

EDITORIAL

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COOPERATION

The willingness shown by the Philippine government to cooperate with the mining industry by the postponement of consideration of tax legislation until there has been time for careful study is a source of gratification. This spirit indicates that the administration recognizes the intricacies and hazards of mining and is willing to work with the mining operators in effecting the proper development of the mineral resources of the Commonwealth.

The government should continue in the same spirit by clearing up the long-standing legal arguments as to the rights of claim owners, by granting to the mining companies the rights to which they are clearly entitled by the mining laws in effect in the Philippines during American occupation and by the spirit and letter of the Constitution of the Commonwealth.

At one time there were nearly 110,000 mining claims recorded in the Islands, which presumably covered around one-twentieth of the entire area of the Philippines; of these, however, only 149 were patented up to November, 1935. During the past 18 months, however, several hundred so-called mining companies have fallen by the wayside, and

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THE MARSMAN MAGAZINE

Published each month for Marsman & Company, Inc., Marsman Building, Port Area, Manila, Philippines. P. O. Box 297

The magazine is sent to all stockholders of Marsman managed properties and to all staff members of the companies associated with the Marsman interests.

NOTE: *All ore values, bullion figures, etc., given in this magazine are expressed in pesos based on gold at \$35.00 an ounce and silver at the market price. Figures given in monthly reports are based on mine assays, and may differ to some extent from final mint or smelter returns.*

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE, ₱5 A YEAR.

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their claims have reverted to public domain because of abandonment or neglect of assessment work.

Hundreds of claims were staked in the Baguio district over areas which had previously been explored and abandoned by legitimate companies, claims were located in the Paracale district on top of one another, many of them in areas where there never was and never will be the slightest trace of mineralization. Recent testimony in a claim dispute case in Surigao showed that a group of claims were recorded covering an area which, according to the measurements of the locators, is several kilometers out at sea. All such claims were obviously worthless, and those who invested in them have since learned so to their sorrow.

At present around 30 gold properties are in production in the Islands, with around half a dozen more nearing that stage. The area worked by these companies consists of around 1,500 claims,

representing some 15,000 hectares. In most cases the property being worked was never greatly productive agriculturally, and therefore of no great use to anyone. On the contrary, the mining companies have entered barren and mountainous regions, with a poverty-stricken population, have created employment for thousands, and have, through heavy expenditures for payrolls and supplies, brought prosperity in the form of high living standards, excellent health conditions, and contentment to the workers.

The mining industry of the Philippines is on a sound basis, and is becoming more and more important in the economic set-up of the Commonwealth. Now is the time for the courts to clear up the long-standing dispute over the rights of legitimate locators, and add to the confidence in the administration which the postponement of tax legislation created.

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