

The modern census has become a highly complex administrative and technical operation. Each enumeration has shown considerable advance over its predecessor in planning, organization, enumeration and processing as well as in coverage. The 1951 Census marked the introduction of many new techniques—a number of processing operations were decentralized and were performed for the first time in regional offices located across Canada; mark-sense equipment was used in conjunction with high-speed electronic tabulating machines; and specialized printing processes were employed to speed the release of published reports and volumes. The results of that Census and descriptions of census methods are contained in the printed record* which will form an important source of reference for many years to come.

Commencing around the turn of the century when the western part of Canada was in its early and rapid stages of development, there were censuses of the three Prairie Provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta at each mid-decade period up to and including 1946. The decision to replace these censuses by a nation-wide census of modified design in 1956 was influenced by the extremely large increases and shifts in the population of Canada shown by intercensal estimates since 1951, and by extensive changes occurring in the agricultural economy of the country. For example, Canada's population increased by over 2,000,000 in the 1951-56 period, a gain almost comparable with that for the complete ten-year period between the decennial censuses of 1941 and 1951. Agricultural changes were characterized by the continuance of the postwar trend toward farm mechanization resulting in fewer and larger farms, often through amalgamation of existing farms, and causing notable changes in types of farming operations and in farm employment.

Such rapidly changing conditions in population and agriculture indicated the need for benchmarks at the five-year period in order to provide accurate estimates over the longer interval of ten years. Also, it was essential to have more up-to-date information on the distribution of the expanded population across the country since 1951 for the many uses required by agencies of government, business, social research, etc. One of the chief values of the 1956 Census is that it provides basic information on population and agriculture for small areas at a point midway between the decennial censuses, information which cannot be obtained from intercensal estimates.

It was realized that if a complete census of Canada were to be undertaken in 1956 it must, of necessity, be of simplified design and limited to basic essentials. Questionnaires were restricted to five 'statistical' inquiries on population (sex, age, marital status, relationship to head of household, and farm or non-farm residence) as compared with 26 in 1951; there were 76 questions on agriculture (farm areas, crop acreages, livestock, farm machinery and farm labour) as compared with approximately 200 in 1951. Such phases of the full-scale 1951 Census operations as the sample Housing Census, the Census of Distribution (retail, wholesale and service establishments), and the Census of the Fisheries were not included in the 1956 program. Also beyond the scope of the modified 1956 Census were population inquiries on birthplace, schooling, origins, religions and languages, as well as economic characteristics dealing with the occupations and industries of persons in the labour force. For such data, the 1951 Census represents the most recent census information available.

Section 3.—Growth of the Population

The population history of Canada, from the first census in 1666 when 3,215 persons were enumerated to the 1956 Census when the figure was 16,080,791, reveals an outstanding rate of population growth. Each census period, of course, contributed to this growth but the periods 1901-11, 1911-21, 1941-51, and 1951-56, merit particular mention. In the decade 1901-11, Canada's population increased by 34.2 p.c., the highest rate of growth in the nation's history. Immigration was the main factor in this gain, 1,800,000

* *Ninth Census of Canada 1951*, Vols. I-XI, \$25, Queen's Printer or Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Ottawa.