

THE DOMINION BUREAU OF STATISTICS.

The Dominion Bureau of Statistics was set up by statute in 1918 as a central statistical department for Canada; (8-9 Geo. V, c. 43.—“An Act respecting the Dominion Bureau of Statistics”). The Act was a consolidation of all previous statistical legislation (the Census Act, the General Statistics Act, the Railway Statistics Act, etc.), with important additions.

The Act was based on the report of a Commission on Statistics appointed in 1912, which criticized severely the omissions, inequalities, overlappings and lack of coherence and common purpose in Canadian official statistics, and recommended (a) a series of specific reforms and enlargements, and (b) a policy of statistical co-ordination for the Dominion under central direction.¹

In 1915, following the recommendations of this report, the office of Dominion Statistician was created, and the next two years were devoted to the drafting in detail of the various plans involved, which included a monograph on each important field of statistics, covering the statistical work of all the Departments. A memorandum entitled “A National System of Statistics for Canada,” was printed for the Cabinet prior to the final adoption of these plans. Subsequently the Bureau was created in 1918.

Creation of the Bureau.

The Bureau was constituted by the transfer or absorption by Orders in Council of the following work and branches: (1) The Census and Statistics Office (covering the census, and also agriculture, general manufactures and criminal justice); (2) Fisheries Statistics, (3) Mining Statistics, (4) Forestry Statistics, (5) Dairying and Fruit Statistics, (6) Water and Electric Power Statistics, (7) The Railways and Canals Statistical Branch of the Department of Railways and Canals, (8) the Trade Statistical Branch (exports and imports), (9) Grain Trade Statistics, (10) Live Stock Statistics, and (11) Prices Statistics (in part). In addition four new branches were erected, dealing respectively with Public Finance, Internal Trade, Vital Statistics and Education. Subsequently the statistical activities of the Fuel Controller and of the Board of Commerce were absorbed. Modifications of the Bankruptcy, Public Health, and Railway Acts and of the Regulation on franking privileges were also made.

¹Other official bodies had drawn equally pointed attention to the deficiencies in Canadian statistics. These statistics had previously consisted of reports brought out independently by Dominion and Provincial Departments on subjects within their respective interests. The B.N.A. Act had assigned “statistics” to the Dominion Government, implying that statistics are a national concern and that it is the duty of the Dominion Government, while not precluding provincial statistics, to organize the field from a national standpoint. Previously to 1916 that duty had not been undertaken. For a brief account of Dominion and Provincial statistical activities from the earliest times up to 1912, see “First Annual Report of the Dominion Statistician, 1919,” pp. 9-14, which sums up as follows: “A considerable but desultory body of statistics had grown into existence, in certain sections good work was being done—in others not good. There was much duplication and at the same time numerous gaps at crucial points, finally there was a total lack of general plan. The embarrassment which this caused with the growth of the country and the increasing complexity of its problems will be appreciated.”