

especial regard to economical and efficient working. As of all other fields of operation, it is essentially true of mining that there should be no unnecessary expenditure of labour or capital, such, for instance, as putting two men upon ground that could be efficiently worked by one, or the sinking of half a dozen shafts where one would be enough. Again, the *efficient* working of the Field should, as far as possible, be secured; for if a claim be in the first place, inefficiently worked, this alternative evil follows of necessity—either the ground must be worked twice over, and thus you have a wasteful expenditure of labour—or there remains an absolute loss of material wealth, inasmuch as much auriferous deposit which might profitably have been extracted remains in the ground. It is well, too, to point out here, both to those who, on the one hand, imagine that to mere monied Companies we must look to the development of the Gold Fields, and to those who, on the other hand, are of opinion that Companies are to be rigidly excluded from the Gold Fields, as tending to undue monopoly, and to an unfair interference with the rights of the individual digger, that in our unanimous opinion we cannot look to Companies for the thorough development of the auriferous wealth of the Colony, but that for such development we must mainly rely upon the labouring miner. Fair encouragement should no doubt be given to Companies for the expenditure of capital; but Companies, merely as such, with unlimited power of hiring labour, have not the power thoroughly to develop the Fields: the miner, as distinguished from the hired labourer, can alone do so; but is only by raising the digger to the position of the miner that you can expect this development. And the condition of the digger can be so beneficially affected only by giving him large and liberal areas for his working,—by giving him great encouragement for prospecting,—by giving him secure tenure of his holding; in fine, by putting him by these means upon a footing to make equal terms with the monied capitalists, or, in other words, putting labour, energy, skill, and enterprise, upon fair terms with the capital of Companies.

ESTABLISHMENT OF SEPARATE AND DISTINCT DEPARTMENT OF MINES UNDER RESPONSIBLE MINISTER.

11. The great and growing importance of the mining interest, and the very wide-spread feeling of dissatisfaction at the imperfect nature of the departmental machinery at head-quarters having charge of this interest, induced your Commissioners to make very special and searching enquiries into the question of the expediency of the establishment of a separate and distinct Department of Mines, with or without a responsible Minister at its head; and the result of our enquiries has forced upon us the conviction that the establishment of such a Department is urgently required. Some little difference of opinion existed amongst us as to the appointment of a special Minister of Mines, it being thought by the President of the Commission that, in the present and proximately probable state of political affairs, it may be matter for grave doubt whether it is desirable to have any additional Ministerial Departments; but, although not without some little misgivings upon the same score, he has concurred in the opinion entertained by his colleagues,—and we now unanimously recommend that not only should a distinct Department of Mines be forthwith established, but also that a Minister of Mines be placed at the head of that Department. This Minister should of course be a political officer directly responsible to Parliament; and his main duties, in especial reference to gold-mining, should be, to borrow the words of the Victorian Commissioners of 1862, “to watch over the internal management of the Gold Fields, their legislative requirements, and the efficient administration of their laws.”

Necessity for
establishing
Department of
Mines.

12. We have pointedly particularised that these last should be the chief duties of the Minister, in especial reference to *gold-mining*; but it must be remembered that the mineral resources of the Colony are by no means confined to auriferous deposits. It is established beyond question that New South Wales is rich in silver, copper, iron, tin, lead, and coal—mineral wealth practically inexhaustible, and a source of prosperity which we think should no longer be regarded with the indifference and neglect which successive Governments have evinced for it.

Great mineral
wealth of the
Colony inde-
pendently of
gold.

13. In addition to the ministerial head of the Department of Mines, we are unanimously and emphatically of opinion that there should be a permanent officer, second only to the Minister, and invested with large and responsible duties. Such officer to be called Secretary for Mines, and to be clothed with functions at least as effective as those possessed by the Under Secretaries of any of the existing Departments. Mining is the only interest in the Colony of anything like the same importance that is without some such officer; and we would desire shortly to advert to some of the present defects arising from the absence of such a man. Mining departmental administration is supposed at present to be centered in the Lands Office. We do not hesitate to say, without casting the slightest reflection on the highly meritorious officers of that Department, that there is no one in the Office who has even a rudimentary knowledge of practical mining in its technical details, or of the principles which should guide the administration of mining affairs; consequently there is not, nor has there been, any officer who is responsible for the Regulations which have been issued. And with regard to the Regulations in existence at the time your Commissioners were engaged in taking evidence, it is a fact adduced in evidence before us, that not one of the officials, either in the Office in Sydney or on the Gold Fields, knew at all from what source those Regulations emanated. The three Gold Commissioners themselves—Mr. Johnson, Mr. Buchanan, and Mr. Clarke—not only declined to be in any way responsible for them, but have expressed their disapproval of them; while Mr. Rich, whom we examined as being the gentleman in the Sydney Office who had had most to do with gold-mining departmental affairs for some years, also stated that he knew nothing whatever

Permanent
Secretary for
Mines.