

PART II.—FURS

Section 1.—The Fur Industry*

Although the relative importance of the fur industry in the Canadian economy has declined through the years, the production of furs continues to contribute substantially to the national income. Furs are produced in all the provinces and, in addition to returns from the sale of pelts, the thriving fur farming industry has boosted the economy of many areas through creation of a chain of associated businesses such as feed supply houses and pelt processing stations. Demand from the industry for feeding stuffs has resulted in the utilization of practically all of what were formerly the waste products from meat packing operations and poultry processing plants. In addition, some 50,000,000 lb. of rough fish and fish frames, formerly of little or no value, are used annually by this industry. In the case of furs from the wilds, trapping returns are distributed through countless northern villages, providing a welcome source of additional revenue for many part-time trappers as well as for the professionals.

The total value of furs produced in the 1962-63 season was \$32,131,000, ranged furs accounting for \$19,957,000 or 62.1 p.c. and wildlife pelts for the remainder. A large proportion of the Canadian furs are exported annually, the principal varieties being wild mink, beaver and muskrat. In 1963 the value of raw furs exported was \$30,987,000 and during the same year raw furs worth \$20,914,000 were imported. The chief imports were mink, Persian lamb, raccoon, fox and muskrat.

Fur Trapping.—Despite intensive trapping which has been carried on for many years, the numbers of wild fur bearers in Canada have been well maintained. Some species, principally beaver and muskrat, are still taken in the settled areas, but much of the wildlife has retreated before the advance of settlement so that the principal trapping areas now lie in the northern portions of the provinces and in the Northwest Territories.

Conservation measures instituted by the respective provincial governments and, for the Yukon and Northwest Territories, by the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources have been largely responsible for maintaining the numbers of fur bearers. These measures include control of the length of the period during which trapping is permitted and, where necessary, the imposition of closed seasons for the protection of scarce species. Also, in many fur producing areas a system of registered traplines is in effect whereby trapping areas are assigned to individual trappers on a constant basis. This system puts the responsibility on the trapper for conservation of the fur bearers in his area and encourages him to trap less intensively any species that show signs of becoming scarce. Prior to institution of the registration system, competition between trappers in the same area often resulted in exhaustion of the fur resource.

According to records maintained by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics since 1919, the 1962-63 catches of beaver, lynx and otter were the largest on record and above-average numbers of fisher and marten were also taken. On the other hand, the white fox catch was the lowest on record because, in 1962, this species was at the low point of its four-year cycle throughout the Arctic.

The total value of the wild fur catch in 1962-63 was 17.5 p.c. higher than in the previous season, reflecting an increased catch of many species and also a fairly general advance in pelt prices. However, prices of most of the principal varieties of furs were still substantially lower than they were when records were commenced in 1919 and, consequently, recent returns from the trapping enterprise have not been sufficiently attractive to keep trappers on their traplines on a full-time basis. In areas where other forms of employment are available many trappers have become full-time or part-time wage-earners, carrying on their trapping activities on week-ends or off days, and others have abandoned trapping

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