
PETITION.

To the Honourable the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of British Columbia :

The petition of the undersigned, representatives of Incorporated Companies owning and operating metalliferous mines in the District of Kootenay, in the Province of British Columbia, humbly sheweth as follows:—

1. That the Companies represented by your petitioners are either incorporated under the laws of British Columbia or under the laws of Great Britain, and in the latter case are now registered and authorised to do business in the Province of British Columbia.

2. That the capital of the Companies represented by your petitioners aggregates many millions of dollars: that large sums of money have been invested by the said Companies in the purchase of mineral claims in the District of Kootenay, British Columbia, and further large sums in the development of such properties and in the purchase and erection of machinery for the working of their respective mines.

3. That a large number of mines owned by Companies doing business in the Slocan District have not been working for some months past, the operation of the same having ceased owing to the unsettled and unsatisfactory state of the labour market occasioned by the passing and enforcement of section 4, Chapter 49, Statutes of British Columbia, 62 Vict., entitled "An Act to Amend the Inspection of Metalliferous Mines Act," wherein it is provided that "No person shall be employed underground in any metalliferous mine for more than eight hours in every twenty-four hours."

4. That your petitioners were not aware that such legislation was being sought, and the first intimation they had of such legislation being passed was through the columns of the newspapers. And your petitioners humbly submit that legislation of such importance, vitally affecting such large vested interests, should not have been passed by the Legislature without an opportunity having been given to those interested of expressing their opinion upon the subject.

5. Your petitioners are satisfied that this change in the law was not asked for by the miners, and the enactment was as great a surprise to the miners as it was to the mine owners. No facts having been adduced to show that the miners working in the mines throughout the Kootenays complained against or suffered under the system in vogue prior to the passing of the Act, and in the absence of any petition or evidence before the Legislature that such a sweeping change in the law was asked for by those who are most interested in the change—namely, the miners—your petitioners submit that they are fully justified in asking that this law should be amended or repealed.

6. The passing of this legislation has had a very unsettling effect on the market; investors are timid, and capital that is seeking investment in the Kootenays is being withheld awaiting the action of the Legislature in the premises. That nothing could have been more promising than the outlook for large investment of English and Eastern Canadian capital in the Kootenays at the beginning of the year 1899, and we regret to say that the passing of the legislation in question has created so much distrust in the minds of the investing public that large sums of money that were ready for investment in mining operations in British Columbia have been withheld.

7. That up to the time of the passing of the law in question mine owners and others interested in mining in the Kootenays had reason to congratulate themselves upon the pleasant and profitable relationship that existed between the employer and employed, and it is the wish of

your petitioners that nothing should occur to disturb the harmony and peace existing between employer and employed. But speaking in the light of experience during the months that this law has been in operation your petitioners state as a fact that it will be impossible for all mine owners to continue to pay the rate of wages for eight hours of labour that they have been paying for ten hours; the expense of carrying on the work in the mines that are at present being operated is so great that the same has been burdensome and unremunerative. The necessary alternative will be a reduction of wages, and upon such reduction, speaking in the light of experience, your petitioners are afraid consequences will ensue that will greatly retard the progress of mining in the Kootenays.

8. Your petitioners desire to emphasize the fact that large sums of British and Eastern Canadian capital were invested in the mines and mineral claims throughout the Kootenays before the passing of the law in question, and your petitioners submit that it is unfair to those who invested their money that they should be discriminated against, as they have been, by the passing of the eight-hour law.

9. Your petitioners submit that the law complained of is unconstitutional, as the same is imposing an unwarrantable restriction upon the right to contract. That the privilege of contracting is both a liberty and a right which has been enjoyed by British subjects from time immemorial, and that any legislation, such as that complained of, which prevents the making of contracts, is an interference with the freedom of contracting between workmen and employer. And further, that the passing of the law in question is an unfair discrimination against the industry of metalliferous mining, and deprives persons employed in metalliferous mines of the privileges allowed to and enjoyed by other persons under like conditions in other mines.

Your petitioners, therefore, humbly submit that they are entitled to relief in the premises, and would ask that such action be taken by the Legislature of British Columbia as will grant a restoration of their rights by either the repeal or amendment of section 4, Chapter 49, Statutes of British Columbia, 62 Victoria, being "An Act to Amend the Inspection of Metalliferous Mines Act."

THE BRITISH COLUMBIA COPPER CO., LTD., FREDERIC KEFFER, <i>Mgr.</i>	OLD IRONSIDES MINING CO., LTD. Per WM. YOLEN WILLIAMS, <i>Supt.</i>
No. 7 MINING CO., - FREDERIC KEFFER, <i>Mgr.</i>	Knob Hill Gold Mining Co., LTD., WM. YOLEN WILLIAMS, <i>Supt.</i>
THE BUCKHORN GOLD AND COPPER CO, LTD., Per W. C. NOBLE, <i>Mgr.</i>	THE GRANBY CON. M. & S. Co., LTD., Per JNO. F. HEMENWAY, <i>Asst. Treas.</i>
THE GOLCONDA MINES, LTD., Per W. C. NOBLE, <i>Mgr.</i>	CITY OF PARIS G. M. Co., LTD., JAY P. GRAVES, <i>Mgr.</i>
COPPER KING, W. R. WILLIAMS, <i>Owner.</i>	MAJESTIC G. M. Co., LTD., JAY P. GRAVES, <i>Mgr.</i>
MACKENZIE, MANN & Co., F. ROBBINS, <i>Mgr.</i>	DOMINION COPPER Co., LTD., F. ROBBINS, <i>Mgr.</i>