

## Section 9.—Census of Merchandising and Service Establishments.\*

A comprehensive survey of business carried on by trading and service establishments was undertaken for the first time in connection with the Seventh Decennial Census in 1931. A partial census of trading establishments only had been made in 1924, but the results of this initial survey, while indicative of the extent of domestic trade, suffered from the incompleteness of the canvass made at that time. The Census of Merchandising and Service Establishments, 1931, covered not only the operations of retail and wholesale merchandising establishments in 1930, but also those of service establishments, including hotels. In addition, information was collected to show the manner in which goods manufactured in Canada are distributed. Preliminary figures for the census were issued in several series of mimeographed bulletins, while the final results are being published in a series of provincial reports.

An outgrowth of the Census of Merchandising and Service Establishments has been an annual survey of retail and wholesale trade based on the reports of all chain stores and of the larger independent stores having an annual turnover of \$30,000 or more in 1930 (\$20,000 or more in the case of food stores or country general stores). While the annual figures for merchandising are not based on such a comprehensive survey as that made in connection with the decennial census, and are thus *estimates based on a sample of from two-thirds to 70 p.c. of the whole field*, they provide the most reliable indicators available of recent trends in merchandise trade.

**Retail Merchandise Trade, 1930-1933.**—On the basis of the results of the annual Census of Merchandising and Service Establishments, to which reference has already been made, the retail merchandise trade in Canada during the year 1933 is estimated at \$1,776,884,000, compared with \$2,755,569,900 in 1930. (See Table 31.) While the decline in all lines of trade combined was thus 35.5 p.c., some kinds of business show much heavier losses than others. How much of the decrease is due to the decline in prices and how much to a reduction in the physical volume of trade, it is not possible to say. The food and general merchandise groups show the least loss in dollar sales, while the largest declines are shown for the retail establishments specializing in building materials and furniture and household goods.

Among the provinces, Saskatchewan has suffered the most severe decline in business, followed by Alberta and British Columbia. If the year-to-year changes in the volume of business are compared, it will be found that in the Prairie Provinces the greatest decline during the period took place in 1931, while for all other provinces the year 1932 shows the largest losses. In all provinces the decline in 1933 was less than in either 1931 or 1932.

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