

In 1947 it became evident that the transition in Canada from a wartime to a peacetime economy was taking place without any serious dislocation. It also became evident that the expansion might be sustained if the financial resources could be matched by labour power and a large population increase. In this, two trends had to be taken into account—the decline over several decades of the rate of natural increase and the historic problem of emigration. Also a relatively short-term problem had to be met by specific measures. The unusually low birth rate during the depression years had created a shortage of persons in the age groups entering the labour market during the latter part of 1941-51 decade. Immigration was therefore encouraged to relieve both the short-term problem and serve long-range objectives. The continuing expansion of the economy continues to absorb large numbers of newcomers who have not only made up for the lack of Canadian workers but have utilized the opportunities offered by the Canadian economy through capital they have brought with them, through the application of special skills and trade processes and through their mobility. By the establishment of new businesses, and the introduction of improved and new processes, they have created additional consumer demands and products.

By the end of 1954, over 1,000,000 people had entered Canada since 1947. In addition, the native-born children of these immigrants in the same period are estimated at some 200,000. This represents a very substantial addition to the body of Canadian consumers and an advance toward the development of mass markets for goods and services. It is also noteworthy that the bulk of immigrants is concentrated in the taxpaying and heavy consuming age groups, a factor that will help to reduce the high overhead costs of maintaining the Canadian standard of living at its present level.

It is in such considerations that operating principles of fitting immigration to absorptive capacity may be found rather than in theories which aim at some final figure of how many might be absorbed or have been absorbed in the past.

Along with the need for compromising between the short-term and long-term objectives of immigration, the implementation of the immigration policy has had to be adapted to such considerations as the availability of transportation, the availability of suitable immigrants who are usually the desirable citizens in their home countries, the degree of tolerance of other countries to being considered a recruiting ground for immigrants to Canada, the decline of both 'push' and 'pull' forces because of the gradual improvement in economic and social conditions in most western countries, the willingness or otherwise of the Canadian people to accept some or all types of immigrants, and many other similar factors.

GROWTH OF IMMIGRATION LEGISLATION

Canada passed her first Immigration Act in 1869 (32-33 Vict., c. 10), two years after Confederation. Principles embodied in this and in succeeding Immigration Acts are in large part deeply rooted in the earlier experience with immigration. The next comprehensive legislation was the Act of 1910 (9-10 Edw. VII, c. 27) which, with amendments, was in force until it was superseded by the present Immigration Act (R.S.C. 1952, c. 325). In tracing some of the additions and changes that led to the Act and Regulations at present in force, it should be kept in mind that throughout the years the motives of migrants, requirements of the receiving country, problems of control, health, welfare, assimilability, protection of the immigrants and of the native community have remained fundamentally unchanged.

EARLY CONTROL MEASURES

There was at first no legislation of any kind to govern the entrance of people into what is now Canada. The earliest measures had their origin in the conditions of ocean transportation.* While of considerable interest to the struggling colonies, this was a problem chiefly for the Imperial Government. Meanwhile the failure to control shipping gave rise

* Stanley C. Johnson, *A History of Emigration* (London 1913), Chap. V.