

operated at about 50% capacity, treating a total of 219,391 tons of ore. Operations were suspended temporarily at the Eldorado complex during a strike which lasted from late August to early November.

Eldorado Nuclear Limited, Canada's only producer of refined uranium products, with facilities at Port Hope, Ont., expanded its uranium hexafluoride ( $UF_6$ ) plant to 2,750 tons of U (in the form of  $UF_6$ ) in 1971. Eldorado, which is one of five major world refiners, was successful in obtaining new contracts in 1971 for conversion of uranium to  $UF_6$ .

The new uranium project being undertaken by Gulf Minerals Canada Limited at Rabbit Lake, in the Wollaston Lake area of northern Saskatchewan, was in the early stages of pre-production in 1971. This open pit development is expected to be completed by late 1974 with first production early in 1975.

Uranium exploration activity declined further in 1971 and almost no new activity was reported. In eastern Canada, British Newfoundland Exploration Limited (Brinex) continued its efforts in the Makkovik-Kaipokok area of Labrador. Some very minor activity was evident in the Maritimes and also in the Mont-Laurier area of Quebec. Activity in the Elliot Lake - Agnew Lake region of Ontario was significantly reduced. In western Canada, Mokta (Canada) Ltée continued its efforts in the Carswell dome area of northern Saskatchewan and Gulf Minerals carried on with its program along the Wollaston Lake trend. No activity of significance was reported from the Uranium City area of Saskatchewan. Some continued activity was reported in the Northwest Territories, principally in the Baker Lake region and on the Simpson Islands in the eastern arm of Great Slave Lake.

Although the uranium industry suffers in the near-term from over-supply, the long-term outlook remains bright as orders for nuclear generating capacity continue to increase throughout the world. A surge in nuclear plant orders was particularly evident in 1971, notably in the United States but also to a lesser extent in western Europe and Japan. As a result of the increasing number of these nuclear power plants scheduled to come on stream in the future, markets for uranium should develop that will require substantially increased uranium production capacity in Canada by the end of this decade.

**Platinum metals.** Production of platinum metals in 1971, which amounted to 475,169 oz.t. valued at \$39,821,616, was 7,259 oz.t. and \$3,734,981 less than in 1970. Canadian output is a by-product of nickel refining. When nickel matte is electrolytically refined, the platinoids — platinum, palladium, rhodium, ruthenium, iridium and osmium — are precipitated in the electrolytic tanks as a sludge. The sludge is purified and sent to refineries in Britain and the United States for recovery of the platinum metals. During 1971, major Canadian nickel producers reduced nickel output in an attempt to balance supply with demand with the result that Canadian platinoid production also declined.

About half of the world's output of platinum metals is from the Soviet Union and most of the remainder is produced in Canada and the Republic of South Africa. Platinum has been in short supply throughout the world in recent years but this condition changed to one of over-supply in 1970-71. Potential new end uses for platinum and palladium include catalysts for emission control systems in automobiles. If this market materializes, world demand for these two metals should show renewed growth and world production should increase as well.

**Cobalt.** Cobalt production in 1971 was 4,323,318 lb. valued at \$9,429,564 compared with 4,561,213 lb. valued at \$10,207,366 in 1970. Canada is one of the world's major cobalt-producing countries, recovering over 95% of its cobalt as a by-product of nickel-copper ores and the remainder from silver-cobalt ores. Approximately 64% of the world (excluding the Soviet bloc) current annual supply of some 24,000 tons is produced, as a by-product of copper recovery, in the Republic of Zaïre; the other principal cobalt producing countries are Zambia, Finland and Morocco.

**Columbium (niobium) and tantalum.** Columbium pentoxide ( $Cb_2O_5$ ) production in concentrates in 1971 was 2,332,663 lb. valued at \$2,296,962 compared with 4,694,239 lb. valued at \$4,819,951 in 1970. St. Lawrence Columbium and Metals Corporation, with a mine near Oka, Que., is the only Canadian producer of columbium and one of two in the world that produce columbium in pyrochlore concentrates as a primary product; the other is a larger producer with a mine near Araxa in Brazil. St. Lawrence Columbium cut back production early in 1971 because of customers' accumulated stocks of columbium concentrates and ferro-columbium. Production was suspended on June 24 and resumed at less than capacity on