

NICKEL DEPOSITS OF ONTARIO.

For some time past the Government of Ontario have had under consideration the question of withdrawing from sale or lease all or part of the known unsold nickel lands in the Province, and offering them to the Imperial Government to provide war material for the manufacture of armor plate and British guns. The Order-in-Council of November 11, withdrawing a belt of land ten miles wide on each side of the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway, so as to reserve the minerals, especially the nickel ores, is the first step towards making possible British ownership of the nickel of Ontario which is now absolutely controlled by the International Nickel Trust, a corporation having its members and headquarters in the United States. The time has clearly arrived when the nickel of Ontario must no longer find its way into the iron walls of British battleships and guns through the medium of a foreign trust, who sell it at their own price without competition. It is conceivable that at a critical time when the Empire most required it, supplies of this necessary material might not be available.

The nickel supply of the world is at the present time derived from two sources. The most important is the Sudbury district of this Province; the other in New Caledonia, a French penal settlement or colony situated in the Southern Pacific Ocean, about four days' sail from Sydney, New South Wales. Consequently, amongst the great powers, France and Great Britain are at present the only ones possessing nickel to any appreciable extent for use in their respective armaments, and in modern armaments nickel is now indispensable, and increasingly so. There is reason to believe that if the British Imperial authorities fall in with Canada's desire to conserve the nickel of Ontario for Imperial uses, France will at once take similar steps in regard to the nickel supply from New Caledonia.

If France and Great Britain act on similar lines in regard to the nickel supply in their territories respectively, it would have the effect of putting the United States International Nickel Trust out of business except on less favored terms than the British or French producer. For Great Britain it would be quite unnecessary for its Government to go into the mining and manufacture of nickel in Ontario. All that will be necessary would be for the British Admiralty and War Office, in making any contracts, to stipulate in the specifications that nickel used under the contracts must be of British origin and entirely of British production, provided it could be obtained at certain specified rates. One of the managing directors of Krupps, the celebrated German gun manufacturers, is credited with the statement that "there was no limit to the extent to which nickel could be used, if the consumer could get it at about half the present price," the wholesale price then being probably about forty cents per pound. An American metallurgist of high scientific attainments, and also a practical smelter, laughed on having repeated to him the foregoing remark. With a thorough

knowledge of the Sudbury nickel belt he gave it as his positive opinion that nickel could be mined, smelted, refined and put on the market for twenty cents a pound, out of which there would be about ten cents a pound profit to the producer, provided the volume of trade were large enough.

This offer of Ontario nickel to the Imperial Government for naval and military uses, as the Toronto News observes, is not a new thing, as such an offer was made in 1891, when Lord Knutsford was Secretary of State for the Colonies. That was before the era of Imperialism that set in at the Colonial Office with the advent of Mr. Chamberlain. The offer made then was civilly declined, probably with but scant consideration. A renewal of the offer to-day will receive far different consideration from the leaders of an Administration that, especially at the present time, is most anxious to cultivate Canadian sympathy and support. Of course, Ontario, as a Province, cannot make an offer to the Imperial Government direct, but must transmit it through the Secretary of State of the Dominion Government. That was done in the case of the 1891 offer, but as the matter was one of great urgency, the then Attorney-General of the Province, the late Sir Oliver Mowat, addressed a letter to the Colonial Secretary, Lord Knutsford, direct, telling him of the despatch that would reach him through the Dominion Government and the Governor-General, and asking that a confidential cable reply be sent giving some indication as to the views of the Imperial Government on the proposition suggested. The Order-in-Council of April 7, 1891, adopted a lengthy report from the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Hon. Arthur S. Hardy, to the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council, and ordered its transmission to the Imperial Government. There have been many changes in the nickel situation since Mr. Hardy's report was made in 1891, but some of it may be usefully re-printed at the present time.

Mr. Hardy begins his report by calling attention to the fact that "already numerous locations have been acquired from the Province by mining corporations and private individuals, and some progress has been made in development." Incidentally, Mr. Hardy gives the credit for first publicly calling attention to the value of nickel when alloyed with iron and steel, to Mr. James Riley, manager of the Glasgow Steel Works, who read a paper on the subject at a meeting of the Iron and Steel Institute in May, 1889. After referring to various tests and to the interest taken by Germany, France and the United States in the new alloy as material for the military engineer, the report states:

The superiority of nickel steel armor plate over the Cornwall armor plate was so clearly demonstrated at the tests made under the direction of the United States Secretary of the Navy six months ago, that Congress has unhesitatingly transferred nickel to the free list, besides placing \$1,000,000 at the disposal of the Navy Department to purchase a supply of the metal to be used in the manufacture of armor plates for the new battleships now in course of construction. The whole

of the nickel ore required for this purpose has been supplied by the Ontario mines, and the result of experiments already made would appear to justify the expectation that the demand will increase and continue.

In view, therefore, of the important national uses to which nickel is being applied by foreign governments, and of the consequent demand for mining locations here, it has occurred to the undersigned that an arrangement might be made under which the government of the United Kingdom should acquire a substantial, possibly a controlling interest, in the nickel deposits of this province.

After stating that the area over which the nickel ore had been found up to 1891 was seventy miles in length and fifty in breadth, and within this limit, known as the "Sudbury district," the Province had sold about 135,000 acres, Mr. Hardy says:

Should the Imperial Government be inclined to entertain a proposition for negotiations, evidence may be furnished of the existence of nickel-bearing ore in economic quantities throughout the district referred to, from scientific surveys and the reports of explorers, with a view to entering into arrangements (with the assent of the Legislature) for granting to the Imperial Government conjointly with the Province, or in such other manner as may be agreed upon, control over part or all of the nickel ore in the Crown Lands of the district, subject to such arrangements for the establishment in Ontario of nickel-steel works or manufactures, the development of the mines, and considerations of royalty on the ore, as may be mutually agreed upon, and as shall be approved by the Legislature.

It is part of the scheme of the government that the iron ores of the Province, of which there are large deposits within easy reach of railway transport, should be utilized with the nickel ore in the production of nickel-steel; and for this purpose a sufficient quantity of iron lands belonging to the Province could be set apart and held by the two Governments, subject to the same arrangements as might be agreed to respecting the nickel lands, and with a like provision for payment to the Province of royalty upon the ores.

As a colony of Great Britain and a portion of the British Empire, our Province is concerned in all things which contribute to the greatness and stability of the parent State; and recognizing especially how much depends on the maintenance of her historic position as a naval power, it would be agreeable to our people that the legislature should further in any way consistent with its obligations to the Province, and the people of the Province, the means whereby that position may be most effectually safeguarded and preserved.

The British Government took some considerable time to consider the matter and then came a despatch from Lord Knutsford to Lord Stanley of Preston, then Governor-General. The despatch enclosed a letter from the Admiralty, which, omitting the formal parts, was as follows:

I am to acquaint you for the informa-