

# Canada's Relations with Finland

EARLY in 1960, Canada and Finland agreed to raise their diplomatic relations to the ambassadorial level. In Ottawa, on April 13, His Excellency Artturi Lehtinen, who was at that time the Finnish *Chargé d'Affaires en pied* in Canada, presented to the Governor General his Letters of Credence as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Finland to Canada. On November 15, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Howard Green, announced the appointment of Mr. John Harrison Cleveland, formerly Head of the United States Division of the Department of External Affairs, as Canada's first Ambassador and resident head of mission to Finland. This stage in the development of the good relations that exist between the two countries provides an opportunity to review the development of Fenno-Canadian relations over the years.

## Early Contacts with Canada

Although the first Finnish immigrants to North America arrived between 1641 and 1655, accompanying a group of Swedish settlers who established a colony in what is now the State of Delaware, the earliest immigrants from Finland to Canada arrived at the beginning of the nineteenth century, mainly by way of the United States and Alaska rather than directly from their homeland.

Many found employment in the construction of the first Welland Canal in the years after 1829. When, in 1867, the United States purchased Alaska, some Finns left that territory for southern British Columbia. The construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway between 1881 and 1885, and the enlargement of the Sault Ste. Marie Canal between 1888 and 1895, attracted yet others from the United States.

However, at the opening of the twentieth century, the majority of Finnish immigrants were coming to Canada directly from Finland itself. In the decade before 1914, the rate of emigration from that country was exceptionally high, reaching a figure of 50 in every 10,000 inhabitants. In the province of Vasa in west central Finland, the rate rose to 123 in 10,000 between 1909 and 1913. While the majority went to the United States, there was, nevertheless, a relatively large influx of Finnish immigrants to Canada. With the outbreak of the war in 1914 Finnish immigration virtually ceased and did not begin again until the 1920's when a peak number of about 30,000 entered Canada. Then came the depression of the 1930's and the Second World War, which again brought immigration almost to a standstill. In the last ten years the rate has shown a considerable increase; between January 1951 and the end of June 1959, some 15,000 Finnish immigrants came to this country.

Although Finnish settlers have established themselves all across Canada, the greatest concentration is in Ontario, where 67 per cent were living in 1951.