

Manitoba.—Trading in furs is Manitoba's oldest industry and the province produces some of the finest pelts on the world markets. The annual value of production varies widely, depending both on the cyclic abundance of fur bearing animals and on world prices for the pelts produced.

As the northern portion of Manitoba became more accessible following construction of the Hudson Bay Railway to Churchill, competition for fur and for trapping grounds became so severe that the fur resources were sadly depleted. In 1940, Manitoba started a program of trapline registration. The program provided security of tenure to individuals or community groups of trappers, weeded out the part-time trappers and changed harvesting of wild fur from fur mining to wild fur farming. At that time beaver were a rarity and a series of closed seasons had been declared. Since then, beaver have increased steadily and 53,963 pelts were harvested in the 1963-64 season. Within the past decade new records in the production of muskrat, beaver, mink, lynx, fisher and otter have been set for this century.

The wild fur industry is still of economic importance in the province, and particularly so for northern residents, both white and native. A program of trapper education, inaugurated in 1957 and designed to improve the general handling of furs by trappers and at the same time achieve a certain measure of standardization in pelt care, has shown gratifying results. It has been expanded to include improved trapping methods and the use of humane trap sets; a booklet, *The Trapper's Guide*, is available from the Wildlife Branch of the Department of Mines and Natural Resources.

Manitoba has been working in close co-operation with federal and other provincial agencies in the promotion of quality furs by contributing a collection of representative wild furs for exhibit at the more important European fairs.

Saskatchewan.—Before the introduction of Saskatchewan's fur conservation and development program, little was done to control the trapping of beaver and muskrat. During open seasons, trappers took every pelt available and then the season had to be closed the following year in hope of natural population build-up. This "feast and famine" policy had a disastrous effect on both the fur resources and the livelihood of trappers. Few trappers had exclusive rights to specific areas and most of them were unable to establish permanent homes in communities. Poaching was common practice and there was little economic security. Beaver began declining steadily after World War I and this affected the habitat for other fur bearers as well.

In 1944, the Saskatchewan Government set up a committee to study trapping problems and the following year the South Saskatchewan Muskrat Trapping Program was instituted. Under this plan, individuals received exclusive rights to trap on definite land locations. Owners and occupants received first consideration, with special priority given to Indians and metis on Crown lands. Muskrat quotas were established to assure continuing populations, and marketing of pelts under government supervision was instituted.

In 1946, under federal-provincial agreement, all Crown lands north of the 53rd parallel were set up as the Northern Fur Conservation Block. Up to \$50,000 a year was to be expended over the following ten years to establish and administer conservation areas, purchase equipment, pay salaries of personnel, transplant live beaver and build dams; the Federal Government agreed to assume 60 p.c. of the cost and the province the remainder. A Fur Advisory Committee, with representation from the provincial Department of Natural Resources and the federal Indian Affairs Branch was set up to supervise the program. Organization of conservation areas was left to the trappers. Five-man councils were elected in all districts, with Indian, metis and white trappers sharing privileges, obligations and responsibilities on an equal basis. Conservation measures and licensing regulations were initiated. In 1956 the agreement was extended for another ten years with minor changes and in 1962 a co-ordinating body was set up by the Fur Advisory Committee to promote better communications and understanding of the fur program.