

Population of the Commonwealth

THERE HAS recently been widespread interest in world population problems. For use in discussion of this subject Table I has been prepared showing the estimated population of the Commonwealth as of January 1, 1960, and the estimated rate of increase of its components. This material may be of particular interest in advance of the meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers scheduled for May in London. For purposes of comparison, the estimated population and the rates of increase for the world, the continents and certain countries are set out in Table II.

Table I also shows the dates the members of the Commonwealth attained independence and the present political status of the dependencies.

The figures shown are unofficial estimates based on United Nations material. They have been established by using the latest official figures from the United Nations' publication "Population and Vital Statistics Report" (Statistical Papers Series A, Vol. XI, No. 4) and projecting them to January 1, 1960, by using the annual rate of increase⁽¹⁾ shown in the UN "Demographic Yearbook 1958". For more detailed information on the subject of population these publications should be consulted.

Some of the specific details on the tables might usefully be emphasized. The Commonwealth, with an estimated population of 706,600,000 has 24 per cent of the world's population. India has 57½ per cent of the total Commonwealth population and Canada has 2½ per cent.

Mainland China's population, which is greater than the combined populations of North America, South America and Africa, is 23 per cent of the world's total. It is increasing by at least 16,000,000 a year, or roughly the total population of Canada, every 12 months.

From the tables it is seen that Canada's population increases by approximately 400,000 persons a year. The tables show that India's population increases by 416,000 a month and mainland China's by 440,000 every 10 days.

The rate of 1.6 per cent shown as the world's rate of increase gives an annual increase of 46,736,000 on the estimated January 1, 1960, world population. This is an increase of approximately 130,000 persons a day, 5,400 an hour, 90 a minute or 1.5 a second. This 1.6 per cent rate, however, appears to be a conservative estimate when it is found that the actual population increases from 1956 to 1957 and from 1957 to 1958 were 56 and 62 million respectively, and not the 46.7 million calculated above. Using the 1957-58 increase as a basis for calculation, the world's rate of increase is approximately 2 per cent and the population is increasing by approximately 170,000 persons a day, 7,000 an hour or 2 a second.

The world's population is estimated at 2,921,000,000 on January 1, 1960. It is estimated that on January 1, 2000, the population of the world will exceed 6,000,000,000.