

To bind these far-separated patches of settlement, oases in a desert of wilds, into a nation was the object of the union known as Confederation. But a nation can live only as it trades what it draws from the soil. Naturally, the isolated provinces looked for trade to the United States, just across an invisible boundary. It seemed absurd that the Canadian provinces should try to trade with each other, a thousand miles apart, rather than with the United States, a stone's throw from the door of each province. But the United States erected a tariff wall that Canada could not climb. The struggling Dominion was thrown solely on herself, and set about the giant task of linking the provinces together, building railroads from Atlantic to Pacific, canals from tide water to the Great Lakes. In actual cash this cost Canada four hundred million dollars, not counting land grants and private subscriptions for stock, which would bring up the cost of binding the provinces together to a billion. This was a staggering burden for a country with smaller population than Greater New York — a burden as big as Japan and Russia assumed for their war; but, like war, the expenditure was a fight for national existence. Without the railroads and canals, the provinces could not have been bound together into a nation.

These were Canada's pioneer days, when she was spending more than she was earning, when she bound herself down to grinding poverty and big risks and hard tasks. It was a long pull, and a hard pull; but it was a pull altogether. That was Canada's seed time; this is her harvest. That was her night work, when she toiled, while other nations slept; now is the awakening, when the world sees what she was doing. Railroad man, farmer, miner, manufacturer, all had the same struggle, the big outlay of labor and money at first, the big risk and no profit, the long period of waiting.

Canada was laying her foundations of yesterday for the superstructure of prosperity to-day and to-morrow — the New Empire.

When one surveys the country as a whole, the facts are so big they are bewildering.