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THE LOGGING INDUSTRY IN CANADA

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Felling trees and sawing logs were among the earliest, if not the first, commercial activities carried on by the original European settlers of Canada. Since then, logging and the secondary wood processing industries have become basic segments of the Canadian economy. Today, the output of these industries together accounts for about 14 per cent of the net value of commodity production in Canada. The net value of logging output alone was \$635 million in 1953, the latest year for which such data are available, or nearly 5 per cent of all commodity production.

During the postwar decade, the logging industry passed through an almost revolutionary phase of development. Rapidly increasing mechanization, improved logging techniques, more year-round operations, more permanent forest workers, substantially improved living and working conditions, higher earnings and increased unionization have been among the most important changes. While marked seasonal and cyclical variations continued to characterize activity in this industry, the seasonal pattern of employment changed in several respects.

LABOUR DEMAND AND SUPPLY

Labour supplies in Canada increased rapidly in the years immediately following the war as men from the Armed Services and war industries became available for civilian work. As a result, the logging industry was able to meet

its requirements for workers to a much greater extent than formerly and employment rose sharply, reaching an all-time record in 1947. In the following year, demand for lumber and pulp and paper products eased and the logging labour force began to decrease. The downward trend continued throughout 1949.

Early in 1950 employment picked up again, stimulated by heavy domestic and external demand for lumber products and by low inventories. By 1951, a level was reached which was exceeded only by the 1947 record. The general buoyance of the Canadian economy at that time, and in particular the upsurge in construction activity, resulted in strong competition for available labour supplies.

By 1952, the trend turned downwards once again, for log inventories were high and the demand for certain forest products less buoyant. This, together with increasing mechanization of logging operations and the lengthening of the cutting season, led to a decline in logging employment. Labour surpluses appeared during 1952 and 1953, although shortages of certain skilled occupations still occurred during peak periods.

Since late 1954, logging employment has again been showing gradual year-to-year increases, with shortages of loggers developing in certain areas after the second half of 1955.

It is difficult to make accurate estimates of the actual size of the labour force engaged

(Over)

CONTENTS

The Logging Industry In Canada	1	Work For Handicapped	4
Cadet Camps	3	New 1953 Peak	4
5-Day Week	3	Coal Output	4
High Birth Rate	3	Posted To UK	6
Refugee Relief	4		