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MR. PLUMMER ON THE OUTLOOK.

(HALIFAX HERALD)

The manufacture of iron and steel has been carried on during the year just closing under conditions not wholly satisfactory, owing chiefly to the labor troubles, which have marred the business of many districts. It has suffered also from delays in the completion of extensions which are under way, due largely to scarcity of suitable labor. But production has been increased; there has been a good market for all that could be produced, and while the great waste which strikes have directly and indirectly caused to the community is greatly to be regretted, present conditions are good, and we can look forward with confidence to the future.

Increased returns from the great coal, iron and steel industries, and activity in general business are reasonably assured. The naval plans of the government at Ottawa are not unlikely to bring new business to our shores, for there are no places so well adapted for the building of steel ships as those we have on our Nova Scotia coasts. In my own opinion two places stand out pre-eminently in offering the greatest measure of advantage for this business. It might be invidious to mention them, but I may go so far as to say that one—I had almost said the other—is Halifax.

The iron and steel industries of Nova Scotia, in their modern form, have had a comparatively short period of existence. The work of the Nova Scotia Steel and Coal company and its predecessors dates back to early days, but the modern development in both the great Nova Scotia companies has scarcely finished its first decade, and while much has been accomplished, very much remains to be done.

Letting the past go, what have we today in the way of iron and steel industries in the province?

The capacity of the blast furnaces now in existence is about 400,000 tons per annum, which will be increased on the completion of the work now under way to nearly 600,000 tons.

At Sydney, and in connection with the works of the Nova Scotia company at North Sydney, there are steel plants capable of converting into steel all the pig iron made at these places, and rolling mills of various kinds capable of turning the steel into finished material.

All this has been done in the last ten years. When one considers the work necessary to prepare for the mining, transportation and handling of ore, of limestone, of coal and other materials, for the manufacture of coke, and the hundred and

one subsidiary operations, the showing is, as we say in Nova Scotia, "not too bad," but in my opinion we are merely at the beginning of things.

What the construction and operation of these plants has done for Nova Scotia it is hard to say, for their effect on the great coal mining industry of the province is not easy to gauge. It may, however, be estimated that for every ton of finished steel shipped, three to four tons of coal have been used directly and a good deal indirectly. In the larger plants much of the cost of ore is expended outside Canada, but that is one of the smallest items in the count. Allowing for that, and counting in the amounts expended in completing the more highly finished products, it is safe to estimate that for every ton of steel manufactured in Nova Scotia over \$2100 per ton goes to the men employed in the steel and coal plants, and from them into all departments of business.

This is not all. Part of the cost of steel and coal is the expenditure for materials and supplies, bought very largely in Nova Scotia. With a steel output of approximately 400,000 tons per annum, consuming directly and indirectly 1,200,000 to 1,500,000 tons of coal, the money thus put into circulation is a very large sum.

A word on the question of iron. We meet very often with complaints that the Nova Scotia furnaces are doing little to develop Nova Scotia ore production. But the amount of labor which goes into the ore is but a trifling proportion of that expended on the steel, and the fact that it is not yet practicable to get ore in Nova Scotia at a reasonable cost is clear. In the early days there was a much larger bounty on pig from Canadian ores than that made from ores from Newfoundland, but even with that advantage no use was made.

The time may come when bodies of iron ore worthy of the costly equipment essential to economical mining and transportation will be opened up at home; meantime we should be thankful that a source of supply is open to us which enables us to meet the competition of the western plants.

A few words on coal may be fitly added, for the mining of coal is closely allied to the manufacture of iron, and steel, and in the main carried on by the same interests. The past history of the coal industry is well known to your readers. The present condition is not altogether satisfactory, for causes which I believe will be eliminated before very long. It may be frankly stated that the cost of mining coal has reached too high a point and that this is in some measure due to the waste of labor and expense through irregular working. If we are to hold our markets these conditions must disappear.