

CHAPTER XXI.—PUBLIC FINANCE

CONSPECTUS

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Section 1.—Comparative Statistics of Public Finance

In planning this chapter of the Year Book, the idea of publishing combined statistics of finance for all Governments of Canada—Dominion, Provincial and Municipal—has been behind such revisions that have been made in recent issues, especially those of provincial finance. This aim, however, has not been easy of accomplishment. Until relatively recently, it was impossible to get even provincial finance figures on a reasonably comparable basis because of the fact that wide variation exists in the matter of fiscal years,* and because of lack of uniformity in accounting methods. In the editions of the Canada Year Book from 1936 to 1939, following a conference on provincial finance called by the Finance Branch of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, figures on a revised classification basis were published. These were the most comparable composite figures of provincial finance available up to that time. The research organization set up for the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations did much work in consolidating public finance statistics and in analysing the results for the purposes of that Commission; in Book III of the Report of the Royal Commission, published in 1940, an elaborate series of tables is given showing the consolidated results of the studies made. In Appendix VI of the 1940 edition of the Year Book, the combined balance sheets for all Governments and the current account revenues and expenditures of all Governments for the years 1913, 1921, 1926, 1930 and 1937 are given. At that time machinery was not provided for continuing the series. Nevertheless, the usefulness of the work that had been done was so apparent that it was decided to continue the series for the Dominion-Provincial Conference planned for January, 1941, and the task was placed under the supervision of the Public Accounts Advisor of that Committee. In the report "Comparative Statistics of Public Finance, 1936-40", the results of this work are given publicity. They are even more detailed than those published in the Report of the Royal Commission and carry a stage further the valuable analyses inaugurated at that time. The Finance Branch of the

* The fiscal years of the provinces are as follows: P.E.I., Dec. 31; N.S., Sept. 30 prior to 1935 and Nov. 30 thereafter; N.B., Oct. 31; Que., June 30; Ont., Oct. 31 prior to 1935 and Mar. 31 thereafter; Man. and Sask., Apr. 30; Alta. and B.C., Mar. 31.