

The inflow of capital and the opening up of new and vast areas with the consequent stimulation of immigration began with the opening of the twentieth century and was the latest episode in the transformation of the central prairie region, which, in the course of forty years, has been organized into provinces and developed with such promise. While at the end of the nineteenth century the population of the then Dominion of Canada was approximately 5,400,000, it had about doubled this figure by 1931. The general increase in the population of European countries during the entire nineteenth century was approximately three-fold; Canada equalled this rate of progress during the sixty years from 1871 to 1931.

In the decade 1900-10 immigration, alone, totalled 1,800,000. This figure was the main factor in the gain of 34.17 p.c. which the total population of Canada registered in that decade and which was relatively larger than the growth of any modern country during the same period.

The next decade started out with an intensification of this immigration movement, but with the outbreak of the First World War a recession set in. The effects of the First World War upon the Canadian population were both direct and indirect. Nearly 60,000 Canadians died overseas and approximately 20,000 took their discharge in the United Kingdom. To these may be added 50,000 deaths from the war plague, influenza. In addition large numbers of British residents in Canada, most of them recent immigrants, left Canada to join the forces of the United Kingdom and did not return, and the same is true of enemy nationals who passed in considerable numbers into the United States immediately before and after the declaration of hostilities. The fluidity of the Canadian population accordingly rendered the War costly in personnel far beyond actual casualties. However, the net result over the ten years was a population increase of 21.94 p.c. or the largest increase for any modern country with the exception of Australia where an increase of 22.01 p.c. was recorded.

The Census of 1931 showed a further increase of 18.08 p.c. on 1921. Natural increase and immigration contributed 1,325,256 and 1,509,136, respectively, although the net gain was only 1,588,837 since estimated emigration was 1,245,555, for the ten years. Census returns of Great Britain for 1921-31 showed an increase of 4.7 p.c., equalling that of the previous decade. New Zealand in the ten-year interval between 1911-21 showed an increase of 19.8 p.c. and between 1921-31, 19.3 p.c. A census of Australia was not taken in 1931, but the official estimate of population based on the Census of 1933 gives an increase of 19.8 p.c. as against 22.0 p.c. for the period 1911-21 (Official Year Book of Australia, 1940, p. 519). Census figures for the United States show an increase of population of 14.9 p.c. between 1910-20 and 16.1 p.c. from 1920-30.

The eighth Census of Canada as of June 2, 1941, gives the population as 11,506,655 as compared with 10,376,786 as of June 1, 1931, an increase of 1,129,869 or 10.89 p.c. in the decade. During the greater part of this decade Canada along with all other countries was face to face with a prolonged and severe economic depression; immigration was still further restricted by government regulations as well as by economic necessity. The figures for immigrant arrivals were actually reduced from 1,166,004 in the ten-year period 1921-31 to 140,361 in 1931-41. The natural increase for this period showed a reduction of about 7 p.c. and, since immigration was reduced more than 88 p.c. over the decade, the net increase in population was due almost entirely to the still favourable birth and death rates of the established population.