
PETITION.

To the Honourable Members of Her Majesty's Government, in the House of Provincial Parliament, Victoria, B. C.

We, the undersigned, workmen employed in and around the metalliferous mines in the Rossland District, do hereby enter our protest against the petition sent to the Local Legislature by the mine owners, directors and promoters of British Columbia.

The mine owners' petition asserts that they "were not aware such legislation was being sought." Any person who has kept in touch with political matters in the West Kootenay Riding, knows such legislation was sought and was a plank in the political platform on which a portion of the candidates were elected to office.

They further declare this change in the law was not asked for by the miners and its enactment was as great a surprise to the miners as to the mine owners. All of which we denounce and resent as unjust and unfair argument, malicious and misleading falsehoods, and a slur and slander on the intelligence of Canadian labour and not calculated in any sense to assist the Government. Such statements and efforts are used and put forth with the ulterior motive of prejudicing the public mind against organized labour.

The labour trouble in the Slocan is not a question of hours but a question of wages, which has been reduced as low as good practical miners can be employed for, and we protest against the importation of labour from the United States into that district. A few facts would not be inappropriate at this time: The War Eagle Mining Company commenced operations in this Province in 1896, first by purchasing the Crown Point Claim. This proving a dead letter, to recompense themselves they bought the War Eagle for the sum of \$700,000, consolidating it with a Slocan property and the Crown Point. Neither of the latter have been worked for at least a year. The burden of these poor investments have all been saddled on the War Eagle, and notwithstanding the fact that they have spent over \$100,000 in permanent improvements, and have worked all machine miners eight hours, \$3.50 per shift, and shaft miners \$4 per shift, since 1896, which must have been done from an economical and business standpoint and not philanthropy; having during the past year been able to pay \$315,000 in dividends or 45 per cent. of the purchase price; yet in the face of these facts and figures they tell us now that the eight-hour law is bankrupting them.

Messrs. Gooderham and Blackstock paid for the Centre Star Mine \$2,000,000 in 1898. From October, at which time they commenced operations, they shipped no ore until the following May, and then only in limited quantities. From that time they have spent and contracted for at least \$80,000 improvements, yet they have just declared a dividend of \$30,000, or $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on the purchase price, and at the same time issues a statement that this dividend will be repeated monthly during the coming year. Since taking over the property before the passage of the eight-hour law, the said company worked all skilled miners eight hours and paid the standard wages, \$3.50 per shift.

The British America Corporation Company, owners of the LeRoi, and who did not receive control of the property until about fifteen months ago, have expended on their property, in improvements, many thousand dollars, still they have been able to pay dividends of \$250,000 during the past year. In the face of these figures, the mine owners can hardly say that the mines are not paying, and yet the management is afraid of pauperizing the shareholders through the gross injustice of the eight-hour law. In the face of these facts, still they say to the Government, that if the eight-hour law is not repealed they will go into the hands of a receiver. The said petition presented by the mine owners is misleading in many respects. Several mining companies appearing on the list, such as the Robert E. Lee Gold Mines, Limited, and Gopher Gold Mining Company, have not operated their mines since 1896, which demonstrates the absurdity of these mining companies being in any way affected by such legislation. We further contend, and can prove, over one-half the miners employed in this district were working eight hours before the passage of such legislation. Believing we can and do as much work under the eight-hour work-day as was previously accomplished under the ten-hour system and insist on maintaining the same, and in good faith, we attach our signatures to this petition, praying the Government to preserve the law in its entirety.

JOHN CORKILL,
SAMUEL FEELER,
ELDRED JEWELL,
W. H. BUDDLE,
JAMES HOOPER
and 687 others.

VICTORIA, B. C. :

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