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THE CENSUS OF 1951*Introduction

Once every ten years since Confederation a census of the people of Canada has been taken. The first of these decennial censuses, as they are called, was taken in 1871: the ninth will be taken on June 1, 1951. It will be a project of the greatest magnitude, greater than ever before, since its organization will not only extend as in the last Census from the United States border to the most northerly settlements in the Arctic but for the first time from the east coast of Newfoundland to the islands off the coast of British Columbia. It will enumerate a population over a fifth larger than any previously recorded in Canada.

The coming Census will be a census of population, housing, agriculture, fisheries and distribution. Its value in determining the progress of Canada will be inestimable. More particularly the 1951 Census will be a yard stick in determining the progress that Canada has made in the first half of the twentieth century. Its uses are so varied that there is scarcely a phase of human activity that cannot be related to it. It is of aid to government, business, social welfare, justice and education and thus helps to make Canada a better place in which to live. With its information available to everyone, the census is democratic in its results.

Since the census is for the common good of all, the co-operation of every Canadian in making it as complete and successful as possible is only a part of good citizenship. To be sure, the law, enacted by the representatives of the people, requires everyone to answer the questions on the census schedules put to him by the enumerator. The success of the census does not rest on this legal requirement, however, but on a general appreciation of the purposes of the census and the willing co-operation of everyone in answering the questions as fully and accurately as he or she can. In short, the census will be only as good as the Canadian people make it.

Historical Background

The taking of a census is a very ancient idea dating back to the pre-Christian era: Besides the better known enumerations of certain classifications of people mentioned in the Old Testament at the time of the Exodus and in the days of King David censuses for one purpose or another were taken in Babylon (3,800 B.C.), China (3,000 B.C.), the Egypt of the Pharaohs (2,200 B.C.), Greece (600-500 B.C.) and Rome (500 B.C.).

* This Reference Paper comprises two releases issued by the Information Division of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Ottawa, Canada. Additional or more specialized information may be obtained from that office.