

PRIMARY TEXTILES INDUSTRY

The physical proportions of an industry is generally regarded as a barometer of its importance in the national economy of a country. This being so, the position of the Canadian primary textiles industry - which ranks second among Canadian manufacturing industries in number of people directly employed, assumes a role of vital importance, according to an article written by John Meriman for the October issue of the "Canadian Textile Journal".

The primary textiles industry comprises those establishments engaged in manufacturing or preparing textile fibres - cotton, wool, and the various synthetics - and in spinning, weaving, felting, knitting, dyeing and finishing these fibres and the products made from them.

While the majority of the plants are located in the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec, every province in Canada is represented and more than half the plants and approximately two-thirds of employees are in towns of less than 50,000 population. Thus the Canadian primary textiles industry is a "home" industry in the truest sense of the word and in its decentralization lies its greatest strength.

For example, the relatively light employment in the textile industry complements that of heavy industries in many so-called textile communities. The industry is a "year-round" employer of labour.

In many cases the textile mill in a small town is the community's only industry, so that it becomes the sole means of livelihood for the townsfolk, men and women, and it is not unusual to find two or three generations of families working side by side in a textile mill. The phrase "a home industry", then, is very real to thousands of Canadian textile mill operators.

PRIMARY & SECONDARY INDUSTRIES

While some consumer products come from the primary industry, in the main it is supplier to the secondary textile and garment manufacturing industries.

The importance of the primary textiles industry in terms of providing employment, salaries and wages for its employees cannot be underestimated. In 1957, for instance, 82,000 Canadian men and women were employed.

In that same year, the secondary textile industries - the secondary textile and garment manufacturing industries, which are supplied by the primary industry - employed 105,000 Canadians.

It then becomes a matter of simple mathematics to deduce the over-all importance of the Canadian textile manufacturing industry in the national economy. With a total of 187,000 employees, the composite industry's contribution to the prosperity of Canada and the general well-being of Canadians is by no means insign-

ificant.

The primary industry today is progressive and efficient and well able to produce top-quality goods and to promote their sale aggressively. The increased use of Canadian fabric by the secondary industry could do much to stem the tide of imports and thus boost the domestic mills' share of the available market.

As things stand at present, however, imports are taking a larger share of a growing Canadian market. When the growth factor was missing, imports increased, but domestic output dropped. Then, when the available market resumed its growth, domestic output improved slightly, but imports increased at an accelerated rate.

ROLE OF MANUFACTURING

The role of manufacturing is becoming increasingly important in Canada's economic structure and will be much more pronounced as the population curve continues its upward climb. During the past quarter-century there has been an increase of 58 per cent in the Canadian population and the forecast has been made that the trend will continue by a further 50 per cent by 1975.

Such a situation is of vital significance to the Canadian primary textiles industry as it means an expansion in the available market for textiles and clothing. On the other hand, however, it is a statistical fact that the number of young people coming into the labour force will grow rapidly as soon as the increased post-war birth rate arrives at working age. Then these people will be out looking for jobs. It has been estimated that the number of young people eligible for the labour force will reach a peak in 1960.

Manufacturing is the industry into which the greatest number of the increasing labour force must move, not only to meet expansion, but to provide the variety of employment needed to make Canadians most fully productive. It is a fact that the most dependable market for the domestic producer of manufactured goods - and this includes textiles - is the domestic market.

Two world wars have proved quite adequately that manufacturing capacity is a basic munition of modern warfare and the global uneasiness which has persisted now for several years in varying degrees makes it mandatory that vigilance and preparedness must not for one moment be relaxed.

Being the world's largest per capita trader is all very well, and it is something of which to be proud. One has also to be realistic in facing the fact that occupying this position involves an exposure to world-wide economic currents which can have a greater impact on Canada than in their countries of origin. They can communicate their effects to Canada by