

CHAPTER XIX.—LABOUR AND WAGES.¹

PART 1.—LABOUR.

Section 1.—Occupations of the People.

The occupations of the people of a country are at any given time mainly determined by its natural resources and the stage which has been reached in their development. The outstanding characteristics of Canada are its enormous extent, its immense natural resources and the comparatively slight development of these, only the resources of the southern portions being as yet at all well-known. The developed areas fall into four economic units with quite distinct physical characteristics: first, the Maritime Provinces, where lands, forests, mines and fisheries are the chief natural resources; secondly, Ontario and Quebec, with lands, forests, mines and abundant water power for manufacturing purposes; thirdly, the Prairie Provinces, where the land is the chief natural resource, except in Alberta which contains immense coal deposits; lastly, British Columbia, with fisheries, forests and mines, where agriculture plays a comparatively minor part. When the country as a whole is considered, the immense fertile areas of arable land must be considered as its chief natural resource, but in different parts of its vast expanse other resources predominate and give the key to the chief occupations of the people.

In Canada, as in other new countries, the labouring population (using the term in its widest sense) bears a larger proportion to the total than is the case in older civilizations where there exists more realized wealth. In addition to our native-born workers, great numbers of young males and smaller numbers of females, who have nothing to sell but their personal services, have, in the past, immigrated from older countries to Canada to find here a better market for their labour. Thus both the sex distribution and the age distribution of the population of Canada is rendered somewhat abnormal, an unusually large percentage of that population being of working age and of the male sex—that is, of the sex which is most generally gainfully employed.²

The Labour Force of Canada in 1931.—In 1931, out of a total population in the nine provinces of 8,159,095, 10 years of age and over (including 3,668 of unstated ages), 3,924,533 or 48·1 p.c. were gainfully employed, as compared with 3,173,169 or 47·5 p.c. in 1921, 2,723,634 or 49·4 p.c. in 1911, 43·9 p.c. in 1901 and 44·5 p.c. in 1891.

Male Labour in 1931.—Of the male population in the nine provinces 10 years of age and over in 1931 of 4,252,537, 3,258,614 or 76·6 p.c. were gainfully employed, as compared with 2,683,019 or 77·5 p.c. in 1921, 2,358,813 or 79·5 p.c. in 1911, 74·2 p.c. in 1901 and 76·6 p.c. in 1891. Thus the latest census shows a decrease in the proportion of males gainfully employed, a decrease probably due partly to a later age at school leaving, partly to a change in the age distribution of the male population 10 years of age and over, a larger percentage of the total being at relatively

¹The sections and subsections of this chapter, with the exceptions of Sections 1, 3, 7 and Section 9, Subsection 3, all of Part I, have been revised by, or under the direction of, H. H. Ward, Deputy Minister, Department of Labour, Ottawa. The information in Section 3, Part I, has been obtained through the courtesy of the Provincial Departments of Labour or Bureaus of Labour, and that in Section 7, Part I, has been revised by the chairmen of the respective provincial Workmen's Compensation Boards.

²On the sex distribution of the population, see pp. 109-111; on the age distribution, see pp. 114-116.