

CHANGING PATTERNS OF EMPLOYMENT

Logging operations and employment patterns differ widely in the two main logging regions of Canada--British Columbia, and Canada east of the Great Lakes. The timber stands, the types of logging, the seasonal pattern of employment, the occupational structure of the working force, and labour turnover are quite distinct in each. The major characteristics of logging operations and recent developments in both regions are described below.

EASTERN CANADA

More than four-fifths of logging employment in Canada is east of the Great Lakes. The trees in this region are mainly coniferous; they are used primarily for pulp-wood production but also for logs and bolts, posts and poles, mining timber, fuelwood and various other lumber products.

The labour force consists mainly of farmers and farm workers in their off season. While most of them work in logging as paid employees, a very considerable proportion work on their own account and sell their products mainly to pulp and paper companies.

Operations in Eastern Canada are highly seasonal, the most active cutting season coming in the late fall and early winter and employment rising rapidly from August to reach a peak in October and November. The logs are then hauled to the lakes and rivers. When the ice breaks up in the spring, the logs are floated to the mills in river drives. Employment reaches its trough during the spring break-up period, in March and April, and then rises again during the river drives.

Until recently, summer work was more or less limited to the river drives, and hauling and maintenance work, except in areas that were inaccessible during winter months. Woods work in the summer was made more difficult by hot weather and black flies, and by the problems of transporting wood over swamps and recruiting labour in competition with other seasonal industries. Many of these difficulties still exist but advancement in transportation techniques, rapid mechanization, and efforts by employers to build up a more efficient and permanent logging labour force have led to more summer cutting during the past five years or so.

While the relatively inexpensive system of river driving will remain the general practice for long-distance transportation for years to come, tractor hauling, truck transportation, the introduction of wire cables for skidding and the development of better roadbuilding techniques are making operations more independent of snow conditions previously necessary for hauling.

One of the most spectacular developments in the mechanization of logging during the past five years was the large-scale adoption of the power saw for felling and bucking. In 1949-

in logging operations in Canada, since much of the work is carried on in remote areas, often by small crews or by individual operators. Wide seasonal variations in employment and relatively high labour turnover in this industry also add to the difficulty of estimating employment at any given time. However, according to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics labour force sample survey, logging employment in Canada reached almost 160,000 during the peak period in the winter of 1955-1956. Most of these were paid workers, although the proportion of paid workers and own-account workers showed wide variations in the course of the cutting season. It has been estimated that the number of paid workers varied from 66 to 86 per cent of the total logging labour force during 1955.

Two-fifths of the paid logging workers in Canada were in Quebec, slightly more than one-fifth in the Atlantic region, and less than one-fifth in Ontario and British Columbia respectively. Some logging was also carried on in the northern Prairie region. It is noteworthy that logging employment in Ontario has been declining during the past few years, partly because of increased mechanization, and partly because of the trend towards year-round operations.

LABOUR SOURCE

The main source of labour supply for the logging industry is in rural areas. It is estimated that about half of the workers in paid logging employment are farmers or farmers' sons; the rest are permanent loggers and casual employees who find employment in the woods during the slack periods in their usual activities (e.g., fishing, mining and construction). The great majority of self-employed loggers, largely in eastern Canada, are farmers who operate woodlots of their own.

Usually only a small proportion of loggers are recent immigrants. During 1947-48 and 1951-52, however, when demand for labour was heavy, sizeable group movements of immigrant loggers were organized by the federal Governments to augment the supply of workers for the forestry industry. About 7,000 logging workers were brought to Canada in group movements during these periods. In addition, more than 5,000 loggers immigrated to Canada more or less on their own between 1946 and 1955, bringing the total number of immigrant loggers during the postwar decade to more than 12,000.

At the same time, Canada has regularly supplied woodworkers from her border region to neighbouring areas in the United States. Up to a maximum quota of 9,900 men, several thousand Canadians are engaged each year for short or long periods in logging operations in the northern New England states. At the completion of their work, they return to Canada. These movements both relieve shortages of woods labour in such areas and provide substantial supplementary income for a considerable number of Canadian loggers.