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SOCIAL ORGANIZATION ON THE PIONEER FRINGE,
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE PEACE RIVER AREA.

The data for this study were made available by the Canadian Pioneer Problems Committee, a research body which is directing a five-year social and economic survey of the Canadian Prairie Provinces. Sources of information included federal and provincial departments, public officials, institutional functionaries, local leaders in the Peace River Area, and finally 332 Peace River farm families. Three units of investigation were used, namely village communities as a whole with their various social and economic facilities, major social institutions, and rural families. Rural social organization in the Peace River Area was found to be related to the successive stages of transportational, agricultural and general economic development within the region. Social facilities are concentrated in the trade centres and they dwindle rapidly in number and complexity as one moves from the centre to the circumference of settlement. The establishment of social institutions on the frontier follows a cyclical trend whose stages parallel those of the general settlement process. The population is young, mobile and heterogeneous as regards ethnic and religious elements. The rural people have meagre social participation, especially of the organized type. Number and variety of social contacts are related to family income, distances from services, and stage of settlement. A comprehensive plan of settlement is needed if waste of human and material resources is to be avoided in settling new areas.