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WOMEN IN CANADA

Since the Second World War, great changes have taken place in Canada. The population has been growing rapidly because of a high birth rate (the seventh highest in the world and the second highest among developed countries) and because of large-scale immigration. Each year, Canada has become more industrialized, and this has resulted in a steady movement of people into the cities. Though fewer Canadians are today engaged in agriculture, the production of food, especially wheat, Canada's main agricultural export, has increased because of improved mechanized methods of farming.

High employment and high wages, combined with a good supply of consumer goods, have produced a society in which the majority of the people has achieved a middle-class status. Compulsory and free elementary education for boys and girls and such social security measures as Family Allowances, old-age pensions and unemployment insurance have also had a levelling effect on Canadian society.

Canadian women have been particularly affected by this rapid revolution from a pioneer agricultural society into an urban middle-class society. The pattern of their lives has also been changed by new factory techniques and by labour-saving devices for the home.

On the Farm

Country life is not as lonely or as arduous for Canadian farm wives as it was a generation ago. Rural electrification has brought light, running water and an automatic washing machine into most farm homes. The telephone, radio and television have brought women into touch with the outside world as never before. The improvement in roads and the greater use of snow plows in winter have enabled them to visit neighbours, go to church, attend meetings of the Women's Institutes and other social gatherings, as well as to do their shopping in what were once distant villages or towns. Nevertheless, many farm wives still buy the family clothing and household furnishings out of the illustrated catalogues issued by the mail-order divisions of several large department stores.

The diversity of Canada's geography makes it impossible to generalize about the way farm women live. Although the country has a small population (19,102,000 on January 1, 1964), its territory is the second largest in the world. It stretches 4,000 miles from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and in the North borders on the Arctic Ocean. This vast area includes mountains, rocky wooded areas populated only by mining communities and trappers, large tracts of timber, small farms and the type familiar to Europeans, wide prairies where the growing of wheat and other cereal crops is big business, and rolling foothill country given over to the raising of cattle.