

It changed Saskatchewan. Gradually diversifying after years of being shackled to a beef-and-wheat economy, the province all at once had a huge new industry—and it has kept on growing. IMC now has two mines worth some \$4,800,000 a year in taxes and royalties alone. More, IMC's dramatic success sparked the flagging hopes of others: eight more companies are now developing their holdings. Four mines are open, six others projected. As for Canada, from the IMC mines alone, the 100-billion-dollar potash pile contributes 60 million dollars a year toward squaring up the nation's balance of trade, and adds another 45 million dollars in sorely needed railroad revenues.

But nowhere have the gains of the great potash strike been more dramatically reflected than in the once-drowsing rural crossroads of Esterhazy. IMC's two mines now employ 4000 persons, with a \$9 million annual payroll. Esterhazy's population, 750 when the mine site was cleared, now is five times that. Its young people, once forced elsewhere to find work, now have opportunity at home.

One day I rode down the hoist into the mine with Alec Scott. We dropped at a stomach-fretting 22 miles an hour (the ore itself comes up twice as fast), whizzing past the iron tubbing that fends off the cantankerous Blairmore. When we reached bottom, our headlamps cast thin shafts of light out into one of the seemingly endless "drifts"—22-foot-wide tunnels hewn from the translucent, weirdly beautiful crystal ore. Alongside us clanked a conveyor belt, carrying ore to the shaft base.

We hitched a ride on a rubber-tired diesel truck to a distant mine face. Here a monstrous,

clawing 52-ton "continuous miner" bit into the glistening wall of ore in five-ton gulps, its massive rotating heads cutting a seven-foot circle with every pass, chewing out 19 inches a minute and throwing powder, chunk and boulder back into a shuttle truck, from which it would be loaded onto a conveyor belt. From the IMC mines these \$250,000 continuous miners now send 3½ million tons of potash to market each year.

We followed a load of ore to the mill. In less than an hour, it was crushed, dumped into a slurry where the basic potash was separated from the salts, dried, screened and transported to one of four giant storage bins. It would not be there long: so intense is the worldwide demand for potash that IMC's people work three shifts around the clock, and 140 loaded freight cars leave every day.

"This is a particularly satisfying product to sell," IMC's president Thomas M. Ware said to me. "It can mean the end of hunger on this earth." That's not mere sales talk. From the dawn of civilization, crop failures have doomed men to starvation. Hunger has often been the final goad to violence and rebellion. And no country ever attained the standards of an industrialized society while the bulk of its men and women were bound to the desperate daily struggle to produce food.

As the world's greatest source of a vital fertilizer ingredient that can help to increase the yield of a mineral-starved acre many times over, Saskatchewan's potash pile is thus more than just an exciting and profitable discovery. It is a prime new weapon in the fight for abundance and human security.

Food from the soil and food for the soil. The head-works of a potash mine in the midst of Canada's wheat country.

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