

The substantial growth of the mining industry in Canada during the post-war years is established by the summary statistics of Table 6. From 1922 to 1929—a period of slowly declining prices—the output increased by 72 p.c., capital investment by 76 p.c., employment by 53 p.c., and the salaries and wages paid by 65 p.c. Progress was most rapid in the metallic mineral industries, where the expansion in net production amounted to 170 p.c. with proportionate increases in capital and employment. The period from 1922 to 1929 was marked by a rising cycle of activity in construction. This is reflected in the expansion of industries engaged in the production of clay products and other structural materials. The output of this group of industries increased by 47 p.c. during the period, while, within the group, progress was much greater in industries producing cement, gravel and stone than in the clay products industries. The group of non-metallic mineral industries remained relatively stationary in contrast to the other two main groups during this period of rapid expansion. This may be attributed to the fact that coal mining is the predominant industry in the non-metallic group and, under increasing competition from oil fuels and hydro-electric power, did not participate in the general industrial expansion of the period.

Since 1929 the mining industry in Canada has been affected by the world-wide economic disturbances which have so greatly influenced industries in all countries. It is instructive to trace the effects of the depression in the industrial statistics of mining. The course of the depression was accompanied by a very drastic decline in the prices of most of the principal metals, especially copper, lead, zinc and silver. Indeed, while prices of these metals at the beginning of 1935 have risen somewhat above their low points, they are still at a low level. In the case of gold, on the other hand, since 1931 the price has risen to a level about 69 p.c. above that formerly prevailing. Under the influence of these price changes, the value of the net production of the metallic mineral industries declined by 27 p.c. from 1929 to 1932, with a decline of 29 p.c. in employees, 30 p.c. in salaries and wages paid and 24 p.c. in the value of fuel and electricity used. But, since the higher price for gold stimulated its production and the readjustment of costs stabilized the base metal industries, metal production in 1933 showed a good recovery, the net sales in 1933 being only 8 p.c. below those of 1929, employees 18 p.c. below, salaries and wages 25 p.c. below, and the cost of fuel and electricity 8 p.c. above 1929. While industrial statistics for 1934 are not yet available, the production figures for this latest year indicate a metal production valued at about 18 p.c. more than the former peak year 1929. Doubtless in reaching this new record the influence of gold is important through increased production, higher value, and its association with other metals, especially copper. However, in 1934, not only gold but nickel, copper, lead and zinc were all produced in Canada in larger quantities than ever before, from which it must be concluded that the producers of these metals are able to operate profitably at even the low prices prevailing for copper, lead and zinc, and that a return to former average price levels would find the Canadian metal-mining industry firmly established on a much larger scale than ever before.

Among the non-metallic industries the most important is coal mining. During the depression, the demand for coal declined owing to reduced requirements for fuel in industrial and transportation activities. Similarly the demand for asbestos and gypsum has been affected by the lower level of industrial and construction operations. Salt has been an exception to the general rule, as its production has been well maintained throughout. Indeed, in 1932 and 1933 the net sales of the salt-