THE SOUTH’S POSITION IN THE MINERAL INDUSTRY

By Dr. R. S. POOR

Professor of Geology, Birmingham-Southern College, Birmingham, Alabama

The mineral industry has been ranked equal in financial importance to transportation, being exceeded only by agricultural pursuits. The world average for the five years preceding 1931 was $12,000,000,000 worth of minerals annually. In 1931 the figure dropped to $8,000,000,000.

In the United States the average annual mineral production has averaged $5,500,000,000 up to 1931, or a little less than 50 per cent. of the world’s total. In 1931 it dropped to $3,250,000,000.

To produce $6,000,000,000 worth of minerals in the United States (and we have produced $6,500,000,000 worth) means that 2,000,000 workers were directly employed and 10,000,000 indirectly. If we include refining and fabrication valued at $15,000,000,000 we add 10,000,000 more workers. Distribution valued at $20,000,000,000 adds 5,000,000 more, and we find at last that in so-called good times the mineral industry accounts for the livelihood of 27,000,000 workers, who handle a total of $41,000,000,000 worth of mineral goods. In the 40 years from 1886 to 1926 the per capita mineral production in the United States increased from $7.78 to $33.94, or seven-fold. It dropped back to $47 in 1929 and $39 in 1930.

The last quarter of a century has seen most of this development. It is estimated that more fuel and more metals have been used during the last twenty-five years than during all the time that went before.2

What has been the South’s contribution to this interest?