

Smaller, more active families

Canadian families are much smaller than ever before, they are more economically active and more ready to disband if things are not working out between husband and wife, according to a Statistics Canada report.

Although single-parent families are on the increase, marriage is more popular than ever. The report summarizes many of the changes taking place in the traditional structure of the family.

Some highlights include:

- From 1971 to 1976, Canada's families increased by 13.4 per cent, whereas the total population increased by only 6.6 per cent. There are now about 5.75 million families in Canada.

- Among the provinces, British Columbia and Alberta had the largest percentage increase in families over the 1971-76 period: 18.4 per cent and 18.0 per cent, respectively, while Saskatchewan had the smallest increase of 5.0 per cent.

- More people are getting married and at earlier ages. In 1976, 64.2 per cent of the population aged 15 years and over were married compared to 52.0 per cent in 1901. The average age at marriage in 1976 was 25 for grooms and 22.7 years for brides. In 1941, the average age was higher: grooms, 27.6 years and brides, 24.4 years.

- Since the passing of the 1968 Divorce Act, the divorce rate has quadrupled. But remarriages are on the increase and most people do not remain divorced for long.

- The number of lone-parent families increased by almost 82,000 between 1971 and 1976. Eighty-three per cent of all lone-parents are women and many of them have young children.

- The average number of children per family was 1.9 in 1961, but by 1976 it had fallen to 1.6 children per family. Families living in rural farm areas had a higher average number of children (2.1)

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than urban families (1.5).

- Economically, Canada's families are better off now than ever before. In 1971, the proportion of families in the higher income groups of \$15,000 and over was only 17.1. By 1976 this group had expanded to include 58.5 per cent of all families.

- Food and shelter absorb over half the budgets of families with average incomes under \$6,000 but only a quarter of the budget of families with incomes above \$35,000.

- The family is expected to continue to be a fundamental social unit in our society and by 2001 there could be between 8.4 and 9.1 million Canadian families.

News briefs

Liberal Herbert Marx, a constitutional law professor, won an expected but still phenomenal victory November 26, over Parti Québécois candidate David Levine, an executive assistant to a Quebec Cabinet minister. It was the seventh straight by-election loss for the Parti Québécois since it came to power three years ago. Mr. Marx took 96 per cent of the vote with 23,313 votes to Mr. Levine's 96 in the suburban Montreal riding of D'Arcy McGee.

John A. MacDonald, former chairman and president of the Export Development Corporation recently took the post of Chairman of the Tariff Board.

A new, major program that will substantially cut the costs of rents for senior citizens on low or moderate incomes in Manitoba has been announced by the provincial government. Known as the SAFER program — Shelter Allowances for Elderly Renters — it will provide monthly cash payments, beginning January 1980, to Senior-citizen renters who presently are paying a large percentage of their income for rent. The program is aimed at benefiting those senior citizens with low or moderate income who pay more than 30 per cent of their income for rent. Assistance will be available, based on income, for actual monthly rents of up to \$205 for a single renter and \$225 for a couple.

Quebec's Finance Minister Jacques Parizeau has offered Quebec's 125,000 female public-sector employees a plan for fully-paid maternity leave. The plan would allow women a 20-week leave,

with full pay and benefits, which could be extended to two years without pay if they wished to care for their infants.

A project, designed to develop and upgrade the media skills of ethnocultural groups will be started at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute in Toronto this January. The course, which will run 14 consecutive Saturdays until April, includes scripting, lighting, camera operation and sound recording. Students will learn the basic skills necessary to produce news, interview, panel and light-entertainment shows. Thirty-five students will be selected for the course on the basis of a 200-word essay, an interview and a resumé. The project is being funded by the Multiculturalism Directorate of the Federal Government.

The **Global TV network** recently started a weekly news program on Tuesdays at 6.30 p.m. offering Canadian news for subscribers on 120 U.S. outlets. The program is repeated on Wednesdays at 9 a.m. The 120 U.S. cable companies will pick the show up from the Satcom I satellite and feed it into hotels and the homes of subscribers. The show, intended for expatriate Canadians, is titled *News from Home*.

The **St. Lawrence shipping season** has been extended three days to midnight December 18, according to a joint announcement from the Canadian and U.S. governments. The extension, covering the Montreal to Lake Ontario section, was granted in response to both Canadian and U.S. concerns about the backlog of grain awaiting shipment from Great Lakes ports.

Doomsday was a dud. The flames of wrath did not sweep through the town of Perth, outside Ottawa, as predicted recently by a nearby resident who took the trouble to mail warnings to every household there. Bonnie Bilton, a 28-year-old housewife, claimed she had a dream that Perth was on fire and heard the word of God urging her to warn the townsfolk that October 25 would be the end. Most of the nearly 7,000 souls took the matter in a lighthearted vein, but police put out extra patrols just in case. A group of high school students showed up in firefighting garb brandishing miniature hoses and water pistols, ready for the big event. One downtown photographic store held a doomsday sale, with film selling at a reduced rate. However, the sign warned that excessive heat could damage the product.