would have to pay a royalty.

This law, like some others in British Columbia, seems to have been framed for the purpose of extracting a trumpery revenue from speculation in the resources of the Province, and without any regard for solid industrial development upon which alone prosperity and a satisfactory revenue depend.

It is not our business at the present time to suggest a specific change, but surely something could be devised a little less likely to attract a flock of land cormorants whose only occupation is to prey upon the capital which is willing, actually, to develop and work the resources of the Province.

From the report, published elsewhere in this issue, of the proceedings at the general meeting of the Tye Copper Company, Limited, held recently in London, it will be noticed that resolutions were passed authorising the directors to take steps to increase the capital of the company from £120,000 to £180,000, by a further issue of 60,000 shares of £1 each. It was not expected, however, that the new issue would be placed without considerable difficulty, and in anticipation of this the following clause was inserted in the Company's Articles of Association:

"Upon any offer of shares to the public for subscription, the company may pay a commission at a rate not exceeding 60 per cent. to any person in consideration of his subscribing, or agreeing to subscribe, whether absolutely or conditionally, for any shares in the company, or procuring, or agreeing to procure, subscriptions, whether absolute or conditional, for any shares in the company. In addition to or in lieu of such commission in cash, the company may give to any such person a commission of the same or less nominal amount as the shares subscribed, or agreed or procured to be subscribed, payable in shares or debentures or debenture stock of the company, wholly unpaid or credited as wholly or partly paid respectively. The power by this article conferred on the company may be exercised by the board."

That a concern such as the Tye Copper company should consider it necessary to offer so large a premium as 60 per cent. in order to make a market for its shares, indicates that the directors fully realise the fact that the present attitude of the British investing public towards British Columbia is apathetic, if not antagonistic, and consequently their proposal to attempt to raise additional money for an undertaking which, though unquestionably promising, is still largely speculative, at so inopportune a time, appears somewhat impolitic. The chairman, however, in his address explains that one of the principal objects for which it is necessary funds should be immediately provided, is that the company may exercise its option in the acquisition of adjoining property at Mount Sicker, which at this stage may be secured upon exceptionally advantageous terms. The purchase, without delay, of the areas referred to is also strongly recommended by the company's consulting engineer, Mr. Wm. Thompson, in his report, and as this advise is based largely on technical grounds having re-