

Many of our people left the western provinces to take war jobs in the industrial plants of eastern Canada or on the west coast, and there is no question that many of them were registered as living in those provinces. I do not think we can criticize the western provinces for allowing their people to go to the other provinces. They left to work in war plants and thus make their contribution to the war effort of this country. While the census may be true for Canada as a whole, I hold the definite view that it is not true as far as the individual provinces are concerned, especially when it is considered in the light of the relevant circumstances.

What was the trend in the population of the western provinces from 1931 to 1941? As I pointed out before, the census of 1941 does not present a true picture of the population trend in western Canada. The west went through some dark days in the decade from 1931 to 1941. It suffered severe drought periods during that time, and no doubt some of the younger men lost heart and moved to other provinces. We also went through another difficult period known as the grasshopper period, although that was nothing new in Manitoba. I was reading the other day that the first crop failure suffered by the Selkirk settlers in Manitoba was on account of grasshoppers. Then, like all other provinces, we in the west went through a severe economic depression which no doubt had a certain effect upon our population.

To-day the picture is altogether different. As everyone knows, agriculture is on a stabilized basis. The prairie farm rehabilitation scheme has done much to prevent drought, and I do not think we shall see a repetition of that difficult period. Just in passing, I should like to say that the story of the prairie farm rehabilitation scheme has not as yet been fully told. When it is, I am sure all hon. members will be impressed by what has been done. It fills a glorious page in the history of western Canada; it is something that is truly to the credit of the present Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner).

The quality of farm production has greatly improved, and during the war years production was on a more varied basis than it had been before. Safeguards have been set up against destructive pests such as the one I have mentioned. Farmers are better organized, and on top of all this we have the herculean efforts of the government to provide more steady and larger markets for the products of western Canada. I mention all this in passing simply to show that the figures of the bureau of statistics do not convey a true

picture of present conditions. No doubt many of those who left during the war will return to the west in a year or so, if they have not returned already.

Therefore the conditions that exist to-day are entirely different. But these economic and climatic conditions do not account for the gloom picture of population trend in the prairie provinces presented by the 1941 census. It is noticeable that not one of the three western provinces during this decade retained its natural increase of population. Saskatchewan had an actual decrease of 25,793. Let us compare the natural increase with the actual increase or decrease in the three western provinces. While Manitoba had a natural increase of 70,000, she had an actual increase of only 29,000—I am giving only round figures—which would mean that Manitoba experienced a loss of 41,000 in that decade. Saskatchewan had a natural increase of 129,000, but an actual decrease of 26,000, making a total loss of 155,000. Alberta had a natural increase of 95,000, but an actual increase of 64,000, and consequently a total loss of 31,000.

These figures show that the actual increase in all of the three western provinces would be approximately only 60,000, and if we consider both together it means that western Canada lost in that decade pretty close to one-quarter of a million people. So that, as I mentioned before, the picture presented by these statistics is certainly not a bright one, and I still contend that it is not a true one. But even if the picture were adopted as the one upon which to base redistribution, if we accepted these statistics for the lack of better, what would be the results in the matter of redistribution?

I shall not quote again the section of the British North America Act because that has already been done by the hon. member for Charlevoix-Saguenay (Mr. Dorion), but I would just refer the house to section 51, subsections 1, 2 and 3, which provide that Quebec is to have a fixed number of sixty-five representatives and there is to be assigned to each of the other provinces such a number of members as will bear the same proportion to the number of its population as the number sixty-five bears to the number of the population of Quebec. The other subsection is to take care of the fractional part that may be left.

Let us take the population of the different provinces: Prince Edward Island, 95,047; Nova Scotia, 577,962; New Brunswick, 457,401;