

THE DEMOGRAPHY OF TASMANIA.

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ABSTRACT

The chief results of the Census of 1911 are now accessible, and this circumstance naturally suggests a review of Tasmanian demography. The returns, however, are still incomplete, and all that is attempted in this paper is to call attention to some of the more remarkable phenomena in Tasmanian population, leaving a fuller discussion until all the data are available.

Migration.

The seasonal fluctuations in Tasmanian migration are well known, but need emphasising as a warning against comparing the population at different times unless both estimates are for the same day of the year. By distributing the annual loss equally throughout the year, and taking it away from the migration figures, we get the average quarterly fluctuation for the last ten years.

<i>Quarter ending</i>					<i>Fluctuation.</i>
March 31st	...	...	...	...	-1,320
June 30th	...	...	...	...	-1,851
Sept. 30th	...	...	...	...	-2
Dec. 31st	...	...	...	...	+3,173

The average annual loss since 1901 is 1,535, but different years show very marked variations, of which it is not easy to find an adequate explanation. The figures, however, have been a good deal adjusted, and it is not yet certain that they represent the facts exactly.

Natural Increase.

The Tasmanian figures are now ahead of those recorded for any country of the world, the average for the last five years just beating the last available figures for Bulgaria, which previously headed the list. There are

no very special features about the death-rate, but the birth-rate has several points of interest.

Birth-rate and the Maternity Bonus.

Last year there was a rise in the recorded rate in all the Australian States, coincident with the coming into effect of the Maternity Bonus on October 10, 1912. It was at first thought that this was due to registration of births being more promptly carried out. But the greater part of the increase has persisted during the first six months of 1913, and it is now clear that it corresponds to a permanent increase in registered births per 1,000. It may be simply that births are registered which were formerly not registered. We have no means of checking the registration of births. The difference between successive census enumerations of course equals natural increase plus net immigration. It is always assumed that the figures for natural increase are correct, and that the large errors which occur are due to defective record of migration. But it may very well be that the birth figures are in defect, and that this deficiency is now being corrected to a large extent by the effect of the Maternity Bonus. The alternative is that there is a real increase of the birth-rate—after a long period in which it has been first decreasing and then almost stationary—due partly to general prosperity and partly to the large increase in immigration during the last two years.

Fertility.

In place of the crude birth-rate the census makes available the figures for fertility, that is, the number of births per 1,000 women aged 15—45.

The comparison with crude birth-rate is of interest:—

			<i>Birth-rate.</i>		<i>Fertility.</i>
Australia	1880	...	35.2	...	170
	1890	...	35.0	...	159
	1900	...	27.3	...	117
	1912	...	28.6	...	126
Tasmania	1912	...	30.5	...	134

It will be noticed that the position of Tasmania relative to the whole of Australia is practically unaltered by taking fertility in place of birth-rate.

There is another test which may be taken. Birth-rate is as much an economic as a physiological phenomenon, and the readiness of the man to undertake the burden

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of parentage may be gauged by the number of births per 1,000 males aged 20—55.

For 1912 these figures are:—

Australia	117,
Tasmania	133,

a rather striking result in view of the lower economic status of the Tasmanian population.

Religion and Size of Families.

The influence of Religion on the birth-rate may be shown by taking out the average size of family. Taking the religion of the mother as the test, we have—

<i>Religion of Mother.</i>	<i>Average Family.</i>
Church of England	3.74
Roman Catholic	4.14

There is then a difference of about 11 per cent. in favour of the Roman Catholic in the birth-rate, or about 20 per cent. in the rate of natural increase, assuming that the marriage-rates and death-rates are practically the same for both denominations.

Birth-rate and Districts.

We find the high birth-rate—33 to 36—in certain districts mainly occupied with dairying, potatoes, fruit, mining, and timber. In the pastoral districts and old-settled farming districts, which are more concerned with grain, hay, and stock, the birth-rate is low—about 25. The figures for the towns, Hobart and Launceston, are high, but are swollen by births that properly belong to the surrounding districts; their real figures are probably about the average for the whole island—30 to 31.

There are three anomalous districts. Sheffield has a birth-rate of 26 or less, while six similar North-Western districts have an average of 36. Beaconsfield has a birth-rate of 27, when the other mining districts average 34. Port Cygnet has a birth-rate of 19 or less, while the other fruitgrowing districts average 33. These figures are only approximate, on account of changes which have taken place in the boundaries of registration districts. The explanation may possibly be found when the age distribution in these districts is available.

Birth-rate and Occupation.

A tabulation of births according to occupations of fathers gives extraordinary results. In the following table

the number of males over 20 following different occupations is taken from the census results, and the occupations of the fathers of children from the registration of births.

*Number of Births per 1000 Males over 20 Years
According to Occupation.*

	<i>Commonwealth.</i>				<i>Tasmania.</i>			
Domestic	70	...	...	...	68			
Land	72	...	...	...	82			
Professional ...	72	...	...	...	78			
Mining	78	...	...	...	80			
Commercial... ..	88	...	...	...	89			
Transport	105	...	...	...	87			
Industrial	142	..	...	...	212			

The figures for "Industrial" occupations are hardly credible. One may suspect that farm labourers, who were tabulated as "Farming" at the Census, were put down as labourers simply and so became "Industrial" on registering a child. Unfortunately, on account of the registration work having changed hands frequently, the Tasmanian Statistical Office is not able to express a definite opinion on this point. Even allowing for a considerable error, there is a suggestion in the above table of a selective birth-rate of a most unpromising kind, which calls for full investigation.

Masculinity.

The Masculinity of Tasmanian population, i.e., the number of males per 100 females, is fairly steady at 104 to 106 for all ages, but the variations with age are remarkable. Beginning at 105, it keeps that figure to the age of 15, and then falls abruptly, so that at 20 years it is 92. It then rises strongly and continuously till the age of 55, when there are 118 males per 100 females, and then falls till the age of 80, when the masculinity is 92, while in the last few years of life the males are once more in excess.

A similar graph for Hobart shows the same phenomena exaggerated. The masculinity at the age of 20 sinks to 62. It then rises till the age of 48, but does not get above 91, and then falls again till it reaches 66 at the age of 77, with the same superior longevity of the male showing itself in the closing years.