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THE CANADIAN IRON-ORE INDUSTRY

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Steel is unquestionably the most important single metal used in an industrial society and iron ore, the principal source of the metal, is therefore a most important ore. The importance of the iron-ore industry to Canada can be gauged by the fact that the country was in 1971 the world's fifth-largest producer of iron ore, with 43.3 million tons⁽¹⁾, valued at \$560 million, being shipped; it was the world's second-largest exporter, with 33.6 million tons, valued at \$413 million, exported. The industry supplied some four-fifths of the iron-ore needs of Canada's iron-and-steel industry, the world's twelfth largest.

The industry had humble beginnings in Canada, only 6.5 million tons of ore being produced during the period 1886 to 1924, with no production for the next 14 years. Between 1939 and 1948, almost all Canada's iron-ore production came from mines in Ontario but, after Newfoundland joined Confederation, shipments from mines in that province were included in Canadian figures for the first time. Since production was resumed in Ontario in 1939, the industry has grown rapidly, particularly since shipments began from mines in the Quebec-Labrador Trough area, in 1954 and especially since 1960.

A total of 17 companies with 18 operations produced iron ore and by-product iron ore in 1971. Ten operations were in Ontario, four in British Columbia, two in Quebec, two in Newfoundland (Labrador) and one in Quebec-Labrador. The leading province in production was Newfoundland (Labrador) with 20 million tons, followed by Quebec with ten million, Ontario with 11 million and British Columbia with about two million.

International Trade

The U.S.S.R., most East European countries and Spain were the only major exceptions in an otherwise world-wide decrease in crude-steel production in 1971 as total output fell by 16 million net tons, or by about 2.4 per cent,

(1) The long or gross ton (2,240 pounds) is used throughout unless otherwise stated.

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