

Section 1.—Growth of the Population

A brief résumé of the population history of Canada from the first census in 1666, when 3,215 persons were enumerated, to the Census of 1951, when the figure was 14,009,429, places Canada among the leading countries of the Commonwealth in the rate of population growth. The total population of Canada at the end of the nineteenth century was approximately 5,400,000; it had about doubled this figure by 1931. The general increase in the population of European countries during the entire nineteenth century was approximately three-fold; Canada equalled this rate of progress during the 60 years from 1871 to 1931.

In the decade 1901-11 immigration alone totalled 1,800,000. This figure was the main factor in the gain of 34·2 p.c. registered by the total population of Canada in that decade, which was relatively larger than the growth of any modern country during the same period.

The next decade started out with an intensification of this immigration movement, but a recession set in with the outbreak of World War I. The effects of that War upon the Canadian population were both direct and indirect. Nearly 60,000 members of the Canadian forces died overseas and approximately 20,000 others took their discharge in the United Kingdom. To these may be added 50,000 deaths from the war plague, influenza. In addition, large numbers of British Isles residents, most of them recent immigrants, left Canada to join the armed forces of the United Kingdom and did not return; the same is true of enemy nationals who passed in considerable numbers into the United States immediately before and after the declaration of hostilities. The fluidity of the Canadian population accordingly rendered the War costly in personnel far beyond actual casualties. However, the net result over the ten years was a population increase of 21·9 p.c. or the largest increase for any modern country in that decade with the exception of Australia where an increase of 22·0 p.c. was recorded.

The Census of 1931 showed a further population increase of 18 p.c. over 1921. Natural increase and immigration contributed 1,325,256 and 1,509,136, respectively, although the net gain was only 1,588,837 since estimated emigration was 1,245,555 for the ten years. Census returns of Great Britain for 1921-31 showed an increase of 4 p.c. as compared with 5 p.c. for the previous decade. New Zealand in the ten-year interval 1911-21 showed an increase of 21 p.c. and in the period 1921-36, 23 p.c. A census of Australia was not taken in 1931, but the official estimate of population based on the Census of 1933 gave an increase of 20 p.c. as against 22 p.c. for the period 1911-21. Census figures for the United States showed an increase in population of 15 p.c. for 1910-20, 16 p.c. for 1920-30 and 7 p.c. for 1930-40.

The Eighth Census of Canada taken June 2, 1941, gave the population as 11,506,655 as compared with 10,376,786 as at June 1, 1931, an increase of 1,129,869 or 11 p.c. in the decade. During the greater part of this decade, Canada, along with all other countries, was faced with a prolonged and severe economic depression; immigration was still further restricted by government regulations as well as by economic necessity. The figures for immigrant arrivals were actually reduced from 1,166,004 in the ten-year period 1921-31 to 140,361 in 1931-41. The natural increase for this period showed a reduction of about 11 p.c. and, since immigration was reduced more than 88 p.c. over the decade, the net increase in population was due almost entirely to the favourable birth and death rates of the established population.