

THE GEOGRAPHY OF MIGRATION IN TASMANIA, 1921-1961

VOLUME ONE

by

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DECLARATION

This thesis is based on my original research and contains no material which has been used for the award of any other degree or diploma.

Ruth Farmer

PREFACE

Originally it was planned to intensively study the spatial aspects of selected migration topics by means of a sample survey in areas chosen in the light of an analysis of census data. This idea has been transformed into a general study of the geography of migration in Tasmania between 1921 and 1961. It soon became clear in the preliminary investigation of the demographic and migratory 'background' that a general survey was necessary to identify the problems that require intensive study and to provide a general frame of reference.

Perhaps a word is called for about the large number of tables included in the second volume of the thesis: they arise from the writer's belief that the analysis of quantitative data is seriously impaired if the basic material is not available for examination. Not only do the 181 tables discussed in the text and the three appendix tables contain considerable information that has had to be neglected in order to keep the study within reasonable limits but also the tables that have not been included in the thesis. These tables are available and readers interested in greater detail should contact the writer, care of the Department of Geography in the University of Tasmania.

Acknowledgment is gratefully made to the people who have helped me in my work. For encouragement, advice and particularly for reading and commenting on the manuscript I am indebted to my supervisor, Professor P. Scott. In Canberra in pursuit of unpublished census data I benefited from the co-operation of Mr. W.J. Willcocks and Mr. J. Dent of the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics and from the assistance of Mr. J.N. Jennings and Mrs. E. Tyler of the

Institute of Advanced Studies of the Australian National University in arranging for the loan and transport of photo-copying machines. I have also been greatly aided by the long-term loan of out-of-print census results by the Tasmanian Office of the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics.

The statistical analyses of these data have been facilitated by the Hydro-University Computing Centre; thanks are due to Mr. J. Boothroyd for tuition in the programming language 503 Algol and for advice in the writing of my initial programmes. I owe a deep debt of gratitude to Miss J.J. Hine who undertook all the ink work involved in the preparation of the illustrations. For many reasons, but particularly for their constant endeavours to maintain the quietness I find conducive to study, for exoneration from a proportionate share of familial chores and for assistance with the checking of the thesis, I am the most indebted to my parents.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Census

Census of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Tas. Parl. Papers

Journals and Printed Papers of the Parliament of
Tasmania.

SUMMARY

The traditional high rates of out-migration from Tasmania to the Mainland, the low rates of immigration and the high level of fertility characteristic of a rural-dominated community compared with the other Australian States left a profound imprint on Tasmania's population in 1921. Only 24.5 per cent of the population were enumerated in the capital city compared the Australian average of 43.2 per cent and only 60.9 per cent of the male population were at the working ages from 15 to 64 compared with the Australian average of 63.9 per cent.

Continuity in the net out-migration from Tasmania dominated the intercensal period from 1921 to 1933. After an initial decline in the immediate post-war egress induced by the differential effects of the post-war recession, Tasmania's struggle against insolvency gave rise to a veritable exodus to the Mainland. Between 1924 and 1927 Tasmania experienced a net population loss. This loss was made particularly serious by the selectivity of the net out-movement. It took the onset of the great depression in 1929 to stem the tide of heavy net out-migration.

Other indications of the close relationship between the population movements and economic conditions are revealed by the concurrent intra-state movements. Everywhere except for the growth points around the major towns and at all ages except age 0 to 4 there were net population losses through migration. Their incidence was highest at the ages from 25 to 29 and from 30 to 34.

The census of 1933 sheds light on the depression's demographic and migratory impact but it is the movements in the era of economic recovery

that emphasize the extensiveness of the scarcity of work. In 1934 employment opportunities in Melbourne improved and there was a quick return to large-scale net out-migration. This was arrested when a major programme of hydro-electric power development was launched and industrial firms resumed operations.

By the end of the 'thirties there were signs of a rising tide of net out-migration, signs that were buoyed by the impact of the Second World War. Together with the out-movement of persons in the military forces such civilian out-movements caused an acute labour shortage in Tasmania. To offset this shortage prisoners of war were brought to Tasmania but their departure at the close of the war accentuated the problems associated with an excess demand for labour. Thus the climate of opinion was favourable to plans for substantially increasing the inflow of immigrants.

The distinctive aspect of the post-war immigration scheme was the financial assistance given to European immigrants of non-British Isles birth. Initially the influx of displaced persons was of prime importance but this gave way to an intake in which the Netherlands-born ranked pre-eminent. They were far less concentrated than the other immigrant groups in the centres of resource and industrial development. Moreover in the second post-war migration interval from 1954 to 1961 they were characterized by relatively low rates of net out-migration. Concomitant to the generally high rates of immigrant out-migration, the decreased rates of immigration and the reappearance of a net out-movement of the Australian-born was the reduced rate of economic expansion.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the nature of migration into, out of and within Tasmania between 1921 and 1961. More precisely, it is a study of the characteristics and interrelations of economy, demography, society, distance and oversea, interstate and intrastate migration. Emphasis is placed on the area differentials in the different types of migration¹ and to achieve comparative relevance the total Tasmanian environment and demographic scene are assessed in relation to conditions on the Australian Mainland.

Viewed from the standpoint of the other States the population of Tasmania had long been outstanding on account of its heavy rates of out-migration and low rates of in-migration. Just 31 years after the first settlement in Tasmania, originally known as Van Diemen's Land, out-migrants from Tasmania had settled in the lands across Bass Strait, founded the city of Melbourne and paved the way for the ensuing 'Port Phillip Mania'.² Then the discovery of gold in Victoria in 1851 stimulated an exodus that dislocated the colony and contrasted strikingly with the very limited success of attempts to attract immigrants from the United Kingdom:³ within a year 21,920 persons or nearly a third of the population had left the Island.⁴ To such an extent was Tasmania a marginal land with a marginal economy that the drift Northward became the largest

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- 1 The definitions of the migration terms used in this thesis are given in the Glossary.
 - 2 Tasmania in Australian Encyclopaedia, (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1958), 8, 431.
 - 3 F.K. Crowley, Immigration into Tasmania from the United Kingdom, 1860-1919, Papers and Proceedings Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 3 (1954), 103.
 - 4 P. Scott, Historical Evolution of Tasmanian Agriculture, 1804-1954, (typescript, not dated), 101.

population problem in Tasmania. By 1870 it had become almost traditional for the young and the vigorous to seek their fortunes outside the Colony.⁵ Little relief was wrought by the short-lived mining booms of the 'seventies, 'eighties and 'nineties and the turn of the century witnessed no departure from the established trends. Thus the census of 1921 which marked the end of an era of Australian development and the beginning of a new period of technological change records the profound imprint on the State's population of the continuing flight from Tasmania to the lands of greater promise. These features are discussed in the context of the space economy in the opening chapter.

The next six chapters are concerned with the changing patterns of migration during each of the intercensal periods from 1921 to 1961. In Chapter 2 attention is focused on the magnitude of the exodus to the Mainland in the 'twenties. Here the data emphasize the sensitivity of the movement to economic changes and the migrant's lack of faith in Tasmania's future. The importance of the economic factors is further underscored by the intrastate movements discussed in Chapter 3 and by the migratory response to both the great depression and the Second World War discussed in Chapter 4. More varied were the factors basic to the new phase of Tasmanian migration from 1947 to 1954 analysed in Chapter 5. Even so economic conditions helped appreciably to not only create the favourable atmosphere towards revolutionary large-scale immigration deemed necessary on political grounds but also to reverse the traditional currents of interstate migration considered in Chapter 6. Still the possibility of an escape from dissatisfying circumstances to the Mainland remained in the background. Thus the decline in the rate of employment expansion in

⁵ Tasmania, op. cit., 433.

Tasmania in the second post-war migration interval was accompanied by a revival of the traditional net outflow, an outflow weighted with both the native- and oversea-born peoples. These movements, together with the concurrent oversea and intrastate migrations are examined in Chapter 7.

Evidently this is an empirical study. Migration theory, however, undeveloped though it undoubtedly is,⁶ has not been disregarded. The volume, velocity and efficiency of migration streams and counterstreams have been considered in the light of the attenuating influence of population concentrations and economic opportunities with distance. Nevertheless the limitations of the available statistical data have precluded tests of the theoretical migration stream inverse distance relationship in terms of gravity and potential models.⁷ Data limitations have also precluded tests of the distortions arising from the tendency of people to move to destinations recently chosen by their friends and relatives. But in Chapter 4 census data have been used to statistically test a number of hypotheses concerning spatial differentials in the aggregate rates of net migration. Moreover questions about the characteristics of the migrants are considered throughout the thesis.

The thesis is based on a variety of sources. To gain insight into the general setting of the total environment for the entire period discussed the journals and papers of the Parliament of Tasmania have been

6 E.S. Lee, A Theory of Migration, Demography, 3 (1966), 48-9.

7 See, for example, G. Olsson, Distance and Human Interaction: A Review and Bibliography, (Philadelphia: Regional Science Research Institute, Bibliography series 2, 1965), 43-70; D.F. Bramhall, Gravity, Potential and Spatial Interaction Models in Isard, W. (ed.), Methods of Regional Analysis: An Introduction to Regional Science, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.; Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Technology Press of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1960), 493-568; W. Christian and W. Braden, Rural Migration and the Gravity Model, Rural Sociology, 31 (1966), 73-80.

systematically analysed. Selected issues of newspapers have also been analysed and published works have been consulted. Information has been obtained from contemporary manuscript sources, from electoral rolls and from maps. But the main source of data consists of published and unpublished statistics of the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics.

This material has been summarized in terms of descriptive statistics and has been used to estimate the volume and intensity of net intercensal migration by age and sex. The procedures used in the preparation of the migration estimates are discussed in Appendix 2 and in Appendix Tables 1 and 2 the basic reference tables are presented. All these computations are limited by the nature of the areal units to which the data refer. Here it is particularly important that Tasmania's local government areas or municipalities embrace dissimilar urban and rural areas that narrow the true difference between the residence groups.⁸ Another source of bias derives from the exclusion of the 'not stated' particulars of the census results; initially it was planned to proportionately distribute them but this proved to be a far too time-consuming task.⁹ On the other hand it was the uncertainty of the resulting benefits that was the deciding issue in the decision not to weight the values in the correlation analyses of data for local government areas of varying size.¹⁰ In

8 For a discussion on the problems of homogeneity of statistical units in areal analyses see, for example, O.D. Duncan, R.P. Cuzzort and B. Duncan, Statistical Geography: Problems in Analyzing Areal Data, (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1961), 37 and G.C. Dickinson, Statistical Mapping and the Presentation of Statistics, (London: Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd., 1964), 71-3.

9 For a discussion on the problems of interpreting such biased figures see G.W. Barclay, Techniques of Population Analysis, (New York and London: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1962), 190.

10 See A.H. Robinson, The Necessity of Weighting Values in Correlation Analysis of Areal Data, Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 46 (1956), 233-6; E.N. Thomas and D.L. Anderson, Additional

interpreting and evaluating the correlation coefficients it should also be noted that some are based on data which refer to successive censuses notwithstanding the fact that time series observations do not meet the statistical requirements of random, normally distributed, independent observations and that none are based on data that have been transformed to improve their fulfilment of the assumptions underlying the use of correlation coefficients.

Finally it must be stressed that the thesis is intended to be no more than a contribution to the understanding of the migration experience in Tasmania. Many topics have been covered but many questions are left unanswered. In so far as it provides a framework of the migration events and the general influences on Tasmanian migration this thesis is a background study to more detailed examinations of the State's migration problem in the future.