

Alberta.—This Province covers 255,285 sq. miles and lies between Saskatchewan and British Columbia. The southern part of the Province is dry, treeless prairie, changing to the north into a zone of poplar interspersed with open prairie and giving way to mixed forests. The Canadian Shield extends only into the northeast corner of Alberta, so that excepting the fringe of mountainous country on its western border, practically the whole of the Province is underlain by arable soil of great depth. Alberta has three marked physical features—the plains, the foothills, and the portion of the Rocky Mountains within its boundaries. Overlying these is the marked difference in vegetation of the arid southwest and the more humid parklands of the remainder of the Province which merge with mixed and coniferous forest. Permanent agricultural settlement reaches its farthest northern point in Canada in the Peace River Valley of Alberta. The southern half of the Province, rising towards the west, lies at a general elevation of from 2,000 to 4,000 feet but in the northern half the slope descends until elevations of well under 1,000 feet are reached at Lake Athabasca in the northeast corner.

Alberta has the most extensive coal resources of any of the provinces and following the discovery of the Leduc oil field about 20 miles southwest of Edmonton in 1947 it is rapidly becoming a major world source of crude petroleum. Huge reserves of natural gas have been disclosed, mostly as a result of oil drilling operations, and prospects are bright for further large discoveries of petroleum and natural gas. These resources provide the basis of Alberta's industrial development. Lumbering is important in the more mountainous western parts and in the north and ranching is carried on in the dry sections of the south and west. In some southern prairie areas the quantity and distribution of the natural precipitation make permanent agriculture precarious and a number of large irrigation projects have been developed which take their water supply from rivers rising in the mountains that form the western boundary of the Province. The climate of Alberta is particularly pleasant, warm and dry generally during the summer, and during the winter the cold is moderated in the south by the chinook winds.

British Columbia.—British Columbia, 366,255 sq. miles in area, is the third largest and the most westerly province of Canada. It includes many islands of the Pacific, notably Vancouver Island and the Queen Charlotte Islands, the area of the former being 12,408 sq. miles.

The predominant feature of the Province is the parallel ranges of mountains that cover all except the northeast corner—resulting in a set of parallel linear valleys. Many of these are extremely fertile with climatic conditions well adapted to mixed agriculture or fruit growing. Generally the agricultural areas of these valleys are relatively small and broken. Two large areas in the Peace River Block and the Stuart Lake District have great agricultural possibilities. The shoreline of the Pacific is deeply indented with many inlets that are ideal for harbourage.

The wealth of the forest resources supports the lumbering and pulp and paper industries and places British Columbia first among the provinces in the production of lumber and timber. The Province excels in fishery products chiefly on account of the famous Pacific salmon. The mineral resources are remarkable for their variety and wealth. Production of lead, zinc, silver, gold and to a lesser extent copper has played an important role in the economic life of the Province since its early days and valuable coal deposits on Vancouver Island and at Crowsnest and Fernie in the interior have been worked for many years. The Province is one of the chief sources of tungsten ore in the free world and asbestos has been added recently to the list of minerals produced. Huge supplies of natural gas have been disclosed in the Peace River section of the Province. In waterpower resources, British Columbia ranks second in Canada.

The Yukon and Northwest Territories.—These vast northern territories extend over an area of 1,511,979 sq. miles from the 60th parallel of latitude to the northernmost limits. They comprise about 39 p.c. of the surface of Canada.