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**A CANADIAN IRON INDUSTRY—SHALL WE HAVE IT?**

The time seems to have arrived when it is to be decided if we are or are not to have a Canadian iron industry; whether the policy of the Government will be to extend such guarantees and safeguards as will put us in a position and condition to meet the demands of the country for pig iron; or if all idea of propagating such an industry is to be abandoned, leaving us entirely dependent upon other countries for that most important and necessary article. Thus far the matter seems to be in a nebulous condition, the wildest and most contradictory theories and propositions being advanced from different quarters, none of them presenting any practical solution of the question, but all of them going to indicate that the Government is being brought face to face with a condition which they cannot escape if they would, and should not if they could.

It goes without contradiction that Canada would be immensely benefitted by the establishment of an industry which would make us commercially independent of the rest of the world as far as pig iron is concerned. We know that we

possess practically inexhaustible supplies of ores of excellent quality and very accessible; and that the necessary fuel is within easy reach. We know that, were suitable conditions established, we would in a few years be able to meet not only all the demands for pig iron, but also for many of the products of pig iron—mild steel, puddled bars, and probably such forms of finished iron as girders, ship and boiler plate, and even steel rails. This would, undoubtedly, be a good thing for Canada; but like all other good things it will cost us something to produce the situation. Are we ready to pay the cost? This is the question which now agitates the country.

We recognize the fact that iron is the basis of national prosperity. It is possible for Canada to be prosperous even if never a ton of pig iron is made in the country. We may attain a certain altitude of prosperity even if every bar of iron we use, and if every form of iron which enters into our internal economy were made in distant lands. We know that thus far we have never made a steel rail, but that we have produced a sheet of boiler plate, or turned out angle and structural iron, and yet we have large buildings, and steamships and steam boilers, and railway and highway bridges, all constructed in whole or in part of the products of foreign mills. And so on through the whole list of articles made in whole or in part of iron or steel; and while we have and use them we know that their production in Canada is practically impossible because we do not have the foundation—the pig iron—of our own production with which to make them.

Our wise men are not blind to this situation, nor have they been. Ever since the adoption of the National Policy it has been the desire of the Government to so frame our tariff laws as to build up an iron industry in Canada; and the failure of the industry to materialize has been not because we have not enjoyed the natural advantages necessary to be present, but because the precise arrangement of the tariff necessary to bring about the desired result was not hit upon and adopted. The failure to produce a pig iron industry of large and adequate proportions, however, did not prevent the development of many other industries in which iron is an important integer. Thus we have extensive works for the production of agricultural implements, wood and iron working machinery, harvesting tools, etc., very much of the iron consumed in them being brought from other countries. It is true that under certain favorable circumstances which do not generally exist, we have some furnaces which produce most excellent pig iron, and one establishment, at least, which produces as good mild steel as can be made in any similar works anywhere. But these are exceptions to the rule. Under the influences of the favorable conditions alluded to, and the operations of the tariff and bounty policies of the Government, these establishments are in a fairly prosperous condition; but the fact that we have no extensive and sufficient iron industry is proof that the policy of the Government in this direction has not been sufficiently comprehensive and far-reaching.

Under the ægis of protection many of our industries have accomplished just what the promoters of the National Policy desired that they should accomplish—increase in importance and capacity until they should occupy the home market to the virtual exclusion of foreign products of similar character;