

Alberta.—Most of Alberta's 255,285 sq. miles lie in the interior plains region. The southern part is dry, treeless prairie changing toward the north into a zone of poplar interspersed with open prairie and giving way to mixed forests.

The boundary of the province follows the 49th parallel as does that of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, but only for a distance of about 180 miles before it strikes northwestward following the ridge of the Rocky Mountains to a point close to the 55th parallel and then turns directly north. From the Saskatchewan border in the southern area the plain rises gradually from about 2,500 feet above sea level to nearly 4,000 feet as it merges into the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. This foothill area is part of the Western Cordilleran Region. The Alberta Rockies have numerous peaks of from 10,000 to 12,294 feet, all of them close to or on the British Columbia boundary.

The southern half of the province is subject in winter to cold dry air masses of continental polar air, moderated from time to time by the Chinook winds. Summers are warm with abundant sunshine but rainfall is meagre, particularly in the southwest, and is extremely variable with periodic droughts. In areas where precipitation is more precarious, large irrigation projects have been developed, taking their water supply from the rivers rising in the mountains to the west. There are altogether over half a million acres of irrigated land in Alberta.

Thus, while the prairie wheat-growing belt extends into central Alberta and this province is the second largest producer of wheat in Canada, its agricultural output is quite diversified. Cattle-raising is more important here than elsewhere on the prairies and is highly developed in the Rocky Mountain foothills, in the Cypress Hills area of the southeast and in the northern prairie region. Feed crops, vegetables and root crops are grown in the irrigated areas. It is noteworthy that permanent agricultural settlement reaches its farthest northern point in Canada in the Peace River Valley of northwestern Alberta. Although the frost-free period in this area is only about 80 days, crops are able to mature because of the long hours of daylight during the growing season.

The prairies of Canada are underlain by fuel-bearing rocks but it is in Alberta that they have become particularly productive. Coal has long been mined in many areas but while these resources continue to be productive, they are becoming less important with the development of the huge oil and gas resources of the central interior. The production from these oil and gas fields has changed the economy of this province in the past 15 years and contributed immeasurably to its activity and growth. Agriculture-based products still rank high among its manufactures but the recent emphasis has been on manufactures connected with the oil and gas industries. Industrial chemicals have made striking gains as have structural materials, the latter in consequence of the tremendous construction that has taken place in the province and elsewhere. Alberta's forests also contribute to its manufacturing output. The province has 52,569,000,000 cu. feet of accessible standing timber, almost equal to that of Quebec. The foothills of the Rockies are particularly heavily forested but lumbering is not as yet highly developed. Water power resources exist in the northern areas but are somewhat remote and present demand for electric power is supplied mainly by thermal plants.

The population of Alberta, which numbered 1,331,944 in 1961, is concentrated in the central southern portion. The metropolitan areas of Edmonton and Calgary, both situated in the oil and gas producing areas, had populations of 337,568 and 279,062, respectively, and thus contained between them 73 p.c. of the urban population of the province. About 37 p.c. of the total population is classed as rural.

British Columbia.—British Columbia, Canada's third largest and most westerly province, has an area of 366,255 sq. miles. It consists almost completely of a portion of the great Cordilleran system of mountains that border the Pacific Coast of South, Central and North America. Only in the northeastern corner does the interior plain region intrude. This mountainous area is made up of three parallel ranges resulting in a set of parallel linear valleys, and each range has distinctive traits.