

28th, 1899. All steps have been taken and papers deposited for certificate of improvements with the Mining Recorder. Now the Gold Commissioner says we must record another assessment, but cannot now record any of the \$2,000 worth of work done in 1896; therefore we must pay in \$100 or do another \$100 worth of work. In one group of eight claims this would mean to our clients doing \$1,800 worth of work over and above the \$500 per claim called for by the Act. I hear of one claim which has already been let go by default owing to this, and we have some which our clients must certainly lose if immediate favourable action is not taken. Cases vary so much that I would venture to ask that Gold Commissioners should be allowed to use their discretion in each case until Order-in-Council comes into force fully governing such cases, and that when such Order-in-Council is passed that it should allow cases in hand to go through according to the custom in force when all steps had been taken in accordance therewith. We have some very pressing cases before the Gold Commissioner here and I would beg of you to instruct him to deal with those according to the foregoing.

"I am, etc."

Mr. Hume's reply to this letter reads as follows:—

"Department of Mines,

"Victoria 29th January, 1900.

"Sir: I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 24th inst., asking that special instructions may be issued to the Gold Commissioners giving them a certain latitude of power in dealing with applications for certificates of improvements affected by the recent interpretation of the Act with respect to the necessity of recording five assessments before such certificate can be granted. I beg to inform you that having given my decision in this matter it is quite beyond my power now to authorize the Gold Commissioners to exercise their discretion in dealing with exceptional cases of hardship entailed by this decision. I would also point out to you that no alteration has been made in the law in this respect. My attention was called to a considerable diversity of opinion that existed as to how the law should be interpreted, and I instructed the Gold Commissioners accordingly as to my interpretation of it for their guidance.

"I am, sir, your obedient servant.

"I. FRED HUME."

We are glad, meanwhile, to be able to state that the Mining Committee of the Legislature has taken this matter up, and that an attempt will be made to remove the several ambiguities of the mining laws as they now appear on the Statutes.

Mr. W. R. MacInnis, the general freight agent of the Canadian Pacific Railway, with headquarters at Winnipeg, last month visited the Boundary Creek district with a view to summing up the situation as regards freight possibilities. Afterwards he informed the *Rossland Miner*, so that paper states, that the ore from the Boundary would not be sufficient to keep the Trail smelter in operation. It is to be presumed that this statement is not intended to be so far prospective as to cover, say, the year 1901, but even so it may be regarded as a significant commentary on the statements that certain mines are shipping ore, which from time to time appear in Boundary district newspapers and are as well either quoted from them by outside newspapers or are received by the latter from their district correspondents. The fact is the local news-

papers and correspondents too often lack candour; they are indefinite in their statements and so suggest an importance to which from a shipping point of view the Boundary Creek district has not yet attained. This custom does the district no good, since it improperly conveys the impression that there are mines shipping ore in quantity regularly when as yet, with perhaps the exception of the "B. C.," they are not. The sending out of two or three carloads of ore, or ten times that number, generally for test purposes, does not make a mine, from a sound mining standpoint, a "shipper." The mineral resources of the Boundary district are undoubtedly extensive and there is good reason to believe that development will prove them both permanent and profitable. Misleading statements of this description are, however, to be strongly deprecated under any circumstance. The chief need of the Boundary country continues to be development work, and until this shall have been done on a much larger scale than has yet been undertaken most of the talk of mines shipping will be talk only, unsupported by a steady output of ore sufficient to warrant it.

Meanwhile there are signs of large early development in Boundary Creek. One of these is the immediately intended incorporation of Phoenix, an important mine centre of that district. Another is the fact that the Granby smelter will begin ore roasting towards the close of this month and it is expected commence operations in full about the 15th of April.

Mr. Frank D. L. Smith, a travelling correspondent of the *Toronto World*, recently contributed an article to his paper on the "closing down" of certain mines in this province. We quote the following excerpt as illustrating this gentleman's style of comment:

"To cap the climax, a despatch from Rossland last night states:

"There is said to be a probability of still other instances of wholesale discharges and shuttings down before the middle of the present month."

"This last item may forecast the stopping of work by the Dominion Copper, Old Ironsides, Knob Hill, Mother Lode, Sunset and other companies who are operating on a large scale, and employing thousands of men in the Greenwood or Boundary Creek sections of British Columbia. The fact of the matter, therefore, to-day, is that over half of the big mines in the Coast province are now idle; that three of the reduction works which they supply with ore have followed suit, and that within a few days, if the mine-owners' programme is carried out to the full, the remaining big mines in the province, and the only other reduction plant will be in the same position."

So far as the Boundary Creek district is concerned Mr. Smith's "forecast" appears to have been as greatly exaggerated as was his statement that there are "thousands of men" employed by the mines in the Boundary Creek section. As Mr. Smith last year largely discounted his usefulness when "writing up" the mineral resources of the Boundary country by his eagerness to obtain from claim owners "honorariums" or whatever else negotiable "considerations" may be designated, it is just possible his "forecast" may have been prompted by an inspiration of a like nature, and be similarly open to suspicion. Be this as it may, this fact remains that while it is true the Dominion Copper Co. has discharged 35 men employed on its Brooklyn claim, in Phoenix Camp, "the Old Ironsides, Knob