

DISORDER, DEPENDENCY AND FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY:
UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF IN WINNIPEG,
1907 - 1942

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of Graduate Studies
The University of Manitoba

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Michael R. Goeres
September 1981

DISORDER, DEPENDENCY AND FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY:

UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF IN WINNIPEG,

1907 - 1942

BY

MICHAEL RALPH GOERES

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

© 1981

Permission has been granted to the LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA to lend or sell copies of this thesis, to the NATIONAL LIBRARY OF CANADA to microfilm this thesis and to lend or sell copies of the film, and UNIVERSITY MICROFILMS to publish an abstract of this thesis.

The author reserves other publication rights, and neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's written permission.

FOR URSULA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iv
LIST OF APPENDICES	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER	
ONE. "Rattle Their Bones Over the Stones": 1907-1917	4
TWO. Return to Normality: 1918-1922	47
THREE. Retrenchment: 1923-1928	90
FOUR. "The Poor House Forever": 1929-1931	146
FIVE. Shifting the Burden: 1932-1936	199
SIX. The End of Relief: 1937-1942	250
CONCLUSION	270
APPENDICES	275
BIBLIOGRAPHY	286

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of the origins and development of unemployment relief in Winnipeg between the years 1907 and 1942. It postulates that unemployment relief was a reaction not to unemployment but to problems created by unemployment; these were problems of disorder, dependency and fiscal responsibility. The thesis traces these responses and demonstrates how they resulted in an increasing involvement in relief by the municipal, provincial and federal governments. It first considers reactions to the first heavy incidences of unemployment in 1907-08 and 1913-15. It then discusses the post-World War I period, the active involvement of the federal government in relief, and the effect on local government when that involvement ended. It analyses the relationship between the political groups on Winnipeg City Council and between City Council and the provincial government, and discusses how these relationships affected unemployment relief. The thesis considers the many responses to unemployment in the first three years of the Great Depression. It then turns to the middle years of the 1930s, suggesting that the emphasis of relief programmes was on curing dependency but within the rigid constraints of fiscal responsibility. The thesis concludes by considering the impact of the relief experience on public attitudes. It suggests that the result of the relief experience was to create an insistent public demand for what became the postwar welfare state.

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A.	Causes of Destitution of Individuals Assisted by the Social Welfare Association, Winnipeg, 1913-1915	276
APPENDIX B.	Cost of Unemployment Relief in Winnipeg, 1920-1930	279
APPENDIX C.	Occupation of Married Men on Relief in Winnipeg, Selected Years, 1921-1941	280
APPENDIX D.	Cost of All Unemployment Relief in Manitoba According to Source of Funds, 1930-1942	281
APPENDIX E.	Direct Relief Expenditures in Manitoba According to Source of Funds, 1930-1942	282
APPENDIX F.	Direct Relief Expenditures in Winnipeg According to Source of Funds, 1931-1937	283
APPENDIX G.	Comparative Statement of Individuals Provided Relief or Work - November, March and June, 1930-1942	284

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have assisted in the research and preparation of this thesis. It is a pleasure to express my gratitude to them.

The generous financial support of the History departments of the Universities of Winnipeg and Manitoba and of a Manitoba Graduate Fellowship made possible the necessary time for research. Grants from the John S. Ewart Memorial Fund financed two visits to the Public Archives of Canada, for which I thank the administrators of the Fund.

The staffs of the three archives in which I worked were unfailingly helpful. Three people, in particular, devoted more time to my queries than I probably deserved. I am most grateful to Barry Hyman of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, to John Smart of the Public Archives of Canada, and to Shirley Spragge of Queen's University Archives. I would also like to thank the staffs of the University of Winnipeg Library, the Elizabeth Dafoe Library of the University of Manitoba, the Provincial Library of Manitoba, the Centennial Library of the City of Winnipeg, the Library of the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, and the National Library of Canada.

The Estate of Dorothy F. Puttee kindly permitted me to quote from Miss Puttee's 1927 thesis, "The Development of State Relief in the Province of Manitoba."

Special thanks is extended to the City of Winnipeg's Social Services Department; to its Director, Mr. Ron Hooper; and to Miss Ethel Saunders, now retired from the Department. In 1977 Mr. Hooper and Miss Saunders found in the basement of their office building and made available to me the Minutes of the Unemployment Relief Committee and some of the Committee's annual reports. This material proved invaluable. Unhappily, the assistance and interest of Mr. Hooper and Miss Saunders were not matched by the City Clerk's Office. Mr. H. Sanger, City Clerk at the time and since retired, refused me permission to look at any civic records under his control. Hopefully, future researchers will have more access to civic records now that the City of Winnipeg has established its Archives.

A special note of gratitude must go to A.B. McKillop, my thesis advisor. In an undergraduate class a few years ago he first encouraged me to pursue the ideas which have resulted in this thesis. His advice and assistance from that time to now have been much appreciated.

Finally, my greatest debt is to my wife, Ursula. She has assisted at every step. She supported my decision to undertake this task, did all the typing, offered useful criticisms, and provided the occasional prodding necessary for me to get on with the work. For this, and for much more, I have dedicated this thesis to her.

INTRODUCTION

No time or place can be studied in isolation. This is especially true of the 1930s, yet that decade is discussed as a self-contained unit more than any other in our history. A chronological quirk is much responsible, for the "Depression Decade" began with the shattering collapse of the stock markets in October 1929 and was blasted away by the German bombs falling on Poland in September 1939. As well, the memory of that decade is burned into our collective consciousness. "These were years of such torment and frustration," writes Victor Hoar, "that the least one can do is maintain a reverent attachment to the word depression. More often than not, we signify the importance of the depression by calling it great. And then to make sure that no one will misunderstand, we capitalize the whole thing: The Great Depression."¹ Many names, events and places make up memories of the 1930s--Hitler, the Spanish Civil War, Ethiopia--but the decade means, more than anything else, mass unemployment. Unemployment was the root of torment and frustration in the Great Depression.

This fixation with the 1930s has tended to skew an

¹v. Hoar, ed., The Great Depression: Essays and Memoirs from Canada and the United States (Toronto, 1969), p. iv.

understanding of the origins of unemployment, the problems which it posed and the ways in which those problems were handled. Historians have acknowledged that Canada faced earlier periods of unemployment, but these have not been studied in detail and only recently have the relationships between earlier hard times and the 1930s been probed.² In Winnipeg the unemployment of the 1930s was only the most recent and severe incidence of a problem which had plagued the city from the early days of the century. Relief mechanisms were in place long before the thirties; they moved easily into operation in the autumn of 1929 and remained the basis of unemployment relief throughout the Great Depression. This thesis is an attempt to explain the origins and development of unemployment relief, what were the nature and functions of relief, and how the established relief system responded to the crisis of the 1930s. Fundamental to this examination is the contention that there was a continuity of method and philosophy from the time unemployment relief was introduced to the time it was ended.

Three points are essential to an understanding of relief. First, unemployment relief was a response to potential or actual disorder. Second, unemployment relief confronted a problem of destitution, not unemployment;

²See, for example, J. Struthers, "Prelude to Depression: The Federal Government and Unemployment, 1918-1929," Canadian Historical Review, 58(3), 1977, pp. 277-93; P. Roy, "Vancouver: 'The Mecca of the Unemployed,' 1907-1929," in Town and City: Aspects of Western Canadian Urban Development, ed. A.F.J. Artibise (Regina, 1981), pp. 393-413.

therefore, its basic concern was dependency. Third, unemployment relief entailed the expenditure of public money, so it was administered within the rigid constraints of fiscal responsibility. Together, these constitute the essential nature of unemployment relief. Each point is not of equal weight, however, and over the years the balance shifts often from one to another. The complex interplay of disorder, dependency and fiscal responsibility is the history of unemployment relief. It begins in the first decade of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER ONE

"RATTLE THEIR BONES OVER THE STONES": 1907-1917

I

On the evening of 27 December 1907 the Walker Theatre, newest and most elegant of Winnipeg's playhouses, opened its doors to a production of a different kind. An overflow crowd of the city's public men, merchants, financiers and entrepreneurs--the heart of the body politic--jostled for seats. They came to be reassured by the "best and broadest citizens, men who have the interests of the west at heart, and who see beyond today," that Winnipeg's future was as bright and promising as could dare be imagined. With evangelistic fervour the evening's speakers presented their considered opinions that if each citizen would do his duty Winnipeg, which had witnessed such remarkable growth in the past twenty years, would "advance with more rapid strides toward the goal of supremacy which is its manifest destiny." It was, reported a staffer of the Manitoba Free Press, a meeting of "Winnipeg the optimistic."¹

Undoubtedly, as they emerged into the raw winter air from the Walker's foyer, the bankers, lawyers, merchants and salesmen reflected on the evening's proceedings,

¹Manitoba Free Press, 28 December 1907, p. 1.

commented on the sagacity of the speakers, and shared their mood of optimism. But over the next few days, as they pored over the papers in their offices or served customers in their stores, they may well have also thought that, though the future might be propitious, in December 1907 the times were out of joint. Since the mid-1880s ever-increasing prosperity had seemed the birthright of Winnipeg. For those who measured progress in terms of ledger columns and census returns there was no doubt that the twentieth century belonged to Canada and especially to Winnipeg. The city's population had doubled, and doubled again. Its commercial dominance of Western Canada was absolute. From its position as the commercial and railway locus of the grain trade grew the metropolitan infrastructure of the city: warehouses and railway maintenance shops were constructed; houses and apartment blocks sprang up to accommodate the workers; business thrived, catering to the needs of the growing resident population and to the immigrants who passed by the thousands through Winnipeg.²

Now, despite a promising first quarter and greatly increased wheat prices, Winnipeg was suffering a sharp economic recession as the ripple effect of an American financial crisis depressed the international money markets. One by one New York, London, Brussels, Montreal and Toronto financiers imposed credit restrictions. The results were quickly felt in Western Canada. The value of construction

²R.C. Bellan, "The Development of Winnipeg as a Metropolitan Centre," Ph. D. thesis, Columbia University, 1958, pp. 19-108.

in Winnipeg was nearly halved compared to 1906 as builders were unable to obtain mortgages. With the curtailment of building, thousands of skilled and unskilled construction labourers were left without jobs and lumber camps, which normally absorbed large numbers of the unskilled, cut back sharply in their output. Although considerable railway construction proceeded apace, traffic declined and fewer men in both the shops and the running trades were needed. The situation was aggravated by a wheat crop only some 63 percent that of the previous year. This led to further reductions in the demand for railway workers and for harvest help. "The number of those temporarily out of work," the Labour Gazette reported laconically, "has been larger at certain points than in some years past."³

There was certainly evidence in Winnipeg to support the Labour Gazette's report. "During the past ten days," the Manitoba Free Press had reported at the end of November, "it has at times been almost impossible to make one's way along Main Street in the vicinity of employment offices of the north end."⁴ This in itself was not unusual, for unemployment was as regular as the seasons. The itinerant work force of Western Canada moved among the lumber camps, the railway construction camps and the wheat harvests as the seasons determined labour demand. Every autumn the labour market contracted and many itinerants flocked to

³Ibid., pp. 116-77; Labour Gazette, February 1908, p. 958.

⁴Manitoba Free Press, 30 November 1907, p. 3.

the cities to live on their stakes and await resumption of work in the spring.⁵

But that winter there was concern about the "out of works," for there seemed many more than usual and, because work had slackened by the middle of summer rather than by late autumn, they had fewer funds than usual on which to subsist through the winter. Concern was in part a reflection of Victorian sympathy and charity. As the Free Press editorialized:

Charity is a characteristic of the West. When want is made known, we are swift to its relief. There is a great deal of private, practical, though anonymous giving in this city by men whose right hands are shy of the left. It is that charity alone that keeps the rich man's heart soft and sweet. The movement on foot to provide work for the poor is good; and there are those among us with plenty of money who could greatly assist the Mayor and his colleagues in making work that the poor may not be pauperized.⁶

Concern was prompted also by the potential social disorder which the crowds of unemployed represented. This was first revealed to Winnipeg through news reports of the situation in Vancouver. On 6 December some five hundred unemployed men marched on Vancouver City Hall to demand work and a municipal employment bureau. Winnipeg's newspapers carried graphic descriptions of the march and

⁵A.R. McCormack, "The Blanketstiffs: Immigrant Workers and Railway Construction in Canada, 1899-1913," unpublished manuscript in possession of the author, pp. 15-16.

⁶Manitoba Free Press, 21 December 1907, p. 4. For an exposition of the Victorian sense of charity see V. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1876 (New Haven, 1957), pp. 273-81.

the demands. Spread across page one of the Free Press were the words of Victor Midgely, the unemployed's spokesman. "If they are not given employment," Midgely warned, "and get down to the last cent, I think it probable riotous demonstrations will occur. In that case the city will be responsible. Unless the city helps them I don't know what will happen." Faced with the threat of serious civil disorder, Vancouver City Council voted three thousand dollars for relief works and arranged for an old police station as a sleeping place for the men.⁷

Combining with the spirit of charity and the fear of civil disorder was unease about the ability of the city's benevolent institutions to assist properly all those deserving of help. Winnipeg had developed an extensive charitable infrastructure, but not one focused on the care of the destitute able-bodied. Some institutions, such as the Men's Own and the Coffee House, provided limited aid to local indigents, transient labourers and stranded immigrants.⁸ Others provided temporary family relief, but all limited aid and encouraged the search for employment. The guiding principle

⁷Manitoba Free Press, 7 December 1907, p. 1; *ibid.*, 12 December 1907, p. 3.

⁸Men's Own of the City of Winnipeg, "Sixth Annual Report [for the year ending 31 December 1907]"; Canada, Immigration Branch Records (microfilm copy, Provincial Archives of Manitoba [P.A.M.], MG4 D1), file 839 pt. 2, J.O. Smith to W.D. Scott, 22 December 1904.

of all such agencies, as the constitution of the Central Relief Association emphasized, was "not to encourage the pauper spirit."⁹ Accompanying this principle was a dissociation of destitution from its economic roots. In the case of unemployment, destitution was due largely to a lack of thrift and sobriety on the individual's part. Work might be scarce and difficult to find, or a man may have made himself unemployable through intemperance or immorality but, as J.S. Woodsworth wrote in 1911, "in this world, particularly in our new land where there is so much to be done, there ought to be work for all. The difficulty is to get the man and the work together."¹⁰ Assistance to the individual would be rendered until work was secured, but the emphasis was on the immediate relief of severe want, the procuring of employment and the elimination of dependency.

The problem which Winnipeg appeared to face in the winter of 1907-08 was not unemployment or a lack of resources to relieve destitution, but a disorganized array of agencies, each working independently of the other and, ultimately, doing more harm than good. Woodsworth brought this unhappy and dangerous situation before the citizens

⁹P.A.M., MG14 B38, A. Polson Papers, "Constitution of the Central Relief Association of Winnipeg," [1895]. For a summary of the kinds of charitable institutions in Winnipeg in this period, and which in the case of relief agencies emphasizes the principle of discouraging pauperism, see J.S. Woodsworth, My Neighbour: A Study of City Conditions, A Plea for Social Service (1911; reprint ed., Toronto, 1972), pp. 159-72.

¹⁰Woodsworth, My Neighbour, p. 160.

of Winnipeg in a letter published in the Manitoba Free Press on 5 December 1907. Decrying the absence of cooperation among charities, he succinctly summarized the results of uncoordinated efforts. "There is an immense amount of overlapping. Unintentionally, pauperism is encouraged. Lazy, servile people with a religious vocabulary may live on the fat of the land, while many cases of real need go unrelieved."¹¹ Woodsworth proposed a central society of all charitable organizations which would keep a record of all cases, investigate all applicants' needs and operate a labour bureau to find at least temporary employment for the needy. Such an organization would protect citizens from fraud, would safeguard the deserving needy, would assist the reform of hardened paupers and would discourage incipient paupers.

The large numbers of destitute individuals seeking assistance underscored Woodsworth's proposals. Mayor J.H. Ashdown had been pondering the question of unemployment and had come to the conclusion that the City should carry on some sewer and water works in order to provide work for married men. In Ashdown's view the City had a duty to ameliorate suffering, as did every responsible citizen. However, he said, "there were limits beyond which the city could not go. It was . . . largely up to the citizens themselves to provide ways and means to relieve the present situation."¹² The City should help organize and guide

¹¹Manitoba Free Press, 5 December 1907, p. 2.

¹²Ibid., 20 December 1907, p. 10.

charitable assistance, but in no way should private endeavors be supplanted. The demands on the several agencies and the dangers, to them and to their clients, of uncoordinated efforts brought about the organization which Woodsworth had proposed.

At the invitation of Mayor Ashdown, representatives of almost all the churches and charitable institutions gathered at City Hall on the evening of 19 December 1907. All were acutely aware of the immediate situation which had prompted the Mayor's call and were determined to arrange for the best possible means of assisting the city's destitute inhabitants. The theme of the meeting was struck by J.S. Woodsworth as he began the discussions. He reiterated the points made in his published letter. Although the charities were doing good work, he emphasized that often "their methods were directly calculated to pauperize people"; instead of eliminating dependency, disorganized efforts actually encouraged it. In the present circumstances when so many were able-bodied, it was crucial to prevail against pauperism. Said Captain Stevens of the Church Army: "As far as possible they should save the children of assisted families from the taint of pauperism and prevent the tradition of pauperism in families." That pauperism was setting in already was demonstrated by the numbers of men begging in the streets and by the alleged exploitation of charities: the Reverend Dr. Wilson "knew no city where the charitable were so

befooled."¹³

While the public was thus being befooled, there was the possibility of actually encouraging pauperism. The flesh was weak and, as the Free Press suggested when endorsing the meeting, the very existence of dissociated agencies "is a temptation to those on the borderline of self-support to seek assistance."¹⁴ The need for a reform of charities was clearly established; the need to do so quickly was emphasized by the statements of W.H. Henshaw, General Secretary of the Men's Own. "There is a dire necessity for immediate relief," he reminded the assembly. "If not done, something more regrettable than anything that has yet been seen or heard of in the city will happen."¹⁵

At the conclusion of discussions it had been resolved to ask the Mayor to appoint a committee "to consider and report upon a feasible scheme for the wise administration of relief in the city."¹⁶ A week later another gathering of the charitable societies adopted a constitution and formally established an umbrella organization, the Associated Charities. Its stated objectives confirmed the sentiments expressed at the meeting of 19 December and rested on the

¹³Ibid.; Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 20 December 1907, p. 2.

¹⁴Manitoba Free Press, 19 December 1907, p. 4.

¹⁵Ibid., 20 December 1907, p. 10; Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 20 December 1907, p. 2.

¹⁶Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 20 December 1907, p. 2.

principles of sound administration, voluntarism and less eligibility.¹⁷ Among these objectives the first was to organize relief (in descending order of importance) from relatives and friends of the needy, from the appropriate charities, and lastly from charitable individuals and corporations. Closely associated with this was the promotion of cooperation between the charities and benevolent persons "in order to prevent imposition and the unwise duplication of relief." To accomplish this, bureaux of investigation and information were proposed, the former to maintain careful records of all applicants and the latter to provide free information regarding employment and sources of relief. The remaining objectives emphasized less eligibility and the rehabilitative role of charity. The Associated Charities hoped that its very existence would "discourage begging and fraud." It would "insist upon self-help on the part of the needy and as far as possible to make the giving of relief conditional upon such efforts." Finally, and most important, the Associated Charities would "treat each applicant for help

¹⁷Less eligibility is a deterrent doctrine of relief. It was enunciated as such in Britain's 1834 Poor Law Report. Under this doctrine, comments de Schweinitz, "the assistance provided for the person in need must be such as to cause his condition to be less desirable, less satisfactory . . . than the condition of the lowest-paid laborer who was not in receipt of relief." K. de Schweinitz, England's Road to Social Security: From the Statute of Laborers in 1349 to the Beveridge Report of 1942 (New York, 1961), pp. 123-24. See also F.F. Piven and R.A. Cloward, Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare (New York, 1971), pp. 34-36.

in such a way as to further permanent improvement."¹⁸

The eagerness with which charity organization was met was only partly due to the prevailing unemployment. The increased level of destitution brought about by unemployment had certainly served to reveal inadequacies in the charitable structure; but the enthusiasm for what was essentially an administrative reform was more deeply rooted in the spirit of urban reform then sweeping North America. An integral element of that reform spirit was the bureaucratic method, which utilized specialists and professionals to develop a non-political, economic and efficient administration.¹⁹ In keeping with this approach the most important task of the Associated Charities was the appointment of a qualified chief administrator. After a long search John Howard Toynbee Falk was selected as General Secretary. Falk was born in Liverpool and had been educated at Rugby and Balliol College, Oxford. Employed for a time in Liverpool and Odessa, Russia by a firm of grain merchants, he had crossed the Atlantic and become involved in social work. He had been a director of Boy's Work in the Christadora House Settlement in New York City and was later an assistant director of the Charity

¹⁸Manitoba Free Press, 28 December 1907, p. 5.

¹⁹See P. Rutherford, "Tomorrow's Metropolis: The Urban Reform Movement in Canada, 1880-1920," in The Canadian City: Essays in Urban History, ed. G.A. Stetler and A.F.J. Artibise (Toronto, 1977), pp. 371-72, 378-79. A useful, less sympathetic, assessment of urban reform is J.C. Weaver, "'Tomorrow's Metropolis' Revisited: A Critical Assessment of Urban Reform in Canada, 1880-1920," in *ibid.*, pp. 393-418.

Organization Society of New York. In many ways he represented the coalition of British and American currents in social reform, and undoubtedly this attracted the Winnipeg charities to him. Falk assumed the position of General Secretary in September 1908.²⁰

The long interval between the organization of the Associated Charities and its administrative beginnings emphasizes the bureaucratic spirit of the development. Only when the right personnel were found could the work be properly undertaken. It also revealed a lessened concern about the degree of destitution in Winnipeg. The masses of men crowding the North End employment offices seemed to have disappeared. The existing charities were fully engaged, but the situation was not unmanageable nor was it as bad as some had first feared. Well-publicized examples of men asking for assistance but refusing to work in return seemed to indicate that reports of wholesale destitution were fanciful. That these men were unemployed was undeniable, but a refusal to work suggested that they were at best vagrants and beggars and very likely were thieves. The Voice, journal of organized labour in Winnipeg, responded to such sentiments with the verse: "Rattle their bones over the stones, they are the out-of-works, whom nobody owns."²¹

²⁰Provincial Library of Manitoba, Biographical Scrapbook B3, p. 193; G. Childs, "History of Relief Work in Winnipeg," Social Welfare, February 1927, p. 363.

²¹Manitoba Free Press, 24 December 1907, p. 5; *ibid.*, 25 December 1907, p. 11; *ibid.*, 27 December 1907, p. 2; R.C. Bellan, Winnipeg First Century: An Economic History (Winnipeg, 1978), pp. 91-92; The Voice, 13 March 1908, p. 6.

Events would soon show that not only did no one, including The Voice's English labourite constituency, own the "out-of-works" but no one in the English speaking community knew how many they were, where they lived, or even who they were.

II

At noon on 1 May 1908, international day of worker's solidarity, a column of seven hundred to one thousand men marching four abreast appeared on Main Street. Heading the parade were two red flags and a banner proclaiming "We Want Work." The column, soon swollen to perhaps twenty-five hundred, headed to City Hall but was forced by police to detour east. As men milled about it was learned that the Mayor was absent from his office, so the column soon reformed and marched north to the Jewish Hall at Pritchard and Powers. There a number of speeches were delivered in Polish, Russian and Ukrainian, after which the crowd quietly dispersed. The demonstration had come as a surprise to most of Winnipeg and had especially caught the English-speaking labour movement off-guard. "The peculiarity about this demonstration," noted The Voice, "was the complete ignorance that the public was in respecting it. It was an instance showing how many people there are in Winnipeg who know not one another and of whom little is known." Such comments underscored the social and political gulf between the English and foreign immigrants, the cause

of many problems in Winnipeg's socialist politics.²²

The demonstration also indicated the existence of a large pool of unemployed submerged within the immigrant population, unknown and untouched by civic authorities and the many charitable agencies. Further evidence of this pool of labour appeared a month later. On 2 June 1908 it was announced that construction would resume on the Union Station, a depot designed for the joint use of the National Transcontinental and Grand Trunk Pacific Railways. By 7:00 A.M. the next day an estimated two thousand men had appeared clamouring for work. They were turned away disappointed, for the few men required had already been hired.²³ On 5 June an "army of Galicians", reported to number between two thousand and three thousand, appeared before the offices of the Canadian Northern Railway, demanding to be put to work. While another one thousand "regular members of the army of the unemployed" looked on, the immigrants were told that they had been misled by rumours and that no work was yet available.²⁴ To organized labour these incidents proved even more strongly the

²²"None of the English socialistic organizations," reported the Tribune, "acknowledge any connection with the parade." Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 1 May 1908, p. 1; The Voice, 1 May 1908, p. 1; A.R. McCormack, Reformers, Rebels and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899-1919 (Toronto, 1977), esp. pp. 65-67, 77-97; A.R. McCormack, "Radical Politics in Winnipeg: 1899-1915," Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba, Transactions, Series 3, 29 (1972-73), pp. 81-97.

²³The Voice, 5 June 1908, p. 1.

²⁴Ibid., p. 7.

contention that immigration policy was to blame for the levels of unemployment. At the same time, there was surprise at the numbers and wonder at the existence of the unemployed. "How these men are living is a mystery," commented The Voice. "They exhibit a patience and a stoicism most remarkable. A large part of them are non-English-speaking. Where there is a prospect of work they are there in crowds, with shovel and pick if it is on the scene of operations, or if it is an employment office which has unlocked its doors they pack it full to suffocation and are often only got outside by a ruse."²⁵

Even as these demonstrations took place the world-wide financial crisis was coming to an end. With a renewal of business confidence, railway and building construction expanded and commercial activity revived. Slowly the ranks of the unemployed were depleted. It was not until late July, however, that the crowds disappeared from the Winnipeg employment offices. By then, reported The Voice, railway workers were finally getting steady work and experienced lumber workers were well-employed. Workers in the building trades were also becoming fully employed, but this was probably due as much to the fact that many tradesmen had left Winnipeg as to the general economic revival. As for general labourers, there were still far too many men in the city for the work available²⁶ but by August and September

²⁵Ibid., p. 1.

²⁶Ibid., 31 July 1908, p. 1; Bellan, Winnipeg First Century, pp. 99-101.

even this situation had eased as the rush to the harvest began.

Unemployment did not, of course, disappear, nor did the destitution of some of the population. What had disappeared was the danger which such destitution presented. In the winter of 1908-09 and after, the number of observable unemployed and destitute declined as opportunities were taken of the economic upswing. But, more important, there was a new awareness on the part of civic and charitable officials of the existence of destitution and better means of dealing with the situation. The City of Winnipeg, for example, adopted a policy of spreading sewer construction work over the entire year so as to provide some work during the winter for those cast out of employment at the conclusion of the summer season.²⁷

The Associated Charities quickly grew from a co-ordinating body to a relief agency. Shortly after J.H.T. Falk commenced his duties, the Associated Charities took upon itself full responsibility for the relief of homeless destitute men and established a woodyard as a work test.²⁸ This immediately allowed many other agencies to direct their attention more specifically to their own areas of concern. The Margaret Scott Nursing Mission was one of these. At the conclusion of the Associated Charities' first year of operation, the Mission's secretary reported: "There

²⁷Labour Gazette, December 1910, p. 630.

²⁸Childs, "History of Relief Work," p. 363.

was . . . a time when the energies of our staff were devoted towards securing work for able-bodied men, instructing them and advising them what to do, but this is now a thing of the past."²⁹ This, in fact, was exactly the nature of the Associated Charities' assistance. Over a period of fifty-five months between October 1908 and April 1913, 2843 homeless men were assisted by the Associated Charities. "Intemperance, improvidence, and sickness, in the order named," said J.H.T. Falk in 1916 before the Dominions Royal Commission, "were the most common immediate causes of destitution. All, of course, were unemployed."³⁰ The two-fold assumption underlying Falk's remark was that destitution, not unemployment, called for charitable action, and that unemployment was by and large self-induced and therefore evidence of character failure. The assistance given to these transient workers reflected this. "Except for two months in the winter of 1908-09, and again for a short period in 1914-15," Falk reported to the Dominions Royal Commission, "it has always been possible to place an able-bodied homeless man on a farm to do chores if only for board and lodging."³¹

²⁹P.A.M., MG10 B9, Margaret Scott Nursing Mission Papers, "Fifth Annual Report," October 1909, p. 4.

³⁰Great Britain. Royal Commission on the Natural Resources, Trade and Legislation of Certain Portions of His Majesty's Dominions. Minutes of Evidence Taken in the Central and Western Provinces of Canada in 1916, Part 1, (London, 1917), p. 38.

³¹Ibid.

In this way Winnipeg confronted its first serious period of unemployment. Reacting in a spirit of genuine benevolence, but motivated also by a fear of civil disruption and the possible collapse of the whole system of charitable agencies, a new agency had been formed which quickly took as its particular provenance the destitute unemployed. Its method was "social reformation", its principle less eligibility. The Associated Charities represented a reassertion of social control over the hungry labourers of Winnipeg and of Western Canada who called Winnipeg their home.

III

Memories of the hard times of "'07-'08" soon faded, except for those who faced a similar situation every year, and as Manitoba grew to the zenith of its dominance over Western Canada the ebullience of the Walker Theatre meeting seemed justified. But the re-emergence of glowing prosperity was not to last long. Already Manitoba's boom years were subsiding. By 1912 land values were falling and the immigrant population moved through Manitoba to the newer West of Alberta and Saskatchewan. A slackening of the rate of growth was not especially serious to Manitoba's prosperity; but the impact of the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 was devastating. As Europe lurched ever nearer to general war, panic in European and British money markets ensued. With foreign capital cut off, Canadian financiers tightened their credit. The ramifications of this financial stringency

were quickly felt. As mortgage money became unavailable construction soon halted. This brought about reduction in sales of hardware and building supplies and reduced the demand for the products of lumber camps from northern Ontario to British Columbia.³²

Businesses of all kinds soon felt the pinch. At the start of November a traveller in Saskatchewan remarked: "Men who had thousands to their credit in the bank last year tell me they have to look at both sides of a dime this year."³³ By August lumber, mining and construction camps were being closed down. The report of an instructor of the Reading Camp Association working at a quarry in British Columbia was typical of the situation across Western Canada by 1 August: "Owing to the money stringency the quarry is somewhat quiet and a good many men were compelled to be laid off."³⁴ In July the Commissioner of Immigration at Winnipeg, J. Bruce Walker, had written to his superintendent of the large surplus of skilled and unskilled labour in the West. Indicative of the serious state of the labour market was Walker's report that many

³²W.L. Morton, Manitoba: A History (Toronto and Buffalo, 1967), pp. 327-30; Bellan, "Development of Winnipeg," pp. 228-51.

³³Public Archives of Canada [P.A.C.], MG28 I124, Frontier College Papers, vol. 18, F.G. Poole to A. Fitzpatrick, 1 November 1913. Correspondence files in this collection are arranged alphabetically by correspondent for each year.

³⁴*Ibid.*, vol. 147, E.R. Gilley to A. Fitzpatrick, 1 August 1913.

skilled men--carpenters, masons, mechanics and others--
 "have accepted employment in ordinary occupations at
 unskilled work." "There is still a considerable number,"
 he added, "specifically of skilled artisans, unemployed
 in Winnipeg and at Western points. These people are
 available for harvest work, and I find that a number of
 them have already made up their minds to avail themselves
 of the harvest opportunities either to provide for them-
 selves during the winter, or to enable them to return home
 without serious loss."³⁵

Harvest work temporarily relieved the congestion of
 labour in Winnipeg, but when that work ceased the harvesters
 returned to the city where they added to the already large
 number of unemployed. As winter approached many of the
 construction projects which had continued past the summer
 financial crisis finally closed operations. The Canadian
 Pacific Railway had laid off three hundred men from its
 shops in Winnipeg and since September had been operating
 on short time. Factories and shops in the city reported
 an average of 50 percent of the usual staff.³⁶ The workers
 in Winnipeg were becoming impoverished either through
 unemployment or underemployment. Whatever the actual
 number was, there was no doubt that, as the federal Deputy

³⁵Immigration Branch Records, file 29490 pt. 3,
 J.B. Walker to W.D. Scott, 11 July 1913.

³⁶The Voice, 19 December 1913, p. 1; *ibid.*, 30 January
 1914, p. 1; P.A.C., RG27, Canada, Department of Labour
 Library, Vertical Files (hereafter cited as D.L.L.), vol.
 3134, file 151, J.D. McNiven to G.H. Brown, 23 December 1913;
ibid., H.S. Hood to Brown, 12 February 1914.

Minister of Labour was informed, at the least hundreds of families were at the "line of want."³⁷

Reactions to the situation were at first as they had been six years earlier. The unemployed paraded the streets, making visible their demand for work. The "first unemployed demonstration for the season" was held on 27 November 1913. At a mass meeting in Market Square the crowd, "composed very largely of British mechanics and town workers," called on the civic government to open relief work or to provide any other means whereby an honest living could be earned. The issue was put succinctly by the chairman of the mass meeting: "We want work, not charity, and at a fair rate. . . . \$2.50 per day; fifteen bucks a week, because yer cawn't pay yer way on less."³⁸ Organized labour fumed yet again over federal immigration policy, arguing that in the interests of "common humanity" the "Immigration Madness" should be ended. In February 1914 a delegation from Winnipeg's Trades and Labour Council appeared before City Council to ask that Council petition the federal government to appoint a royal commission to investigate the causes of the heavy unemployment in Western Canada. A motion embodying this request was passed unanimously. The conviction of both City Council and the Trades and Labour Council were summarized by R.A. Rigg, first representative of labour elected to City Council. "I venture

³⁷D.L.L., vol. 3134, file 151, H.S. Hood to G.H. Brown, 12 February 1914.

³⁸The Voice, 28 November 1913, p. 1.

to say," he declared, ". . . that this condition of affairs has been brought about by the unnatural fostering of immigration by the Dominion government, and the government is responsible for the distress resulting from it."³⁹

In fact, the federal government did assume some responsibility for destitute immigrants. The Immigration Branch had a longstanding practice of rendering aid to destitute newcomers, though this often involved no more than a few days' shelter until work was found. In Winnipeg the Commissioner of Immigration had arranged with the Associated Charities to administer such relief because, as he said, "our staff had neither the experience nor the ability of ascertaining whether the persons applying for relief were as destitute as they said or as deserving of relief as they should have been."⁴⁰ The Associated Charities offered little more assistance than did the Immigration Branch, but it was administered with due regard to the principles of scientific charity. In the winter of 1913-14 most of those who were sent to the Associated Charities from the Immigration Building were provided with sustenance and sent to farm work.

The number of unemployed assisted in this way was only a small part of the total number. The civic government

³⁹City of Winnipeg, Minutes of City Council (hereafter cited as Winnipeg, M.C.C.), 23 February 1914, p. 130; The Voice, 13 March 1914, p. 1; *ibid.*, 27 February 1914, p. 1. For a good statement of labour's position on the question see the article "Immigration and Unemployment" in *ibid.*, 13 March 1914, p. 1.

⁴⁰Immigration Branch Records, file 32437, J.B. Walker to W.D. Scott, 8 April 1913.

sought to keep several hundred of its married citizens from passing the "line of want" to a state of dependency through a program of sewer construction.⁴¹ The civic Free Employment Bureau, which came into existence in June 1913 and began operations that October, went to strenuous efforts to find jobs. In the following year twelve thousand applicants were directed to employment. The Trades and Labour Council credited the Bureau with keeping many from destitution.⁴² Unions also sought work for their members, but campaigns urging home-owners to advance renovation plans could not meet the rising tide of unemployment. The experience of the Painters and Decorators Union, Local 739, was typical. "As a result of the fatiguing efforts of the master painters to induce householders to get their spring cleaning done early," reported the union's business agent, "one painter got a job yesterday morning. The unfortunate feature about it is, however," he added, "that during the day 16 others were added to the unemployed list among our union men."⁴³

There came a point when many single men found themselves without a penny, when families found their cupboards bare, and when their friends and neighbours and relatives

⁴¹Labour Gazette, February 1914, p. 943.

⁴²Winnipeg, M.C.C., 30 June 1913, pp. 437, 464; The Voice, 6 March 1914, p. 6; D.L.L., vol. 3134, file 151, H.S. Hood to G.H. Brown, 12 February 1914; D.J. Bercuson, Confrontation at Winnipeg: Labour, Industrial Relations, and the General Strike (Montreal and London, 1974), p. 23.

⁴³The Voice, 27 February 1914, p. 8.

could offer no help. Then they turned to the Associated Charities. The single transients could expect little assistance and less sympathy. A correspondent of The Voice, describing the scene at the Men's Own, a hostel catering to the homeless workers, wrote of "the pitiful sight of 500 hungry men with haggard faces, unkempt, their hair dishevelled, hungrily devouring their scant morsel of thin German sausage and dry punk."⁴⁴ Meals and shelter were given as temporary relief until they "beat it out of the city." Such was Mayor Deacon's advice to the transients. The "unmarried young men who are floating in here from all over Western Canada," warned the Mayor, voicing the attitude of both City Council and the Associated Charities, "might just as well understand at first as last that the people of this city are not going to be taxed to feed them in idleness when the farmers of the country in whose interests largely they came to the country would be glad to avail themselves of their services."⁴⁵ To the farms they were sent. The Associated Charities was able to send every able-bodied single man applying for assistance to a farm that winter, "if only for board and lodging."⁴⁶

Destitute married men received more sympathetic treatment. Depending on the circumstances a family might receive fuel, clothing, meat, milk and vegetables; at times

⁴⁴Ibid., 20 February 1914, p.1.

⁴⁵Ibid., 12 December 1913, p. 1; *ibid.*, 20 February 1914, p. 1.

⁴⁶Dominions Royal Commission, Evidence 1916, p. 38.

even rent was paid. The number of families destitute directly from unemployment and receiving assistance varied widely in 1913-14. In December 1913 seventy-three such families were aided. By the end of January that number had increased to 202, an increase of 277 percent. In the following three months the number fluctuated from 80 to 152 to 76.⁴⁷ The monthly variation was due largely to the requirement that every applicant for assistance register with the civic Employment Bureau and accept any work offering; assistance was terminated when work was found. Indicative of the scale and rapidity of destitution was the caseload of the Associated Charities. Between May 1913 and April 1914, 31.9 percent of all families receiving assistance were destitute due to unemployment; in the previous year unemployment was the direct cause of only 7.65 percent. J.H.T. Falk noted quite correctly that "in the case of the wage-earning class the margin between dependence and independence is a very narrow one."⁴⁸

With the coming of spring businesses professed renewed confidence in the economic future. The financial stringency appeared to have eased and substantial building construction was promised for 1914. But retail business remained quiet, while labour-intensive projects such as large-scale railway construction had ended.⁴⁹ For those

⁴⁷Ibid., chart interleaved between pp. 38 and 39.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 35, 40.

⁴⁹Bellán, Winnipeg First Century, pp. 125-27.

seeking work, prospects were decidedly not bright. One young man spent "altogether nearly six weeks in Edmonton . . . looking for a [construction] camp."⁵⁰ Those who found work also found their wages lower and uncertain. A bridge construction gang in Saskatchewan was "not working half the time; some I'm sure aren't earning any more than their board," reported a labourer. That crew "got in so little time in July that they actually couldn't pay their board bill."⁵¹ Agricultural employment, as always, absorbed many men; but with so many searching for work farmers would only accept the most experienced agricultural labourers. Construction labourers and city unemployed had little chance of securing farm employment.⁵²

By August Canada was at war. "Manitoba," wrote a colleague of Clifford Sifton, "is simply wild with enthusiasm & the drums are beating & our men are waiting for orders."⁵³ While the drums beat, however, the western economy almost ground to a halt. Work on construction projects, such as the Parliament Buildings in Winnipeg,

⁵⁰Frontier College Papers, vol. 22, D. Pendergast to A. Fitzpatrick, 14 August 1914.

⁵¹Ibid., A.C. Wheatley to A. Fitzpatrick, 22 June 1914; *ibid.*, Wheatley to Fitzpatrick, 11 August 1914.

⁵²Immigration Branch Records, file 28128 pt. 8, W.D. Scott to Dr. Roche, 17 June 1914; *ibid.*, file 29490 pt. 3, Scott to P.N. Buttler, 21 July 1914.

⁵³P.A.C., MG27II D15, Clifford Sifton Papers, vol. 202, J.M. Robinson to C. Sifton, 7 August 1914.

was immediately suspended.⁵⁴ Businesses of all kinds reduced hours, cut staff and lowered wages. Suddenly stenographers, clerical staff, waitresses and cooks were unemployed. Positions for which there had been insatiable demands, such as domestic help, were suddenly over-supplied. The demand for domestics quickly fell off and wages, which had recovered in the summer from a drastic drop during the late winter, plunged. There seemed to be near-revolution in the domestic affairs of the well-to-do as Winnipeg's Relief Officer reported indications that "the better class of people in Winnipeg are doing their own work where they formerly hired help."⁵⁵

The sudden surge in unemployment surprised no one, and everywhere plans for dealing with it were quickly considered. People everywhere, wrote J.P. Rice, a Frontier College fund-raiser, say "there is only one thing to be done now, which is to bend every effort and devote every dollar to meeting the enormous emergency demands forced upon all classes by The War, in caring for the families of the soldiers, and those forced out of employment, who will have to be clothed and fed until the war is over, and

⁵⁴"Owing to the scarcity of funds caused by the War, everything so far as outside work is concerned is closing down this week," reported R.P. Graham from Alberta. Frontier College Papers, vol. 21, Graham to A. Fitzpatrick, 13 August 1914.

⁵⁵Immigration Branch Records, file 33136 pt. 2, J. Matheson to W.D. Scott, 9 November 1914; D.L.L., vol. 3134, file 152, H.J. Williams, "Report", 16 November 1914; *ibid.*, file 151, F. Kerr to Mayor of Winnipeg, 31 August 1914.

probably longer."⁵⁶ Unemployment suddenly acquired a patriotic patina. Those unemployed because of the war were making their sacrifice for the great cause; assistance to those distressed became not a social or political responsibility but a patriotic duty. As Europe burst into flames, the unemployed in Winnipeg found themselves the objects of much careful attention.

IV

Some responses to war-time unemployment were no more than traditional benevolent reactions using the rhetoric of patriotism. Domestic servants, for example, were soon in difficulty as many were fired either immediately at the outbreak of war or some weeks later, by which time their wages had also steadily dropped. The Local Council of Women and the Industrial Bureau opened a Bureau of Work for Women. The object was to procure employment for all unemployed women as domestic help in country homes. Farm homes were desired because traditionally more help was needed on the farm than in the city, it cost less to maintain a girl in the country, and in the country a young girl would be removed from the temptations which idleness in the city presented. "It is the intention," reported a Labour Gazette correspondent, "that these girls disemployed owing to the war shall be treated in the homes as

⁵⁶Frontier College Papers, vol. 22, file 152, J.P. Rice to A. Fitzpatrick, 16 September 1914.

companion helps, and that the actions on both sides shall be treated as patriotic rather than charitable."⁵⁷ In this way it was felt the stigma of charity would not be attached to the domestics--they would not be "demoralized." The ladies of the Local Council of Women, of course, could feel that they were doing their part in a grand moral crusade. The domestics may have also felt patriotic twinges, but they as assuredly felt a quiet desperation and, perhaps, relief in finding food and lodging of any kind. Jessie Matheson of the Girls Home of Welcome remarked simply that "in most cases they will give their services for their board."⁵⁸

Across Canada the "enormous emergency demands" of the war were met primarily by the Canadian Patriotic Fund. The Fund, reorganized from the Canadian Patriotic Fund Association of Boer War years, was established to provide assistance to wives, children and dependent relatives of Canadian residents on active service. It was administered by a plethora of local and provincial associations under the general direction of a national executive in Ottawa. The Manitoba Patriotic Fund never affiliated with the national association.⁵⁹ While it collected and distributed funds

⁵⁷D.L.L., vol. 3134, file 152, H.J. Williams, "Report," 16 November 1914.

⁵⁸Immigration Branch Records, file 33136 pt. 2, J. Matheson to W.D. Scott, 9 November 1914.

⁵⁹The official history of the Canadian Patriotic Fund simply states: "The reason for this action on the part of Manitoba was never clear." P.H. Morris, ed., The Canadian Patriotic Fund: A Record of its Activities from 1914 to 1919 (n.p., n.d.), p. 18. Eight Ontario counties and the town of Cumberland, B.C. also did not affiliate.

rather than having the national association do so, the Manitoba Fund did subscribe to the same principles of assistance. Through a programme of pamphlets, home visits and savings schemes, thrift was encouraged. The Fund maintained close surveillance of recipients, watchful for any sign of dependency or moral laxity. Morality was enforced to the extent of removing children from a mother's care "as a spur to better things." Maximum levels of assistance were set at thirty dollars per month in Eastern Canada and forty dollars in the West. These were gradually raised to a uniform fifty dollars per month.⁶⁰

Recognizing that the war had rendered more than just soldiers' dependents needy, the Manitoba Patriotic Fund created two classes of assistance. Class A was for assisting relatives and dependents of soldiers; Class B was for "relieving all distress and unemployment caused by the war."⁶¹ In its first four months of existence the Fund paid out a total of \$25,211.12 to 1083 families. This was indicative of a great degree of destitution in Winnipeg, but even more telling was a one-third increase of 358 families in that total assisted in the first two weeks of January 1915. By the end of winter 1914-15 the Patriotic Fund had spent \$60,023.91 on unemployment relief

⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 36-37, 29, 32-33.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 107.

and at 31 December 1915 had spent \$115,455.59.⁶²

The Manitoba Patriotic Fund had intended to use Class B funds to find jobs and, if necessary, to transport men to them. In this way it was felt that all distress would be relieved.⁶³ Jobs were not easily found, however, and as the Fund's executives pondered the situation, criticism of their inaction mounted. By November 1914 no plan for providing work had yet been devised and few applicants for assistance had been accepted. A dissident faction on the executive committee, including ex-mayor Waugh, Alderman R.J. Shore, J.H.T. Falk and City Relief Officer Frank Kerr, led public and internal agitation.⁶⁴ The publicity had its desired result. Disbursements in Class B for November were \$10,224.28, up from \$2244.25 in October.⁶⁵ A wood camp was opened to provide employment for married men. It eventually employed 357 men and, most satisfactorily, operated at a net profit to the Fund. The wood camp returned over fifteen thousand dollars to the Patriotic Fund in 1915.⁶⁶ In May 1915 the Patriotic Fund

⁶²P.A.M., MG13 G1, Rodmond P. Roblin Papers, p. 206, [H.A. Robson and A.M. Nanton] to the General Committee of the Manitoba Patriotic Fund and the Winnipeg Patriotic Fund, 16 January 1915; Morris, Canadian Patriotic Fund, pp. 109, 117.

⁶³D.L.L., vol. 3134, file 152, L. Pickup to F.A. Acland, [September 1914].

⁶⁴The Voice, 6 November 1914, p. 1.

⁶⁵Roblin Papers, p. 206, [H.A. Robson and A.M. Nanton] to the General Committee of the Manitoba Patriotic Fund and the Winnipeg Patriotic Fund, 16 January 1915.

⁶⁶D.L.L., vol. 3134, file 152, H.S. Hood to T.W. Crothers, 2 February 1915; Morris, Canadian Patriotic Fund, pp. 110, 122.

discontinued disbursements from the Class B funds, as enlistments and a number of construction projects absorbed the English-speaking unemployed.⁶⁷

The federal government necessarily took an interest in the question of unemployment. In part this stemmed from the need for efficient marshalling of all resources, including labour, for the war effort. This interest was also rooted in a fear of the unemployed. Many of the unemployed were enemy aliens, chiefly from the far-flung Austro-Hungarian Empire, who had formed the core of the unskilled work force. Their presence in Canada represented a potential threat to Canada's internal security, and unrest due to unemployment could only make them more dangerous.⁶⁸ Other unemployed were young Canadians and Englishmen who could not yet be absorbed into the military. Their usefulness to the war effort would be severely limited should they become pauperized and demoralized.

Prime Minister Borden was therefore prepared to offer federal assistance for the relief of the unemployed. The government, he argued, must be prepared to meet "so far as possible any existing needs and [should be] making provision for any necessary future action by the Government."⁶⁹ After

⁶⁷D.L.L., vol. 3134, file 151, H.S. Hood to G.H. Brown, 10 May 1915.

⁶⁸D. Morton, The Canadian General: Sir William Otter (Toronto, 1974), p. 328.

⁶⁹D.L.L., vol. 3134, file 151, R.L. Borden to T.W. Crothers, 26 August 1914.

correspondence with provincial premiers and perusals of weekly reports from immigration agents and Labour Gazette reporters, however, Ottawa concluded that special federal action was unnecessary. The provinces had replied to inquiries from Ottawa that they would be able to adequately deal with any unemployment problem. Of more concern to them was the fullest prosecution of the war effort.

Rodmond Roblin, Premier of Manitoba, suggested that unemployment would be solved and the war effort furthered if every fit unemployed man was drafted into the Militia, "giving them regular pay, and having them put in their time exclusively at drill. . . . This relieves them as you will see from the charge of receiving charity, and on the contrary places them on the high roll of patriots."⁷⁰

The federal government did not provide assistance to the unemployed but did undertake measures which, reported the Department of Labour, "very materially contributed to the relief of unemployment and distress throughout the Dominion."⁷¹ Some of these measures, such as munitions orders, had little impact on Western Canada, particularly in the first years of the war.⁷² Others were felt directly

⁷⁰Roblin Papers, pp. 178-79, T.W. Crothers to R.P. Roblin, 3 October 1914; *ibid.*, pp. 182-83, Roblin to Crothers, 6 October 1914. The replies of the other premiers to Crothers' inquiry are found in D.L.L., vol. 3134, file 151.

⁷¹D.L.L., vol. 3134, file 151, "Memo re Unemployment since January 1915," n.d.

⁷²See J.H. Thompson, The Harvests of War: The Prairie West, 1914-1918 (Toronto, 1978), pp. 51-56.

by the unemployed. The internment of enemy aliens removed nine thousand men from the national labour pool during the course of the war. Many were unemployed, destitute and from Western Canada. Internment operations were a security measure but it seems clear that, due to the system of local registration, internment was a convenient means whereby municipalities removed from their midst a portion of the troublesome unemployed.⁷³ Probably the most useful action was undertaken by the Immigration Branch. The Commissioner of Immigration's office had for years served as a farm employment bureau for immigrants newly-arrived in Winnipeg. This employment function was intensified in the autumn of 1914. By February 1915 over four thousand men had been sent to low-wage work. This, it was claimed, effectively eliminated the problem of unemployed unmarried men.⁷⁴

V

As winter passed the unemployment situation in Winnipeg seemed well in hand. The Patriotic Fund had played a large roll in relieving any distress among the English-speaking population. The City of Winnipeg had

⁷³D. Morton, Canadian General, pp. 333-34; Thompson, Harvests of War, p. 79. On internment operations generally see D. Morton, "Sir William Otter and Internment Operations in Canada during the First World War," Canadian Historical Review, 55(1), 1974, pp. 32-58.

⁷⁴D.L.L., vol. 3134, file 151, "Memo re Unemployment Since January 1915"; *ibid.*, H.S. Hood to T.W. Crothers, 2 February 1915.

reluctantly started some sewer work and quarry operations when the demands on the Associated Charities had become too large (since the outbreak of war City Council had been the Associated Charities' sole source of funds), giving employment to over two hundred men. Work on the Greater Winnipeg Water District line, a project to tap the water resources of Shoal Lake, proceeded, giving work to "a few hundred more english [sic] speaking unemployed." The Commissioner of Immigration continued his efforts to place men on farms, sending out eight hundred in March. Premier Roblin had offered to fund formation of a Home Guard of the unemployed men in Winnipeg. Over two hundred men were recruited under the commend of Frank Kerr, City Relief Officer. The Guard was almost immediately disbanded when the number of "recruits" dropped to seventeen. This was proof, it seemed, that conditions were not at all alarming.⁷⁵

Nearly all the unemployed who obtained work or assistance were Canadians or British immigrants, along with a small number of West European immigrants. The foreigners who made up the largest part of the unskilled labour force and the majority of the unemployed simply did not figure in anyone's calculations. In the first place, of course, organizations such as the Patriotic Fund could not be expected to render assistance to enemy aliens, nor could

⁷⁵Ibid., H.S. Hood to T.W. Crothers, 2 February 1915; ibid., Hood to G.H. Brown, 10 May 1915; Immigration Branch Records, file 839 pt. 2, J.B. Walker to W.D. Scott, 9 April 1915; R.C. Bellan, "Relief in Winnipeg: the Economic Background," M.A. thesis, University of Toronto, 1941, p. 68.

many other charities in good conscience provide aid. It was also commonly believed that, because of their peculiar habits, immigrant workers did not need assistance. Nine thousand workers were estimated to be out of work in Winnipeg in January 1915, four thousand of those unskilled Germans or Austrians; yet J.H.T. Falk later asserted that "the Slav homeless [and family] destitute was unknown."⁷⁶ Many were supposed to have money saved in banks. J.B. Walker reported over \$800,000 of "foreign money" deposited in one bank, with similar sums in several other banks.⁷⁷ More generally, they simply disappeared from view: "The common labourers composed of Ruthenians, Austrians, Galatians [sic] etc. . . . will leave this city for districts where they have friends, or absorb themselves."⁷⁸ Another observer noted how the foreigners put "in their time as usual with them when not working--they are congregated in their boarding houses in the several colonies, where they are awaiting news of work. These people are not a charge upon anyone . . . but living in large numbers in a room, and when the money gets low they simply bunk up a little closer and so tide over the lean weeks."⁷⁹ But as spring approached

⁷⁶D.L.L., vol. 3134, file 151, H.S. Hood to T.W. Crothers, 2 February 1915; Dominions Royal Commission, Evidence 1916, p. 39.

⁷⁷D.L.L., vol. 3134, file 151, J.B. Walker to W.D. Scott, 2 September 1914.

⁷⁸Ibid., H.S. Hood to G.H. Brown, 15 October 1914.

⁷⁹Immigration Branch Records, file 762263, L.N. Beard to J. Hoolahan, 19 January 1914.

with little prospect of work, as personal resources were dissipated, a great many of these immigrants grew both hungry and angry. The basic reason why they had received little aid was that they had not made the depth of their need known. They were unknown, unimportant and unheard.

Their discontent began to congeal and take disconcerting, threatening shape soon after the City had ceased its special winter operations. On the morning of 19 April a crowd of probably five thousand unemployed gathered in the market square behind City Hall. They had no leaders and had appointed no delegates to meet with civic officials. The crowd, "sullen and dogged" and nearly 90 percent "foreign", mutely asked the City to give some work. The Mayor told them he had neither work nor money to offer. By early afternoon the demonstrators had dispersed. The potential threat of such a gathering was not lost upon observers. "Out of work for months, in many cases with families depending on their efforts," the Free Press described them, "the men had become sore and yesterday it needed but little, perhaps a hasty action on the part of a constable, an undue pushing or shoving by him, or the presence of a magnetic leader to have turned the sullen, brooding men into a mob of vandals, ready to go to any ends."⁸⁰

City Council responded by quickly dashing off requests

⁸⁰D.L.L., vol. 3134, file 152, L. Pickup to R.H. Coats, 22 April 1915; Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 19 April 1915, p. 1; Manitoba Free Press, 20 April 1915, p. 14.

to the federal and provincial governments that they take some action to relieve unemployment. Councillors were worried about the situation but felt that the City had already taken care of more than its share of the problem. Some councillors also believed that, as many of the demonstrators were enemy aliens, they deserved no sympathy or assistance from any British subject.⁸¹

On the following day the provincial government faced the unemployed. A delegation of five British immigrants met Premier Roblin. They claimed to represent two thousand skilled British tradesmen who, unemployed in Canada, requested assistance to return to England. Roblin was sympathetic to them because they were British, because they did not want charity, and because they wanted to return to England to further the war effort. The premier urged their case upon the federal government.⁸² Later that morning the Premier had less congenial callers. Some three thousand unemployed, mostly enemy aliens, congregated at the government buildings on Kennedy Street. Hasty calls to the City Police brought a squad to block entrance to the offices. A deputation, headed by a young Ukrainian, Wasyl Kolisnyk, met with Roblin and three or four of his colleagues. Kolisnyk said there were at least twelve thousand unemployed in Winnipeg. They were eager to work, but most had not

⁸¹Manitoba Free Press, 20 April 1915, p. 14.

⁸²Roblin Papers, p. 341, R.P. Roblin to J.B. Walker, 20 April 1915; *ibid.*, p. 344, Walker to Roblin, 22 April 1915.

enough money to pay transportation to farm work. All they asked was a little financial assistance so they could go to farms. Provincial ministers began to sense that a serious situation was taking shape. "Yours is the second deputation which has waited on me this morning in connection with unemployment," Roblin replied to Kolisnyk. "I have had before me a delegation of the British-born unemployed in Winnipeg. . . . They are also out of work and have nothing to live on. They are in a very serious condition. Therefore, it is clear that work in this city is very scarce."⁸³ With a Cabinet promise to consider the whole question, the demonstrators were dispersed by the City Police.

On Thursday, 22 April, a huge crowd of unemployed immigrant labourers began marching from the North End of Winnipeg to the provincial buildings. They carried banners crying "We are not enemies of Canada; we are hungry and want work." By noon ten to twelve thousand men were ranged on Kennedy Street, carefully watched by fifty armed policemen. After much delay a deputation of the men was admitted to the Premier's office. Once more the request was for assistance in securing farm employment. Roblin again expressed his sympathy for the unemployed but declared his government unable financially to take any initiative. Asked what the government could give, Roblin replied:

⁸³Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 20 April 1915, p. 2; Manitoba Free Press, 21 April 1915, p. 1.



"Nothing that I can think of."⁸⁴

The Premier soon changed his mind; the threat to civil order posed by thousands of unemployed pounding Winnipeg streets was simply too great to ignore. On 24 April the provincial government and City Council met to plan a course of action. Two days later they met with representatives of the Canadian Pacific, Canadian Northern and Grand Trunk Pacific Railways. The railways promised to soon employ five thousand men. The City opened its stone quarry and gravel pit where men were paid one dollar per cubic yard to break stone. The City also offered food to any family in urgent need and voted more money for sewer work. The grounds of the Manitoba Agricultural College were opened to the City so that it could establish truck gardens at which single men would work four hours each day. In return, the men would receive three meal tickets and a bed ticket.⁸⁵ All these measures were made possible by Roblin's offer to the City to pay one-half the cost, a commitment which was later estimated to total \$31,000.⁸⁶

⁸⁴Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 22 April 1915, p. 1; Manitoba Free Press, 23 April 1915, p. 16; The Voice, 23 April 1915, p. 1.

⁸⁵Manitoba Free Press, 24 April 1915, p. 4; *ibid.*, 27 April 1915, p. 4; D.L.L., vol. 3134, file 151, H.S. Hood to G.H. Brown, 10 May 1915; Dominions Royal Commission, Evidence 1916, p. 38; Bellan, "Relief in Winnipeg," p. 68.

⁸⁶P.A.M., RG18 A4, Manitoba, Department of Public Works, Minister's Office (hereafter cited as Public Works, M.O.), vol. 23, file Unemployment 1932, "Memorandum re Unemployment Relief," 15 December 1932.

Both levels of government intended their involvement with this scale of unemployment relief to be temporary. Rodmond Roblin had accepted an expansion of his government's role in order to defuse a dangerous civil situation, and as a means to effect the redistribution of labour which was the cause of unemployment and which threatened the economic fabric of the province. "I do not think there is any unemployment problem in the Province," he wrote. "... What is required is an intelligent method of distribution [to farms] of those who are willing to work and who are now in the City of Winnipeg."⁸⁷ Any assistance should be a severe minimum and should encourage the unemployed to look elsewhere for support; in this case, at farm work. If successful, even a minimum of assistance would be unnecessary.

The role of the civic government expanded considerably as a result of war-time unemployment. It had, of course, a recognized and accepted responsibility for the care of the local destitute, but the unemployment crisis brought about a change in the order of civic involvement. In part the local government responded to the same hopes and fears as did the provincial government, but the municipality also had the responsibility of managing the public funds which assisted the destitute. It was this responsibility which led the civic government directly into the role of

⁸⁷Roblin Papers, p. 357, R.P. Roblin to C.F. Roland, 28 April 1915.

a relief agency.

City Council had been involved in the formation of the Associated Charities and seven civic officials sat on its board. The relationship between the two had grown ever closer until by 1913 the City paid by way of grant all the costs of administration. With the outbreak of war the Associated Charities agreed not to compete with the Patriotic Fund for charitable donations. The City took over all financing of the Charities.⁸⁸ Not to have done so would have meant the probable collapse of most individual charities with invidious social results. This also meant, however, a vastly increased financial commitment. From August 1914 to April 1916 Council voted an extra two thousand dollars per month for "extraordinary relief."⁸⁹ Council's interest in the responsible use of its money brought it into increasing conflict with the Associated Charities, whose trained workers felt they knew best how to administer charity. Controversy came to a head in the autumn of 1915 as the City braced for another onslaught of unemployment.⁹⁰ City Council insisted that as it now paid all the bills it must ensure that charitable work was done

⁸⁸Childs, "History of Relief Work," p. 363.

⁸⁹Manitoba Free Press, 24 April 1915, p. 4; Winnipeg, M.C.C., 10 August 1915, p. 472.

⁹⁰D.L.L., vol. 3134, file 152, F. Kerr to Mayor Waugh, 6 November 1915. Due largely to the huge number of harvesters required that season Kerr concluded that "previously conceived opinions of much brighter prospects this winter than has been the case during the last two seasons cannot now be sustained."

in the most efficient and economical manner. Equally important, "Council must not delegate its functions to persons or organizations not directly responsible to the taxpayers."⁹¹ From that moment municipalization of charity was an administrative fact, though the situation was not formalized until 1917 with the formation of the City Council-controlled Social Welfare Commission. Drawn into ever-increasing responsibilities by the inability of private charity to deal with unemployment and other matters, the civic government was compelled to adopt an active role in social welfare.

The special demands of war, especially the efficient marshalling of all economic resources and damping threats of civil disorder, had lead to a much greater degree of state involvement in the nation's affairs by all levels of government. This involvement, largely thought to be temporary, would in many areas become permanent. In the postwar world governments would try to extricate themselves from these assumed responsibilities, but the same concerns which had led the Winnipeg civic government to take a leading role in local charity made it extremely difficult for other governments to return to pre-war conditions and responsibilities.

⁹¹Manitoba Free Press, 4 November 1915, p. 3.

CHAPTER TWO

RETURN TO NORMALITY: 1918-1922

Soon after his appointment as Prime Minister in August 1920, Arthur Meighen undertook a tour of the country. Confronted with a dismaying range of discontent, the common denominator of his message everywhere was the necessity of a return to normal conditions. By normal Meighen meant a return to traditional values of work, a diminution of the government's war-induced expansion, and a repudiation of the radicalism which seemed to be sweeping the common sense from workers' minds. "We have been living for the last six years in a highly abnormal and artificial age," Meighen declaimed, "and the sooner we get to normal conditions the better it will be for all of us. . . . A great many people seem to have lost all sense of values, of proportion and of numbers; extravagance in thought is as great as the undoubted extravagance in living. It is an age of indulgence in Isms and theories." "A truly great future is ahead of Canada if we only keep our heads and seriously believe in the doctrine of work," he urged. "Work after all is the normal condition of men--I mean of every man--and it is the best answer and antidote to Socialism, Bolshevik and Soviet nonsense. . . ." ¹

¹R. Graham, Arthur Meighen, vol. 2: And Fortune Fled (Toronto, 1963), p. 9.

As often as he prescribed this antidote, however, the Prime Minister discovered that it could not be fully applied. During this tour he was frequently met by delegations of returned soldiers who spoke of their fear of unemployment and want in the coming winter.² It was becoming clear that the government's reconstruction programme was not fulfilling its desired objectives.

I

Long before the Armistice, preparations were being made to ease the country's transition to peace-time existence. In October 1917 a cabinet committee on reconstruction was struck. In January 1918 the Soldier Settlement Board was established. This Board offered loans to veterans for the purchase of land, buildings, livestock and equipment. It was hoped that settling service-men on farms would largely ease the problems of demobilization and, through the increase of primary production, add to the national wealth and so relieve some of the crushing burden of war debt. In February 1918 the Department of Soldiers Civil Re-establishment was formed. The Department was to administer veterans' pensions and benefits, provide vocational training, assist in the re-employment of munitions workers, and generally oversee the many problems associated with the rapid demobilization of thousands of soldiers. Two months later

²P.A.C., MG26 I, Arthur Meighen Papers, vol. 32, p. 18490, A. Meighen to G.D. Robertson, 7 November 1920.

the Employment Service of Canada [E.S.C.] was organized. Under the Employment Offices Coordination Act a nationwide system of employment bureaux was established to be financed and administered jointly by the federal and provincial governments. The E.S.C. would direct demobilized soldiers and other unemployed to available jobs free of charge. Importantly, joint financing also allowed the federal government to pass some costs of reconstruction on to the provinces.³

Reconstruction programmes were designed to hasten the return of the normal peace-time conditions of which Arthur Meighen spoke. They had come about because the federal government realized that the electorate would hold it accountable for generous treatment of the men when they returned home. So too would the soldiers, as the controversy over gratuities in the autumn of 1919 indicated.⁴ The political motives of reconstruction were quite obvious, as Newton Rowell argued to Prime Minister Borden. "I believe we can only rally the country behind the Government during the days of reconstruction," pleaded the ranking Liberal in the Unionist cabinet, "if we have a definite

³R.C. Brown and R. Cook, Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed (Toronto, 1974), p. 322; E.C. Morgan, "Soldier Settlement in the Prairie Provinces," Saskatchewan History, 21(2), 1968, pp. 41-44; J. Struthers, "Prelude to Depression," pp. 278-81.

⁴On the question of soldiers' gratuities see J. Eayrs, In Defence of Canada: From the Great War to the Great Depression (Toronto, 1964), pp. 49-61.

and constructive programme which would inspire confidence, awaken the enthusiasm, and quicken the imagination of all patriotic Canadian citizens."⁵ There was another equally pressing concern in reconstruction programmes. That was to limit the extent of social disorder which would surely accompany the economic dislocation at war's end. Again Newton Rowell put the issue squarely. "After the strain of war during the past four years people are not now in a normal condition. There is less respect for law and authority than we probably have ever had in the country," he warned. "If, therefore, Canada faces acute conditions of unemployment without any adequate programme to meet the situation, no-one can foresee just what might happen."⁶

Demobilization and reconstruction plans were designed to bring unemployed civilians and soldiers in contact with jobs and to provide veterans with a stake while they became oriented to civilian life. But jobs could not be offered where none existed, and discharge pay was soon spent. By the autumn of 1919 many returned soldiers were without work and were vocal in their criticism of the government's failure to reward them for their service. These critics were becoming increasingly prominent in veterans organizations and represented a serious threat to the Union Government.⁷ More disturbingly,

⁵P.A.C., MG26 H, Robert Laird Borden Papers, vol. 114, p. 63136, N.W. Rowell to R.L. Borden, 28 October 1918.

⁶Ibid., p. 63120.

⁷Eayrs, In Defence of Canada, p. 50.

veterans did not hesitate to express forcefully their dissatisfaction with existing conditions. On 26 January 1919 veterans in Winnipeg vented their frustration by rioting and looting the offices of the Socialist Party of Canada. The support which thousands of veterans gave the General Strike at Winnipeg in May and June thoroughly frightened federal authorities. The collapse of the Strike did little to ease apprehensions as military sources across Canada reported continued discontent. The military was convinced that disaffected veterans could bring a Bolshevik revolution to success.⁸ Captain Edmund H. Oliver had indeed sounded a prescient warning from the battlefields of France in the summer of 1918. "These men will have earned the right to shape, if not to rule, the world they have saved, . . ." he had written. "They are not going to be content with the old order, nor will you find them thinking the old thoughts."⁹

Discontent seemed to be directly related to the economic circumstances of the returned men. To blunt the sharp edge of discontent the government secured an appropriation from Parliament from which it provided direct financial assistance to needy veterans. Due "particularly to the urgency of the situation, and the advisability of taking advantage of the best machinery

⁸Bercuson, Confrontation at Winnipeg, pp. 86-87, 143, 170-71; Eayrs, In Defence of Canada, pp. 62-65.

⁹E.H. Oliver, "A Viewpoint in Educational Reconstruction," Social Welfare, November 1918, p. 27.

that existed in the country for meeting the difficulties," the Patriotic Fund was requested to administer the "Federal Emergency Fund." The Patriotic Fund officials were reluctant to undertake the task--"some were not even in accord with the principle of unemployment pay," recorded the official historian--but a full day of discussion with members of the cabinet, including the Prime Minister, convinced them of the need for action.¹⁰

Financial assistance was offered during the months of December 1919, January, February, March and April 1920 and was restricted to those in necessitous circumstances because of "enforced non-employment" or "enforced inadequate employment." Each applicant for assistance had to prove that employment was not available at his home or elsewhere. Fund officials investigated each applicant to ascertain his need and whether he had other sources of income such as a disability benefit or pension. When assistance was discontinued on 24 April 1920 a total of 43,382 returned men had been aided at a cost to the federal treasury of between five and six million dollars.¹¹

The Federal Emergency Fund had been a reluctant but necessary continuation of the government's war-time

¹⁰ P.A.C., MG28 I5, Canadian Patriotic Fund Papers, vol. 1, "Executive Committee Minutes," 4 December 1919; Morris, Canadian Patriotic Fund, p. 375.

¹¹ Canadian Patriotic Fund Papers, vol. 1, "Executive Committee Minutes," 4 December 1919; *ibid.*, 14 May 1920; Canada, Sessional Papers, 1921, No. 37, "Employment Service of Canada," pp. 102-103; Morris, Canadian Patriotic Fund, pp. 335-36.

responsibilities. Federal aid had been forthcoming in order to deflect political criticism and to reduce the possibility of civil disorder. With the crisis past, the federal government hoped to reduce its multifarious activities to a level comparable to the pre-war years and to return responsibilities to municipal and provincial authorities. This desire was summed up by Senator Gideon Robertson later in the year in response to calls for continued federal aid. "Municipal and Provincial authorities," the Senator argued, "must not be permitted to continue as in wartime--to pass every local question on to the Federal Government to find a solution. In previous periods of depression appeals for aid were always made to the local authority first. We should, I think, guide all concerned in that direction, if Municipal and Provincial authorities are to properly function."¹²

II

Civic authorities in Winnipeg generally agreed with this sentiment. Relief of unemployment distress was still viewed within the context of the charitable system, and so was naturally a local responsibility. Accordingly, preparation for the expected increase in unemployment during the winter of 1920-21 proceeded with little reference

¹²Meighen Papers, vol. 32, p. 18511, G.D. Robertson to A. Meighen, 5 December 1920.

to the federal government. By Christmas the local employment situation had deteriorated rapidly. Mayor Charles F. Gray described the "sad, and even lamentable state of affairs when men who are honest, energetic and willing to work have to go about from door to door practically begging for employment, so that they may have enough to eat and drink." "At a time like this," he asserted, "when some people are wondering how they are going to get enough to eat, it is no time to theorize, but to act and act quickly, with discretion so as not to hurt the self-respect of those who must, of necessity, be given a helping hand." Mayor Gray's quick action was to ask City Council to appoint a committee to look into the matter.¹³ Reverend C.W. Gordon, Chairman of the Joint Council of Industry and also known as the popular novelist Ralph Connor, spoke for many when he said that "there is no reason why a community such as Winnipeg should lie down, helpless, and refuse to relieve the distress caused by unemployment. The city is quite able to deal with it." Gordon suggested that unemployment was not wholly a matter of charity--it was, after all, "so intimately associated with industry in the largest sense of the word"--but, he added, "there is a place for the exercise of charity in relieving distress. The responsibility, therefore, devolves upon the city of dealing with

¹³P.A.M., RG18 D1, Manitoba, Department of Public Works, Bureau of Labour Newspaper Clippings, 1920-22 (hereafter cited as Bureau of Labour), Book 1, Manitoba Free Press, 23 December 1920.

the situation. . . . Winnipeg has never failed yet to solve its problems; or, at least, to deal with them in a satisfactory way; and it will not fail at this time."¹⁴

Recently-inaugurated Mayor Edward Parnell also pursued this theme. Shortly after assuming office in January 1921 he told Winnipeggers: "The responsibility for an intelligent solution of our local unemployment problem is the responsibility of the people of the city."¹⁵ And in March, Parnell declared: "The City as a Corporation has alone done what it could. It is surely the peoples' own job to complete the task through strenuous cooperation. . . ."¹⁶

While civic officials were fully prepared to accept the relief of distress due to unemployment as part of the municipality's responsibility, Winnipeg was remarkably ill-prepared for the deluge of unemployed during the winter of 1920-21. This was due largely to the conviction that the general situation was not as serious as some claimed. By the middle of November local newspapers reported large numbers of unemployed crowding the Main Street employment agencies. Despite this, "there is no rush of applicants when the man behind the railing announces a call for men" because of the low wages offered.¹⁷ There

¹⁴Ibid., 24 December 1920.

¹⁵Ibid., 13 January 1921.

¹⁶Meighen Papers, vol. 53, p. 29767, E. Parnell to the Citizens of Winnipeg, 18 March 1921.

¹⁷Bureau of Labour, Book 1, Manitoba Free Press, 17 November 1920; *ibid.*, 19 November 1920.

was little cause for alarm and certainly no need to consider assistance when men were so reluctant to take work. Moreover, expert advice from the Employment Service of Canada, from the provincial Bureau of Labour, from the Employers' Association and from the Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council all suggested that while there might be a temporary increase in unemployment the situation was not acute and would soon ease.¹⁸

At the beginning of December there was still little cause for alarm. The Social Welfare Commission, successor to the Associated Charities and fully financed and administered by the City, had eleven cases on its books where distress was due to unemployment and had no difficulty in providing work for these few men.¹⁹ But within the next two weeks the situation became serious. City and provincial authorities huddled together as, concurrently it seemed, factories closed, casual work disappeared and hundreds of building tradesmen were laid off. The Joint Council of Industry felt constrained to aver: "Prompt action, efficient action, businesslike action is necessary; but there is no place for panic in the present situation."²⁰

A special meeting of City Council was held on

¹⁸Ibid., 26 November 1920; *ibid.*, 29 November 1920.

¹⁹Meighen Papers, vol. 53, p. 29709, G.B. Clarke to E. Parnell, 8 December 1920.

²⁰D.F. Puttee, "The Development of State Relief in the Province of Manitoba," M.A. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1927, p. 50; Bureau of Labour, Book 1, Manitoba Free Press, 23 December 1920; *ibid.*, 24 December 1920.

23 December at which a committee to consider and report on unemployment relief was appointed. On 24 December the Finance Committee canvassed civic departments to ascertain what work could be provided. Five days later reports from the department had indicated work for only 150 to 200 men.²¹ A delegation from City Council and the Great War Veterans Association met with Premier Norris and his cabinet on 29 December. A joint unemployment relief committee of City Council, the provincial government, veterans, the Union of Municipalities and the Joint Council of Industry was struck. It was agreed that a registration office for the unemployed should be opened immediately and that assistance should be given through civic relief agencies.²² On 3 January 1921 City Council authorized the establishment of a separate department of the Social Welfare Commission to deal with "extraordinary relief" and advanced one thousand dollars to the Commission with which to provide relief.²³ Two weeks later the situation was still chaotic, as evidenced by the Finance Committee's authorization of overdrafts to provide funds for unemployment relief. Council expected this condition to continue for some time, for it empowered the Mayor, the chairman of the Finance Committee and the chairman of the Committee

²¹Winnipeg, M.C.C., 23 December 1920, p. 1061; Bureau of Labour, Book 1, Manitoba Free Press, 25 December 1920; *ibid.*, 29 December 1920.

²²Bureau of Labour, Book 1, Manitoba Free Press, 30 December 1920.

²³Winnipeg, M.C.C., 3 January 1921, pp. 21-22.

on Health to authorize further advances as conditions warranted.²⁴ At the end of January the provincial government authorized an expenditure of \$30,000 for "the purpose of assisting in and adequately relieving the distress among the citizens of Winnipeg and other Municipalities."²⁵ The Social Welfare Commission was registering from 125 to 250 cases daily; in the month ending 23 February there had been 8223 applications for relief.²⁶ Mayor Parnell summed up the rather preliminary nature of this hectic activity in a speech before a mass meeting of the unemployed at the Board of Trade building. "You may not agree with everything we have done but you must admit we have done something," he declared. "Further that we have lost no time and we have made an honest endeavor to relieve the situation as far as it can be relieved and that we have provided machinery whereby it will be unnecessary for any citizen of Winnipeg to suffer through lack of food or living quarters."²⁷

The fact was that in the midst of this flurry of activity there was little systematic administration of

²⁴Ibid., 17 January 1921, pp. 61-62.

²⁵P.A.M., RG18 B2, Manitoba, Department of Public Works, Deputy Minister's Office (hereafter cited as Public Works, D.M.O.), vol. 19, file Unemployment 1921-25, Provincial Order-in-Council 35956, 28 January 1921.

²⁶Bureau of Labour, Book 1, Manitoba Free Press, 13 January 1921; Public Works, D.M.O., vol. 19, file Unemployment 1921-25, E. Rogers and A. MacNamara to T.C. Norris, 28 February 1921.

²⁷Bureau of Labour, Book 1, Manitoba Free Press, 17 January 1921.

relief. The existing charitable relief apparatus simply crumbled under the crushing load of destitution in the first months of 1921. Prior to the 1920-21 crisis the Social Welfare Commission had a well-defined procedure for dealing with cases of destitution arising from unemployment. An applicant for relief was first investigated to ensure that he was unemployed, then was sent to the Employment Service of Canada office. The E.S.C. would certify that it was unable to find suitable work for the individual. The applicant would then be sent to the City Woodyard to split wood at fifty cents an hour. If, "though a willing worker," he was unable to earn enough to provide for his family the City would supplement the woodyard income. The Social Welfare Commission would also help a man get a job outside Winnipeg by assisting the family until the first wages were received. The whole process was designed to obviate the need for material assistance. Sending a man to the Employment Service was a crucial component, for it "now means that a man must have made an attempt through the existing channels to secure employment before relief work is offered him." Similarly, relief work of any kind was essential. The Social Welfare Commission had learned from the experience of other cities that simply handing out money resulted in nothing more than a rush of new applicants. It demoralized the poor and encouraged pauperism. Equally important, as the secretary of the Commission explained, relief work "would eliminate the taint of charity which must necessarily be

associated with my office and at the same time safeguard the citizens from any unscrupulous applicants."²⁸

City officials had every intention of following the Social Welfare Commission's routine. In early December 1920 Mayor-elect Parnell had said; "We don't want to wait till it is acute; we want to take all the preventive measures possible." A fortnight later he urged immediate action, but "with discretion so as not to hurt the self-respect of those who must, of necessity, be given a helping hand."²⁹ On both occasions Parnell was urging the procurement, somehow, of employment and possibly the start of some relief work by the City. When the joint unemployment relief committee at the end of December said that assistance should be given through the City relief agencies it also strongly urged that "unemployed men should be provided with work before they actually suffered through the lack of it." If a man should suffer from lack of work "the City will assist him to that minimum degree which will prevent both him and those depending on him from suffering." Assistance must be of a minimal degree so as not to subsidize idleness and to encourage a man to continue an active search for employment. Complementary to this was a work-test. Relief work "is a test of the willingness of the capable to do work. It has to be insisted upon to preclude a certain amount of fraud and

²⁸Meighen Papers, vol. 53, pp. 29709-710, G.B. Clarke to E. Parnell, 8 December 1920.

²⁹Bureau of Labour, Book 1, Manitoba Free Press, 11 December 1920; *ibid.*, 23 December 1920.

and deceit," argued G.B. Clarke, secretary of the Social Welfare Commission.³⁰

In reality, relief administration was a shambles. Under the crushing load of thousands of applicants the Social Welfare Commission guidelines were useless. There was neither the time nor the staff to investigate every applicant or even to ensure proper processing of application forms. There was not enough work in the Woodyard to employ all applicants, even to the extent of token work-tests. Faced with the collapse of the formerly neat and efficient system, the Social Welfare Commission had little choice but to give cheques for food and rent on the basis of each application. Not surprisingly, wholesale fraud was suspected. But not until March, when the situation had stabilized, was the Social Welfare staff able to regroup and reorganize the relief machinery.³¹

Although still committed to the principle of local responsibility, Winnipeg soon found the weight of that responsibility an increasingly difficult financial burden. Local politicians were spared the choice of pursuing fiscal responsibility by ignoring or minimizing the unemployment problem by offers of cost-sharing from the federal and provincial governments. In December 1920 Ottawa responded

³⁰ Ibid., 30 December 1920; *ibid.*, 5 January 1921; *ibid.*, 11 January 1921.

³¹ Meighen Papers, vol. 53, p. 29826, E. Parnell to A. Meighen, 1 October 1921; Bellan, "Relief in Winnipeg," pp. 91-92; Puttee, "State Relief in Manitoba," p. 53.

to the quickly deteriorating economic situation, especially in Ontario, by offering to pay one-third of amounts actually spent on municipal relief. Reflecting its desire to restrict its post-war responsibilities, Senator Robertson emphasized that "in normal times these problems are dealt with wholly locally." The federal offer was made, he asserted, because "the numbers of the unemployed at the present time are increased by reason of the general contraction in industrial activity following upon a period of abnormal prices during the war"; in other words, unemployment as a war-related emergency justified federal activity.³²

Federal and provincial cost-sharing soon assumed paramount importance in the City's struggle with unemployment. In the fiscal year 1920-21 the federal share of unemployment relief in Manitoba was \$52,202.09, 98 percent of which went to Winnipeg; the province's share was \$78,952.28.³³ By the middle of March Mayor Parnell asserted that the cost of unemployment relief was so heavy that without financial aid the City would have to cease its

³²Meighen Papers, vol. 53, p. 29697, G.D. Robertson to Hon. W. Rollo, 14 December 1920. A copy of this letter was sent to Mayor Parnell on 17 December and was published nationally the same day. A copy of the letter is also printed in Labour Gazette, January 1921, pp. 46-47.

³³P.A.C., RG27, Canada, Department of Labour, Lacelle Files (hereafter cited as Lacelle Files), vol. 208, file 617:9B, "Unemployment Relief--Comparative statements of amounts paid under Unemployment Relief, by provinces, during the fiscal years 1920-21, 1921-22, 1922-23, 1923-24, 1926-27," n.d.; Public Works, M.O., vol. 23, file Unemployment 1932, "Memorandum re Unemployment Relief," 15 December 1932. The provincial government's share is larger because it also agreed to pay one-half of administrative costs associated with relief.

relief operations. Responding to reports that federal contributions would end as of 31 March the Mayor told Winnipeggers that no further applications for relief could be accepted "as a further extension of the relief expenses without the aid of the Federal Government would result in an alarming per capita tax rate."³⁴

Mayor Parnell and the City were caught in the midst of a serious dilemma. A keen sense of fiscal responsibility would not permit the City to spend the thousands of dollars necessary were it to assume the full financial burden of relief. On the other hand, civic officials realized that there was no work magically available as of 1 April and that at least one thousand families needed continuing assistance. The Mayor could do no more than publicly hold out "absolutely no hope for continuation of relief," in the hope that those on relief would seek out and accept any job available, and privately beg the Prime Minister to continue federal cost-sharing.³⁵ Meighen acceded to Parnell's importunings, and to similar requests from across the country, and cost-sharing was continued "for absolutely necessary relief." The government in fact offered considerably more, as the Deputy Minister of Labour noted in his annual report to Parliament. "The view was freely advanced," read the report, "that a continuance of the unemployment

³⁴Meighen Papers, vol. 53, p. 29765, E. Parnell to A. Meighen, 15 March 1921; *ibid.*, p. 29767, Parnell to the Citizens of Winnipeg, 18 March 1921.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 29768, E. Parnell to A. Meighen, 21 March 1921; *ibid.*, Parnell to Meighen, 23 March 1921.

situation would justify the acceptance by the Dominion authorities of responsibility for paying at least a portion of any increased cost due to carrying on municipal undertakings during the winter months, and it is not unlikely that, should the unemployment situation continue during the winter of 1921-22, some assistance will be rendered to municipalities in this way."³⁶

III

The federal government's decision to continue assistance into the summer was not so much due to a sensitivity to the state of municipal finances as to a concerned appraisal of the difficult situation facing the nation and the government. As the third post-war summer dragged on the country seemed more to be slipping toward anarchy rather than to be returning to a normal state. Unemployment threatened to accentuate this, as the government's advisors noted. "There is nothing that makes men so critical of the present industrial order as unemployment," wrote Bryce Stewart, head of the Employment Service of Canada, in an article published in March 1921. Reminding his readers that Jean Val Jean stole food to feed his hungry family, Stewart warned: "The society that does not deal with the

³⁶Ibid., p. 29771, A. Meighen to E. Parnell, 24 March 1921; *ibid.*, p. 29772, P.C. 1007, 24 March 1921; *ibid.*, p. 29781, Meighen to W. Dinnan, 23 May 1921; Canada, Sessional Papers, 1922, No. 37, "Report of the Deputy Minister of Labour for the Fiscal Year ending March 31, 1921," p. 8.

problem of unemployment may expect this reaction and others still more subversive of public order."³⁷ By July the Minister of Labour was receiving disturbing reports from the Mounted Police and the military on the increasingly difficult and dangerous unemployment situation, especially on the West Coast but in Ontario and Quebec as well.³⁸

"Lack of employment," Sir Robert Borden warned his successor, "will increase existing unrest which is already very serious and which may break into violence at some points within [the] next six or eight months."³⁹

Nor was social unrest the only problem facing the Meighen administration. The Unionist coalition was pulling apart at the seams. The government seemed to lack direction and the morale of backbenchers was low. The loss of a by-election in Medicine Hat by nearly ten thousand votes to "a combination of organized Farmers, Red Labour and Liberals," as Harry Stevens put it, underscored the government's precarious position.⁴⁰ Some Conservatives even feared that the government might be defeated in the House. It was imperative that the government once more be seen to take charge of the affairs of the nation, both to preserve public peace and to improve the chances of electoral

³⁷B.M. Stewart, "The Problem of Unemployment," Social Welfare, March 1921, p. 168.

³⁸Meighen Papers, vol. 42, pp. 24569-70, G.D. Robertson to A. Meighen, 1 July 1921.

³⁹Borden Papers, vol. 118, p. 65611E, R.L. Borden to A. Meighen, 7 July 1921.

⁴⁰Graham, Arthur Meighen, p. 112.

success.⁴¹ Meighen's government continued its relief assistance and formulated an unemployment policy as responses to national requirements and political demands.

By the middle of July Ottawa had suggested to the provinces that they conduct surveys of the unemployment situation. On 31 August Senator Robertson wrote directly to the mayors of seventy industrial municipalities requesting information.⁴² Manitoba responded to this request with a meeting of provincial and federal representatives on 8 August. It was decided to call a general meeting for 15 September to which would be invited, in addition to provincial and federal officials, representatives from each city in Manitoba, from the municipalities around Winnipeg, from employer and employee organizations, from the United Farmers of Manitoba and the Union of Municipalities.⁴³ This conference is significant in that it reveals contemporary perceptions of the nature of the unemployment problem and indicates the methods of dealing with that problem which would be undertaken in Manitoba. As a result of this conference certain "ground rules" were clearly specified for the administration of relief. These would not change for more than a decade, nor would the perception of the problem facing provincial and civic officials.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 22-32, 110-14; Borden Papers, vol. 118, p. 65611E, R.L. Borden to A. Meighen, 7 July 1921.

⁴²Meighen Papers, vol. 53, pp. 29782-86, G.D. Robertson to A. Meighen, 8 September 1921.

⁴³Labour Gazette, September 1921, p. 1154.

The working paper for the conference was a report, subsequently adopted, prepared by a committee composed of seven provincial representatives, two from the City of Winnipeg and two from the Employment Service of Canada.⁴⁴ As a prelude to any action a forecast of the expected situation was necessary. The results of a fairly thorough survey were certainly disheartening. The Employment Service of Canada reported a steady decrease in employment ranging from 16 percent to 20 percent compared to 1920. The lumber industry was traditionally a large employer of winter labour, but the best estimate for 1921-22 indicated a full 50 percent reduction from the last season. In Winnipeg the building trades had been in a slump, with many tradesmen unemployed all summer. Employed tradesmen, reported the Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council, "have only been working spasmodically through summer and these have no reserves with which to face the winter." On the other hand, a survey of 310 firms conducted by the Employers' Association of Manitoba estimated no more than an 8.4 percent drop in employment in January, February and March of 1922. It seemed to the conference committee that unemployment would strike largely at the mass of unskilled workers and at men in the building trades.⁴⁵

⁴⁴Meighen Papers, vol. 53, pp. 29799-814, "Report for Consideration of Conference on the Question of Unemployment Held on the Invitation of the Government of the Province of Manitoba, at Winnipeg, September 15, 1921." A summary of the conference, based on this report, is found in Labour Gazette, October 1921, pp. 1282-83.

⁴⁵Meighen Papers, vol. 53, pp. 29804-807, "Report for Consideration . . . September 15, 1921."

The forecast of expected unemployment simply confirmed what the conference saw as the main causes of unemployment. The most significant factor was rural depopulation, followed closely by seasonal fluctuation in the labour market, especially in the building trades. Lesser factors were the lack of industrial youth training, world-wide economic fluctuations and an accompanying "lack of organization of productive industry with a view to continuous employment."⁴⁶ That rural depopulation was the foremost factor causing unemployment seemed obvious. As the United Farmers of Manitoba put it, in the urban areas "unemployment appears to be periodically recurrent while rural areas and agricultural industries are increasingly decadent."⁴⁷ The "abnormal industrial activity as a result of the war" which drew farm men and their families to the cities and towns was the primary cause. A contributing factor was the number of farmers who, upon demobilization from the military, chose to settle in the cities. Finally, and perhaps most galling of all, was federal immigration policy which admitted immigrants "who are not equipped, either physically or financially, to take up farm work, and who are not desirous of taking up this work."⁴⁸

To stop this drift to the cities and so ease, if not eliminate, urban unemployment the conference suggested an

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 29804-807.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 29800.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 29808-809.

agricultural survey to ascertain the causes of rural depopulation which would then result in a "Back to the Land" campaign. It also urged restrictions on all immigrants not prepared to take up farm work. As a corrective to some of the other causes it was suggested that private and public employers should plan to keep some work in reserve for periods of high unemployment, that some system of industrial training for youth be undertaken, and that the Employment Service of Canada's "excellent" mobilization of labour be perfected.⁴⁹

Clearly, the observations and suggestions of this conference indicate a perception of urban unemployment not as an industrial phenomenon but as a result of an overcrowding of the urban labour market and an under-supplying of the rural market. This had come about through directly observable circumstances and those could be reversed. But given this, it was still recognized that the matter could not be rectified immediately, nor could it be done by force. In the coming winter, if not later, there would be considerable unemployment and destitution with which to deal, so some form of direct relief would be necessary. All participants at this conference agreed that "handing out 'unemployment doles' is wrong in principle and harmful in effect, and should not be resorted to until all other measures have failed." They also agreed to define the unemployed as

workless people in the Community, who, though fit and willing to work, are, through no fault of their own,

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 29810-12.

but owing to the conditions of Industry in their Community and in the country generally, unable to secure work. This definition excludes from the ranks of unemployed, properly so called, the following classes: - those incapacitated by disability; those unwilling to work; and those constitutionally lazy and thriftless.⁵⁰

With this definition, and an abhorrence of "doles", the only acceptable kind of relief was work. Such work would, in itself, expose those unwilling to work and would also provide the honest unemployed with respectable assistance. To encourage the unemployed to seek other work, it was suggested that earnings on relief work "be restricted by reduced hours to the amount required to meet the cost of living." Further, it was urged that transportation costs of men going to jobs elsewhere be provided.⁵¹ In sum, relief work would be a last resort for the destitute, would provide a minimum level of subsistence, and would be designed to encourage the worker to take any other work offered.

The several guidelines for unemployment relief enunciated by this conference were reflected in Winnipeg's relief administration which, despite the expected gravity of the situation expressed in September, was not established until December. The delay was deliberate, in order to eliminate the possibility of large numbers of eastern harvesters staying in Winnipeg and seeking City assistance. The City recognized a duty to help the unemployed, but only those who were properly citizens of the municipality. As

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 29808.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 29811-12.

Alderman W.B. Simpson, Labour chairman of the civic Unemployment Relief Committee [U.R.C.] put it: "With 7000 harvesters from the east out of employment in the western provinces, Winnipeg must take a firm stand on the matter of allowing workless men to remain in the city if they do not belong here. These men are staying in the west to pick up chances of good work next spring, but that is no reason why the city should have to carry them over the winter or take work from its own unemployed to provide them with sustenance."⁵² The cheap harvest excursion rates expired on 30 November, so by delaying the opening of civic relief until December it was hoped most harvesters would leave Winnipeg. At the same time it was recognized that a great many harvesters were stranded in Winnipeg without the means to support themselves or to purchase the return portion of their excursion ticket. On 16 November the Unemployment Relief Committee, appointed by Council on 8 November, decided to issue meal tickets, to provide work at the City Woodyard, and to provide beds at No. 1 Immigration Hall for stranded harvesters.⁵³ To ensure that only the needy were helped, every man had to report to the Woodyard for work. "The city woodyard has been opened," declared Mayor Parnell, "and as long as there is work to do there no one will be fed at the city's expense without taking

⁵²Bureau of Labour, Book 2, unidentified clippings [u.c.], 22 November 1921.

⁵³Winnipeg, M.C.C., 8 November 1921, p. 936; Winnipeg, [Unemployment Relief Committee], "Emergency Unemployment Relief 1921-22" (hereafter cited as U.R.C., "Report 1921-22"), p. 1.

their turn at the wood yard [sic]."⁵⁴ This work test was expected to deter a number of applicants. To further encourage the harvesters to move on the Relief Committee paid the return fares for 401 harvesters at a cost of \$8576. When relief to harvesters ended on 1 December over 7000 meals had been issued and 220 beds provided each night. Separate accounts were not kept so the exact cost is unknown, but a reasonable estimate, including the assisted railway fares, would be between \$11,000 and \$12,000.⁵⁵

The opening of relief had also been delayed because of some uncertainty about financial arrangements. In October the federal government established the terms for sharing in relief costs. Under Order-in-Council P.C. 3831 one-third of the cost over the estimated normal cost of relief work would be paid, as would one-third of relief disbursements. Federal participation was contingent on joint and equal participation by the provincial governments.⁵⁶ These proposals were especially intended to help "create and provide employment"; but, as Mayor Parnell of Winnipeg argued with the Prime Minister when the proposals were first discussed, they placed much of the burden of providing work on the municipalities. Since the municipalities still had

⁵⁴Bureau of Labour, Book 2, u.c., 18 November 1921.

⁵⁵U.R.C., "Report 1921-22," pp. 1, 10; Bureau of Labour, u.c., 30 November 1921.

⁵⁶Public Works, D.M.O., vol. 19, file Unemployment 1921-25, P.C. 3831, 7 October 1921; Lacelle Files, vol. 208, file 617:9A, G.D. Robertson, "Memo re Unemployment Relief," October 1921.

to pay at least a third more than the normal cost of such work, there was a danger that they would resort "to the dole system rather than furnishing employment because of the cheaper cost."⁵⁷ Over the course of a month, civic and provincial officials met to consider the federal offer and to seek better terms. But Ottawa was firm and, facing a rapidly-deteriorating situation, the Manitoba government on 24 November agreed to the federal terms and in addition agreed to pay one-half of administrative expenses.⁵⁸

Relief applications were not accepted until 12 December. At meetings on 29 November and 5 December City Council adopted policy guidelines and administrative procedures for unemployment relief. Everything possible was done to ensure that City relief was a last resort for the unemployed. Each applicant had to be out of work for at least two weeks prior to application and be registered with the Employment Service of Canada. With an E.S.C. certificate in hand, the applicant reported to the relief office where he was interviewed by a clerk. He was questioned about his personal and employment history, and about the earnings of

⁵⁷Meighen Papers, vol. 53, pp. 29827-28, E. Parnell to A. Meighen, 1 October 1921.

⁵⁸Bureau of Labour, Book 2, u.c., 24 November 1921; Lacelle Files, vol. 208, file 617:9A, F.A. Acland to Minister of Labour, 30 December 1921; Public Works, D.M.O., vol. 19, file Unemployment 1921-25, Provincial Order-in-Council 37986, 24 November 1921. The federal government did later improve the terms regarding relief work. In January 1922 it agreed to pay 50 percent of the excess cost of relief work, providing the provinces agreed to continue paying one-third. Lacelle Files, vol. 208, file 617:9A, P.C. 191, 25 January 1922.

all members of the family, including children, then given a brief physical examination. If all went well he then signed an affidavit attesting to the "truth of the applicants [sic] statement in his efforts to influence the relief office to grant him assistance." He would then receive the vouchers which would be exchanged for groceries. If necessary, the City would pay light, water and gas charges. Rent might also be paid, but only when the rent was two months in arrears and only to a maximum of twenty-five dollars per month for two months.⁵⁹

Central to the whole procedure was the agreement of the applicant to take whatever work was offered. With luck the E.S.C. might provide work; hence the requirement for weekly registration at its offices. Work was also made available in the City Woodyard, in City-operated bush camps and City-owned quarries, on sewer and water lines, and on a number of provincial public works. Much of this work was seen technically as repayment for relief received. It was also felt that working for one's relief would eliminate the dangers of demoralization and pauperization. And, of course, relief work operated as a work test, differentiating between the honest unemployed and the "thriftless and constitutionally lazy." Alderman Frank Fowler described the role of relief work in these terms, if in a high-minded tone. "It was not the state's duty to provide employment," he suggested. "Rather it was the state's duty to leave the

⁵⁹U.R.C., "Report 1921-22," p. 5.

opportunity open to the individual, and then the duty devolved on the individual to take that opportunity and provide for his future."⁶⁰ Relief work presented that opportunity to the unemployed individual. The Unemployment Relief Committee described work at the Woodyard, which was reserved for single men, in the most basic of terms. It "must be considered as an effort to eliminate undesirables applying for relief and cannot be considered as productive work."⁶¹

The entire relief mechanism was designed to deter the unemployed from applying while at the same time providing a minimum standard of living for those genuinely in need. From the involved, time-consuming application procedure to the offer of relief work, the individual was encouraged to accept any alternative to City relief. The Employment Service of Canada, for instance, made continued efforts to find openings on farms for single men. "We know that the farmers are not in a position to pay big wages," said James Bowman of the Winnipeg office, "and the deserving men are not looking for such."⁶² More bluntly, Mayor Parnell declared that "the consequences will be unpleasant" for anyone on relief who turned down a job. In other words, they would be cut off.⁶³ Rates of pay on

⁶⁰Bureau of Labour, Book 2, u.c., 30 November 1921.

⁶¹U.R.C., "Report 1921-22," p. 13.

⁶²Bureau of Labour, Book 2, u.c., 12 November 1921.

⁶³Ibid., 9 December 1921.

relief work were set below the Fair Wage Rate in order to encourage the men to accept other work. Labourers on relief work were paid forty cents an hour, ten cents below the Fair Wage Rate. It was clearly to their advantage to seek and accept other work which would be paid at normal rates. This also, of course, provided the City with cheaper labour and kept the cost of the work down.⁶⁴

By the end of May 1922, 5204 individuals had applied for relief. Of those, 4786 applicants, representing 12,680 individuals, had received aid. Over 67 percent of those were unemployed labourers while another 22 percent were tradesmen from other than the building trades. Twenty-nine percent of applicants were foreign-born (that is, European) with an equal proportion Canadian-born; fully 38 percent were British-born. Over 65 percent (3400) of applicants were in the prime working years between ages nineteen and forty. An overwhelming 71 percent of applications were received in December and January, 45 percent of those in the two and one-half weeks of registration in December. This rush hints at the need and desperation of the unemployed. Even more suggestive is the fact that over 57 percent of

⁶⁴Ibid., 13 December 1921; Public Works, D.M.O., vol. 19, file Unemployment 1921-25, A. MacNamara to W.B. Simpson, 16 January 1922. Organized labour was furious about the low wage, claiming that private employers were using it as a precedent to cut wages generally. City Council had discussed the wage question in November and refused to pay the Fair Wage Rate on relief works. Bureau of Labour, Book 2, u.c., 30 November 1921; *ibid.*, 24 January 1922; Winnipeg, M.C.C., 29 November 1921, p. 987.

applicants had been unemployed between two and four months at the time of their application. And nearly 34 percent were on relief for two, three or four months. A further 11 percent (517) received aid for over four months; that is, for nearly the entire period in which relief was available.⁶⁵

It had been a winter of difficult work, but one on which civic officials could look with some satisfaction. They had established a sound administrative basis for relief and had assisted a great many needy citizens. But there was cause for concern as well, arising largely from the inability to offer sufficient relief work to all applicants. In summing up the year's work, relief office superintendant A.D. Cockrill wrote: "The method of relief without work has had a damning effect upon men who have come under my personal and intimate knowledge." Cockrill noted as a result a change in the attitude of those applying for relief. Their attitude "has developed from bashful inquiry, to confident expectation, and finally to a belligerent demand with the avowed intention on the part of a too large minority to secure, by misrepresentation if necessary, every possible nickle's worth of relief."⁶⁶ The unemployed, Cockrill was saying, were becoming pauperized--precisely the development most feared in the dispensing of relief. And while pauperizing workers, the relief system

⁶⁵U.R.C., "Report 1921-22," pp. 10, 16, 18, 20, 21, 26.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 33.

did not address itself to real solutions of unemployment. Echoing the assessment of the 15 September 1921 conference, Cockrill argued that industrial work "furnishes the commodity for the market but it does not also create the wealth that supplies the price of the commodity." Many families on relief the past winter had been willing and able to go to farms "but no organization or funds were available to carry on the work which opens the solution of the unemployment problem by production from basic sources. Since all wages must be paid out of production, production must be increased."⁶⁷

Municipal politicians agreed. On 31 August 1922 representatives of Brandon, Winnipeg and the suburban municipalities around Winnipeg met to discuss unemployment and to prepare recommendations for a Dominion-provincial conference on unemployment to be held a week later. "Insofar as Manitoba is concerned," the meeting concluded, "the solution of the unemployment problem would seem to be the settlement of surplus labour in rural districts and assisting them to take up agriculture."⁶⁸ Maintaining people in the city, declared one Winnipeg alderman, "is prone to have a bad effect on the future of the country, as it robs them of enterprise and perseverance in the face of hard times."⁶⁹ Implicit in this was a suggestion that

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 35.

⁶⁸Manitoba Free Press, 1 September 1922, p. 14.

⁶⁹Ibid., 4 September 1922, p. 10.

the matter was really beyond the scope of individual municipalities. Only the provincial and federal government could adequately produce programmes to rectify the urban-rural imbalance of labour. This would ease the financial burden on municipalities for, as the Winnipeg Suburban Municipal Association argued, "the system [of relief] hitherto in vogue has entailed great hardship on the taxpayers in some municipalities, and has diverted to doles or non-essential work money that was required for necessary municipal improvements."⁷⁰

The federal government, now Liberal under the leadership of William Lyon Mackenzie King, also shared this rural perspective. It was dictated to a great extent by King's desire to bring the Progressive Members of Parliament into the Liberal fold. To do so King pursued policies which would provide a common meeting ground between the two. The agrarian representatives had long been concerned about rural depopulation and the high price of agricultural labour. They blamed the Unionist government's employment initiatives for much of their difficulties and saw unemployment relief as encouraging labour to remain in the cities on relief.⁷¹ These were areas in which King could

⁷⁰P.A.C., Richard Bedford Bennett Papers (microfilm copy deposited by the University of New Brunswick), p. 12588, "Report of Proceedings of Unemployment Conference Held at Ottawa, September 5, 6, 7, 1922" (hereafter cited as "Proceedings, September 1922"). This report is also found in Lacelle Files, vol. 119, file 600.02-176.

⁷¹Struthers, "Prelude to Depression," pp. 285-89; R.M. Dawson, William Lyon Mackenzie King: A Political Biography, 1874-1923 (Toronto, 1958), pp. 377-81, 389.

conveniently oblige the Progressives' wishes for he wanted to end federal involvement in unemployment relief.

V

Most urban municipalities in Western Canada predicated their relief systems on some measure of federal assistance. Preparing for the fall and winter of 1922 they had reason to expect continued federal aid. Shortly after assuming office the King cabinet had passed Order-in-Council P.C. 191, by which the government offered to pay 50 percent of the excess cost of relief works provided the provinces continued to pay one-third, 50 percent of provincial expenditures in unorganized districts, 50 percent of the relief to physically fit ex-soldiers, and a continued one-third of the costs of direct relief generally.⁷² These provisions, due to expire on 31 March, were extended generally until 30 April. A further extension was granted to Manitoba because of the "exceptional conditions" in Winnipeg, where on 28 April there were still eight hundred families receiving relief. Relief in Winnipeg was finally discontinued at the end of May.⁷³ These actions seemed to indicate a certain sensitivity to the problems which the municipalities faced. Later in the year the new Minister

⁷²Lacelle Files, vol. 208, file 617:9A, P.C. 191, 25 January 1922.

⁷³Ibid., P.C. 4/630, 20 March 1922; *ibid.*, Minister of Labour, "Memorandum," 28 April 1922; *ibid.*, P.C. 120/1018, 9 May 1922; Public Works, D.M.O., vol. 19, file Unemployment 1921-25, A. MacNamara to S.C. Oxton, 11 September 1922.

of Labour, James Murdock, had also seemed to give a promise of continued federal aid. Attending a municipal conference at Calgary Murdock had declared: "My position personally will be this, that whenever provincial or municipal governments think they need help and ask the federal government to aid them in solving problems of unemployment, I will see that prompt and equitable co-operation will be undertaken by my department." This was not, of course, a promise of financial assistance but the most favourable interpretation was placed on Murdock's remarks.⁷⁴

Municipalities, especially in Western Canada, were understandably annoyed when Mackenzie King called a Dominion-provincial conference on unemployment for September 1922 and they were excluded. Representatives of the larger urban municipalities angrily made their way to Ottawa where they were permitted to address the conference. It was a discouraging experience for them, for it was clear from the outset in which direction King intended to lead the meeting. The Prime Minister opened the conference with strong criticism of the "centralizing tendency" which had developed during the war. As a result jurisdictional boundaries had become confused and the federal government had assumed duties which were properly the responsibility of the provinces. King emphasized that federal assistance for unemployment relief had always been temporary and was undertaken as part of obligations arising from the war.

⁷⁴Bureau of Labour, Book 2, u.c., 5 August 1922; Bennett Papers, pp. 12650-53, "Proceedings, September 1922."

It was time "to get back again to the foundation upon which in the past the strength and the greatness of our country has been built," to "individual initiative, individual effort, self-reliance upon the part of the individuals and upon the part of communities."⁷⁵

King was declaring abnormal war-related unemployment at an end. Most provincial delegates seconded the Prime Minister's desire for a return to traditional values and provided evidence which supported his declaration of the end of serious unemployment. Every province declared the employment outlook quite favourable, and those anticipating unemployment did not expect it to be serious. Even Manitoba, which presented one of the most pessimistic reports, did not foresee much of a problem except for men in the building trades. For these men the problem was a working season too short to enable them to save enough to get through the winter.⁷⁶ The government's Employment Service officials presented an even brighter picture. R.A. Rigg, director of the E.S.C., reported of Winnipeg that "there will be but little unemployment this winter. . . . No physically fit single or married man without children should be granted relief."⁷⁷

The municipalities which forced their way into the conference presented a much different picture. "We are

⁷⁵Bennett Papers, pp. 12536-40, "Proceedings, September 1922."

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 12560-66.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 12581.

faced at the present time with an abnormal condition," declared the Mayor of Edmonton, with the general approval of his colleagues. But they undermined their own position by agreeing with the general consensus that most of the unemployment was caused by overcrowding of the cities.⁷⁸ Offering relief only encouraged surplus labour to stay in the cities, rewarded extravagance, undermined thrift, and "would seriously interfere with the type of citizenship which we are trying to build up in Canada."⁷⁹ The municipalities had the constitutional responsibility for relief and only they could undertake the appropriate measures to counter these relief-induced tendencies.

Still, the federal government agreed that if abnormal levels of unemployment should appear that winter it would meet the situation by following the methods of 1921-22 with details to be worked out as the occasion warranted.⁸⁰ Winnipeg City Council would soon learn to its dismay that Mackenzie King had a very different conception of what was "abnormal" than did either Council or the provincial government.

By December City relief facilities were being stretched to the limit. In the eyes of civic officials the situation was abnormal so a request for financial assistance was forwarded to Ottawa. The federal government did not agree. Reports to James Murdock, the Minister of Labour, in January and February 1923 noted a great improvement

⁸⁰Lacelle Files, vol. 208, file 617:9A, "Memorandum," n.d.

in the economic situation. While, for example, Winnipeg carried the same number of married men on relief as in the previous year, it was pointed out that few single men were on relief and the City was not proceeding with any public works to relieve the situation. Unemployment was also being held in check by an "exodus" of building tradesmen to the United States.⁸¹ These reports ignored as much about the Winnipeg situation as they revealed, but they were sufficient evidence for the federal government to refuse all requests for financial assistance.

It is not accurate to say the federal government did nothing for the unemployed. The federal position was that it could not and would not assist municipalities for general unemployment relief. However, the government was sensitive to the needs of its former war-time employees, and was certainly sensitive to the favourable public sentiment enjoyed by those returned soldiers. This sensitivity dictated a softening of the government's position towards relief assistance, so in February 1923 the cabinet passed P.C. 220. This Order-in-Council provided for reimbursement of one-third of relief dispensed after 1 January 1923 to unemployed needy ex-service men. But accounts for this relief would only be paid if submitted to the government by a special relief body composed of representatives of

⁸¹Ibid., vol. 184, file 614:05, "A Comparison of Employment Conditions in the Province of Manitoba on January 31st, 1922 and January 31st, 1923 as Shown by Reports from Offices of the Employment Service of Canada," n.d.; ibid., [R.A. Rigg], "Memo to the Minister," 21 February 1923.

the municipality concerned and of the various charitable and veterans groups. Further, these relief bodies were to be formed only in areas where municipal or provincial authorities had not assumed responsibility for relieving the unemployed.⁸² To take advantage of this meagre assistance Winnipeg would have had to reorganize its relief department, let financial control pass from its hands and cut off all relief recipients except ex-service men. This was an insulting if not irresponsible attitude and clearly one which the City would not accept. P.C. 220 became a focus for City Council's anger with Ottawa, moreso because it was believed that the Order had been passed simply to pacify Montreal.⁸³ City Council passed resolutions and Mayor Farmer wrote letters to Murdock and Mackenzie King emphasizing the City's "keen disappointment" and "dissatisfaction" with the government's offer, pointing out the considerable problem Winnipeg had with the total population of unemployed, of whom about one-third were ex-service men.⁸⁴ Correspondence continued into the summer of 1923 with the

⁸²P.A.C., MG26 J1, William Lyon Mackenzie King Papers, vol. 119, p. 101134, J. Murdock to S.J. Farmer, 6 February 1923. Unless otherwise noted all citations from the King Papers are from series J1.

⁸³Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 17 July 1923, p. 9. In fact, the largest federal disbursements went to Ontario. See P.A.C., MG26 J4, William Lyon Mackenzie King Papers, vol. 142, p. 103541, "Federal Contributions to Unemployment Relief ending Fiscal Year March 31, 1930," n.d.

⁸⁴Winnipeg, M.C.C., 12 February 1923, p. 130; King Papers, vol. 119, p. 101134, C.J. Brown to J. Murdock, 13 February 1923; *ibid.*, p. 101135, S.J. Farmer to Murdock, 15 February 1923; Meighen Papers, vol. 137, pp. 82236-39, Farmer to W.L.M. King, 8 January 1923.

City of Winnipeg alternately demanding and pleading for assistance with unemployment relief. The federal government remained firm in its resolve.

It was obvious to civic officials that letter-writing and strong resolutions would not in themselves unlock federal coffers. Winnipeg City Council believed the federal position to be unfair and contrary to the spirit of the 1922 Dominion-provincial conference. To reinforce its case the City simply billed the Dominion for what its share would have been if a cost-sharing agreement had been in effect. This was calculated to be \$52,336.04.⁸⁵ The account was curtly dismissed. "The claim of your municipality," wrote the Minister of Labour, "is in a word wholly outside the terms of the governing regulations and no federal grant can be paid."⁸⁶

City Council was not content to let the matter rest. A glimmer of hope appeared with the announcement of a by-election in North Winnipeg, made necessary by the appointment of E.J. McMurray to the federal cabinet as Solicitor-General. An opportunity to play upon the political needs of Mackenzie King had appeared, but just as quickly it disappeared under the partisan politics of the Council chamber. The Finance Committee and the Unemployment Relief Committee proposed to enlist the aid of the

⁸⁵King Papers, vol. 119, pp. 101121-22, City Comptroller, "Statement of Dominion Account with the City," 27 August 1923.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 101135, J. Murdock to S.J. Farmer, 14 July 1923.

Union of Canadian Municipalities in pressing the City's claim. When Council turned down the proposal, Labour aldermen charged the others with partisan motives. They alleged that letting the matter rest at that time squelched an embarrassing issue for the Liberals. W.B. Simpson, chairman of the Unemployment Relief Committee since its formation, resigned that post, citing Council's lack of confidence in its committee.⁸⁷ When Council later decided to send a delegation to Ottawa, further charges of partisan politics echoed through City Hall. This time Labour aldermen charged others with raising the false hope that the Dominion might pay the claim when it was well known that the federal government had no such intention.⁸⁸ The position of the Labour aldermen is understandable since one of them, A.A. Heaps, was McMurray's main opponent in North Winnipeg. But the City's attempt to use federal politics to secure its claim failed. It failed because of the inability of Council to present a unified or even a well-defined strategy and because of its slight political weight. Even more important, the federal government successfully negotiated several dangerous political shoals. In Ottawa, Murdock and other ministers often reaffirmed their sympathy for Winnipeg's situation, promised reconsideration, and after considerable delay reported that unfortunately

⁸⁷Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 29 August 1923, p. 3; ibid., 11 September 1923, p. 10.

⁸⁸Winnipeg, M.C.C., 8 October 1923, pp. 831-32; Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 9 October 1923, p. 3.

the City's claim could not be accepted.⁸⁹

By December 1923 City Council recognized the obvious and gave up on its claim for 1922-23. Each winter Council requested Dominion participation as a one-third partner in providing unemployment relief.⁹⁰ With the exception of 1926 the requests were turned down. The unemployment situation was not significantly worse that year nor had the federal government altered its philosophy towards unemployment assistance. The difference in early 1926 was that Mackenzie King faced defeat in the House of Commons without the support of J.S. Woodsworth and A.A. Heaps. The price of their support was legislation providing for relief assistance and old age pensions. It was a price King was prepared to pay and as an investment it repaid King handsomely.⁹¹

Without federal assistance City Council could only turn to the provincial government. The only certainty in

⁸⁹See especially the report of a City Council delegation to Ottawa in Winnipeg, M.C.C., 5 November 1923, pp. 922-25. See also King Papers, vol. 119, pp. 101130-140, J. Murdock to C.J. Brown, 10 December 1923.

⁹⁰Winnipeg, M.C.C., 17 December 1923, pp. 1011-12; *ibid.*, 15 December 1924, p. 1014; *ibid.*, 8 February 1926, pp. 73-4; *ibid.*, 7 March 1927, p. 166.

⁹¹King Papers, vol. 165, p. 119473, J.S. Woodsworth and A.A. Heaps to W.L.M. King, 7 January 1926; *ibid.*, p. 119475, King to Woodsworth and Heaps, 28 January 1926; Lacelle Files, vol. 208, file 617:9A, P.C. 315, 2 March 1926; F.V. Stone, "Unemployment and Unemployment Relief in Western Canada," M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1933, pp. 87-88; H.B. Neatby, William Lyon Mackenzie King, 1924-32: The Lonely Heights (Toronto, 1963), pp. 110-11, 125-26.

City Hall was that the City alone could not bear the full burden of relief. Sound fiscal practices dictated provincial involvement in civic matters. Ironically, in attempting to control relief expenditures through cost-sharing, City Council would lose control of both relief expenditures and relief policy.

CHAPTER THREE

RETRENCHMENT: 1923-1928

I

Reducing expenditures and balancing budgets were among the chief economic concerns of governments in the 1920s. The need for this was both simple and obvious. "It is earlier extravagance in municipal, provincial and federal government Canada is now paying for in so much toil and travail," explained one Winnipeg newspaper. "Not until the slate is lightened to a considerable extent will private capital become available for industrial and commercial expansion. Extravagance in government, causing further conscription of capital, will only serve to delay the return of prosperity."¹

It was an economic argument which had few opponents, and it formed the basis of the King government's fiscal programme. At the 1922 Dominion-provincial conference the government had argued against establishing a nation-wide framework for relief. "We cannot afford to do it," James Murdock argued quite simply.² Under the conservative fiscal guidance of William Stevens Fielding and then James Robb

¹Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 18 January 1923, p. 4.

²Bennett Papers, p. 12557, "Proceedings, September 1922."

the federal government ultimately balanced its budgets, in which surpluses and tax reductions became common features.³

In Manitoba the Liberal government of T.C. Norris practiced "economy . . . in every direction of public policy."⁴ This was accentuated with the election of a Farmers' government and the elevation of John Bracken to the premiership in the summer of 1922. That election has been described by one Manitoba historian as a return to the province's origins, to the "rural values of thrift, sobriety and patient labour." Another has written of the election: "Above all it was a demand for economic government."⁵ Bracken's professed desire to administer the province's affairs "with businesslike efficiency and economy" was applauded on the farms and in the towns alike. So too was the government's programme of economic retrenchment. "The chips have got to fall somewhere, . . ." editorialized the Winnipeg Evening Tribune. "The louder the wails the more the general public will be reassured that a policy of economy is being not only preached but practiced."⁶ And in Winnipeg's City Hall the civic Finance Committee sat down each spring

³Dawson, W.L.M. King, 1874-1923, pp. 384, 391; Neatby, W.L.M. King, 1924-32, pp. 18-19, 59, 122-25.

⁴Canadian Annual Review, 1922, p. 453.

⁵Morton, Manitoba, p. 379; J. Kendle, John Bracken: A Political Biography (Toronto, 1979), p. 37.

⁶Canadian Annual Review, 1922, p. 777; Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 5 December 1922, p. 4. In fact, the main criticism of Bracken economics was that it was not frugal enough. See Kendle, Bracken, pp. 37-39.

to pare estimates and reduce the mill rate. The headline one Winnipeg newspaper used over its review of 1922 was equally true for each subsequent year of the decade; "Economy Has Been Slogan at City Hall," it said.⁷

A policy of economy was largely the reason for the City of Winnipeg's obstinacy in pursuing its \$52,336.04 account with the federal government. There were other reasons, of course, such as the conviction that the federal government had reneged on a clear commitment given at the Dominion-provincial conference of 1922. Winnipeg also believed that it, with many other municipalities, was being forced to carry a burden greater than was constitutionally required. Winnipeg attracted many unemployed who came hoping to find work, and also served as the wintering quarters for many of the West's itinerant workers. A week after assuming office in 1923, Mayor Seymour J. Farmer reasoned with the Prime Minister that these people, though not citizens of Winnipeg, could not be allowed to starve. The City had to feed them, but Farmer suggested that they were properly "Dominion Citizens at Large" and so had a claim on the resources of the Dominion as a whole. Not surprisingly this suggestion was dismissed by the federal government.⁸ At root it was a question of dollars and cents. At the best of times the civic government had a

⁷Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 1 January 1923, p. 1.

⁸Meighen Papers, vol. 137, p. 82236, S.J. Farmer to W.L.M. King, 8 January 1923; Winnipeg, M.C.C., 26 February 1923, p. 206.

limited tax base; in times of recession revenue was even more circumscribed. Tens of thousands of dollars were being spent on essentially non-productive efforts. This was anathema to many in a city which bore the proud motto "Commerce, Prudence, Industry." The assistance rendered by the Province and the Dominion in 1920-21 and 1921-22 had enabled the City to spend the large sums necessary for relief with somewhat greater enthusiasm than had it been left on its own. Now it faced the discouraging prospect of carrying half or even more of the load.

As a complement to economic restraint, a determined effort was made to discourage any who might have thought of applying for relief that winter. Alderman J.A. McKerchar, chairman of the Finance Committee, spoke for many when he declared in September 1922: "There has been plenty of work this summer and will be until the snow flies. After that wood camps will open up and there will be lots of work available for single men in the bush." The City's policy, he said, was that "unless there is urgent need of assistance our relief will be limited to married men with families." Restricting eligibility in this way would reduce costs and also had important social implications. "Giving help to single able bodied men is prone to have a bad effect on the future of the country," explained McKerchar, "as it robs them of enterprise and perseverance in the face of hard times."⁹

⁹Manitoba Free Press, 4 September 1922, p. 10; *ibid.*, 1 September 1922, p. 14.

In October the City circulated a large poster in rural Manitoba. Over the signature of Mayor Fowler it warned men to be on the lookout for winter jobs as the "CITY OF WINNIPEG WILL NOT ASSIST ABLE BODIED MEN." The intent, as Arthur MacNamara told the Deputy Minister of Public Works, was to "check demands for unemployment relief insofar as single men are concerned."¹⁰ Men were encouraged to look harder for work, to be less choosy about wages and conditions, and to be more reluctant to approach the City for assistance. Even as Fowler's notice was being posted, however, civic officials realized that there probably would not be enough jobs to go round. This pessimism was borne out, as a month later the City of Winnipeg was building woodcamps to relieve single men and the Province was being urged to do the same.¹¹

The Social Welfare Commission had been dispensing unemployment relief in Winnipeg since 12 November. By the middle of December the demands on the Commission were such that its other relief and charitable work was being neglected. At this point, as was the rule, the Unemployment Relief Committee became involved and all unemployment cases were transferred from the Social Welfare Commission to its charge. On 18 December City Council approved relief guidelines for the season, which were basically unchanged from

¹⁰Public Works, D.M.O., vol. 19, file Unemployment 1921-25, A. MacNamara to D. McLean, 16 October 1922.

¹¹Ibid., A. MacNamara to W.R. Clubb, 17 November 1922.

the previous year.¹² A request for financial assistance was also routinely sent to both the federal and provincial governments. As noted above, the federal government refused, but for a time it appeared as if the provincial treasury would remain closed as well.

When Council decided to open a separate office for unemployment relief it was with the presumed understanding that other monies would be forthcoming. The Unemployment Relief Committee, in close contact with the Minister of Public Works through Arthur MacNamara, the Assistant Deputy Minister of Public Works, had earlier approached the provincial government, which had intimated that some assistance would be forthcoming. On 29 December Provincial Order-in-Council 39639 was passed, by which the government agreed to pay one-third of relief expenditures spent on cases in excess of the normal number (one hundred cases being considered normal). It would also pay up to one-half of the balance of the excess costs of relief work not paid by the federal government and, as before, one-half of the increased administrative costs. However, the Province added that all this was contingent upon the federal government "participating to [an] amount satisfactory to the Provincial Government."¹³

This was a more limited provincial involvement than previously. It reflected in part the hope that unemployment would not be as serious that winter, but mostly it reflected

¹²Winnipeg, M.C.C., 18 December 1922, pp. 2018-20.

¹³Public Works, D.M.O., vol. 19, file Unemployment 1921-25, Order-in-Council 39639, 29 December 1922.

the new Bracken administration's policy of reducing expenditures wherever possible. Provincial costs could be reduced by limiting the amount of aid offered and by sharing the burden with the federal government. The provincial government soon realized that the pressure for assistance would increase, whether or not the federal government became involved. The numbers of unemployed alone made this inevitable; at the end of December the City was relieving 414 married men and their families, a total of 1546 persons, and 82 single men. By the first week of January 1923 the number had risen to 538 married men for a total of 2787 persons, plus 146 single men, and there was every indication that the number was increasing.¹⁴ It was also politically difficult for the new Bracken government to do nothing. The administration had agreed that there was already a situation which called for its assistance, and it was increasingly difficult to blame the federal government for its own refusal to act. Bracken was still consolidating his position in the House, balancing the interests of urban and rural Manitoba. He had the general support of the Winnipeg business community, but to them economy in government did not mean economy at one level to the detriment of another. They expected the burden to be shared.¹⁵ The government realized that the

¹⁴Ibid., F.O. Fowler to W.L.M. King and J. Murdock, 28 December 1922; Meighen Papers, vol. 137, p. 82236, S.J. Farmer to W.L.M. King, 8 January 1923.

¹⁵On the political situation of the Bracken government at this time see Kendle, Bracken, pp. 39-46.

longer it delayed action, the greater the criticism would be and very likely increased levels of assistance would also be requested.

On 23 January the provincial legislature debated a resolution, moved by Seymour J. Farmer, M.L.A. and Mayor of Winnipeg, asking the federal government to extend aid for unemployment relief as it had in the past. The resolution passed unanimously. In the course of debate late that evening, R.W. Craig, the Attorney-General, modified the provincial government's position. Craig declared that if the federal government did not respond favourably "then the government of this province would do its utmost to cope with the situation from its own resources, aiding all municipalities to give comfort to their unemployed."¹⁶ The next day Arthur MacNamara sent a memorandum to his Minister recommending that Order-in-Council 39639 be repealed and a new Order substituted to authorize provincial assistance regardless of federal participation. The prime reason, wrote MacNamara, recognizing that with Order 39639 the government had in principle indicated its willingness to assist, was "to forestall, if possible, any request from the City of Winnipeg or other municipalities that the Government grant fifty per cent of relief instead of one third."¹⁷ On 25 January, before any reply had been received from Ottawa, the cabinet passed Order-in-Council 39809. The

¹⁶Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 24 January 1923, p. 3.

¹⁷Public Works, D.M.O., vol. 19, file Unemployment 1921-25, A. MacNamara to W.R. Clubb, 24 January 1923.

provisions were identical to Order 39639 except that all references to the federal government were deleted. With this assistance the financial burden on the City was eased somewhat and relief continued.

With the coming of spring the tide of unemployment once more receded from Winnipeg. A.D. Cockrill, Superintendent of Relief, reported to the City Council in July 1923 that over the winter the City had taken care of 7400 unemployment cases, draining the City treasury of about \$117,000. With provincial assistance of almost \$80,000 the total cost of relief was nearly \$200,000. The one encouraging note in these large figures was that this represented only 41 per cent of the amount spent in 1921-22.¹⁸ It appeared to the optimistic that at last unemployment had peaked and that prosperity was returning. Indeed, at least one Winnipeg newspaper concluded at the end of the year that the "depression era" had ended; the mill rate had been cut, tax collections were up, City Hydro was making good profits, and the City's financial position appeared generally sound.¹⁹ Such optimism, however, had to be tempered somewhat when in the autumn large numbers of unemployed once more appeared in Winnipeg streets.

Not everyone during the summer of 1923 was sanguine about the coming winter. Among these was Mayor Seymour J. Farmer. For some time he had been urging Council to prepare

¹⁸ Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 17 July 1923, p. 2; Seasonal Unemployment in Manitoba; A Report, by R.W. Murchie, Chairman (Winnipeg, 1928), p. 75.

¹⁹ Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 1 January 1924, p. 2.

work for the unemployed but had met with little response. The agitation over the fifty-two thousand dollar claim against the federal government indicates that unemployment was a matter of discussion among aldermen during the year, but this was far from preparing contingency plans for unemployment. Accordingly, when City Council formally recognized the existence of an unemployment problem in December 1923 and ordered the Unemployment Relief Committee to deal with it²⁰ Mayor Farmer was alone in presenting concrete proposals for work. The Relief Committee had definite ideas about the administrative side of relief but had little else to propose. Alderman R.J. Shore, chairman of the Unemployment Relief Committee, told a delegation of unemployed men on 10 December that, as far as possible, "the city will provide jobs for Winnipeg's unemployed married men and they will be independent of the relief schedule. We hope to open up a sufficient amount of work to allow every man to receive his pay cheque."²¹ Until the Civic Utilities Committee and Council approved specific works, though, nothing could be done. Lack of preparation in the preceding months was now resulting in unneeded suffering and in the dispensation of doles without work to hundreds of men, both abhorred by all aldermen.

In the first week of December the Social Welfare Commission received over three hundred applications for

²⁰Winnipeg, M.C.C., 3 December 1923, p. 971.

²¹Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 10 December 1923, p. 2.

relief work from single men alone. Until the City organized its wood camps these men split wood at the Woodyard, receiving in turn three meals a day. Part of the problem in this case was the fact that weather conditions made bush work impossible: there was insufficient snow and the temperature was too warm.²² But there was probably an equal number of married men for whom work was needed but unavailable, and this group was of first concern. The Mayor presented a list of proposed sewer and water main work to the Civic Utilities Committee on 10 December. The Committee did not object to the proposed work but did raise so many technical objections, such as the need for tendering of contracts, "that the mayor began to lose his wonted equanimity." "For months I have been urging that we have some work ready for the unemployed when the winter began," Mayor Farmer lectured the Committee. "I was always met with the argument that we had better wait as there might be no unemployment. Here's the result. Unemployment is upon us and we are faced with all sorts of technicalities when we try to arrange work." The Utilities Committee dropped its objections and Council approved a number of works though it took a further week and more to get these operations started.²³

By 8 January 1924 over three hundred married men were employed on relief works, but there were at least

²²Ibid., 7 December 1923, p. 3.

²³Ibid., 11 December 1923, p. 13; Winnipeg, M.C.C., 11 December 1923, pp. 999-1001.

another two hundred needing work who in the meantime were maintained on relief. The City was unable to provide sufficient work. In the middle of February six hundred men were employed on relief works while another six hundred were on direct relief.²⁴ These relief works were expected to furnish approximately twelve weeks' work. None further were planned when they finished in March, notwithstanding numerous protests from the unemployed.²⁵ The confident expectation, of course, was that other construction work and farm jobs would open up in May. As the married men finished on City construction and the single men returned from the wood camps along the Greater Winnipeg Water District rail line, they were expected to seek out available work and, if they failed to find any, were maintained on the relief rolls. Single men were expected to take out-of-city work. Relief for them was cut off at the end of April to encourage them to leave. Married men were continued on relief for several more weeks.²⁶

II

It was a sign of continuing depression that the unemployed were becoming both vocal and organized. A great many workmen had been periodically or continually unemployed for three years and more. Impatience and frustration

²⁴ Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 18 February 1924, p. 5.

²⁵ Ibid., 4 March 1924, p. 1; *ibid.*, 17 March 1924, p. 1.

²⁶ Ibid., 22 April 1924, p. 12.

naturally grew. One morning in April 1924 Mayor Farmer arrived at City Hall to find the corridors filled with more than two hundred unemployed men. The men were in a vaguely threatening mood, demanding that relief be continued until they found jobs. They left after an hour with a promise from the Mayor to convey their wishes to the Unemployment Relief Committee. The incident seems only to have buttressed the Committee's decision to remove single men from the city though continuing relief for married men.²⁷

During the winter of 1922-23 City Council was besieged with delegations of the unemployed who complained of the levels of relief, of poor clothing, of discrimination from landlords, and a multitude of other grievances. On 7 December 1922 the National Association of the Unemployed organized a march on the legislature to press the government to cooperate with the City on relief. A week later there was a second march.²⁸ The Association routinely filled the galleries at City Council's Monday evening meetings. At the first meeting of 1923 Mrs. Edith Hancox, one of the leaders of the National Association of Unemployed, disrupted the session by walking across the floor and placing a sheaf of documents containing numerous complaints on the Mayor's desk. One of the unemployed, William Boothman, poured a packet of tea on the City Clerk's desk to dramatize his

²⁷Ibid., 16 April 1924, p. 19; *ibid.*, 22 April 1924, p. 12.

²⁸Ibid., 7 December 1922, p. 11; *ibid.*, 14 December 1922, p. 17.

contention that the Unemployment Relief Committee was issuing inferior supplies. From the galleries came shouts that the unemployed had expected more sympathy from Council, especially when the chairmanship of the Unemployment Relief Committee and the mayoralty were held by Labour representatives.

Not surprisingly Alderman W.B. Simpson, chairman of the Unemployment Relief Committee, took these charges personally. Rising to deny the shouted charges as untrue, he was greeted by a chorus of boos. He responded angrily. The electors of North Winnipeg, Simpson declared, had that autumn returned him to City Council with an increased majority and Council had unanimously re-elected him to the Relief Committee. He had had the thankless task of chairing that Committee for two years; if anyone wanted his resignation they could have it right there. Other aldermen quickly came to Simpson's defence. R.J. Shore, no supporter of the Labour aldermen, damned the attacks on Simpson as "vicious, cruel and mean." Alderman H. Jones, a fellow Labour representative from Ward 3, mused that it was the lot of labour leaders to be crucified by those they tried to help. He had no doubt that "Simpson and Jones will be crucified in time."²⁹

This episode underlined the difficult position of the Labour party in these kinds of civic issues. It might be thought that the intense nature of civic politics may have decidedly influenced the relief administration in this

²⁹Ibid., 5 January 1923, p. 8.

period, for it has been persuasively argued that civic politics in Winnipeg were essentially class politics arising from the bitter social divisions generated by the General Strike.³⁰ On the one side were the representatives of the Independent Labour Party whose base of support was the city's skilled tradesmen; on the other were the Citizens' League members who had the support of Winnipeg's business and professional community. A further study of the socio-economic profiles of aldermen and of their voting patterns leaves little doubt that "despite denials and rhetorical flourishes, Winnipeg city politics from [1919 to 1945] was dominated by two organized political parties." That study also suggests that "on major economic and ideological issues the two groups confronted each other directly and consistently over the years."³¹ From this one might expect an ideological division over relief policy and that ideological predispositions dictated, to some degree, the nature of relief policy. A review of the first three full years of relief administration indicates that such inferences are greatly misleading. A hint as to the true nature of Council's attitudes is to be found in the criticisms of Mayor Farmer and Alderman Simpson by the National Association of Unemployed during their demonstration in January 1923.

³⁰J.E. Rea, "The Politics of Conscience: Winnipeg after the Strike," Canadian Historical Association, Historical Papers, 1971, pp. 276-88.

³¹J.E. Rea, "The Politics of Class: Winnipeg City Council, 1919-1945," in The West and the Nation: Essays in Honour of W.L. Morton, ed. C. Berger and R. Cook (Toronto, 1976), pp. 233, 234-39.

Between 23 December 1920 and 31 December 1923 City Council voted eighty-five times on matters pertaining to unemployment relief. Of these, sixty-five had to do with specific policy matters, including personnel, administrative procedures and the adoption of federal or provincial guidelines. In the course of these three years, only eleven of the sixty-five policy matters were put to a recorded division. It should be noted that such roll call votes were employed "only when a Council member considered a vote to be significant and wished each alderman's opinion made a matter of public knowledge."³² Since these votes were such a small proportion of the total, it may be useful to review some of the matters which were not considered so significant.

In 1921 councillors agreed that relief in the form of cash should not be given, that a work test was desirable, that the relief schedules were adequate, and that an individual must be out of steady employment for at least two weeks to be eligible for relief. All of these were agreed upon again in 1922, with the added proviso that no single men should receive relief when any work was available. One point on which Council divided was a Labour suggestion that the two week unemployment period be eliminated. Interestingly, five of the six Labour aldermen were opposed by the rest of the Council. The one Labour member who joined the Citizens' majority was W.B. Simpson, then chairman

³²Rea, "Politics of Class," p. 239.

of the Unemployment Relief Committee.³³ In 1923, Council agreed that the City had no responsibility for other than its own citizens, that a work test was desirable, that single men should not receive relief, and that individuals were to take any work available if they had fewer than two children. These results suggest, particularly in the almost complete lack of alternatives proposed by the Labour group, that both "parties" of Council either shared similar views on unemployment relief or recognized certain bounds on their actions beyond which Council could not step.

There was a fundamental similarity of views. All aldermen agreed that unemployment should be a federal responsibility and that it was beyond the City's means to cope either physically or financially. They agreed that simply doling cash with nothing asked in return was both fiscally irresponsible to the City and morally detrimental to the unemployed; hence, they agreed that both work tests and relief works were needed. On this set of assumptions relief administration was predicated. Winnipeg councillors were not alone, as the many statements by politicians of all ideologies at the 1922 unemployment conference made clear. The matters on which Council divided do nothing to undercut this view; indeed, they lend credence to the suggestion that there were also other factors which must be considered.

As noted above, an attempt by Labour in 1922 to

³³Winnipeg, M.C.C., 18 December 1922, p. 1080.

remove the two week unemployment period was defeated by the Citizens' majority with the added support of W.B. Simpson. The other issue which caused division that year was an Unemployment Relief Committee recommendation that married men without children were to accept any available work. A Labour amendment to strike the clause was carried with the support of six Citizens' members. However, when reconsideration of the clause was proposed, only four Labour aldermen opposed the motion, with Alderman Simpson once more voting with the Citizens' majority. This clause was subsequently adopted by a voice vote.³⁴ Apparently the Labour group did not think the matter sufficiently important to continue opposing it. Presumably they felt their public posture had been recorded on the original vote.

The same pattern emerged in 1923. A Labour motion of 9 April 1923 was defeated by the solid opposition of the Citizens' majority who once more had the support of Alderman Simpson. This process repeats itself when, on 17 December 1923, Council considered the Unemployment Relief Committee's report for the coming winter. Of six recorded votes, Labour-proposed amendments were passed four times, each time with the support of at least one Citizens' member. However, two of these amendments simply replaced U.R.C. administrative proposals with the relevant practices of the preceding years. Of the other two, one had once more to do with the required period of unemployment prior to application

³⁴Ibid., p. 1081.

for relief. The original U.R.C. proposal had been for a two month period. Amendments first to strike the clause and then to make the period two weeks were solidly opposed by the majority, with Alderman Simpson's support. The matter was finally resolved by a successful motion for a one week period.³⁵

The striking point in this is not the strong party cohesion among the majority, who always claimed they were not a party, but the lack of cohesion among the Labour group, who steadfastly maintained that they were a party.³⁶ Even more surprising, given the fractious nature of labour politics, was the lack of public recrimination towards Simpson; in later years Thomas Flye, a long-time Labour alderman, was drummed out of the party for too often voting the wrong way. One is left with the conclusion that in the matter of unemployment and relief, the Labour Party in Winnipeg was content with the relief system. At the very least, Labour tried to avoid involvement with the relief system and with the City's welfare system generally. When in January 1924 it came time to choose chairmen for civic committees the "Rite of the Strike" took its course with two notable exceptions: no one wanted to take the Unemployment Relief Committee or the Social Welfare Commission. It was true that Labour had been badly handled by the majority

³⁵Ibid., 17 December 1923, pp. 1012-13.

³⁶A.B. McKillop, "Citizen and Socialist: The Ethos of Political Winnipeg, 1919-1935," M.A. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1970, pp. 63-65, 71-73; Rea, "Politics of Class," p. 233.

in the matter of committee and commission representation, including being stripped of the chairmanship of the Public Utilities Committee, and that as a protest Labour had refused nomination to the Unemployment Relief Committee and refused the chairmanship of the Social Welfare Commission. "It seems strange," commented Alderman T. Boyd of the Citizens' majority, "that Labour members should avoid service on these two bodies--presumably of special importance to a part of the community for whose welfare they profess special concern--and yet feel so sensitive at not being appointed in larger numbers to those departments concerned for the most part with purely business administration."³⁷

A partial explanation of Labour's action is contained in Boyd's statement. Labour was a legitimate political force in the city and wanted a fair share of the "purely business administration" of the City. Another partial answer has already been suggested. Aldermen, whether of the Left or the Right or the Center, shared certain basic values regarding unemployment and relief. None of them had much quarrel with the system as it was. As well, chairing the Unemployment Relief Committee was at best a politically unattractive position, as W.B. Simpson had discovered in 1923 and F.H. Davisdon, of the Citizens' League, would learn in 1925. The U.R.C. attracted criticism indiscriminately, and that criticism was especially embarrassing to Labour aldermen when it came from members of

³⁷Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 15 January 1924, p. 5.

the working-class. For them it was better to avoid responsibility and duck criticism. Finally, all aldermen realized that their actions in relief matters were limited because of the partnership with the provincial government.

The Bracken administration shared City Council's views regarding relief and took an active interest in relief programmes since every year it helped to finance relief. The provincial government insisted on having two representatives with voting privileges on the Unemployment Relief Committee. Provincial orders-in-council specified to what extent money would be forthcoming and to whom relief was applicable. The role of the provincial government was crucial. The commonality of views, the provincial stipulations, and the recognition that the basic necessities of life must be provided, dictated the nature of the relief system. That the role of the provincial government as financier implied some measure of state responsibility for unemployment and its alleviation was studiously ignored; that it eased a difficult financial burden for the City was never forgotten. Labour and Citizens' League aldermen all recognized the limits on their actions and all recognized the central position of the provincial government in relief matters.

That the provincial government was the final arbiter is suggested, in addition to the orders-in-council, by instances of direct intervention in the relief administration. A most obvious example occurred over the seemingly minor matter of who should be appointed as Superintendent and

Assistant Superintendent of Relief for 1923-24. A.D. Cockrill and A.W. Sinclair had occupied these positions in the past and, because by now they were experienced with relief matters, the Unemployment Relief Committee proposed their appointments once more. Cockrill was an efficient administrator but he was also injudicious and intemperate in his public statements. In describing unemployment for 1922-23, for instance, he had declared:

The Dominion government is admitting Central Europeans, late alien enemies, who will be enrolled as fellow citizens, before we have finished burying our gas-poisoned soldiers, and who, if our present policy of employing the foreigner on municipal work is continued, will quite likely tend the graves of the men they killed.³⁸

Statements such as these, plus Cockrill's habit of reporting "in a sarcastic vein which no private employer would tolerate for one minute", his alleged autocratic methods of handling the unemployed, and his known antipathy to Labour³⁹ overtaxed the patience of Mayor Farmer and the Labour aldermen. When the Unemployment Relief Committee's report was presented to Council on 11 December 1923, the clause proposing the re-appointment of Cockrill and Sinclair was vigourously opposed by the Labour group. In the course of a bitter debate, in which many charges were laid against Cockrill, Alderman Jones declared that Alderman R.J. Shore,

³⁸Ibid., 17 July 1923, p. 2.

³⁹For example, two years later, speaking to the Social Workers Club, Cockrill affirmed that relief offices were hotbeds of Bolshevism. "If one were to go into the cellars of the relief station," he declared, "and listen to the men talking, one would think he was in Russia." Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 21 March 1925, p. 7.

chairman of the Unemployment Relief Committee since the resignation of Simpson, "thinks that what we want is an Archangel Gabriel. It seems to me that what he really wants [is] a modern Jesus." At this seven aldermen left the Council Chamber, declaring that they would not be part of an assembly in which such sacrilege was bandied about. Left without a quorum, the meeting adjourned.⁴⁰

The Relief Committee's report was dealt with again on 17 December. Four aldermen again walked out of the meeting in protest over Jones's remark and unhappy with his retraction. This, however, did not destroy the quorum, so the report was considered. With support of Citizens' League alderman Dan McLean, Labour successfully passed a motion recommending that Cockrill and Sinclair be replaced by Messrs. Kelpin and Pearce, respectively manager of the City quarries and secretary of the Civic Charity Bureau. Though worded as a recommendation Mayor Farmer suggested, in an interesting reference to the presence of two provincial representatives on the Committee, that " the council has a majority on the unemployment committee and I presume this committee will take this as an instruction from council."⁴¹

Mayor Farmer's remark reflected a concern voiced periodically that Council was losing control of the Unemployment Relief Committee because of its provincial partnership. Events in this case were to prove that such concern was

⁴⁰Ibid., 12 December 1923, p. 7.

⁴¹Ibid., 18 December 1923, p. 10; Winnipeg, M.C.C., 17 December 1923, p. 1012.

quite justified. The Council recommendation to replace Cockrill and Sinclair was passed on 17 December. On the morning of 18 December the Unemployment Relief Committee considered the request and rejected it. The cause for rejection was quite simple: the provincial government was content with Mr. Cockrill's handling of his duties, however intemperate some of his statements may have been. The issue was put clearly and bluntly by Arthur MacNamara. Declaring that he and Mrs. Edith Rogers, M.L.A., were present under instructions of the provincial government and not of City Council, MacNamara explained that the

object of placing two [provincial] representatives on the committee was originally to assist it in dealing with unemployment. It was also to see that the monies disbursed by the provincial government were disbursed as economically as possible. If we are of opinion that the monies are not being disbursed economically, the only course for us to follow is to recommend to the government that they withdraw from the organization. Probably the government would welcome such a recommendation from us, as it would be in line with the policy of economy. . . . If you put an inexperienced man in charge we would have to seriously consider a recommendation to the government.⁴²

In the face of this obvious threat the Unemployment Relief Committee agreed to retain Cockrill and Sinclair. Much unhappiness over this was expressed at the next Council meeting. Alderman Thomas Flye argued that ignoring Council's request was an insult. This was countered by the simple explanation that since the provincial government paid part of the bill it was entitled to some say in the matter. This put the best possible face on the matter and, amid consider-

⁴²Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 18 December 1923, p. 1.

able grumbling by the Labour members about Council being unable to control its own committee (with this the Citizens' League majority, it should be noted, agreed), the issue was dropped. It was a convincing display of the extent to which the provincial government could determine civic policy; it also indicated that to a surprising degree the Unemployment Relief Committee had become a semi-autonomous body, its bonds to Council becoming increasingly tenuous.

III

As the winter of 1923-24 ended, civic officials reviewed the season with dismay. The City had dispensed unemployment relief to 2721 cases, comprising some 8955 persons. This was some 1500 more individuals than the previous winter.⁴³ The total cost was \$242,240.89, an average cost for each man, woman and child of \$27.05. The provincial government had once more come to the City's assistance, but at a reduced level of aid while the federal government had adamantly refused to accept any responsibility. This was perhaps the most irksome point with civic officials, for increasingly the problem of unemployment came to be associated with federal immigration policies.

1923 had witnessed a massive resurgence of immigration. Total immigration was more than double that of the preceding year, from over 64,000 to nearly 134,000; more than half

⁴³Winnipeg, [Unemployment Relief Committee], "Report on Emergency Unemployment Relief, Winnipeg 1924-25" (hereafter cited as U.R.C., "Report 1924-25"), p. 5.

of this was from the United Kingdom. 1924 would result in some ten thousand fewer immigrants coming to Canada, but with a doubling of the number claiming Western Canada as their destination.⁴⁴ By March 1924 Winnipeg newspapers were carrying frequent reports of immigrant arrivals. In one forty-eight hour period over one thousand immigrants disembarked in Winnipeg, and the promise of railway and immigration officials was that by "late spring and early summer the immigrants will be pouring into Western Canada by the tens of thousands on a scale not paralleled since the war."⁴⁵

Only a small number of immigrants (those in Canada less than five years) ever received relief from the City. They had, however, a much more significant impact on the relief situation than their numbers would imply. In the spring of 1923 a memorandum was sent by the City to officials in Ottawa which detailed the causes of unemployment in Winnipeg during the winter of 1922-23. The first cause enumerated was immigration; specifically, the fact that many immigrants who came to Canada proved unfit for farm life, or never bothered to try it, and soon ended up in the city.⁴⁶ The problem was not the number on relief

⁴⁴Bellan, "Development of Winnipeg," p. 342.

⁴⁵Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 13 March 1924," p. 1.

⁴⁶Meighen Papers, vol. 137, pp. 88246-49, "Memorandum Dealing with Causes of Unemployment in the City of Winnipeg during the Winter of 1922-23 and giving Details of Returned Soldiers Relieved and Dominion Citizens at Large Relieved," n.d.

but the fact that they were obtaining jobs in the city at the same time as the relief department was trying to find jobs, and meanwhile providing relief, for its own citizens.

This aspect of the matter came to light again in early April 1924. On the afternoon of 8 April the Unemployment Relief Committee met to consider several complaints that Winnipeg employers were giving preference in jobs to immigrants over the local unemployed. The U.R.C. was understandably concerned since such actions negated much of its efforts. It suggested a resolution requesting employers to give preference to Winnipeg men when hiring. With this Council concurred.⁴⁷ Numerous examples were cited during the next two weeks to prove that immigrants were taking jobs away from Winnipeg residents.⁴⁸ Although the question was taken up with provincial authorities, there was little that Council could do beyond its public request. The response to this request underlines the City's weak, indeed impossible, position in dealing with the whole unemployment question. Some employers replied that a policy of hiring Winnipeg men first was already in force. Others, the most important of these the Canadian National Railway, promised to carefully consider the request. Still others promised nothing without a definite quid pro quo, as the reply of Manitoba Bridge and Iron Works bluntly

⁴⁷Winnipeg, M.C.C., 7 April 1924, p. 348; Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 8 April 1924, pp. 6, 12.

⁴⁸Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 16 April 1924, pp. 3, 19; ibid., 22 April 1924, p. 12.

stated:

A request of this kind coming from the council implies, we presume, an intention on the part of the city administration to make every effort to see that money contributed by the taxpayers thus employed is expended so far as possible with those organizations who are employing these taxpayers.

The general impression amongst manufacturers in Winnipeg is that there had been no effort by your council to retain such businesses here, and the request which has been made in this resolution is, in the light of past experience, inconsistent.⁴⁹

The problem of immigration, the inability of the City to undertake constructive measures to relieve unemployment, and the steadfast refusal of the federal government to take any action resulted in much unhappiness and bitterness in municipal circles across Western Canada. Concern and agitation were increased as unemployment conditions prevailed across the whole of Canada. In the Maritimes there was "no shortage of labour of any proportion in any district or occupation."⁵⁰ Winnipeg, like other urban centres, was not spared unemployment that summer. The relief office remained closed but the City did try to furnish some extra employment. A modest work program was started, consisting largely of street paving, laying of sidewalks and painting of the Louise Bridge. This work was available only to married men, residents of the city, who registered for work with the Social Welfare Commission; it was, in effect, relief work in a different guise.⁵¹

⁴⁹Ibid., 22 April 1924, p. 12.

⁵⁰Lacelle Files, vol. 184, file 614:05, [R.A. Rigg], "Memo re Unemployment Situation," 8 July 1924.

⁵¹Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 15 July 1924, p. 5; *ibid.*, 19 August 1924, p. 1; *ibid.*, 21 August 1924, p. 6.

Given the rather difficult situation that summer, Winnipeg, like many other municipalities, responded favourably to an invitation from the federal government for a second unemployment conference. A small hope existed that just possibly the federal government was finally realizing the municipalities' desperate situation. Of course, such a conference would also enable municipalities to bring widespread attention to bear on the government's do-nothing policy.

That the federal government had little to propose was apparent from the outset. The idea for the Conference originated with James Murdock, federal Minister of Labour. Writing to Prime Minister King's private secretary, Murdock noted that winter unemployment had become especially acute since the war and that increasingly provinces and municipalities were looking to the federal government for leadership in dealing with unemployment. To provide this leadership and yet avoid assuming direct responsibility he suggested a meeting to formulate a plan which would ensure reasonable cooperation in carrying on as much winter work as possible. There would be no formal agreement resulting, "but rather a gentleman's agreement could be prepared that all interested in might co-operate in making effective."⁵² In agreeing to Murdock's suggestion the federal cabinet revealed uncommon frankness. Ministers concluded that while seasonal unemployment "may be accepted as on the whole permanent, none the

⁵²Lacelle Files, vol. 113, file 600.02-79 pt. 1, J. Murdock to R.A. McGregor, 6 May 1924.

less, by consultation and co-operation . . . much may be done to mitigate [it] in [its] severest aspects and greatly to increase the prospect of employment winter and summer alike for all who are willing and able to work." The assistance rendered by the federal government in 1920-21 and 1921-22 had eased suffering but "can hardly be regarded as adequate to meet the more permanent, if less severe conditions arising from seasonal fluctuations in industry." The solution was to regularize (not to stimulate) building and other outside work. The second unemployment conference was called to discuss this apprehended solution.⁵³

While there was undoubtedly a genuine element of concern about the extent of unemployment, the federal cabinet patently had no intention of undertaking constructive plans to lessen or eliminate it. A certain level of unemployment, significantly, was now considered acceptable and normal. The plans for the conference were consistent with the King government's previous actions: to appear to be responsive and flexible but to put the onus on others. A document accompanying the cabinet decision made it quite clear that the government had no new proposals and had not altered its position. This document was a carefully argued four page defence of the government's refusal to accept responsibility for unemployment; it was as well a forceful statement of provincial responsibility, going so far as to suggest that federal involvement with unemployment might be

⁵³Ibid., vol. 208, file 617:94, P.C. 914, 3 June 1924.

regarded as interference in provincial rights.⁵⁴

Representatives of municipalities, the provinces, employers' associations and organized labour met with federal ministers in Ottawa on 3 and 4 September 1924. Since unemployment was deemed to be a local matter, the views of the municipalities were of major concern. Winnipeg and many other municipalities attended, determined to be aggressive if not openly antagonistic. Antagonism there was, from the Manitoba government, from Winnipeg, and from many other delegates to the Conference. Noting the antagonism in municipal circles, Mrs. Rogers, a provincial delegate, wrote: "We must act as a unit in demanding a square deal for Winnipeg and Manitoba." Alderman McKerchar, commenting on the Dominion's refusal to pay the City's 1923 account for fifty-two thousand dollars and on the wider question of responsibility, suggested that the real problem was Murdock. "The Mackenzie King government is all right, but Murdock is the black sheep in the Liberal fold. He isn't a true Liberal."⁵⁵

At the opening session of the conference, once pleasantries were exchanged, each municipal representative stood up in turn to condemn the federal government and to argue vigorously the government's primary responsibility

⁵⁴Ibid., "Policy of the Dominion Government Regarding Unemployment Relief," n.d.; *ibid.*, vol. 113, file 600.02-49 pt. 2, J. Murdock to J. Bracken, 5 July 1924.

⁵⁵P.A.M., MG13 I2, John Bracken Papers, vol. 7, file 84, E. Rogers to J. Bracken, 27 August 1924; Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 9 August 1924, p. 2.

for unemployment, especially where immigrants were concerned. This was repeated at each session of the conference, but with little effect. Murdock, as chairman, tried to keep discussion on the question of providing winter work, while both he and James Robb, Minister of Finance, asserted that not only did the federal government have no responsibility for unemployment but neither did the lower levels of government. If only the private sector would do its duty Canada would not have an unemployment problem worth discussing. Murdock argued that as "most of the work in Canada is connected with private business undertakings, the responsibility, under normal conditions, for regular employment must fall in the main upon private authorities." Robb declared:

If my good friends of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association would get together and agree on a policy, if they would help the government to develop markets for Canadian goods, they would do more towards solving the unemployment problem than anybody else could.⁵⁶

The conference was taking an entirely disagreeable turn for its hosts. It was agreed that all three levels of government should carry on as much construction during the winter as possible, and to that extent the Conference had fulfilled Murdock's original objective. Nevertheless, the municipalities were determined to extract from the Dominion a share of responsibility for unemployment relief, for they knew there would never be enough work to absorb all the unemployed. So vociferous were they that Murdock

⁵⁶ Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 3 September 1924, p. 1; ibid., 4 September 1924, p. 1.

had to formally deny once again any federal responsibility. This did not daunt the delegates and, determined to force the government's hand, they passed a resolution assigning a 50 percent share of any unemployment relief to the municipalities, 25 percent to the provinces and 25 percent to the Government of Canada.⁵⁷

With the latter proposal the government of course could not concur and on that rather sour note the conference ended. Memories of 1922 were still sharp and with the dismay over federal attitudes expressed that week delegates left Ottawa in a highly "dubious state of mind." In Winnipeg the results of the Conference were widely dismissed, for no one really believed the government would accept even one-quarter responsibility, though some hoped that perhaps "it has learnt some official wisdom by this time."⁵⁸ Mayor Farmer summed up the whole affair in a sharp letter to Murdock a week after the Conference. "I think I am safe in stating," he wrote, "that the entire conference felt considerable disappointment that no statement was forthcoming from the Federal Government representatives at the conference which might have given a lead in respect of any or all of these phases of the Unemployment problem."⁵⁹ Farmer was under

⁵⁷King Papers, series J4, vol. 142, pp. 103169-72, "National Conference Regarding Winter Unemployment in Canada, Ottawa, September 3-4, 1924, Report." Conference proceedings were later published. Canada, Department of Labour, National Conference Regarding Winter Unemployment in Canada, Bulletin No. 8 (Ottawa, 1924).

⁵⁸Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 5 September 1924, pp. 1, 7.

⁵⁹Lacelle Files, vol. 113, file 600.02-49 pt. 2, S.J. Farmer to J. Murdock, 12 September 1924.

no illusion that the federal government could be counted upon for assistance in the coming winter, which for unemployment was already promising to be even more severe than the previous year.

IV

As always, those most affected by the vagaries of the economic system were the general labourers: the harvesters, bushworkers and construction workers. Since the end of the war they had formed the core of the unemployed whom the City had assisted. They were over 67 percent of those relieved in 1921-22, over 66 percent of applicants in 1923-24, and in the coming winter would be a substantial 69.5 percent of all those registered.⁶⁰ It was not too difficult for civic officials to look at the economic situation in the prairies and quickly expect the worst. The continual presence all summer of a large number of unemployed boded ill for the winter. Construction work had been minimal, which meant large numbers of labourers in the trade were in straitened circumstances. Moreover, this meant that lumber companies would have surpluses on hand, so few bush camps would be open. Despite a dramatic rise in the price of wheat, some \$.55 per bushel over the previous year, the actual harvest was reduced considerably; total wheat production on the prairies for 1924 was only 236 million bushels, down from

⁶⁰U.R.C., "Report 1921-22," p. 16; U.R.C., "Report 1924-25," Table 14; Winnipeg, [Unemployment Relief Committee], "Report on Unemployment Relief Covering Winter 1925-26; Winnipeg, Manitoba" (hereafter cited as U.R.C., "Report 1925-26"), Table 7.

452 million bushels in 1923.⁶¹ Symptomatic as always of the general malaise was the situation in the railway shops. On 29 July 1924 the C.P.R. shops at Weston closed, laying idle at least two thousand workers. Though the lay-off was to be only for one week, it lengthened into two months. Not until October were the shopmen re-employed, and then only about 50 percent of the original number returned to work.⁶² Short time and periodic layoffs among these and other occupational sectors, combined with the province's and Western Canada's narrow employment base, made the workers of Winnipeg even more vulnerable in the winter of 1924-25 to the distress which would sooner or later accompany unemployment.

The unemployed did not take long to appear. By the last week of October 1924 the Social Welfare Commission had found it necessary to relieve cases of destitution due to unemployment.⁶³ By the middle of November the Unemployment Relief Committee was meeting regularly, as were the unemployed. When Mayor Farmer arrived at City Hall in the morning of 24 November he found the corridors packed with the unemployed, mostly single young men. Though the men left quietly when asked, it was clear that the problem was once more upon the City. The Relief Committee, meeting as scheduled that

⁶¹Lacelle Files, vol. 213, file 617:62, unidentified clipping, 28 November 1924; Bellan, "Development of Winnipeg," p. 322.

⁶²Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 30 July 1924, p. 1; *ibid.*, 23 September 1924, pp. 7, 9; *ibid.*, 3 October 1924, p. 1.

⁶³U.R.C., "Report 1924-25," p. 1.

morning, decided to once more open the relief office. While the office was being organized, immediate steps were taken by opening the City wood camps on the Greater Winnipeg Water District Railway and by sending men to the Woodyard, there to be credited with \$1.75 per cord per day split and piled.⁶⁴ On 1 December the relief office was opened and unemployment relief was officially transferred from the Social Welfare Commission to the Unemployment Relief Committee. In general, the guidelines of the previous winter were followed. Part of the policy was not to assist physically fit single men, but so serious was the plight of many that this was effectively ignored. In fact more single men without dependents were assisted than married men with dependents: 49 percent of total relief applications were from single men.⁶⁵

The unemployed also emerged as an issue in the 1924 civic election. Mayor S.J. Farmer was running for an unprecedented third term. He was opposed by Ralph Humphreys Webb, manager of the Marlborough Hotel and resident in Winnipeg for all of ten months. Thirty-eight years of age, a retired Colonel of the Canadian Army, holder of the Distinguished Service Order, the Military Cross and the Croix de Guerre, Webb was a dynamic man of boundless energy. His enthusiasm and energy, channelled to many different projects, were accentuated by the fact that he was one of the

⁶⁴Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 24 November 1924, p. 1; U.R.C., "Report 1924-25," pp. 1, 3.

⁶⁵U.R.C., "Report 1924-25," Table 7. There were 1999 single men, 73 single men with dependents, 1898 married men with children, and 258 married men without children.

war's casualties, having had his left leg blown off in France in 1918. Webb offered a dynamism and a vision of Winnipeg which a great many of its citizens were eager to grasp. He promised to revitalize the economy, to end unemployment, to once more make Winnipeg a growing and prosperous city. Webb's promises seem to have been believed, as Winnipeg citizens gave him a majority of 4700 votes, the greatest margin of victory in the city's history.⁶⁶

Webb had a fundamentally different outlook on the question of unemployment; in many ways he was a type lifted from the civic circles of the pre-war years. The most obvious exposition of this was that he rebelled against the suggestion that the federal government had responsibility for unemployment. He believed a city must be responsible for its own prosperity; hence its problems must be locally solved. A campaign advertisement on 26 November said it all. Webb's stern, moustached visage stared at the reader, flanked on either side by newspaper clippings, the larger headlined "Unemployed Blocking [City Hall] Corridors." "A Winnipeg Problem," noted the Colonel above this, "Is Farmer Solving it?"⁶⁷

The unemployed also believed in Webb. Hundreds of them, unwilling or unable to wait for the relief office to open, crowded into Webb's campaign office on the afternoon

⁶⁶Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 17 November 1924, p. 4; *ibid.*, 29 November 1924, p. 1; J.H. Thompson, "The Political Career of Ralph H. Webb," Red River Valley Historian, Summer 1976, pp. 1-7.

⁶⁷Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 26 November 1924, p. 2.

of 25 November. To the six hundred men Webb expressed his sympathy (though he had not hesitated to ask Chief of Police Newton to call out reserves, which the Chief speedily did), declared that as he was a candidate it was impossible and illegal for him to provide jobs or relief for them, but promised to do all possible as a private citizen.⁶⁸ Using his considerable contacts within the business community, Webb organized a volunteer employment bureau. Opened on Boxing Day, this bureau was only to handle cases which fell out of the scope of other organizations. It was designed to find employment for Winnipeg citizens through the cooperation of other citizens; it would "work in the interests of Winnipeg citizens who would rather accept whatever employment is offered them than become burdens on the community."⁶⁹ The fate of the employment bureau is uncertain--it disappears from the newspapers by the New Year--but this episode provides an important insight to the man who would nominally lead Winnipeg into the few years of 1920s prosperity and who, having retired from office in 1927, would return at the onset of depression to govern during the mad ride of economic collapse.

Colonel Webb's employment bureau takes on a pathetic tone when one reviews the winter of 1924-25. Just under 60 percent of all who received relief that winter, 2515 of 4228 cases, were first registered in November and December.

⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 5,8.

⁶⁹Ibid., 25 December 1924, p. 1; *ibid.*, 26 December 1924, p. 8; *ibid.*, 27 December 1924, p. 2.

This was just two hundred fewer than the total registration of the entire 1923-24 season. Alderman Davidson, chairman of the Unemployment Relief Committee, estimated in the middle of December that there were probably ten thousand unemployed in Winnipeg.⁷⁰ The estimate of ten thousand is certainly not unreasonable, though it must be admitted that Davidson was trying to impress upon a Dominion official the seriousness of Winnipeg's situation and the consequent need for federal assistance. Winnipeg undoubtedly had a large pool of surplus labour, a pool growing larger and more superfluous as the passing years brought more mechanization to farms, as homesteads became filled and as the city's metropolitan infrastructure barely grew.⁷¹ Those who received unemployment relief were only the most visible, the most hard-pressed, of the unemployed. Many had probably had little work since the end of the war, certainly not steady work. Each year they had fewer resources with which to get by; each year they appeared on the relief rolls a little sooner. In 1924-25 the percentage of those unemployed for two to four months before applying for relief was nearly halved to 16.7 percent from 31.6 percent during the previous winter. There was a corresponding increase of 13.5 percent of those unemployed for less than one month.⁷² And while they were unemployed for a shorter period of time, they remained on relief for a

⁷⁰Lacelle Files, vol. 212, file 617:62, F.E. Harrison to J. Murdock, 16 December 1924.

⁷¹Bellan, "Development of Winnipeg," chapter 11.

⁷²U.R.C., "Report 1924-25," Table 18.

much longer time. The percentage of those receiving relief for one and two weeks, one month and two months were relatively constant, but there was an almost three-fold increase of those receiving relief for over four months. At the same time, those who were registered on the relief rolls but who were immediately struck off, for whatever reasons, declined by more than one-third compared to the previous year to just over 5 percent of the total, suggesting that virtually all those who applied were honestly in desperate straits. In total, over 50 percent of all registered were on relief for two months or more.⁷³

A picture emerges of a large number of unemployed, most unable to exist very long on their own resources and relying on civic relief to sustain them for a comparatively long period of time. Without the detailed records of the relief administration it is impossible to say precisely who those people were. However, using the categories of age, nationality, occupation and housing provided by the annual reports of the Unemployment Relief Committee one can construct a crude socio-economic profile of the unemployed.

The unemployed covered a spectrum of ages, from under eighteen years to over sixty. The single largest group was that of twenty-six to forty years. Since 1921-22 it had been 43 percent to 45 percent of the total. The next largest group was the forty-one to fifty year-olds. This had been 24.3 percent in 1923-24 and was now 21.2 percent.

⁷³Ibid., Table 19.

The drop here is interesting for it is closely matched by an increase from 14.7 percent in 1923-24 to 18.5 percent in 1924-25 among the nineteen to twenty-five year-olds. There is also a significant drop in the fifty-one to sixty year age group, almost 3 percent, and a slight drop in the over-sixty category. Thus, there is a general shift from the older end of the spectrum to the younger end; the majority, however, remained in the twenty-six to forty age group.⁷⁴

The age breakdown is consistent with what one would expect from the occupational ranking. As noted previously, the vast majority of the unemployed came from the pool of unskilled and general labour, some 66 percent in 1923-24 and 69.5 percent in 1924-25. Obviously, the hale and hearty, those in their twenties to forties, would make up the bulk of the unskilled labour pool. Skilled tradesmen normally represented about one-quarter of relief recipients, with the remainder consisting of professional and clerical workers and those for whom no occupation is known.⁷⁵

The unemployed reflected the polyglot nature of the Western Canadian community. Classified according to national origin, 24.6 percent of relief applicants in 1923-24 were born in Canada, 33.3 percent were born in Europe, and 37.8 percent were born in the United Kingdom

⁷⁴Ibid., "Report 1921-22," p. 20; *ibid.*, "Report 1924-25," Table 2. For 1921-22, N=5210; for 1923-24, N=2721; for 1924-25, N=4228.

⁷⁵Ibid., "Report 1924-25," Table 14.

(including Ireland); in 1924-25 17.8 percent were Canadian, 39.2 percent were European, and 40.3 percent were British. Perhaps tenuously corroborative of the charge that new immigrants were taking jobs away from citizens is the fact that 81 percent of those on relief in 1924-25 had resided in Canada over ten years. During the next winter, in fact, the number on relief who had lived in Canada over ten years would rise to 92 percent.⁷⁶

The information available on housing of the unemployed reveals yet again those at the low end of the economic spectrum. Only 13 percent of the 2229 married men on relief in 1924-25 owned their own home, a drop from 17.3 percent the year previous. These percentages correspond roughly to the numbers occupationally classed in the skilled trades and professions. Fully 78.9 percent lived in dwellings renting at less than \$25 per month. Even more striking is the fact that in 1924-25 almost half (48.8 percent) of these married men paid under \$15 per month. The number of rooms occupied completes the picture. While 37.5 percent occupied four to six rooms, even more, 39.4 percent, had only two or three rooms and fully 15.6 percent had only one room.⁷⁷ When one remembers that these figures are for married men, their wives and, in over 85 percent of the cases, their children (5934 children in all), the picture is one of cheap crammed lodgings, the wage-earner in his prime working years but employed intermittently in the

⁷⁶Ibid., Table 5.

⁷⁷Ibid., Table 16.

in the summer months and hardly ever during the winter. This picture is imperfect at best, but it does indicate a large core of unemployed, existing hand-to-mouth, residing in the poorer sections of the city. What seething anger there must have been; that it did not boil into violence, or self-destructive rage, is perhaps the most remarkable aspect of these unhappy years. It was perhaps the continual plight of these many people in the early 1920s and for many throughout the decade, who never had a real chance in the "Roaring Twenties" and who had no chance at all in the coming world depression, which explains the more open desperation by 1933. Many by then would have suffered not only two or three years, but ten or more.

V

That in the winter of 1924-25 the more than four thousand relief recipients did not suffer more owes as much to good chance and the inertia of bureaucracy than to the good sense and the administrative ability of the Unemployment Relief Committee. Partly this was due to the sheer mass of unemployed with which the city had to deal, but also it was due to a less sympathetic attitude towards the unemployed, particularly from newly-elected Mayor Ralph H. Webb and the U.R.C. chairman F.H. Davidson. It was also due to the character and administrative incompetence of Alderman Davidson.

The only real break the unemployed got that winter was the willingness of the City and Province to provide

assistance. The Province on 18 December 1924 agreed to assist the City much as it had before. Provincial money came into play when the City was relieving one hundred or more married or single men with at least two dependents. One-quarter of the costs of direct relief or one-third of relief works would be paid. A new feature was an agreement to pay 50 percent of the cost of assisting men to return to their homes or to a place where work (other than relief work) was available. In all, this assistance cost the province \$58,600.⁷⁸

When the Unemployment Relief Committee organized the relief office in December it adopted the guidelines of the previous year with two important exceptions. The first and most important of those was to dispense with a works programme. Alderman Davidson explained this decision in January 1925. "Our policy is to carry on economically as

⁷⁸Public Works, D.M.O., vol. 19, file Unemployment 1924-25, W.R. Clubb to Mayor and Council of Winnipeg, 18 December 1924; Seasonal Unemployment in Manitoba, p. 75. There was never any doubt that the City would obtain provincial assistance, though both the City and the Province at times pretended this was not so. Arthur MacNamara, for instance, told F.E. Harrison, a federal official investigating the situation in December 1924, that the Province was not about to make cash contributions for relief that season because "the government was waiting until the situation became more acute." This stance was taken in the hope of embarrassing the federal government into rendering aid, as Harrison's report to his Minister made clear. Lacelle Files, vol. 212, file 617:62, Harrison to J. Murdock, 16 December 1924. It should be noted that at the time MacNamara was meeting with Harrison the provincial government was already preparing the terms of its assistance. Public Works, D.M.O., vol. 19, file Unemployment 1926-30, A. MacNamara, "Memo re Unemployment Relief," 18 January 1927.

ever possible," he said. "Our aim is to confine relief to cases of dire need. Floaters cannot expect to receive city relief indefinitely."⁷⁹ In other words, relief eligibility was going to be more restrictive. The emphasis would be on the economics of relief, with the Unemployment Relief Committee willing to take a chance on pauperizing the unemployed. The Committee later argued that though a good number of men had been given work in the past "and although this appeared advantageous [for their well-being] at the time, it was later proven of very little value and did not justify the amount expended, owing to the excessive cost of such work during the severe winter weather."⁸⁰

The debate on winter work was old and arose yearly, but the decision taken for 1924-25 is striking given the conclusion of the 1924 unemployment conference that as much work as possible should be done. As Mayor Farmer pointed out to the Social Welfare Commission after the conference, even "the employers presented a well-considered statement for the inauguration of relief work all the year round, work hitherto considered impossible in many cases."⁸¹ The woodyard still operated, but in no sense was this ever considered real work. As well, work there was largely

⁷⁹Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 21 January 1925, p. 3.

⁸⁰U.R.C., "Report 1924-25," p. 4.

⁸¹Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 16 September 1924, p. 6. The Mayor was responding to Alderman Davidson's statement that, with the possible exception of sewer work, it was foolish to talk of winter work in Western Canada. Thus the Unemployment Relief Committee's decision had Davidson's imprint all over it.

confined to the single men, of whom there were an unprecedented number. So great, in fact, were the numbers that it was necessary to restrict each man to cutting only one-half cord of wood per day; this made his income a munificent \$.875 a day. With this congestion at the Woodyard there were few openings for married men so generally they, the objects of works programmes before, were left to sit at home or wander through the downtown stores in search of small pleasures.

The other significant exception to earlier policy was in the payment of rent. This too was intended to discourage people from applying for relief. In other years the Unemployment Relief Committee had paid rent for a relief recipient when that individual was two months in arrears and possessed an eviction notice for non-payment. Such rent was paid to a maximum of \$25 per month. Under the new policy, a relief applicant who was in rental arrears was sent to the Woodyard to cut wood. There he would be paid \$1.75 for each cord cut, with the total earnings applied to rent.⁸² This new rental policy was more restrictive in a number of ways, the most obvious being that the amount of rent relief had actually to be earned. With single men filling the Woodyard beyond capacity there was little work for a married man to earn enough to pay his rent, even though the relief office otherwise maintained the family. There was also, it was reported, a deliberate policy of relief officials to discourage rental

⁸²U.R.C., "Report 1924-25," p. 3.

relief applications. The result, it was alleged in City Council, was that the Unemployment Relief Committee paid no rent until the bailiffs were actually in the house.⁸³

The relief administration was severely criticized by Labour during the winter of 1924-25. Criticism, however, was directed towards the administrative competence of the Unemployment Relief Committee, on which no Labour councillors sat, rather than to the relief system itself. So many things seemed to be going wrong that winter, and going awry because the Unemployment Relief Committee as constituted was unequal to its task and because it blithely ignored past experience. In sum, Labour argued that they were more able and economic administrators than the businessmen on City Council. Alderman Jack Blumberg, who would eventually serve thirty-six years on Council under the banner of the Independent Labour Party and later the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, stung sharply when he charged that the U.R.C. members, all successful businessmen, were making "the biggest hash ever of it."⁸⁴

The most celebrated evidence supporting Labour's charges concerned the contract for feeding the single men on relief. The Unemployment Relief Committee had contracted with Mr. Oscar Williams to provide meals for the single unemployed in his restaurant at ten cents a meal. The meals

⁸³Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 24 February 1925, p. 6.

⁸⁴Ibid.

were provided and seemed good: the president of the local Trades Council declared that the single men "are getting better meals than the greater portion of the workers in Winnipeg today."⁸⁵ The problem was that Williams was not paying his suppliers or his employees, preferring to pocket the money instead. When in due course Williams was arrested it was discovered that he was in fact Oscar Heifmester, a man not unfamiliar with the provincial gaol. Here it seemed was a glaring case of incompetence: the Unemployment Relief Committee was unable even to let a simple contract. Even Mayor Webb tended to agree. "It is most surprising to me," he said, "that the committee should ever have engaged this man without finding out something more about him. We are now informed by the chief of police that Williams has a jail record and is quite an undesirable character."⁸⁶

Three things made the situation look even worse. Complaints had for some time been reaching City Hall about Williams, but had been ignored or dismissed. Labour aldermen had warned against contracting meals to one restaurant, a fact upon which they delightedly dwelled in Council. Worst of all was the fact that the same system was been tried and found wanting a year earlier. After objections from both restaurant owners and the unemployed in 1923-24, the single contract had been scrapped and weekly meal tickets good at any restaurant which honoured them were issued. After an

⁸⁵Ibid., 4 February 1925, p. 5.

⁸⁶Ibid., 7 February 1925, p. 1.

acrimonious debate in Council, this system was reinstituted.⁸⁷

The Williams affair highlighted Labour charges that the Unemployment Relief Committee was acting incompetently. Davidson did not help his or the Committee's case by his adamant refusal to comment on matters or by his refusal to give detailed information publicly on the administration of relief. Such petulance invited charges of cover-up. Davidson's position in this case was that, according to precedent, the Unemployment Relief Committee presented only an annual report to Council; aldermen, if they wanted information, could consult him personally or attend Committee meetings. It should be noted, incidentally, that when the Williams affair broke, the Unemployment Relief Committee immediately closed its meetings to the press, adding yet more fuel to the charges of cover-up.⁸⁸ Labour aldermen responded to Davidson with charges of "slavish adherence to precedent"; "the Czar of Russia," said one, "was nothing to them." They also presented what was in effect a motion of censure, subsequently defeated, in the form of a request that the Unemployment Relief Committee report to each Council meeting.⁸⁹

⁸⁷Ibid., 10 February 1925, p. 11; *ibid.*, 13 February 1925, p. 1; *ibid.*, 18 February 1925, p. 5; *ibid.*, 19 February 1925, p. 3. Williams was eventually convicted on two counts of fraud and given a suspended sentence. The entire affair was given prominent press coverage and can be followed in *ibid.*, 7 February 1925, p. 1; *ibid.*, 9 February 1925, p. 9; *ibid.*, 10 February 1925, p. 11; *ibid.*, 13 February 1925, p. 1; *ibid.*, 28 February 1925, p. 1; *ibid.*, 30 March 1925, p. 8.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 7 February 1925, p. 1.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 10 February 1925, p. 11; Winnipeg, M.C.C., 9 February 1925, p. 83.

The battle was joined again at the next Council meeting. Bitter and hurt, Davidson presented the figures requested by Labour and followed that up with his resignation as chairman of the Unemployment Relief Committee. Interestingly, the reason for resignation was much the same as that for which W.B. Simpson had resigned two years earlier: lack of support in Council. But in Davidson's case it was of a different nature. General support was being withheld, he argued, and now "we are getting criticism not only from outside [City Council], which I expect, but from inside, which I don't expect. The position is a very difficult one to fill, and I am now quite fed up with the attacks which are being made." Davidson withdrew his resignation in order to finish the season's work, but when that work was finished he declared that "wild horses would not be able to drag him into the position next winter."⁹⁰

It had been a most difficult winter, as both the accounts for relief and the strains within City Council demonstrated. To the dismay of aldermen, unemployment difficulties did not end with the closure of the relief office on 30 April. In March there had been encouraging signs of increased demand for labour, particularly in agriculture, while construction promised to substantially increase.⁹¹ This projected work did not, however, prove

⁹⁰Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 28 February 1925, p. 1; *ibid.*, 2 March 1925, p. 3; *ibid.*, 30 April 1925, p. 2.

⁹¹Lacelle Files, vol. 184, file 614:05, "Summary of Employment Conditions in Canada during First Half of March 1925, as Reported by Employment Office Superintendents," n.d.

to be the boom hoped for. Through the spring and into the summer unemployment persisted. Aldermen were at a loss to explain it since the building level was mounting, wheat prices were high and business generally appeared to be getting on track. Some saw the problem as the lack of large-scale construction work which would absorb unskilled labour, obviously a major problem. Federal immigration policy was blamed, as was the nature of capitalist society. Still others saw the unemployed themselves as the problem: "Our unemployed are looking for soft jobs and a great many of them are inefficient," said one councillor.⁹² Whatever the reason, the unemployed continued to bedevil the civic administration. One alderman complained in June: "I am getting tired of being beseiged by men who say they are unable to obtain work and who are on the verge of starvation." "The thing is getting on my nerves," declared another, "having to meet the unemployed day by day. . . . Put a man who won't work in jail, but if he is starving, feed him."⁹³ Both Council meetings in June devoted considerable discussion to the situation, and ultimately a special Finance Committee meeting was held. There it was decided to appropriate \$100,000 to replace wooden sidewalks with granolithic walks. The work would have been done anyway, would give useful summer-long work to the married unemployed, and, most appealing of all, would

⁹²Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 17 June 1925, p. 1.

⁹³Ibid., 16 June 1925, p. 13.

be a local improvement charge so the cost would not be taken from the general revenue.⁹⁴ With this final assistance from the City the unemployed effectively disappeared from official view. As the western and the Canadian economy generally picked up in the latter half of 1925 there was a fervent hope that finally the worst had passed.

VI

Passed it had, but less than worse was still bad enough. Over the course of the decade there had been a significant occupational shift upwards in the number employed as unskilled workers. This shift manifested itself in a steady and substantial manufacturing sector, in greatly increased construction, and in transportation and service industries.⁹⁵ Anticipating the second half of the decade officials at all levels of government could understandably think that the economic corner had been turned. If the dangers inherent in a large, unskilled and seasonal work force occurred to any, there was also the expectation that once again with sufficient summer work most who would be unemployed part of the year would have saved enough upon which to subsist. At the very least, there was the confident expectation that by forcing people

⁹⁴Ibid., 18 June 1925, p. 9.

⁹⁵W.A. Mackintosh, The Economic Background of Dominion-Provincial Relations (Toronto, 1964), p. 82.

to find jobs, which assuredly existed, the problem of unemployment in coming winters would largely and possibly be wholly cured.

It was in this mood that Mayor Webb had proposed in April 1925 that "no funds be put in the [City] estimates for unemployment relief other than what has been spent up to date, and that the social welfare [commission] be placed on the same basis except that a sufficient amount be allowed to carry on in a small way next winter." The Mayor's argument was that this would stop any move of non-resident unemployed to Winnipeg next winter (notwithstanding evidence proving that these were not that much of a problem), and would serve as a disincentive for bona fide Winnipeg unemployed.⁹⁶ Similar intentions motivated the Unemployment Relief Committee in its recommendations for the future administration of relief. Its annual report, not considered in Council until 24 August,⁹⁷ had four suggestions, all designed to restrict those eligible for City relief and so to reduce relief rolls. They were also an attempt to foist some responsibility on the federal government. It was recommended first that no fit single men or married men without children receive relief and that wide publicity be given to this fact. It was secondly suggested that no relief be given to men in Canada less than five years and

⁹⁶Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 18 April 1925, p. 18; Manitoba Free Press, 18 April 1925, p. 1, 11.

⁹⁷The report is reproduced in Winnipeg, M.C.C., 24 August 1925, pp. 743-62.

that those who received relief should be referred to the Immigration Department. Thirdly, it was proposed that a strict residency qualification period of one year be adopted. Finally, Council was urged to pressure the federal government to adopt a "Back to the Land" scheme so as to remove the large number of experienced farm workers from Winnipeg.⁹⁸

When the harvest was over and snow fell in 1925 these policy recommendations were strictly adhered to and probably accounted for much of the drop in numbers on relief for 1925-26. Of a total of 868 cases on relief, only 18 were single men with or without dependents or married men without dependents. No one was admitted on relief who had resided in Canada for less than one year, and only sixty-one had been resident between one and ten years. The vast majority, over 92 percent, had lived in Canada over ten years. Similarly, over 95 percent on relief had lived in Winnipeg for the requisite one year and the majority, 59.3 percent, for over ten years.

These figures, based on such selective though understandable policies, give a very artificial veneer to the unemployment situation in Winnipeg that winter. While the number of cases on relief were only about one-fifth that of 1924-25, the reduction in the number of married men with children was only some 55 percent. This was a considerable improvement, but indicates still a large mass of unemployed in the city. Further, it was the group least able to cope

⁹⁸U.R.C., "Report 1924-25," p. 7.

with unemployment, for a married man had not only to clothe, feed and shelter himself but also his dependents; he had also to provide for such incidentals as the schooling of his children.⁹⁹ These unemployed were drawn from the traditional pool of surplus unskilled labour. In 1925-26 73.4 percent were unskilled labourers, a 9 percent increase over the previous year. Almost 85 percent lived in accommodation renting for \$25 or less a month; 55.4 percent rented for less than \$15 per month.¹⁰⁰

The Canadian economy was on the upswing in 1926, 1927 and 1928, yet unemployment still persisted. Relief had become a routine matter as the calendar turned to November and December. It appeared to be seasonal, because that was when the Western economy slowed down and the unemployed's options disappeared. Many, in government and out, still believed that the problem was simply a lack of desire in seeking work, or a lack of thrift when work was found. But the real root of the problem was that the Western economy particularly, and the Canadian economy generally, was not sufficiently diversified to absorb the mass of labour upon which it had originally been predicated. Relief programmes were rooted in a pre-war notion of the economy. Few would admit, or cared to admit, that a changing economy required changing responses. If the problem was seasonal, the response was seasonal. Thus, for

⁹⁹U.R.C., "Report 1925-26," Table 7. Almost 94 percent of dependent children were under the age of sixteen. Ibid., Table 8.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., Tables 11, 14.

example, Manitoba's first full-scale investigation into the unemployment question, the Murchie Commission, explained and reported on Seasonal Unemployment in Manitoba.¹⁰¹ The report's main recommendation was for increased winter construction, hardly a novel suggestion by 1927. The other significant proposal was for a form of national unemployment insurance, something advocated since before the war and becoming widely accepted after 1920, and something beyond consideration by the King government. Both depended on extra-provincial forces, private industry in the one case and the federal government in the other. The municipalities had reasonably adequate relief programmes to deal with seasonal unemployment; the problem was that unemployment only appeared to be seasonal. With the economic downturn following 1929 the inadequacies of those programmes would be revealed. Local authorities were not caught unaware by unemployment in the 1930s. It was the extent of that unemployment which staggered them. Their programmes, structured to deal with a temporary, seasonal phenomenon, were unable to adjust to a prolonged and widespread situation. But it was only because of the experiences of the 1920s that they were able to cope at all.

¹⁰¹Seasonal Unemployment in Manitoba.

CHAPTER FOUR

"THE POOR HOUSE FOREVER": 1929-1931

Thirty-three men and two women assembled in a conference room in the Manitoba Parliament Buildings. Those thirty-five represented the governments of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, the cities of Edmonton, Regina, Brandon and Winnipeg, the Winnipeg suburb of St. James, several trades unions, the Winnipeg Board of Trade, the unemployed C.P.R. workers in Manitoba, and the Manitoba Independent Labour Party. They were meeting at the invitation of Winnipeg City Council to consider the unemployment situation in Western Canada, a situation which, all recognized, promised to be the worst in the past five years. This conference, composed of many disparate groups, was unanimous in its conclusions. It damned the federal government for refusing to be represented at that gathering; it urged cancellation of the agreement between the Dominion and the two national railways whereby the railways were permitted to import labour for one year's work; it called for a Dominion-provincial conference in order to bring about a system of unemployment insurance. Finally, it called on the federal government to implement the resolutions agreed upon at the 1924 National Conference on Winter Unemployment, of which the central recommendation had been assumption by the

federal government of 25 percent of the cost of emergency unemployment relief. The Winnipeg conference amended this to ask the federal government to carry one-third of the costs.¹ It was 2 December 1929, five weeks after the collapse of the stock market and grain markets. The Great Depression had begun.

I

The Winnipeg conference was not meeting as a result of those crashes. It had, rather, been called because of the disturbing continuous presence of the unemployed every winter, and because the winter of 1929 promised to deposit even more casualties of unemployment at the doors of the provincial and civic governments.

Despite a great improvement in the agricultural economy and a significant increase in Manitoba's industrial sector, Winnipeg's citizens in 1929 were still confronted with swarming numbers of unemployed men walking the streets, begging often for work and always for money. Some degree of unemployment and some measure of relief were accepted by now as normal, and few quarreled with the expenditures of public money for assistance. In part this was because expenditures were relatively low compared to the experience

¹Lacelle Files, vol. 210, file 617:24, "Minutes of a Meeting called by the Council of the City of Winnipeg of Representatives of the Cities and Provincial Governments from Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, to Consider the Unemployment Question, held in the Parliament Buildings, Winnipeg, Manitoba, on December 2nd, 1929, at 10:00 A.M."

of the early 1920s. It was also due to the strict eligibility requirements demanded for relief and to the fact that such relief as was given was seen to be repaid through relief work. It was also due to a moral imperative: that whatever the faults of the parent, each citizen had a duty to preserve and protect the children. Little debate ensued, either in City Council or in any public forum, over the relief measures provided from November 1928 to April 1929. Civic relief was restricted to married men with at least two dependents, and each family head who received relief was bound to repay it by working in the City Woodyard or at laying crushed stone on Winnipeg's streets. The relief office registered 403 cases over the winter at a total expenditure of \$31,394.60. The provincial government, which had agreed to pay one-quarter of the cost of relief and one-half of administrative expenses when the caseload exceeded one hundred, contributed \$8,520.06.² These measures, thought to be generous enough to help morally and physically those considered worthy of help and yet strict enough to avoid large expenditures and possible abuse, had become accepted as part of the normal scheme of affairs.

These figures alone indicate a substantial number of unemployed present in Winnipeg, but many more were not identified. It is impossible to give any precise estimate of the number, but it was very likely in the thousands. One

²Winnipeg, "Minutes of the Unemployment Relief Committee" (hereafter cited as U.R.C., "Minutes"), 22 April 1929; *ibid.*, 27 May 1929.

must consider those who applied at the relief office but were turned away; those who eked out a meager existence by drawing on their savings or who found temporary employment; those who received aid from any of the several private charitable organizations and churches; those who were fortunate enough to have friends or relatives who could assist them. There was, however, one group of unemployed which was recognized by government authorities and to which all those who concerned themselves with the question of unemployment paid close attention.

The largest group of unemployed was undoubtedly the single men. Mostly unskilled labourers, they were subject to the vagaries of both the economy and the climate. They were expected to shift for themselves, for it seemed inconceivable to most "right-thinking" people that such men, able of body and free to travel unhindered, could not find work. Yet Winnipeg teemed with thousands of them each winter. Few had families or friends to assist them but, while they were ineligible for civic relief, a staggering number had obtained public assistance. Many were arrested for vagrancy and spent varying terms in the relative comfort of the provincial gaol. Many more were assisted by the Winnipeg Police, who provided a night's lodging at the Station for those who appeared at its doors each evening. In the winter of 1928-29 four thousand single men were supported by Winnipeg's constables.³ What upset the good

³Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 13 November 1929, p. 3.

citizens of Winnipeg as much as those four thousand men was the continuous badgering of the city's honest workers by those men begging for a nickel, a dime or a quarter. Not only was this seen as a blight on the city's character; it was annoying for passersby and morally debilitating to the men themselves. Further, the presence of so many shiftless men seemed a constant threat to the peace since they were presumed to have a propensity to crime and to be susceptible to communistic agitation. These concerns prompted Mayor Dan McLean to convene a special meeting of the Unemployment Relief Committee to consider what to do about the unemployed single men.

To that meeting, held 22 April 1929, came Thomas Gelley, the Western Division Commissioner of Immigration; J.A. Bowman, superintendent of the Employment Service of Canada in Manitoba; representatives from the colonization departments of the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Railways, from the Hudson's Bay Overseas Land Settlement and from the Federal Land Settlement Board; and several local ministers whose churches had been giving aid of various kinds to Winnipeg's unemployed citizens. A meandering discussion ensued, in which were aired all the complaints about the single men: their begging, their threat to the moral fibre of the community, their laziness and their refusal to work.

Beyond this, the meeting also tried to do something about finding jobs for the men. At the insistence of Arthur MacNamara, Assistant Deputy Minister of Public Works, the meeting

concluded that there were two reasons for the presence of so many unemployed men. First, there was no organized and exhaustive effort on the part of the Employment Service of Canada, the Province, the City or the charitable organizations to find jobs for these men. Secondly, the colonization agencies brought in immigrants and either left them to fend for themselves or else worked extensively to find jobs for their charges but in the process took jobs away from needy Canadian citizens. Since the reasons for unemployment were so obvious, the solution was as well: secure enough jobs. The meeting endorsed a resolution presented by MacNamara calling for a conference in the autumn to find ways and means of placing single men in winter jobs.⁴ There was no discussion except in a negative sense that relief be given to the single unemployed. MacNamara spoke for all the participants when, in explaining to Premier Bracken his reasons for drafting the conference's resolution, he argued that no relief should be given to single men simply "because I feel that a man without dependents should be able to take care of himself."⁵

In this way, a meeting scheduled for the autumn of 1929 to deal with a continuing problem of unemployment had come to be organized long before the Crash. On the day that the stock markets collapsed, 24 October 1929, the

⁴U.R.C., "Minutes," 22 April 1929; Bracken Papers, vol. 27, file 343, B. Stewart-Hay to J. Bracken, 27 May 1929.

⁵Bracken Papers, vol. 27, file 343, A. MacNamara to J. Bracken, 31 May 1929.

Winnipeg Unemployment Relief Committee held a hurried session. The reason was to hear a delegation from the Winnipeg Presbytery of the United Church of Canada which, from its experience as one of the first places to which the unemployed turned, reported that the problem of unemployed single men was becoming acute once more. At Arthur MacNamara's insistence that "all energies of persons interested should be towards making employment" rather than to preparations for dispensing relief, the Unemployment Relief Committee called a special meeting for 31 October to do just that.⁶

Similar to that of 22 April, this meeting met under more urgent circumstances. J.A. Bowman of the Employment Service of Canada reported a dismal employment situation, caused largely by the small crop and short harvesting season of that year, but also aggravated by the railroads which were laying off hundreds of men and placing many more on reduced hours. By 30 October the C.P.R. alone had released 1150 men in Winnipeg. The demand by lumber companies for bush workers had peaked early and at much lower levels. Finally, there was no demand at all for chore men on farms, another traditional employer of seasonal labour. All present at the meeting were conscious that some steps had to be taken to deal with the single unemployed but, with the exception of Communist alderman Wasyl Kolisnyk and R.B. Russell of the One Big Union, they were equally determined

⁶U.R.C., "Minutes," 24 October 1929.

that relief should not be one of the alternatives considered. Since most normal avenues of employment seemed closed, it was agreed that available City work was the only resort. The meeting recommended to City Council that overtime in civic departments be eliminated and that the working day be shortened. To ensure that only those who really needed and wanted work obtained it, registration of the single unemployed was also suggested. Council did not yet accept the need for a registration of the unemployed but it did agree to reduce overtime and shorten the work day where possible.⁷

City Council also took two other important steps. It authorized the Social Welfare Commission to deal with urgent cases of unemployment and it approved the Finance Committee's decision to have the Unemployment Relief Committee arrange an unemployment conference among representatives of the Dominion government, the three prairie provincial governments and the municipalities of Western Canada. Both measures were a recognition of a steadily worsening situation. The impetus for a large conference came in part from the meetings of the Unemployment Relief Committee in April and October, but it also came as a result of the request for such a meeting by the Western Labour Conference. The Labour Conference had met in Regina on 26 and 27 October to organize a united Labour party in Western Canada. Though much time was spent preparing the framework for such a party, the Conference also noted with concern "the extraordinary and pressing unemployment

⁷Ibid., 31 October 1929; Winnipeg, M.C.C., 12 November 1929, pp. 1246-47.

situation now prevalent throughout Western Canada" and urged a meeting of the three levels of government to deal with "the present emergency unemployment situation" and to develop a permanent solution.⁸ Alderman Robert Durward of Winnipeg had been secretary of the Regina conference. Returning home in time to attend the City Council meeting of 28 October he moved that Council endorse the resolution and take the necessary steps to organize such a conference. Referred to the Finance Committee with power to act, that Committee instructed the Unemployment Relief Committee to organize a conference of all interested parties for 2 December.⁹

The representatives who came to Winnipeg earnestly hoped to find a permanent solution to unemployment and equally hoped to obtain federal assistance in relieving the existing unemployed. The resolutions passed at the conference clearly indicated this. However, all action was predicated on the willing participation of the federal government. The refusal of the government to attend at Winnipeg showed that this was not to be.¹⁰

The government's attitude became even clearer a month after the conference. Peter Heenan, federal Minister of

⁸Lacelle Files, vol. 210, file 617:24, R. Durward to W.L.M. King, 28 October 1929; Manitoba Free Press, 28 October 1929, p. 3.

⁹Winnipeg, M.C.C., 28 October 1929, p. 1203; *ibid.*, 12 November 1929, p. 1274; Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 12 November 1929, p. 6.

¹⁰Lacelle Files, vol. 210, file 617:24, P. Heenan to R. Durward, 27 November 1929.

Labour, issued a press statement on 7 January 1930 in which he disclaimed any federal responsibility for unemployment relief and produced the rather tired argument that the post war assistance had been solely in recognition of circumstances arising directly from the war. Heenan's statement provoked a storm of criticism in Western Canada. The newly-elected mayor of Winnipeg, Ralph Webb, called Heenan's remarks "an insult to ordinary intelligence," while alderman Thomas Flye declared that "Mr. Heenan has made a very ill-considered statement. I am afraid he looks at things through different spectacles since he began to ride in special trains."¹¹ The Winnipeg Evening Tribune argued that most of the unemployed were ex-service men and recently-arrived immigrants, both of whom came specifically under the jurisdiction of federal ministries. Winnipeg would look after its own, said the Tribune, but the federal government had a responsibility as well and "can't escape it by ignoring it or by making excuses." Premier Brownlee of Alberta agreed with the Tribune's sentiments and suggested that "all governmental organizations should, at such a time, forget the nice distinctions of the B.N.A. Act and see how best they can together share the common responsibility."¹²

Heenan subsequently claimed that he had been misquoted, that he had only tried to "allay unnecessary anxiety concerning the present and immediate future prospects of

¹¹Bracken Papers, vol. 40, file 452, J. Bracken to W.L.M. King, 7 January 1930; *ibid.*, King to Bracken, 8 January 1930; Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 9 January 1930, p. 1.

¹²Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 9 January 1930, p. 1; *ibid.*, 10 January 1930, p. 7; Manitoba Free Press, 10 January 1930, p. 6.

industrial activity."¹³ He need not have worried for he was clearly enunciating the Liberal government's policy. At no time was this clearer than in the House of Commons in April. Chided by the opposition about quickly rising relief rolls across Canada, MacKenzie King declared ponderously:

I can see nothing arising out of a recognition of this problem as a national problem which obliges this federal government, having regard to our constitution and the division of powers under it, to collect taxes from the people generally in order to meet a situation which affects only a certain group of people in some municipalities in this country, but which does not adversely affect the country as a whole. . . .

I submit that there is no evidence in Canada to-day of an emergency situation which demands anything of the kind.¹⁴

To authorities in Western Canada this must have seemed a particularly obtuse remark, for they were clearly confronted with an emergency situation. Left on their own to struggle through that winter, they could only hope that with an election expected in 1930 the King government would recant or that the Conservatives would prove more amenable to cooperation.

The administrative mechanisms which had been developed in Winnipeg during the 1920s slipped once more into gear in November 1929. Since 12 November the Social Welfare Commission had been empowered to care for urgent cases of distress arising from unemployment. As in recent years, this assistance was only for married men with two or more

¹³Lacelle Files, vol. 210, file 617:24, P. Heenan to W.L.M. King, 17 January 1930.

¹⁴House of Commons, Debates, 3 April 1930, pp. 1223, 1225.

dependents. Within two weeks the number of married men applying for relief was so great that the Social Welfare Commission could not process them. Mrs. Stewart-Hay, secretary of the Commission, reported that the office was so congested it was virtually impossible to get any work done. Accordingly, the Unemployment Relief Committee decided to open a separate relief office in the City Woodyard at 981 Elgin Avenue. By 9 December, less than one month after relief registration was begun, 425 families were receiving aid. This was twenty more than the total of the previous winter. A week later 503 were registered for relief and by 30 December 654 were registered, with 503 receiving relief. The comparable figure for December 1928 was 132 families on relief. By the end of March the City had registered 1575 families and by 30 April, the usual date for termination of the winter's relief efforts, the total had risen to 1613.¹⁵

Winnipeg's problem was compounded by the presence of thousands of single men and recent immigrants who were in dire circumstances. Civic authorities recognized the problem these individuals posed, but were determined not to open relief for them. Both the City and the Province were adamant that these unemployed were properly the responsibility of the federal government but, as Mayor Cater of Brandon wrote plaintively to the federal Minister of Labour, though these "people really have no domicile anywhere

¹⁵U.R.C., "Minutes," 25 November 1929; *ibid.*, 9 December 1929; *ibid.*, 31 December 1929; *ibid.*, 31 March 1930; *ibid.*, 5 May 1930.

. . . when they are here they have to be taken care of."¹⁶

As the special meetings in April and October indicated, civic and provincial authorities were concerned foremost about the single unemployed. Every meeting of the Unemployment Relief Committee in November and December devoted considerable attention to this group. As early as 12 November the Committee had debated extensively the question of opening a registration bureau solely for the resident single men. It was decided to do nothing for the present for fear, as Alderman F.H. Davidson explained, that "any mention in Council regarding single men would bring publicity resulting in an influx of unemployed from all over the country."¹⁷ Nevertheless, the Unemployment Relief Committee soon recognized, and publicly admitted, that this year it would have to make an effort to provide a certain amount of work for single men. But this would not be City work, relief or regular, nor would it be work within the city. The aim was to get the men out of the city. To this end the provincial government, through Arthur MacNamara, had undertaken a series of radio talks urging farmers to take on men for the winter. When the Province renewed its agreement to assist in the costs of relief, it and the City agreed to share the cost of transportation to any available work for a single man, whether or not he was a resident of Winnipeg. The provincial government limited

¹⁶Lacelle Files, vol. 210, file 617:24, H. Cater to P. Heenan, 10 January 1930.

¹⁷U.R.C., "Minutes," 12 November 1929.

its aid for single men to this transportation and, with the hope of thus substantially reducing the number of single men in Winnipeg, refused to consider any other policy.¹⁸

To the dismay of both the civic and provincial administrations this hope was soon to be cruelly dashed. It was quickly apparent that something more than shipping a few men out of the city was necessary. The presence of thousands of single unemployed threatening the public order was also becoming a political liability because a substantial number of the unemployed were war veterans who still had a good share of public sympathy and who were aggressive in their demands that the country owed them a living. By late December the many veterans organizations were holding almost daily meetings to publicize the plight of their members, reports of which were featured prominently in Winnipeg's newspapers. Delegations of ex-servicemen appeared before the Unemployment Relief Committee and City Council and at the steps of the legislature. A politician ignored them at his peril. On Saturday, 4 January, Mayor Ralph Webb, himself a battle-wounded veteran, offered to provide food and beds for 129 single veterans over the weekend. Webb did this on his authority as Mayor with the expectation that City Council would endorse his action. Undoubtedly he increased his already great popularity in

¹⁸Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 5 December 1929, p. 2; *ibid.*, 13 December 1929, p. 3; U.R.C., "Minutes," 16 December 1929; *ibid.*, 24 December 1929.

in the city by his public statement that if Council did not cover that cost he would pay for the assistance out of his own pocket. Council approval was quickly forthcoming.¹⁹ This was the first breach in the "married men only" policy.

II

Having given in to the demands for relief from one segment of the unemployed, the City and Province realized the impossibility of not extending relief to all residents. In large part this was due to apprehension of violence in Winnipeg's streets. Already there had been one large demonstration and parade on the Legislature by the unemployed, accompanied by minor scuffles with the police. It was feared that agitators--Communists--would stir the unemployed's discontent to dangerous levels.²⁰ On 6 January, at the Unemployment Relief Committee's request, City Council reluctantly authorized the U.R.C. to extend relief to all resident unemployed. On 8 January the Relief Committee opened a separate shack in the City Woodyard for the registration and relief of the single unemployed.²¹

The need for such action was quickly apparent. On

¹⁹Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 6 January 1930, p. 3; *ibid.*, 7 January 1930, p. 3; U.R.C., "Minutes," 6 January 1930; Winnipeg, M.C.C., 6 January 1930, p. 22.

²⁰Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 20 December 1929, p. 3; *ibid.*, 21 December 1929, p. 3.

²¹Winnipeg, M.C.C., 6 January 1930, pp. 16, 22; U.R.C., "Minutes," 8 January 1930.

10 January the Unemployment Relief Committee was called hurriedly into session. Its secretary reported of the single men that it was "impossible to handle the situation in the City Woodyard, the congestion was too great, and it was greatly impeding the work of the department in handling the unemployed married men." The Committee responded by opening a separate Single Men's Relief Department. Although it provided temporary relief to single men, this Department was primarily to secure work for them. Arthur MacNamara, provincial representative on the Unemployment Relief Committee, had insisted on this, declaring that work existed and that single men should not be given assistance while jobs were available.²² Unfortunately, there was little work available beyond what the City provided for married men. As well, complained D.A. Cockrill, supervisor of single men's relief, the Department had great difficulty persuading the single men, especially the veterans, to accept such work as was offered.²³

The Unemployment Relief Committee was faced with a dilemma. All City relief work had been expressly set aside for married men with dependents, partly as a work test but also as a means of preserving the family's morals and morale. But it was evident now that work for single men was needed for precisely the same reasons and, additionally, to remove the noxious weed of agitation and discontent from

²²U.R.C., "Minutes," 10 January 1930; *ibid.*, 14 January 1930.

²³*Ibid.*, 21 January 1930.

among them. The unhappy choice faced by relief authorities lay in establishing which group was the lesser evil if left idle. Not surprisingly, fear of single men's unrest weighed more. On 21 January the Unemployment Relief Committee decided that its policy would be to offer each single man work with wages to be paid in kind. As far as possible this work was to be in the City's cordwood camps along the Greater Winnipeg Water District railway to Shoal Lake. The married men working at the camps were to be returned to Winnipeg and the camps' facilities were to be expanded.²⁴

These camps could absorb only a relatively small number of men; many more still remained in Winnipeg. At the end of January 275 men had been found jobs or had been refused assistance for various reasons. The distressing fact, however, was that 575 men were receiving support and doing little in return. To avoid making a complete mockery of the work-for-relief policy the Woodyard was opened to single men, who largely displaced the married men working there.²⁵

It soon became evident that both the cost and the numbers of men involved made continuing in this way impossible. Between 9 January and 21 February 1785 single men had been

²⁴Ibid.; *ibid.*, 22 January 1930.

²⁵Ibid., 28 January 1930; *ibid.*, 4 February 1930. The U.R.C. later estimated that the cost of hand-sawing one cord of wood by one man was \$3.50 while the normal cost, using wage labour and sawing machines, was \$.80. *Ibid.*, 5 May 1930. The willingness to accept such a differential illustrates the considerable importance placed upon the Woodyard work test.

registered for relief. Of this number almost half, 884, had received relief at a total expenditure of over \$28,000. In a desperate attempt to cut costs and reduce relief rolls the Unemployment Relief Committee decided to discontinue providing transportation for men leaving the city for work. A week later registration of new single men's cases was discontinued and no further relief was given to existing cases except in circumstances of exceptional need.²⁶ At this point 1793 single men had been registered, with the number receiving relief steadily decreasing. On 1 March 802 men were receiving relief; by 5 March this had been cut to 371 and by 12 April only 104 men were still being assisted.²⁷ This policy was protested vigorously by the lone Communist alderman, W.N. Kolisnyk, and by several of the unemployed associations, but to little avail.²⁸ Still wedded to the belief that unemployment was seasonal and that spring work would soon open up, worried about the large expenditures involved, and convinced that without provincial assistance the City could not continue, civic authorities felt they had no choice upon the Province's notification that its assistance would be terminated on 15 April but to end all relief programmes.²⁹

²⁶Ibid., 18 February 1930; *ibid.*, 24 February 1930.

²⁷Ibid., 3 March 1930; *ibid.*, 17 March 1930; *ibid.*, 14 April 1930.

²⁸Ibid., 17 March 1930; Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 1 April 1930, p. 2; *ibid.*, 9 April 1930, p. 4; *ibid.*, 15 April 1930, pp. 2, 3; Winnipeg, M.C.C. 28 April 1930, p. 435.

²⁹U.R.C., "Minutes," 14 April 1930; Winnipeg, M.C.C. 14 April 1930, pp. 384, 392.

The extent to which the Province assisted in the expense of relief was always of crucial importance to civic authorities. Throughout the 1920s the City had discontinued relief when provincial cost-sharing ended, for that share was a significant element in keeping civic expenditures down. The cost of relief from 12 November 1929 to 15 April 1930 was approximately \$156,500, compared to a total expenditure in 1928-29 of only \$31,394.60. The Province offered to pay \$57,092.28 as its share.³⁰ This sum was quickly accepted but, because it thought that a problem of considerable dimension still existed, the City asked the Province to continue indefinitely its assistance. Several requests for meetings with the provincial cabinet were turned aside. The government was doing its share of providing work, Arthur MacNamara told the Unemployment Relief Committee, and it believed that there existed no more than normal unemployment; quite simply, the government had no intention of contributing further to unemployment relief.³¹ Despite this rather unequivocal position, Council sent delegations to the provincial legislature virtually begging for assistance. The Province remained firm, however, and not until the fall was provincial assistance again forthcoming. For the first time since the Great War Winnipeg was left on its own to cope with

³⁰Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 15 April 1930, p. 2; U.R.C., "Minutes," 28 April 1930.

³¹Winnipeg, M.C.C., 26 May 1930, p. 615; *ibid.*, 21 July 1930, p. 855; *ibid.*, 18 August 1930, p. 1031; U.R.C., "Minutes," 26 May 1930.

heavy unemployment.

Council's frantic appeals to the Province were a reflection of existing conditions: namely that, far from disappearing as usual, the number of unemployed was actually increasing. At the Council meeting which received notice of the termination of provincial aid, aldermen had found it necessary to continue relief for a further two weeks. A fortnight later the Unemployment Relief Committee instructed its staff to continue relief where necessary. On 13 May the U.R.C. asked for and received authorization to give relief as necessary to unemployed resident married men and veterans.³² The number of those assisted in May was not large by winter standards--an average of fifty-two married men per week received assistance--but of obvious concern was the fact that these men and their families now needed relief during the summer months.³³

The situation was made worse, and politically more dangerous, by the highly visible presence in the city of an estimated five hundred unemployed veterans, many not residents of Winnipeg. It was generally believed that in all events care of veterans was a federal responsibility, but genuine sympathy and a clear recognition of political realities made it necessary for the City to do something

³²Winnipeg, M.C.C., 14 April 1930, p. 372; U.R.C., "Minutes," 28 April 1930; *ibid.*, 12 May 1930; Winnipeg, M.C.C., 13 May 1930, pp. 528, 538.

³³U.R.C., "Minutes," 12 May 1930; *ibid.*, 19 May 1930; *ibid.*, 26 May 1930; *ibid.*, 2 June 1930.

for the veterans until the federal government could be induced to come to their aid. In order to assist in the most economical way, while not exceeding its authority to deal only with residents, and in order to keep clear the distinction between the City's responsibility for its own citizens and its generous gesture to the veterans until federal responsibility was assumed, the Unemployment Relief Committee decided to send food to one veterans' organization, the United Ex-Service Unemployed Men's Unit of Canada. It in turn would assume actual responsibility for the distribution of this aid. To this Unit the U.R.C. sent daily \$15 worth of food: thirty pounds of meat, five pounds of carrots, five pounds of onions, three pounds of peas, one bushel of potatoes, and twenty twenty-ounce loaves of bread.³⁴ Assistance was renewed weekly until 10 June when it became expedient to incorporate the veterans within the larger mass of unemployed individuals.

There were two reasons for this change. First was the sheer mass of unemployed, mostly single men, who still walked Winnipeg's streets. By this time, arguing about who was responsible for these individuals was both irrelevant and dangerous. A month earlier Alderman Ralph Maybank had warned of "the fact that these many non-residents here . . . have no place to sleep and nothing to eat[;] the danger lies in the fact that they may take the law into their own hands."³⁵

³⁴Ibid., 19 May 1930; *ibid.*, 26 May 1930.

³⁵Ibid., 12 May 1930.

This was a threat always taken seriously by civic authorities. The second reason was that the forthcoming federal election presented the opportunity to put pressure on the federal government. It was hoped that fear of the ballot would induce the King government to take its responsibilities more seriously.³⁶ Accordingly, the Unemployment Relief Committee re-opened registration first of single men and then of immigrants with the intention of putting them to work in the City's parks and billing Ottawa for the costs incurred. As the Committee's secretary succinctly recorded: "Ottawa would have to pay attention to 5000 or 6000 cases."³⁷

It was a singularly naive step by the U.R.C., for neither the federal nor provincial governments paid the slightest attention. But, having admitted it would render at least temporary aid and having rented office space for a month, the City was forced to take some action, albeit reluctantly. On the first day of registration the office was swamped, with the staff having to work hours overtime.³⁸ Within the week, at the insistence of Mayor Webb who was convinced that non-residents should never be assisted and that the City had just knuckled under to a "single men movement [which] was organized by agitators to compel relief being given", the Unemployment Relief Committee discussed closing registration. Webb and Alderman Charles Simonite

³⁶Ibid., 2 June 1930.

³⁷Ibid., 5 June 1930; *ibid.*, 10 June 1930.

³⁸Ibid., 10 June 1930.

insisted that if registration was not closed and relief cut off, assistance should at least be limited to a daily allowance of bread and cheese. Fortunately the other members of the Committee realized that such drastic action would be counter-productive at best, and might very likely result in disastrous riots or worse. They overrode the Mayor and Alderman Simonite and decided to continue relief for a further five days.³⁹ Ultimately registration of single men, and married men of course, remained open for the month of June and relief was continued for three weeks beyond that.

The number of single men assisted was testimony to the increasing scale of poverty of Western Canada's labour pool. Between the re-opening of registration on 6 June and 21 June, 3047 single men were registered and 1628 were given relief. The number assisted in those two weeks was almost equal to the number who had been registered between November 1929 and March 1930. In the following week 3108 men were registered, of whom 1219 received relief. In the week ending 5 July registration had increased to 3130, though the number on relief had decreased to 871. In the same interval the weekly registration of married men was about eight hundred, with over three hundred of those receiving relief.⁴⁰

By the end of June the situation seemed to have

³⁹Ibid., 13 June 1930.

⁴⁰Ibid., 2 July 1930; *ibid.*, 5 July 1930.

peaked. While registration was fairly constant, the number given assistance was steadily dropping. By July authorities could look forward to an exodus of men from the city to the harvest fields for, while Alberta and Saskatchewan crops were suffering from drought, Manitoba had been blessed with adequate rainfall and a promising crop. Accordingly, registration of single men and married men was closed on 2 July. On 14 July the single men's allowance was reduced from three to two meals daily, with all assistance ended as of 21 July.⁴¹ Once more the single labourer was expected to fend for himself. While the single men were thus conveniently disposed of, it remained necessary to continue aid to married men. This aid was reviewed each week with the hope of terminating it but the utter lack of jobs, either in the private sector or with civic departments, made such action impossible.⁴²

It had been a depressing and discouraging summer for Winnipeg's aldermen. Not only had they been confronted with thousands of unemployed to whom some assistance had to be given but a great many had not even been proper charges of the City. Even worse was the refusal of the federal government to recognize the problem, much less

⁴¹Manitoba Free Press, 19 July 1930, p. 1; U.R.C., "Minutes," 2 July 1930; *ibid.*, 18 July 1930.

⁴²Winnipeg, M.C.C., 7 July 1930, p. 826; *ibid.*, 21 July 1930, p. 885; U.R.C., "Minutes," 21 July 1930; *ibid.*, 5 August 1930; *ibid.*, 11 August 1930; *ibid.*, 18 August 1930.

provide any help. The provincial government was not much better. True, it had helped but only to a limited degree. Since the opening of relief on 12 November 1929, the City had spent \$275,080.17 to 1 August 1930; of this the Province had contributed less than 21 percent. Though the harvest promised to reduce temporarily the level of unemployment, even the most optimistic councillor knew that the problem in winter would be as bad, and probably much worse, than the winter so recently past. So, while some eighty men a day left for the Manitoba fields,⁴³ civic authorities, and not a few provincial politicians and civil servants, waited impatiently for the special session of Parliament which newly-elected Prime Minister R.B. Bennett had promised would take immediate action on the unemployment problem.

III

Richard Bedford Bennett had campaigned through June and July on promises of action. In July 1930 action of any kind was what the Canadian people demanded. They gave Bennett a large majority and he did not disappoint. On taking office the evening of 2 August, the Conservative administration immediately telegraphed the provinces for information on the extent of unemployment within their boundaries. Bennett next called a meeting of the Employment Service of Canada, which met on 21 August. After

⁴³Lacelle Files, vol. 117, file 600.02-154, W.M. Mackintosh to Directors, Employment Service of Canada, 8 August 1930.

deliberating for two days, the E.S.C. presented twelve recommendations to the Prime Minister. These proposals had one underlying principle: that the three levels of government--municipal, provincial and federal--had a joint responsibility in all actions undertaken to meet the existing emergency. Emphasis was placed on the creation of work by governments acting both separately and together; this, it was thought, would give encouragement to the private sector. It was recommended that where direct relief was necessary, the cost should be divided evenly among the three governments. Finally, the Employment Service called for the appropriation by Parliament of an unspecified amount of money as a preliminary to these activities.⁴⁴

When Parliament met, Bennett presented measures based on these recommendations. The first item, on which federal palliative efforts were based, was an appropriation of \$20 million, to be administered by the Department of Labour and governed by Order-in-Council. No other details about this unprecedented use of the public purse were announced. The government considered it "impracticable to attempt to make appropriations for specific purposes in specific amounts" because "necessity differs widely in different localities, according to the number of persons needing aid, . . . [and] the means by which employment opportunities may be offered greatly vary."⁴⁵ Beleagured officials

⁴⁴House of Commons, Debates, 10 September 1930, pp. 61-62.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 65-66; Bennett Papers, p. 493280, G.D. Robertson to R.B. Bennett, [September 1930].

in the municipalities and provinces were unconcerned about the niceties of parliamentary budgeting; they wanted federal aid as quickly and as generously as possible.

The need for quick action was made evident by the results of a hasty but distressing survey made by the Employment Service of Canada just as Parliament opened on 8 September. The registered unemployed in eight provinces (Prince Edward Island was excluded) totalled almost 118,000 and it was estimated that the number would reach 200,000 in the winter. 17,380 of that number were found in the prairie provinces, almost 7000 in Manitoba alone.⁴⁶ Though relief for single men in Winnipeg had been cut off and only forty-six married men were still on the City relief rolls at 1 September, civic and provincial authorities were already bracing for the coming winter. They waited impatiently for passage of the \$20 million appropriation.

In fact, the Manitoba government was making plans for the winter even before Parliament assembled. The Province had already indicated that it was prepared to assist municipalities but it requested an early meeting with federal authorities because "Question of amount and character of assistance Province will provide can only be determined when Dominion Government makes known extent and character of its plans and programme. . . ." Technically, the federal government could not make this information known until Parliament had approved the measure, but anticipating

⁴⁶House of Commons, Debates, 10 September 1930, pp. 63-64.

its speedy passage Senator Gideon Robertson, Minister of Labour, suggested a meeting for 30 September.⁴⁷ In the meantime Premier Bracken was formulating a definite programme for presentation to Ottawa. On 17 September he met with the representatives of sixty Manitoba municipalities to coordinate plans for public works. To the perturbation of the Premier and many rural municipalities, the needs of Winnipeg dominated those discussions. The Premier was unconvinced by the City's arguments that the province as a whole benefitted by expenditures in Winnipeg, but he did agree that the City deserved generous treatment because so many of the unemployed from other districts drifted to that metropolis.⁴⁸

With passage of the \$20 million appropriation on 15 September, the federal government was ready to begin apportioning it. There were three general stipulations. All negotiations for distribution of federal money must be between the provincial government, on behalf of itself and the municipalities, and the federal government. All provinces and municipalities seeking federal aid must be "ready to show their good faith by contributing a portion of what they would otherwise have to bear the total cost of." Finally, the government was offering assistance because the

⁴⁷Bracken Papers, vol. 51, file 549, J. Bracken to G.D. Robertson, 6 September 1930; *ibid.*, Bracken to Robertson, 11 September 1930.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, "Summary of Conference on Unemployment between Representatives of Manitoba Government and Municipalities," 17 September 1930.

unemployment problem had assumed nation-wide proportions, but "everyone recognizes [it] is not primarily a Federal responsibility."⁴⁹ On these understandings, Senator Gideon Robertson, as the minister responsible, was ready to negotiate.

The Manitoba delegation was first to arrive in Ottawa. John Bracken, W.R. Clubb, Minister of Public Works, and his Deputy Minister, Arthur MacNamara, were armed with a lengthy list of public works. Accompanying this triumverate was Winnipeg's mayor, Ralph H. Webb, a life-long Conservative who hoped that his close relationship with the Prime Minister and others in the Cabinet would ensure generous treatment of Winnipeg.⁵⁰ The Manitoba proposals required, for that time, a staggering amount of money. The City of Winnipeg's suggested programme of works alone was estimated at \$7 million. The provincial government submitted a works programme which it proposed to undertake on its own amounting to another \$2.5 million, and requested the federal government to equal that amount in purely federal works. Of the \$20 million marked specifically for unemployment relief John Bracken suggested that \$2 million be set aside for Manitoba.

⁴⁹Ibid., G.D. Robertson to J. Bracken, 27 September 1930.

⁵⁰Webb deeply distrusted the Bracken government with which, during his term as Mayor in the 1920s, he had constantly battled. See Thompson, "Political Career of Ralph H. Webb," p. 1. Webb always feared that because of Bracken's hard and at times abrasive dealings with Ottawa Winnipeg would suffer the consequences. For example, when Winnipeg faced a serious financial situation in October 1932 Webb wrote a personal letter to Bennett begging the Prime Minister not to "penalize dear old Winnipeg because of the Govt. of Manitoba." Bennett Papers, p. 479003, R.H. Webb to R.B. Bennett, 12 October 1932.

It was not unreasonable to expect 10 percent of the total sum appropriated, but unfortunately for the Premier, and for those who followed him to Ottawa, the federal government did not in fact have \$20 million to divide among the provinces. Ottawa had set aside \$4 million for direct relief purposes and a further \$3 million for other purposes, leaving only \$13 million for relief work in the provinces. Manitoba, which offered from the outset to match the Dominion dollar for dollar, was offered \$900,000 to pursue public works and \$300,000 for direct relief. Though Premier Bracken complained that the former sum was "only sufficient to provide work for a very small proportion of Manitoba's unemployed" and would "not permit many of the undertakings which . . . [the municipalities] have asked us to urge be proceeded with," he recognized that the federal position was firm and accepted the terms. Bracken was, in fact, later reported to have told Sir George Perley, Minister without Portfolio, that he was satisfied with the outcome.⁵¹

The Dominion-Provincial Agreement embodying the results of these discussions was signed on 1 October 1930. Aside from \$26,000 the Department of the Interior would spend in Riding Mountain National Park, the Dominion contribution was matched by the Province. A full one-third of the allocation was specified for public works in Winnipeg, for which both the City and the Province would contribute

⁵¹Bracken Papers, vol. 51, file 549, J. Bracken to G.D. Robertson, 1 October 1930; *ibid.*, Bracken, [Press Release], 9 October 1930; Bennett Papers, pp. 480138-45, Robertson to R.B. Bennett, 27 October 1930.

like amounts. Almost all of this sum was for the construction of new bridges over the Red and Assiniboine Rivers on Main Street. The remainder of the money went to projects shared equally by the two senior governments and to works in the other municipalities of the province. Of equal importance was the agreement by the Dominion and the Province to each pay one-third of municipalities' expenditures for direct relief.⁵²

With these financial guarantees, Winnipeg's Relief Committee undertook careful formulation of policies which would reflect the Committee's dual responsibility: the "formulation of such relief policies as will prevent human suffering among unemployed and their dependents," and the "careful and economic expenditure of funds granted for unemployment and relief."⁵³ Relief policies kept expenditures to the minimum necessary for subsistence living and emphasized the responsibility of the relief recipient to work and to use all available resources. Only resident married men, those who had resided in Winnipeg for at least one year prior to application, were to be eligible for assistance and they were to express in writing their willingness to accept any work available. Both to encourage men to

⁵²P.A.C., RG27 acc. 70/303, Canada, Department of Labour, Unemployment Relief Commission (hereafter cited as Dept. of Labour, U.R.C.), temporary vol. 2039, file Y1-5-OA, "Summary of Dominion-Provincial Agreements," n.d., p. 19.

⁵³Winnipeg, [Unemployment Relief Committee], "Report on Unemployment Relief, City of Winnipeg, September 1, 1930-August 31, 1931" (hereafter cited as U.R.C., "Report 1930-31"), p. 1.

take work and to relieve genuine distress the Unemployment Relief Committee would assist a man for "a reasonable time" pending the start of work if the man had written assurance that a job was available. Assistance would continue until the man drew his first pay and, if the work provided an income insufficient to provide for the man's family (based on the standard relief schedule), the deficit would be made up.⁵⁴

In addition to the grocery allowance the Unemployment Relief Committee would pay light and water bills, but only if the applicant had received notice that these services would be discontinued. In no circumstances would past accounts be paid. Rent would also be paid by the City, but only if the applicant had been on relief at least one month, was in arrears two months, and had received an eviction order from the landlord. To ensure that all individual resources were utilized the income of children living at home was included in computing family relief schedules. Of course, a family was not expected to retain such luxuries as an automobile, a telephone or a liquor permit. Every case was investigated on application and for each renewal, which could be weekly, bi-weekly or monthly. The applicant's bank account was examined to make sure there was no money in it. In addition, regular and unannounced investigations by City and provincial investigators were undertaken to ensure that relief applicants were not in any way cheating.

⁵⁴Ibid., Appendix A, "Regulations."

As the number on relief increased investigations became more rigorous; little wonder that decades later both recipients and investigators remember great resentment in relief homes.⁵⁵

The members of the Unemployment Relief Committee were hopeful that with the public works to be undertaken by the three governments, with definite policy guidelines and with a measure of good luck they would be able to arrange at least some work for each married man. This was not to be, for, as the Committee plaintively noted in its annual report, the numbers on relief grew so large and so rapidly "that there was nothing in the experience of the community to guide the Committee." The U.R.C. was indeed "trying to handle a growing army of unemployed with the apparatus geared to the needs of a platoon."⁵⁶

Had the City to care only for its own married residents, of which the total registration for the year of 5703 was not much different from 1922-23, the sense of crisis would still have been present. In the case of married men it was not only the number needing assistance but the number in such a short time that was unexpected. From only 46 men receiving relief on 1 September 1930 the number jumped to 2555 by 14 February 1931. In the Woodyard offices, fourteen

⁵⁵ Ibid.; U.R.C., "Minutes," 13 October 1930; Winnipeg, M.C.C., 13 October 1930, pp. 1273-75; B. Broadfoot, Ten Lost Years: Memories of Canadians Who Survived the Depression (Don Mills, 1975), pp. 71, 74-75; Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, Human History Division--Oral History, Tape 317, Mrs. Stankovic, 19 February 1973.

⁵⁶ U.R.C., "Report 1930-31," p. 2; J. Gray, The Winter Years: The Depression on the Prairies (Toronto, 1966), p. 19.

registrars could not keep up with the crush of men wanting to apply; the Unemployment Relief Committee received complaints that men were kept in line two and three days before their applications were received.⁵⁷ This sudden deluge of married men was indicative of the great extent to which Winnipeg's citizenry was becoming destitute, and the problem was spreading. The moral imperative to prevent actual suffering led the Unemployment Relief Committee to accept on the relief rolls married couples with at least one child who did not fulfill the residency requirement, though it was hoped that the couples' home municipalities would reimburse the City for this expense.⁵⁸

The Unemployment Relief Committee also had to make arrangements for the care of unemployed women. Destitute women had been assisted by the Social Welfare Commission since February 1930, but most did not come properly within its jurisdiction. On 28 October 1930 the U.R.C. established a separate relief department, registration office and staff for unemployed single women and widows with dependents. The Women's Department was to "treat each case as an individual problem." Accordingly, although they were subject to the same general relief regulations, women had much more latitude than men; even their relief allowances were more

⁵⁷U.R.C., "Report 1930-31," p. 3; U.R.C., "Minutes," 11 November 1930; *ibid.*, 24 November 1930.

⁵⁸U.R.C., "Minutes," 7 January 1931.

generous.⁵⁹ This was due in part to prevailing attitudes towards assisting women,⁶⁰ but more important was the fact that relief officials did not know what to do with unemployed women. None of the relief work was suitable for them, so there was no alternative to assisting each case individually (with close monitoring to detect signs of dependence) and trying to find proper employment in the traditional female fields. As well, although the number of unemployed women was worrisome, they were only a minority of all relief cases. Between 1930 and 1938 there were always fewer than two thousand women's cases each month, even when the total caseload reached a high of 10,500 in April 1933. Finally, women were not perceived to be as serious a threat to public order as were both married and single men.⁶¹

⁵⁹Ibid., 4 February 1930; *ibid.*, 24 October 1930; U.R.C., "Report 1930-31," pp. 4-5; *Winnipeg, M.C.C.*, 13 August 1934, p. 488; P.A.C., MG30 E256, Charlotte Whitton Papers, vol. 26, Canadian Welfare Council, "Schedules of Relief and Assistance in Typical Areas, Section III: Province of Manitoba, Province of Saskatchewan, Province of Alberta, Province of British Columbia, Autumn 1936," January 1937, pp. 8-9; Report of the Royal Commission on the Municipal Finances and Administration of the City of Winnipeg, 1939, by H.C. Goldenberg, Chairman (Winnipeg, 1939), p. 143.

⁶⁰For example, Charlotte Whitton, Canada's foremost social worker, wrote in 1935: "The [unemployed] girl and woman are best dealt with by individual provision for shelter and aid, of such type as is indicated and under the supervision of qualified women workers." *Whitton Papers*, vol. 19, C. Whitton, "Memorandum on Relief Problems, Canada, 1935," n.d., p. 15.

⁶¹*Winnipeg, [Unemployment Relief Committee], "Unemployment Relief Committee Report, September 1, 1931-December 31, 1932" (hereafter cited as U.R.C., "Report 1931-32"), p. 8; Royal Commission on Municipal Finances, pp. 163-64.*

What ultimately made the situation a crisis was the number of single men the City found itself supporting. As with women and married men, the Unemployment Relief Committee made plans to extend aid to a limited number of single men. A single man was to have resided in Winnipeg for at least twelve months within the three years immediately prior to application for relief. Given the transient nature of the employment that authorities assumed most of these men found, it was expected that the number eligible would be relatively small. Preparations were made to register the single men and permission was received to use the C.N.R. Immigration Hall to sleep 350 men a night; the remainder would receive vouchers for rooming house quarters. The Unemployment Relief Committee was staggered to discover that within two weeks of opening registration on 20 October 1665 single men were receiving relief. By 7 February 1931 that number had risen to 4223 and by the last day of August there were over 7000 single men registered, 2243 of them still being supported.⁶² Coupled with the wholly unexpected number of married men requiring relief this huge number of single men had two important effects on relief policy: it effectively destroyed any possibility of a relief works programme providing a reasonable amount of employment and it led directly to the institution of the City's soup kitchens, precursors in many ways to the single men's relief camps.

⁶²U.R.C., "Report 1930-31," p. 3.

The soup kitchen is certainly one of the most enduring images of the 1930s, not because it was a new development--it was not--but because so many thousands across Canada, and North America, depended on the kitchen for virtually all sustenance. In Winnipeg, the civic dining halls, as officials preferred they be called, were a logical result of the Unemployment Relief Committee's stated dual responsibility. Given the need to relieve single men, it was necessary to do so at the least possible cost. The civic dining hall proved to be a most acceptable means of adapting one to the other.

The usual method of relieving single men since the 1920s had been to issue meal and bed tickets on a weekly basis. Most restaurants, rooming houses and hotels accepted the men's tickets, which were then redeemed by the City. Three daily meals and a bed for seven nights in 1930 cost the City \$5.95 per man; that was more than the weekly allowance for a family of five on relief. Not surprisingly, the question of this cost was uppermost in the minds of most members of the Unemployment Relief Committee. Concern was heightened when it was learned that costs in other cities were much lower. Saskatoon, for example, provided food and accomodation for seven hundred to eight hundred men at a cost of twenty-five cents each in a camp it had established on the Exhibition Grounds.⁶³

⁶³U.R.C., "Minutes," 26 January 1931; A. Lawton, "Relief Administration in Saskatoon During the Depression," Saskatchewan History, 22(2), 1969, p. 54.

A report on alternative methods of feeding single men was ordered and on 2 February 1931 W.G. Rumball, who had been appointed special assistant to the Relief Department's secretary only the week before, presented his findings to the Unemployment Relief Committee.

Rumball proceeded from the premise that "any economies that could be effected should benefit the City rather than the unemployed." As a preliminary, he suggested to the Committee that an immediate 10 percent reduction in the face value of food vouchers should be instituted. He also suggested more vigorous investigations of single men to eliminate "malingerers", each of which, if struck from the relief rolls, would save the City about seventy-five dollars. As to the mechanics of mass feeding, Rumball suggested a number of options. One was civic dining halls, on which he had, as yet, little information. An "ideal solution" would be to feed men in military armories, but the military strongly objected. Another possibility was to contract the service to a caterer at a fixed cost per man. Rumball was convinced that any one of the methods would effect considerable savings, would "prevent the destruction [sic] of initiative and general demoralization of those receiving relief" and would "discourage those not requiring relief from taking advantage of it."⁶⁴

The Unemployment Relief Committee was impressed, but also was determined to have any proposed system under its

⁶⁴U.R.C., "Minutes," 2 February 1931.

strict control. Hence, only feeding by means of dining halls was seriously discussed and on 16 February it was decided to conduct "an experiment in mass feeding." On 3 March the first civic dining hall was opened in the C.N.R. Immigration Hall on Water Street.⁶⁵

The dining hall proved a huge success, which meant that above all it was cheap. Within a fortnight Mr. Rumball could report that the cost of a meal had dropped to fourteen cents from the twenty-three cents it had cost with the restaurant vouchers. Virtually bubbling with enthusiasm, Rumball opined that the cost could never be more than fourteen cents and should be less than twelve cents.⁶⁶ With these encouraging prospects, and perhaps stung by a bill from the Chief of Police for meals supplied at the Police Station from October to the end of March, the Unemployment Relief Committee instructed Rumball to open another dining hall. It opened on 4 May with room for seven hundred men.⁶⁷ Near the end of August a third hall was opened. The cost of meals dropped steadily: at the Immigration Hall from \$.135 to \$.10 and finally to \$.075 at which point it stabilized.⁶⁸ The same trend held true for the other dining halls. By December 1931 the City operated five dining halls. In addition to the Immigration Hall

⁶⁵Ibid., 16 February 1931; U.R.C., "Report 1930-31," p. 3.

⁶⁶U.R.C., "Minutes," 16 March 1931.

⁶⁷Ibid., 13 April 1931; *ibid.*, 4 May 1931.

⁶⁸Ibid., 11 May 1931; *ibid.*, 8 June 1931; *ibid.*, 27 June 1931; *ibid.*, 29 June 1931; *ibid.*, 4 August 1931.

they were located at 75 Martha Street, at 130 James Avenue, on the corner of King Street and James Avenue, and on the corner of Ross Street and Princess Avenue.

The dining halls were justified on economic terms alone, but they served another equally important function. In the dining hall system, relief officers could keep close watch on the single men, ensuring that they fulfilled the quota of work required and isolating them from the feared "agitators." As with the later relief camp system anyone deemed an agitator--whether in fact a Communist organizer or simply someone complaining about the quality of food--was immediately expelled from the halls. The man could appeal to the Unemployment Relief Committee and was usually re-admitted to the halls after a suitable period of time, if he was not openly a Communist. This crude, quick and effective discipline was integral to the U.R.C.'s approach to the single man. Equally so was the insistence that each single man must prove himself morally worthy of relief by agreeing to perform all tasks asked of him.

By 1931 the City and Province were becoming more concerned with providing work for single men than for married men largely because they feared the consequences of allowing thousands of men to lay about the city in complete idleness. Not only was such idleness seen as destructive of morale but it was widely believed that providing aid and demanding nothing in return would lead to the creation of congenital paupers. Further, it was accepted that a man genuinely deserving of assistance would

be only too happy to prove his good character by doing any work available. Finally, the potential threat to public order that these men represented spurred authorities to keep them busy, and if possible busy out of the City. Few doubted that the Devil and Karl Marx found work for idle hands.

Work programmes pre-dated the dining halls. The single men had periodically been put to work in the Wood-yard, and so they were again in the winter of 1930-31.⁶⁹ But this could absorb only a few so, at the initiative of the provincial government, a number of wood camps were opened along the railway line to the City's water source at Shoal Lake. "The plan," wrote W.R. Clubb, Minister of Public Works, "will provide occupation for the genuine cases--weed out those who are not actually destitute and get the single men out of the city, and in addition, will build them up physically and put them in shape so that they will be in better condition to look after themselves in the future."⁷⁰ These camps also absorbed relatively few single men. There was one work project, however, which promised to provide work for several hundred men. With a proper rotation system all the single men would have a chance to work on the Grassmere Ditch.

The Grassmere Ditch Drainage Scheme, as it was

⁶⁹Ibid., 1 December 1930; U.R.C., "Report 1930-31," p. 4.

⁷⁰Winnipeg, M.C.C., 25 November 1930, p. 1446; *ibid.*, 8 December 1930, p. 1498; Public Works, M.O., vol. 27, file Unemployment 1930-31, W.R. Clubb to G.D. Robertson, 26 November 1930.

formally known, was to be a massive ditch, four to nine feet deep with a twenty-eight foot base, to provide water drainage and flood protection for the north-western suburban area of Greater Winnipeg. It was to start near the village of Brooklands and exit into the Red River near Middlechurch. The Ditch had been recommended to Ottawa by the Manitoba government as a preferred work after the bridges over the Red and Assiniboine Rivers.⁷¹ But where bridge work was intended to employ married men with a heavy complement of artisans, the Ditch was expressly designed as a project for single male labourers. The problem with this enterprise was that, after the costs of the bridge work were deducted, only an estimated \$100,000 remained of the \$900,000 allocated for relief work in Winnipeg. As a relief work project the Ditch was far too expensive a proposition. Were it undertaken as a normal public work utilizing dredging equipment the estimated cost was \$150,000; with the work done by hand the cost would increase almost seven-fold to \$1 million. Instead of starting the Ditch as relief work, W.R. Clubb suggested that it be undertaken as direct relief.⁷² The distinction may seem slight, but there was a crucial difference between using Grassmere as direct relief or as relief work. There was a bookkeeping change which effectively placed more

⁷¹Bracken Papers, vol. 51, file 549, J. Bracken to G.D. Robertson, 1 October 1930.

⁷²Public Works, D.M.O., vol. 19, file Unemployment 1926-30, W.R. Clubb to G.D. Robertson, 22 October 1930.

funds at the ready; but the real difference was that on relief work men were removed from relief rolls and received actual pay packets. On direct relief projects men were literally working for their supper. In simplest terms, Grassmere was a work test with the additional benefit of removing hundreds of men from the City each day. As Senator Robertson correctly summed it up, Grassmere would require "able-bodied men applying for relief to give some service in return for aid received" and "will prevent imposition on the municipality by those who seek aid but won't work."⁷³

Only one alderman opposed the Grassmere project, Communist W.N. Kolisnyk. During his last two months on City Council, Kolisnyk argued vehemently against the scheme. "It is inhumane to force men to work," he thundered, "merely for the sake of making them work for their relief, at employment which would cost seven times the amount required to do the same work with machinery." "This proposition is foolish," he continued, "especially considering the time of year the scheme is being started and that the work is only to be considered a test of a man's willingness to work."⁷⁴ To the other members of the Unemployment Relief Committee, and to the senior governments, Grassmere was far from foolish and by 1 December 1930 the first groups of single men were at work. At the end of January 1931 over 1600 men were at work weekly. By February

⁷³Ibid., G.D. Robertson to W.R. Clubb, 5 November 1930.

⁷⁴U.R.C., "Minutes," 11 November 1930.

this number had risen to over 2300 and remained at over 2000 until work was stopped with the spring break-up in April.⁷⁵

The men at the Ditch worked two eight-hour days each week, being transported to the site from the Woodyard by truck and street-car. Though superficially the project seemed to be working well there were many problems. The two more difficult ones were logistical and disciplinary in nature, and were closely related. Basically, there was no single and efficient system of ensuring that the necessary number of individuals appeared on time at the Woodyard. With the men scattered over the City, it was manifestly difficult to arrange for a prompt departure to the Ditch. If a man did not turn up at the Woodyard, there was little recourse to immediate disciplinary action by cancellation of relief, for he usually already had his meal and bed tickets. Even at the Ditch itself discipline was not very tight for the same reason. Accordingly, when the first dining hall was opened it was immediately seen as a practical solution to these problems. With men gathered together in one place, the logistical problems disappeared. As for discipline, locking a man out of the hall or removing him from the Ditch gang (which had the same effect) was a simple, immediate and effective punishment.

⁷⁵Ibid., 31 January 1931; ibid., 14 February 1931; ibid., 28 February 1931; ibid., 23 March 1931; U.R.C., "Report 1930-31," p. 2.

With the effectiveness of the dining halls amply demonstrated and with Grassmere as the single largest project for single men, it was an obvious and logical step to unite the two. When work on Grassmere started again in the fall of 1931 a sub-committee of the Unemployment Relief Committee reported in favour of building a camp at the Ditch, and was directed to make the necessary financial arrangements with the provincial government.⁷⁶ The subcommittee also recommended that the Ditch men be put on a wage basis but this never got beyond the Relief Committee. Arthur MacNamara bluntly told the Committee that "it was a waste of time as far as wages were concerned, to approach him."⁷⁷ Finally, in January 1932 the provincial government agreed that as an experiment a spur line from the Winnipeg Electric Railway would be built to the ditch so that bunk cars could be brought in. There would be accommodation for four hundred men, who were to be rotated at two week intervals. The project was approved by City Council a month later and quickly Grassmere became a permanent relief camp.⁷⁸

The Grassmere camp in its early stages was far from luxurious but probably no worse than many other relief or construction camps. James Leslie, a special investigator for the provincial Department of Public Works, thought the

⁷⁶Ibid., 26 October 1931.

⁷⁷Ibid., 2 November 1931.

⁷⁸Ibid., 18 January 1932; Winnipeg, M.C.C., 16 February 1932, pp. 147-48.

camp compared favourably to railway construction camps and was "certainly better than many camps I was in during the war." Each car slept twelve men in bunks. Straw mattresses and blankets but no pillows were provided. Each car had three washbasins and a heater, but there were no bathing facilities. Sanitation was primitive, with only seven trench toilets for the camp. The dining hall was clean and commodious and, most importantly, little more expensive than the dining halls in the City. The average food cost per meal was \$.065 and though the full cost per man of about \$.11 was two or three cents higher than the halls in the City, this was because the wages of the camp's employees--not only the cooks but the foremen, timekeeper and so on--were included in the cost.⁷⁹

This was a picture of the camp at the beginning of April. It soon became of a more permanent nature, with more amenities for the men. The impetus for this came not from a desire to make the men's lives easier but from a fear of what the men would do when faced with long hours of idleness (they were limited to eight hours of work per day) and with nothing in that time to occupy them. A first attempt to prick the already growing bubble of discontent was an early decision to make regular issues of tobacco--a luxury considered beyond the needs of married men. A radio was also provided, and soon construction of huts to replace

⁷⁹Public Works, M.O., vol. 23, file Unemployment 1932, J. Leslie to A. MacNamara, 7 April 1932; U.R.C., "Minutes," 21 March 1932; *ibid.*, 4 April 1932.

the disliked bunk cars was started. By July attempts were made to provide for the recreational needs of the men. The Unemployment Relief Committee provided athletic equipment and paid the entry fee for a team of camp-men in the Winnipeg Soft Ball League.⁸⁰ At this time these were all features unique to the Grassmere camp, designed to reduce discontent which the close quarters exacerbated.

The Grassmere enterprise was the single men's branch of a policy called "Work-for-Relief." This scheme was designed to complement the public works programme but not to compete with it. Accordingly, and particularly for the married men, all projects under this scheme were of a non-essential but labour-intensive nature. They were literally make-work projects, "organized time-wasting" as one participant observed.⁸¹ Starting in mid-April, married men were required to present themselves at the Woodyard for a couple of days work each month. Men crushed stone, brushed streets, cut stone at the City quarries, cleaned up the river banks, dug dandelions from boulevards and levelled schoolyards with shovels and rakes. From April to August 8437 men were sent to work for a total of 50,662 man-days.⁸² To the considerable criticism directed at these make-work projects the Unemployment Relief Committee responded in two ways. It first justified the

⁸⁰U.R.C., "Minutes," 4 April 1932; *ibid.*, 16 May 1932; *ibid.*, 4 July 1932.

⁸¹Gray, Winter Years, p. 42. For a vivid treatment of the work-for-relief schemes see *ibid.*, chapter 4.

⁸²U.R.C., "Report 1930-31," p. 5.

the work on economic grounds, pointing out that the total cost, including the wages paid to supervisory staff, amounted to just over \$79,000 while the value of the work done was an estimated \$125,570. But, most importantly, the Unemployment Relief Committee pointed out that the benefits of the scheme lay not in the value of the work, though that was important; rather, "one must bear in mind benefits such as maintaining the morale and physical health of men engaged in such work. One must also bear in mind the fact that such work schemes are necessary in detecting those not deserving of relief."⁸³

V

All these make-work projects had become necessary, given the underlying suppositions about the value of work, because the programme of public works was unable to provide employment but for a few of the unemployed thousands. In April 1931 the Citizens Committee of Winnipeg on Unemployment made a survey of unemployment and job prospects. The Committee's pessimistic results underscored the inability of the public works programme to cope with the situation. It was estimated that in March there were 18,900 unemployed men and women in Greater Winnipeg. About 14,100 had applied at some point for relief, with half of them obtaining aid. For this surplus labour there were few job opportunities. Public works, under the Relief Act,

⁸³Ibid.

would absorb at most one thousand men in Greater Winnipeg, three-quarters of those in Winnipeg itself. Outdoor work was minimal. The railways reported that they would not be hiring men and in all probability would be laying off more employees. Few agricultural jobs were available. Farmers at all points reported that they would not be hiring help because they could not afford to pay any wages; consequently, "any crops put in would be put in by the farmer and his family." Bush work, which in normal times absorbed eight thousand to ten thousand Winnipeg men, was expected to employ fewer than 10 percent of that number, and not all of those would be taken from Winnipeg.⁸⁴ With this state of affairs direct relief rather than public works employment was the more common method of assisting the unemployed.

The situation seemed to be getting out of hand. "Unless there is a decided change in business conditions generally I am afraid that the unemployment problem will be much worse this fall and winter than it was last winter," was John Bracken's pessimistic forecast to the Prime Minister. "Most of the municipalities," he added, "have about exhausted their efforts to deal with their local difficulties. As far as the Province is concerned our finances are such that we cannot enter upon any large new undertakings or works which would be of any material

⁸⁴Bennett Papers, pp. 487165-69, H.B. Shaw, R. Maybank and A. MacNamara to W.W. Kennedy, M.P., 10 April 1931.

assistance."⁸⁵ Matters would become much worse, as Bracken well knew.

Already one of Winnipeg's suburbs had gone bankrupt. The village of Brooklands had been forced to close its schools, and when it was unable to pay its one-third share of the two thousand dollar monthly relief bill the provincial and federal governments took over relief on an equal basis. The village itself ceased to function as an effective municipality.⁸⁶ The Winnipeg School Board found it necessary to impose a one hundred dollar tuition fee on grade twelve pupils starting in September 1931, and eliminated free textbooks for grades seven and eight. This was followed the next year by the complete elimination of grade twelve.⁸⁷ In December 1931 the provincial government found itself unable to continue supporting financially-weak school districts and had to beg from the federal government a loan of \$125,000 so the schools could remain open.⁸⁸ The public works programme had failed to provide sufficient work to relieve the unemployed, while the cost of direct relief mounted at a frighteningly fast rate

⁸⁵Bracken Papers, vol. 51, file 549, J. Bracken to R.B. Bennett, 23 April 1931.

⁸⁶Public Works, M.O., vol. 23, file Unemployment 1930-31, A. MacNamara to H. Hereford, 2 April 1931.

⁸⁷Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 15 April 1931, p. 3; Bracken Papers, vol. 67, file 703, Winnipeg Public School Board, Annual Report 1932, p. 19.

⁸⁸Bennett Papers, pp. 477826-27, J. Bracken to R.B. Bennett, 3 December 1931; *ibid.*, p. 477829, A. MacNamara to H. Hereford, 8 December 1931.

without adequate government supervision. With the increased demand for relief, and the lengthened time for which it was necessary, came the need for an expansion of the kinds of relief. Municipalities were finding it necessary to provide such things as medicine and clothing and were vocal in their demands for government assistance in those areas. Transience was emerging as a significant problem but one with which the federal government declined to become involved.

Hanging over all these financial and social problems was the threat of violence. Manitoba's Attorney-General was receiving disturbing reports from R.C.M.P. spies about Communist activity. Not only was the degree of agitation and organization among the unemployed increasing but now the truly revolutionary nature of the Communists was revealed. In May 1931 the R.C.M.P. reported their suspicion that Winnipeg's Communists had a secret cache of thirty Thompson machine-guns, and later discovered a Communist master plan for conquering Winnipeg. The Bank of Montreal, with its strategic command of Portage and Main, would be taken first, followed by the Minto Street Barracks. With these secured all communication links, the Post Office, railroad stations and banks would be seized. All this was presumably to be accomplished by thirty trained machine-gunners.⁸⁹ Coupled with this apprehended violence was the very real violence which

⁸⁹P.A.M., RG3 C1, Manitoba, Department of the Attorney-General, file 43, "Synopsis of Reports of Communistic Activities Commencing 5 May 1931."

already could be found in Winnipeg's streets. A demonstration of six thousand unemployed before the Parliament Buildings and a subsequent riot on the Mall had made a great impression on John Bracken. "The demonstration, . . ." he told Bennett, "brings very forcibly to our notice the seriousness of the whole situation."⁹⁰ Mayor Ralph Webb, too, was "beginning to feel keenly the situation and the hopelessness displayed." Writing to Robert Rogers urging the federal government to proceed quickly with some "constructive works," Webb warned that "men without work and very little sympathy are bound to follow the law of least resistance and dangerous false leadership." "Therefore," he concluded, "it is incumbent upon all those in authority to size up the situation immediately, and not wait until serious trouble arises, and then by force of arms, etc., do that which should never have been necessary."⁹¹

The whole situation would receive much more attention than previously. By the autumn of 1931 even the Prime Minister conceded that "we are now faced with the real crisis in the history of Canada."⁹² Unemployment, "the darkest shadow that hangs over the head of the wage earner

⁹⁰Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 15 April 1931, p. 7; *ibid.*, 16 April 1931, pp. 1, 3, 5, 13, 16; Bracken Papers, vol. 51, file 549, J. Bracken to R.B. Bennett, 16 April 1931; *ibid.*, Bracken to Bennett, 23 April 1931.

⁹¹Bennett Papers, pp. 48715-18, R.H. Webb to R. Rogers, 20 May 1931.

⁹²*Ibid.*, p. 493597, R.B. Bennett to R.B. Hanson, M.P., 22 October 1931.

in any country,"⁹³ was getting darker. As worrisome as the financial difficulties and the threat of widespread social disorder was a deepening sense that the vitality and the will of the nation were being sapped and with them the foundations not only of the economy but also of Canadian society. This sense pervades a psalmic parody quoted widely in Canada and the United States. Whether referring to Herbert Hoover or R.B. Bennett, it was indicative of a growing sense of despair and of anger among the populace. "Bennett is my Shepherd, I am in want," wrote the unknown psalmist.

He maketh me to lie down on park benches.
 He leadeth me beside great need.
 He restoreth my doubt in the Conservative Party.
 He leadeth me in the path of destruction for his
 Parties' [sic] sake.
 Yea, tho I walk through the valley of starvation,
 I do feel evil for he is against me.
 The Politicians and profiteers they frighten me.
 He prepareth a reduction in my salary in the presence
 of mine enemies.
 He annointeth my income with taxes,
 My expenses over-runneeth my income.
 Surely unemployment and poverty shall follow me all
 the days of the Conservative Administration and
 I shall dwell in the Poor House forever.⁹⁴

To stop the erosion of the nation's will and to keep its people alive as cheaply as possible were the formidable tasks that now confronted all governments.

⁹³Senator G.D. Robertson in the Senate, 18 March 1931, quoted in Labour Gazette, April 1931, p. 389.

⁹⁴Bennett Papers, p. 493308, loose page; Queen's University Archives, Thomas A. Crerar Papers, Box 98; A.K. Cameron to T.A. Crerar, 2 February 1931.

CHAPTER FIVE

SHIFTING THE BURDEN: 1932-1936

I

Manitoba's Minister of Public Works had been invited to address the Winnipeg Rotary Club on relief measures undertaken in Manitoba. It could not have been an enjoyable task to draft the appropriate words of faith in the future while relating the most distressing of statistics. It was February 1933 and fully 17 percent of Winnipeg's population was receiving direct relief. Relief costs were over four hundred thousand dollars per month, most of it borrowed and so adding to an ever-increasing debt load. Relief works had been curtailed and no prospect of an economic revival was apparent. As if to emphasize the difficult times the Manitoba winter was the coldest in memory.

Nevertheless, W.R. Clubb could find some reassuring, if irrelevant, phrases. "While conditions are far from good," he suggested, "they are excellent when we compare them with some of the disasters of the past." "The conditions after the Civil War in the United States, for example. The famine in India of 1899 and 1901, a short 32 years ago, when one million people perished and 4,500,000 people were employed on relief works. We do not have far to look to realize that we have made progress." Further, assured the Minister, "our

unemployed now are better fed and housed and clothed, even though at public expense, than the fully employed were fed and housed and clothed in our Grandfather's [sic] day, and to that extent we can congratulate ourselves that progress has been made." But Clubb recognized that this progress had a fatal flaw. The system fed, clothed and housed the destitute but it was "not a system, I grant you which offers any hope of re-establishment of those out of work--nor is it a system which has much to recommend it except one very important feature, which is, that it is the cheapest which has been devised."¹ Yet even as this speech was being drafted, the system was being over-hauled so that, while still intended to be "the cheapest which has been devised," some element of rehabilitation was injected into it.

Government officials, social workers, businessmen, and private citizens in all walks of life feared that continuing direct relief would destroy the "self-reliance, individualism, and saving habits, which [have been] long regarded as characteristic of Canadians" and be "replaced in the lives of many relief recipients by 'relief mindedness' or readiness to lean on Governments."² The evidence of this was in the increasing needs of every individual on relief and in the growing reluctance of relievers to accept any

¹P.L.M., Vertical Files, file Unemployment--Canada, W.R. Clubb, "Talk for Rotary Club, Draft, Feb. 22nd, 1933," pp. 4, 8, 10.

²A. MacNamara, "Public Works as a Relief Measure," in Canada's Unemployment Problem, ed. L. Richter (Toronto, 1939), pp. 318-19.

work offered, even when accompanied with the threat of dismissal from the relief rolls.

The Greater Winnipeg Welfare Association warned of the development of a "dependency complex" in the minds of relief recipients. "This has been manifested," the Association asserted, "in a widespread popular notion that Governments have apparently inexhaustable purses and could, and should, meet all sorts of needs." The Association's warning continued:

The material outgrowth of this superficial but tenacious attitude of mind was pressure in varying degrees upon Governments for the spending of public monies for all kinds of purposes. It cannot, therefore, be regarded as surprising that the mental attitudes of many people developed along the lines that it was the business of the Government to look after them; and it is but a short step from this attitude of mind, on the part of some at any rate, to yet another--that there is nothing improper in their getting all they can from this source. This unquestionably leads to a blunting of personal initiative and to the mental attitude that they do not need to worry since they are bound to be cared for.³

Winnipeg's Unemployment Relief Committee, in its report for 1933, also worried about the "attitude of dependence, shown by a large number of those receiving assistance, on the Department for their every want." "The magnitude of the Unemployment Relief problem," commented the report, "has obviated the possibility of doing more than preventing destitution by granting direct relief, and a resulting deterioration of human values has been inevitable."⁴ A memorandum to Premier

³Public Works, M.O., vol. 23, file Unemployment 1933, Executive Committee of the Greater Winnipeg Welfare Association, "A Report on Unemployment in Winnipeg," 1 June 1933, p. 4.

⁴Winnipeg, Unemployment Relief Department, "Report of Operations and Costs, Year Ending 31 December 1933" (hereafter cited as U.R.C., "Report 1933"), p. 1.

Bracken stated frankly that "we have evidence that the system is weakening morale and character."⁵ The premier himself fairly summarized the situation in a brief to the Macmillan Banking Commission. The net result of three years of unemployment, he said, was that "starvation of the unemployed has been prevented. Discontent among those out of employment has increased . . . [and the] confidence and self-reliance of those on relief is rapidly being destroyed."⁶

These consequences were a natural result of a relief system which was designed to temporarily ameliorate difficult conditions--but conditions which themselves were considered to be temporary. Despite all protestations to the contrary, government and business now expected the road to prosperity to be long and tortuous rather than short and slightly rocky. Recognizing this, Premier Bracken and his advisors and most individuals concerned with the question of relief, concluded that there must be a renewed emphasis on the basic aims of the relief system. Relief had always been predicated on asserting the work ethic and avoiding dependence; now it was necessary not only to reinforce but also to instill the work ethic and a sense of self-reliance in those on relief. As it was, noted, Arthur MacNamara in the autumn of 1932, "we are doing practically nothing to rehabilitate these people."⁷

⁵Bracken Papers, vol. 67, file 697, "Memorandum for use at Interprovincial Conference," 17 January 1933.

⁶Ibid., vol. 65, file 680, "Brief Submitted to the Banking Commission (Lord Macmillan) by Premier Bracken," n.d., p. 9.

⁷Public Works, M.O., vol. 23, file Unemployment 1932, A. MacNamara, "Memorandum to the Honourable John Bracken," 29 September 1932.

The term "rehabilitate" reflected the ravages of nearly three years of mass unemployment. It was carefully chosen, and was used as the editors of Webster's intended: to restore to a former capacity, to make fit to make one's livelihood again.⁸ After 1932 all measures complementary to the distribution of relief issues would have rehabilitation in mind. A necessary component of such measures, however, would be that they cost no more than direct relief itself. As a specially appointed committee of Winnipeg City Council later suggested to Prime Minister Bennett:

Recognizing our responsibilities in maintaining the social and financial integrity of Winnipeg we approach this problem [of unemployment] having in mind primarily three points:-

- a) The interests of the taxpayer;
- b) The ultimate good of the unemployed families with whom we propose to deal;
- c) Notwithstanding the betterment in general conditions an employment program must have a sufficient element of continuity to gradually but steadily shift the burden from the State to where it properly belongs--the individual.⁹

One program which embodied these points was the Back to the Land Movement, or as it was more formally and accurately known, Rural Rehabilitation.

II

The idea that a return to the land would relieve some of the pressures in the city, and that the rural values of

⁸Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 5th ed. (Toronto, 1936), p. 838.

⁹Bennett Papers, p. 487986, R.H. Webb and C.H. Gunn to R.B. Bennett, 15 May 1934.

thrift, sobriety and hard work could have a salutary effect on relief-softened individuals, was not a new one. As the relief rolls mounted, a return to the country-side became increasingly attractive. The Manitoba Free Press editorialized: "It would open up one means of enabling men and families to get off relief in the city with at least a fighting chance of becoming self-supporting."¹⁰

The rural population emphatically did not agree. The United Farmers of Manitoba opposed any assistance which would encourage more people to take up agriculture.¹¹ Reviewing the Rural Rehabilitation programme at the end of its experimental first two years, the "Folks at Teulon" argued that a back to the land movement was the last thing Manitoba needed. Noting the crop failures, the record low prices, the crushing burden of rural debt and the foreclosed mortgages, Teulon's citizens argued that there were too many farmers. "Sending hosts of people out of the cities into remote farming districts," they warned, "involves the risk of creating great rural slums." Pointedly asking "our city friends" if "they despaired of the future of their cities," the conclusive reply seemed to be "Yes." It was correctly noted that the "real attraction of 'Back to the Land' seems to be in the dream that the farmer is a sort of independent person who can employ himself at his own pleasure to provide

¹⁰Manitoba Free Press, 28 April 1932, p. 11.

¹¹Public Works, M.O., vol. 27, file Back to the Land Movement 1931-33, W.R. Clubb to Mrs. Anna Gray, 12 November 1931; *ibid.*, Gray to Clubb, 27 November 1931.

for his own needs." This was a false and desperate notion. As the "Folks" concluded: "'Back to the Land' means simply a return to the primitive and an abandonment of the advantages of civilization."¹²

Other considerations, such as the need to preserve the morale and character of relievers and the desire to obtain something productive from the huge relief expenditures, outweighed rural protestations. It was also anticipated that successful land settlement would substantially reduce relief expenses. It was ultimately for this last reason that the Rural Rehabilitation plan was adopted. John Bracken told one correspondent: "While I favor a 'landward' move by our families, I am of the opinion that the great benefit to be derived from such a move is that families settled upon land can grow and raise, by their own efforts, sufficient for their own needs in the matter of foods, thus reducing the tremendous relief costs."¹³

The idea had been first broached by a "Citizens Committee," later named the Back to the Land Association, comprised largely of members of the Young Men's Section of the Winnipeg Board of Trade. Their plan envisioned a capital fund of one hundred dollars per family, exclusive of the cost of land. This sum was intended to cover the settler's transportation, purchase of stock and equipment,

¹²Bracken Papers, vol. 79, file 822, "A Rural Community Replies to the 'Back to the Land' Movement; Some Reflections from the Folks at Teulon, Manitoba," [1934], pp. 3-7.

¹³Ibid., vol. 69, file 722, J. Bracken to H. Hardern, 12 April 1933.

repairs to buildings and sustenance for two years, after which it was hoped that a family would become self-supporting. Only families considered to be suitable, which meant that the head had some previous agricultural experience, would be selected. It was suggested that the federal Department of Immigration and Colonization supervise the scheme, since this was really an extension of the federal programme of settling on farms unemployed city dwellers who had agricultural experience and some capital.¹⁴

The Back to the Land Association and representatives of Winnipeg City Council and of the Province discussed the plan with both the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Immigration and Colonization and with local federal officials. These talks were inconclusive, as the federal government showed little interest. The Department of Immigration suggested that late autumn was not the best time of year to consider land settlement, but the real reason was that the plan as proposed was considered to be simply too expensive. Neither Winnipeg City Council nor the provincial government objected to the decision not to proceed.¹⁵

The Back to the Land Association did not, however,

¹⁴Public Works, M.O., vol. 27, file Back to the Land Movement 1931-33, "Plan to Settle Selected Families on Farms," 7 November 1931; *ibid.*, A. MacNamara to Deputy Minister of Immigration and Colonization, 1 October 1931; *ibid.*, W.R. Clubb to W.A. Gordon, 14 October 1931. On the federal programme see W.M. Jones, "Relief Land Settlement," in Canada's Unemployment Problem, ed. Richter, pp. 263-64.

¹⁵Public Works, M.O., vol. 27, file Back to the Land Movement 1931-33, A. MacNamara to H. Hereford, 1 December 1931; *ibid.*, Hereford to MacNamara, 2 December 1931; *ibid.*, Hereford to MacNamara, 3 December 1931.

allow the plan to fall by the wayside. In the new year it met with Bennett, with the federal cabinet and with Winnipeg's Members of Parliament. The objectionable features of the original plan were removed and a revised proposal was submitted for consideration.¹⁶ This new plan, readily approved by the provincial and civic governments, contemplated settling relief families on improved farms at a cost per year which would not exceed the yearly value of their relief. A committee of the contributing bodies and representatives of interested organizations would supervise and administer the plan. The Back to the Land Association argued that settlement "will create no problem by way of increased agricultural production, but will give a welcome relief to a pressing civic problem, and will afford self-respecting families an opportunity to produce their own subsistence." The settler families would "regard themselves simply as pioneers who will eventually work out their own destiny." They would "stand on [their] own legs and succeed by reason of [their] own effort."¹⁷

Spring was rapidly approaching and, with disturbing rumours circulating that the federal government would considerably reduce its assistance for relief, the City of Winnipeg decided to take the initiative. On the recommendation

¹⁶Ibid., A. MacNamara to W.R. Clubb, 4 March 1932; *ibid.*, MacNamara to H. Hereford, 16 March 1932; *ibid.*, Clubb to W.A. Gordon, 16 April 1932.

¹⁷Ibid., A. MacNamara to H. Hereford, 16 March 1932; *ibid.*, [Back to the Land Association], "Resolution re Back to the Land Movement," [March 1932].

of the Unemployment Relief Committee, and with the approval of the provincial government, Council formed the Rural Rehabilitation Commission to "handle all matters pertaining to the Back-to-the-Land scheme." The Commission was composed of the City Treasurer and representatives of City Council, the Back to the Land Association and the provincial government. At the end of April the federal government announced that it would participate in the Rural Rehabilitation Commission and in similar schemes in other provinces.¹⁸

Undoubtedly the chief attraction for Ottawa was the promised low cost of the plan at a time when it was trying to reduce its role in relief to a minimum. At the suggestion of the provinces earlier that April, joint relief works had been considerably curtailed. The federal government was also attempting to discourage the monthly requests from Manitoba for money, but with little success.¹⁹ The settlement plan, which became effective 2 May 1932, would demand a maximum contribution of two hundred dollars per family from each of

¹⁸Winnipeg, M.C.C., 11 April 1932, pp. 328-29; Public Works, M.O., vol. 27, file Back to the Land Movement 1931-33, "Memorandum re Proposed Unemployment Relief Measure," [April 1932]; *ibid.*, W.A. Gordon to W.R. Clubb, 27 April 1932; House of Commons, Debates, 28 April 1932, pp. 2453-54; Jones, "Relief Land Settlement," pp. 265-66.

¹⁹Labour Gazette, May 1935, p. 480. The federal government, as a condition of further participation in relief expenditures, wanted Manitoba to declare that it was unable to raise its own share of relief funds. Bracken refused to admit this, arguing only that it was irresponsible of the provincial government to borrow funds on the open market at the prevailing high interest rates. See the lengthy correspondence between Bracken and E.N. Rhodes, federal Minister of Finance, from April 1932 to August 1932 in Bracken Papers, vol. 72, file 762; Kendle, Bracken, pp. 127-31.

the participating governments, but expenditures would be made only as need arose in individual cases and one hundred dollars was held in reserve for the second year. None of the money would go to renting or purchasing land or to constructing buildings, and the federal government, as usual, paid no administrative expenses. There was every reason to believe that by settling people with suitable experience on improved farms, having them grow as much of their own food as possible, and buying only the necessary stock and equipment, the initial cost would be below six hundred dollars per family. Quite soon, it was thought, the majority of settled families would become self-supporting.²⁰

The plan soon proved popular to both its sponsors and its settlers. At year's end, after eight months operation, 187 families had been settled. Of these, 157 were from Winnipeg with the remainder from five Winnipeg suburbs and from the unorganized territory. The average cost per family was only \$287. Equally encouraging was the eager response of the unemployed. At 31 December 1932 the Commission already had approved three hundred new applications and was reviewing four hundred others. Undoubtedly there would have been many others but for the rigorous investigation of each family. The Commission wanted only sincere families who were determined to make the most of their opportunity, not the kind

²⁰P.A.M., RG18 D4, Rural Rehabilitation Commission, "Minutes" (hereafter cited as R.R.C., "Minutes"), 2 May 1932; *ibid.*, 4 May 1932; Public Works, M.O., vol. 23, file Unemployment 1932, [H. Hereford], "Direct Relief," 27 December 1932.

who were looking simply for something new and diverting.²¹

The land settlement plan generated a good response among relief families for a number of reasons. Many families, particularly those taken on in the first year, had come to Winnipeg in the more prosperous years of the 1920s. They were discouraged and tired of city drudgery and took advantage of a chance to return to the country. Many applied because they saw in the plan what its designers had intended: an opportunity to re-establish themselves and become independent once again. An important consideration must have been the relative attractiveness of remaining in the city on relief, with the endless vouchers and queues at the Woodyard offices, or working in the country, equally receiving relief, but in a more generous and certainly more guaranteed way.

Almost from the start, settlers' needs were met much more broadly than were relievers' needs in the city. This was done, of course, to provide the maximum opportunity for re-establishment. To this end the Rural Rehabilitation Commission paid settlers' hospital bills and funeral expenses, and provided school books for the children. Clothing was provided to almost all families. Much of it was obtained through donations from the newly-formed Back to the Land Assistance Association, and the rest was supplied by the

²¹Bracken Papers, vol. 67, file 697, "Report of the Rural Rehabilitation Commission," [January 1933]; Public Works, M.O., vol. 27, file Back to the Land Movement 1931-33, "Interim Report of the Rural Rehabilitation Commission," 7 October 1932.

Province and the City and charged to the settlers' accounts.²² At the same time, the Commission curiously refused to assist some obvious attempts at re-establishment. Settlers in the Interlake area, for instance, asked for fish nets. The Commission refused, arguing that it had no direct authority for such an expenditure under the Agreement.²³

For the three contributing governments, the keys to the success of the land settlement plan were the savings effected compared to direct relief and the beneficial effects of country living on the families. Certainly they believed in the possibilities of the plan, as the shared governmental contributions grew from the original six hundred dollars per family to one thousand dollars per family by 1936. In large part these increased expenditures were due to the need to cover subsistence of families for the second, third, fourth and even fifth years of settlement.²⁴ Much of the reason for this support was the argument that "these families could be brought back to the City of Winnipeg and the money spent to settle would be no greater than would have been spent in any case keeping them on direct relief in the City." In fact, it was suggested that the cost would be considerably less, for the estimated saving by 1935 was \$225,000.²⁵ By April

²²R.R.C., "Minutes," 25 August 1932; *ibid.*, 28 September 1932.

²³*Ibid.*, 3 November 1932.

²⁴Bracken Papers, vol. 105, file 1158, "Review of Unemployment and Relief, 1936," p. 33.

²⁵*Ibid.*, vol. 90, file 960, "Review of Unemployment and Relief, 1935," p. 33.

1938 that saving had leaped to an estimated \$618,460 with further recoverable assets in stock and equipment of \$200,000. Even this Arthur MacNamara considered to be conservative; his own estimate was almost 18 percent higher.²⁶

By the latter part of the decade Rural Rehabilitation was often justified, and judged, on economic grounds. That had always been part of its raison d'etre; but government, business and the public also justified it because of its rehabilitative efforts. These too seemed to be successful. The fact that some settlers had still to receive assistance for two or even more years was disappointing, but the costs were not too high and the benefits of working and raising a family in the country could not be denied. The failures were also disappointing, but that rate was often a creditable 20 percent or less.²⁷ Evidence that settlement stiffened the backbone and restored morale could be found even among those who had failed as settlers. The provincial government carefully noted those of the returnees who went back on relief and those who stayed off. The longer the plan continued and the longer the families remained on their farms, the greater the percentage who stayed off relief if they returned to Winnipeg. By 1937 over 44 percent of

²⁶Ibid., vol. 114, file 1258, "Comparative Costs of Rural Rehabilitation Commission as at 31 April 1938 in Comparison with Direct Relief," 20 June 1938; *ibid.*, A. MacNamara to J. Bracken, 20 June 1938.

²⁷Ibid., vol. 90, file 960, "Review of Unemployment and Relief, 1935," p. 26; *ibid.*, vol. 114, file 1258, "Review of Unemployment and Relief, 1937," p. 45.

returned families, when investigated, were still off relief.²⁸ W.R. Clubb's hope, expressed in February 1933, had been that the plan would "rebuild the character of families discouraged and nearly heart-broken by the dreadful worry of unemployment and the spectre of want." Nearly seven years later the Winnipeg Evening Tribune lauded the Rural Rehabilitation Commission's work in "restoring or helping to preserve the self-reliance of more than a thousand families."²⁹

III

Placing a few hundred families on farms was never intended to be the solution to dependency, but it did indicate the approach which many now believed to be necessary. It was obvious that high levels of unemployment would continue for some time to come, even with an upswing in the economy, and it seemed equally obvious that a "dole mentality" was taking root among the thousands on relief. The prospective consequences of this were frightful: the creation of a huge class of paupers, the destruction of the highly-valued work ethic, perhaps even a revolution born of the despair of those on the dole. These concerns were most obvious when official attention turned towards the single unemployed.

There has been a tendency in Canadian historiography to view the single unemployed of the 1930s largely as a

²⁸Ibid., vol. 114, file 1258, "Review of Unemployment and Relief, 1937," p. 45.

²⁹P.L.M., Vertical Files, file Unemployment--Canada, W.R. Clubb, "Talk for Rotary Club, Draft, Feb. 22nd, 1933," p. 6; Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 29 December 1939, p. 6.

seething mass of revolutionary anger, finding an occasional outlet through bursts of violence in the streets of Vancouver, Winnipeg and Toronto, and to consider approaches to the single men's situation chiefly as responses to proto-revolutionary circumstances.³⁰ This perspective misses much of the point of both federal and provincial programmes. True, there was considerable concern about the influence which Communist agitators might have on the unemployed and officials did worry that violence might break out. But relief officials equally recognized that much of the discontent stemmed from the futile quest for work and the nagging sameness of each day on relief rather than from revolutionary zeal. The real problem was that the unemployed were tired, bored and dispirited; by allowing this to happen the State was helping to destroy work-skills and the desire to work itself. This in turn only furrowed the unemployed's minds to better receive the dangerous seeds of Communism. The solution was to remove them from the influence of agitators. Even more importantly, the State would provide the men with work in order to reinforce the work ethic and to restore their faith in capitalist enterprise. This had to be done, however, at a minimum cost so as not to drain already over-burdened government treasuries. It was within these competing demands that the problems of the single unemployed were approached.

³⁰See, for example, Eayrs, In Defence of Canada, pp. 124-25; M. Horn, ed., The Dirty Thirties: Canadians in the Great Depression (Toronto, 1972), pp. 306-311.

Attempts to provide work for the single men in Winnipeg, even at the alternative of leaving married men idle, have been noted. The Woodyard, the bush camps along the Water District railway, and Grassmere were all efforts aimed at ensuring that only the needy were assisted, that all those assisted worked in some way, and that this was done at the least possible cost. Another relief plan which figured significantly in the "single men's question" was the Farm Placement Plan.

At the Manitoba government's suggestion, an organized effort was made in the autumn of 1931 to place single men as farm labourers for the winter months. Each man sent to a farm would be paid five dollars per month while the farmer taking the man would receive five dollars towards room and board. The federal government paid half these costs, with the Province and the individual's home municipality paying 25 percent each. The plan was an immediate success. That first winter over 1600 men were placed on Manitoba farms, at a shared cost of about twenty dollars per man, a considerably lower figure than if the men had remained in Winnipeg on relief.³¹

The provincial government and Winnipeg's Unemployment Relief Committee were determined to continue the plan. W.R. Clubb emphasized the benefits of a country life--improved health, practical training and a return to self-reliance--and the lack of alternatives available to the single men.

³¹U.R.C., "Minutes," 4 October 1931; Winnipeg, M.C.C., 29 October 1931, pp. 1069-70; Labour Gazette, May 1935, pp. 489-90.

"Personally," he bluntly told his Rotary Club audience, "I see very little hope of these young men being able to establish themselves in any industry other than on farms. . . ." ³² John Bracken pointed out the great difficulties which the thousands of single men posed and which the additional cost of maintaining them on relief entailed. In April 1932 over 9000 single men were registered in Winnipeg and over 1700 received relief; the cost of relief in Winnipeg alone was \$265,000 a month. Bracken argued with the Prime Minister that there was no hope of substantially reducing relief costs, as Bennett had insisted must be done, unless the single men were taken out of Winnipeg. ³³ Arthur MacNamara, writing to Harry Hereford, the Dominion Commissioner of Relief, argued both points. Farm Placement was particularly important, he noted, because it was restricted to men resident in urban centres and it required the urban centre which the man called home to pay a share of the cost. ³⁴

These were compelling reasons to put before the federal government in 1932, at a time when it was trying to keep expenditures to the minimum and as well was developing a comprehensive policy for the single men. When informed that an estimated three thousand men (almost the full number of

³²P.L.M., Vertical Files, file Unemployment--Canada, W.R. Clubb, "Talk for Rotary Club, Draft, Feb. 22nd, 1933," p. 5.

³³Bracken Papers, vol. 72, file 762, J. Bracken to R.B. Bennett, 22 April 1932; U.R.C., "Minutes," 20 April 1932.

³⁴Public Works, M.O., vol. 27, file Single Men's Relief 1930-33, A. MacNamara to H. Hereford, 30 September 1932.

single men on relief in Winnipeg the previous spring) could be placed, the federal government quickly agreed to continue the plan on the same basis as in the first winter.³⁵ With 2600 placements in Manitoba during the winter of 1932-33 the Farm Placement Plan was again considered successful, and it became a permanent relief programme.

Farm Placement, noted MacNamara in 1934, was "one of the most satisfactory plans we have in dealing with the unemployment problem."³⁶ Not only was this an inexpensive form of relief, but it also appeared to be having the desired effect on the workers. Men were staying on the farms the following summer, working for little more than they had in the winter. Of the 4634 placements in the winter of 1933-34, 1700 were known to have remained with their formerly subsidized employers. This increased the following year to a full 50 per-cent of the 5172 men, and a few women, placed. These figures, suggested MacNamara, were "ample proof of the Plan's soundness."³⁷

Encouraging as Farm Placement was, it obviously could not absorb the full number of single unemployed in Manitoba and did not even touch the transients who had started to appear in alarmingly large numbers that winter. From November 1931 Winnipeg had been providing relief to about 300 transient

³⁵Ibid., A. MacNamara to H. Hereford, 20 October 1932; ibid., Hereford to MacNamara, 22 October 1932.

³⁶Ibid., file Farm Placement, A. MacNamara to H. Hereford, 23 November 1934.

³⁷Ibid., A. MacNamara to H. Leader, M.P., 26 October 1935.

single unemployed each week, and after January 1932 to approximately 150 transient families each week.³⁸ In the autumn of 1932 the situation was much worse, for the federal government had ordered the R.C.M.P. to remove all transients riding freight trains--the "boxcar pullmans"--after 30 September. The immediate result of this was to swamp Winnipeg with thousands of men, many who had travelled west with the hope of finding harvest work. Prompted by sharp protests from Winnipeg City Council and the provincial government, and pestered by Ralph Webb who was visiting in Ottawa, the federal government agreed to provide temporary assistance for these transients.³⁹

There was a mood of optimism among official circles in Winnipeg on the evening of 12 October. Not only had word been received from Ottawa that arrangements were being made for temporary assistance to transients stranded in Winnipeg, but Ralph Webb had wired the unexpected good news that the federal government was taking over fully the care of transients and single unemployed by means of camps and public works, all to be administered by a special commission.⁴⁰ It appeared that, for once, insistent badgering had brought about the desired results from Ottawa.

³⁸U.R.C., "Minutes," November 1931 to August 1932.

³⁹Winnipeg, M.C.C., 11 October 1932, pp. 863-64; Bennett Papers, p. 487547, M. Peterson to R.B. Bennett, 12 October 1932; *ibid.*, pp. 487551-52, J. Bracken to Bennett, 12 October 1932; *ibid.*, p. 487558, G.C. MacLean to W.A. Gordon, 25 October 1932.

⁴⁰Public Works, M.O., vol. 27, file Single Men's Relief 1930-33, R.H. Webb to M. Peterson, 12 October 1932.

It is quite likely, however, that the federal government had already decided on this course of action. At least a week earlier, the Prime Minister had requested and had received a detailed proposal from Major-General A.G.L. McNaughton outlining a method of employing the single unemployed on useful national projects. This plan, according to the Department of National Defence, was to remedy a situation in which thousands of young men "were being schooled to [sic] the habits of idleness and taught to get along without work." It was expected that "once free from the demoralizing effects of compulsory idleness, the mental attitude would react to the influence of steady work, wholesome food and congenial surroundings." Within a month the first two thousand men were at work in what was to become in the next year a comprehensive network of Department of National Defence camps--the "Royal Twenty-Centers."⁴¹

Manitoba had been urging a camp system for some time. In April 1932 W.R. Clubb had written the Minister of Labour suggesting a comprehensive approach to the single men's problem by means of the Farm Placement Plan and a series of work camps for those in excess of farm requirements. Federal

⁴¹Bennett Papers, p. 480700, "Memorandum on the Department of National Defence Unemployment Relief Scheme with Some Observations Concerning the United States Civilian Conservation Corps," 4 October 1933. On the federal relief camps see Eayrs, In Defence of Canada, pp. 125-37; G.M. LeFresne, "'The Royal Twenty-Centers': The Department of National Defence and Federal Unemployment Relief, 1932-36," B.A. thesis, Royal Military College, 1962; T.W. Tanner, "Microcosms of Misfortune: Canada's Unemployment Relief Camps Administered by the Department of National Defence, 1932-36," M.A. thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1965.

representatives in Winnipeg, the City Council and the provincial government, wrote Clubb, had come to the conclusion that "as regards single men our efforts should be directed towards getting them out of Cities, Towns and Villages by putting them to work at productive employment."⁴² A camp plan based on the Farm Placement scheme was suggested; that is, men would be fed and sheltered in camps and would receive a five dollar monthly gratuity. After some deliberation, the federal government agreed to pay one-half of the costs if the Province provided the physical facilities. However, this camp plan was held in abeyance in anticipation of considerable harvest work; "we did not," noted MacNamara, "want camps established at a time when they would compete with the harvest field work."⁴³ By the time the harvest had come to a dismal conclusion and the men had started to drift into the cities, the D.N.D. plan was known, Webb's enthusiastic telegram had been received, and a secretive personal emissary of W.A. Gordon, federal Minister of Labour, was in the West.

The emissary was Dr. W.J. Black, head of the Canadian National Railway's Colonization Branch. He had been sent to visit each of the western capitals to put into effect the Dominion's plan for the single unemployed. His mission was confidential and none of the premiers received any official

⁴²Bennett Papers, p. 478458, W.R. Clubb to W.A. Gordon, 27 April 1932.

⁴³Public Works, M.O., vol. 27, file Single Men's Relief 1930-33, H. Hereford to W.R. Clubb, 22 July 1932; *ibid.*, A. MacNamara to H. Hereford, 30 September 1932.

advance word about the precise object of his visit. By the time Black arrived in Winnipeg on 3 November, the provincial government knew the details of the federal proposals, through the courtesy of the Alberta government, and was prepared to agree to almost any plan as long as there was some guarantee of federal financing for the provincial share.⁴⁴

Black met with Clubb and MacNamara on 4 November and presented them with an "Outline of Policy." This proposed the establishment of a Commission to administer relief to all single homeless men, who would preferably be placed in camps. The federal government would pay the actual cost of food, clothing and maintenance up to twelve dollars per month per man (this worked out to be forty cents per day). Maintaining the charade of provincial responsibility, Ottawa insisted that the Province pay all administrative costs and provide the camps. Provincial officials estimated that this proposal amounted to the Dominion paying 75 percent of the total relief cost of the single unemployed so, with minor adjustments to some items, the proposal was accepted.⁴⁵

⁴⁴Ibid., A. MacNamara to W.R. Clubb, 29 October 1932; *ibid.*, [Alberta] Minister of Public Works, "Report to the Executive Council," 29 October 1932; *ibid.*, MacNamara to E.A. McPherson, 27 November 1932. Black's journey from British Columbia to Manitoba can be followed in the correspondence among Black, W.A. Gordon and H. Hereford in Bennett Papers, pp. 479029-49.

⁴⁵Public Works, M.O., vol. 27, file Single Men's Relief 1930-33, "Outline of Policy," n.d.; *ibid.*, A. MacNamara to W.J. Black, 4 November 1932; *ibid.*, [W.R. Clubb], "Memo for Fyle," 4 November 1932; Bracken Papers, vol. 73, file 764, Black to J. Bracken, 6 November 1932; *ibid.*, Bracken to Black, 7 November 1932; *ibid.*, vol. 91, file 962, Order-in-Council 1469/32, 12 November 1932; Public Works, M.O., vol. 27, file Single Men's Relief 1930-33, "Indenture of Agreement," 15

The Single Men's Relief Commission [S.M.R.C.] came into existence on 15 November 1932. The three commissioners were W.H. Carter, a well-known president of a large construction firm, G.W. Northwood, the Dominion's representative in Winnipeg, and Arthur MacNamara. The Commission was to supervise the administration of relief to all single, homeless persons in Manitoba. "Homeless" was liberally interpreted to mean anyone without means to pay for shelter, which meant that the S.M.R.C. took over responsibility for almost all the single unemployed in the province. The only single individuals who remained a municipal responsibility were those with children and those unfit for camp or farm work. For Winnipeg, this meant a lowering of the relief rolls from 3533 to 96 single men within two weeks; for all of 1933 the City assisted a monthly average of 115 single men.⁴⁶

The Commission immediately assumed operation of the Farm Placement Plan, of the relief camps including Grassmere, and of the dining halls in Winnipeg. The federal government's intention in establishing the Single Men's Relief Commission had been to direct all single men to either farm or camp work, but by 31 December 1932 almost three-quarters of the single men in Manitoba were still found in the Winnipeg dining halls. There was little the Commission could do about this. The Department of National Defence camps, which would

November 1932.

⁴⁶Public Works, M.O., vol. 27, file Single Men's Relief 1930-33, A. MacNamara to H. Hereford, 28 November 1932; *ibid.*, Hereford to MacNamara, 3 December 1932; U.R.C., "Report 1931-32," p. 8; U.R.C., "Report 1933," p. 4.

absorb thousands of single men between 1933 and 1936, were not yet operating and because the S.M.R.C. had started operations so late in the year it could not begin economically the building of more relief camps. In discussions with Dr. Black the provincial government had been assured that "if not good business from [a] cost point of view, to open [camps], then agreement [is] not to be considered as making it compulsory." Also, almost half the men were found to be in some way physically unsuited for the fairly rigorous farm and camp work.⁴⁷

The governments of Winnipeg and Manitoba were well pleased with the Single Men's Relief Commission because they had been relieved of a heavy burden, the City fully and the Province largely. In its first five and one half months of operation, the Commission spent just under \$400,000, of which the Dominion absorbed a staggering 88 percent. But the federal government had no intention of continuing such an arrangement for very long; hence the termination of the first agreement at the end of the fiscal year, 30 April 1933. When the ministers responsible for relief in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba met their federal counterpart at Ottawa on 1 June, the federal government had changes to make in single men's relief.

By this time the Department of National Defence had embarked on the full-scale development of relief camps. Six

⁴⁷Public Works, M.O., vol. 27, file Single Men's Relief 1930-33, [W.R. Clubb], "Memo for Fyle," 4 November 1932; *ibid.*, W.H. Carter to W.R. Clubb, 1 March 1933.

weeks earlier General McNaughton had reported the "experimental phase" successfully completed and "now we can go to 'quantity production.'"⁴⁸ Accordingly, the federal Minister of Labour proposed to his provincial counterparts that all physically fit men be cared for in the D.N.D. camps while the provincial Single Men's Relief Commissions deal with men in the cities, with those unfit for the camps, and with the Farm Placement programme. The provinces agreed to this division, but they believed as well that they had agreed to a continuation of the existing financial arrangements. Their outrage was understandable, therefore, when copies of the new agreement received in August provided for a Dominion payment of one-half the cost of maintenance to a maximum forty cents per man; that is, the Dominion share was reduced to twenty cents from forty cents per man. The premiers of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba sent a joint letter of protest to Ottawa but received no reply. Manitoba was determined to resist, but two further protests by mail and a meeting with the Prime Minister did not change matters. The Dominion's position was put quite succinctly by W.A. Gordon. On the basis of figures submitted by the Single Men's Relief Commission, he noted, available camp accommodation provided by the federal government alone was in excess of existing requirements. In addition, the Dominion offered up to twenty cents per day towards the maintenance of physically unfit single homeless men. "I consider that the Dominion has

⁴⁸Gen. McNaughton to J.W. McConnell, 15 April 1933, quoted in Eayrs, In Defence of Canada, p. 127.

assumed a very generous share of the burden," Gordon concluded, "and I think you should now do your part and in particular you should take all proper steps to organize the care of the physically unfit men on the basis submitted and agreed to by three of the Western Provinces."⁴⁹

The Province had to capitulate. But in Winnipeg, at least, this did not mean that the burden shifted immediately to the City. The Province had, in fact, promised to assume all costs over the Dominion's share for single men not in camps.⁵⁰ This gesture had little to do with generosity; it was part of the Bracken administration's manoeuvring in its continuing battle with Ottawa over relief financing generally. Premier Bracken had been advised in September that if the Dominion persisted with its reduced assistance Winnipeg might be brought into the dispute and so bring additional, perhaps decisive, pressure to bear on the federal government.⁵¹ It was only when all further attempts to revert to the original agreement had failed, and when, even more worrisome, the federal government threatened to end all financing for direct relief,⁵² that the Province insisted

⁴⁹Bracken Papers, vol. 73, file 764, "Single Homeless Men," n.d.; Public Works, M.O., vol. 27, file Single Men's Relief 1930-33, W.A. Gordon to W.R. Clubb, 10 October 1930.

⁵⁰Winnipeg, M.C.C., 23 October 1933, p. 572.

⁵¹Bracken Papers, vol. 72, file 759, A. MacNamara to J. Bracken, 11 September 1932. On the relations with the federal government at this time see Kendle, Bracken, pp. 127-31.

⁵²J. Struthers, "Two Depressions: Bennett, Trudeau and the Unemployed," Journal of Canadian Studies, 14(1), 1979, pp. 76-77. The Bennett government did not carry out this

that Winnipeg pay one-quarter of the cost of single homeless men who, at the time of going on relief, had Winnipeg residence qualifications. City Council naturally refused to pay these amounts, but it was a hollow bluff. Premier Bracken informed Council that it had two choices: either pay the 25 percent or take full responsibility for the single men. The City paid.⁵³

Single men's relief changed little until the spring of 1936; even dramatic outbursts of disorder, such as the On to Ottawa Trek and the seizure of a soup kitchen in Winnipeg in June 1935, did not result in significant alter-

threat. Instead, the system of contributing one-third of relief costs was changed to one of lump-sum grants-in-aid. This had the desired effect of reducing the federal share of relief financing. From August 1934 to December 1935 the Dominion paid only 20 percent of the cost of relief in Winnipeg. The Province continued its one-third share, so the financial burden was shifted to the City of Winnipeg which now had to pay 46.67 percent. When the King government took office grants-in-aid were temporarily increased and Winnipeg's share of relief financing dropped to 30 percent. After 1 April the grants were reduced and the City's portion of relief costs rose to 35 percent and then to 40 percent. In 1939 financing reverted to a percentage basis, with the federal and provincial governments each absorbing 40 percent of relief costs. Public Works, M.O., vol. 23, file Unemployment 1934, W.R. Clubb to [Municipalities, Villages and Cities], 13 August 1934; Bracken Papers, vol. 98, file 1057, A. MacNamara to Clubb, 3 April 1936; Public Works, M.O., vol. 24, file Unemployment 1936, Clubb to N. McL. Rogers, 4 January 1937; *ibid.*, vol. 33, file P-45, "Chairman's Report to the Members of the Public Welfare Committee, City of Winnipeg, Covering the Year 1941," p. 1; House of Commons, Debates, 23 January 1939, p. 224.

⁵³Winnipeg, M.C.C., 5 June 1934, pp. 377-78, 387; *ibid.*, 4 July 1934, p. 416; Bracken Papers, vol. 82, file 859, M. Peterson to J. Bracken, 4 July 1934; *ibid.*, W.R. Clubb to Peterson, 11 July 1934; *ibid.*, Peterson to Bracken, 21 July 1934; *ibid.*, Bracken to Peterson, 24 July 1934; Winnipeg, M.C.C., 13 August 1934, p. 488.

ations in policy.⁵⁴ All fit single men were encouraged to take farm work during the winter under the Farm Placement Plan. The numbers doing so increased steadily, from 5172 in 1934-35 to 5541 in 1935-36 and to over 9500 in 1936-37. All other fit men were required to take work in one of the D.N.D. camps or, if these were filled, in one of the six camps operated by the Single Men's Relief Commission. Unfit men and transients were lodged and fed in Winnipeg. Transients were given assistance for two days at one of two dining halls after which they had to take camp work or maintain themselves. The unfit men received two meals per day and shelter in rooming houses.⁵⁵

Among those policies repudiated in October 1935 with the Conservative government were the D.N.D. camps. In the spring of 1936 the Liberal government began closing them down across Canada and transferring nine thousand of the men to federally-subsidized railway maintenance work. In Manitoba the Single Men's Relief Commission camps continued but emphasis was focused on Farm Placement, hence the increase of four thousand positions in 1936-37 over the previous year. The Farm Placement Plan was so much more

⁵⁴R. Liversedge, Recollections of the On to Ottawa Trek; With Documents Related to the Vancouver Strike and the On to Ottawa Trek, ed. V. Hoar (Toronto, 1973); Tanner, "Microcosms of Misfortune," pp. 83-100; Gray, Winter Years, pp. 153-65.

⁵⁵Bracken Papers, vol. 90, file 860, "Review of Unemployment and Relief, 1935," pp. 34-36; *ibid.*, vol. 103, file 1158, "Review of Unemployment and Relief, 1936," pp. 41-44; *ibid.*, vol. 114, file 1258, "Review of Unemployment and Relief, 1937," pp. 52-53.

successful than it had been earlier for a number of reasons. The most obvious was that the single men now had no other alternatives. Provincial work camps could absorb at best fifteen hundred men, and there were at least ten times that number needing some assistance. There continued to be a number of single men being fed in Winnipeg, fluctuating between three thousand and four thousand, but these were the old and infirm. It was not until 1937 that the Single Men's Relief Commission began to receive enough applications from farmers to insist realistically that all fit men should go to farms.⁵⁶

A turn at rural life was made somewhat easier, however, by the fact that a man on a farm had the opportunity of earning at least a bit of cash and perhaps of finding a steady job. The monthly wage remained \$5 per month, but after 1937 the worker was also guaranteed \$2.50 for each full month he had worked upon expiration of his contract.⁵⁷ This was hardly a munificent sum, but it was sufficient to provide an individual with a small stake at the start of the

⁵⁶H.M. Cassidy, "Relief and Other Social Services for Transients," in Canada's Unemployment Problem, ed. Richter, p. 105; Bracken Papers, vol. 106, file 1162, W.R. Clubb to T.A. Crerar, 5 March 1937; *ibid.*, vol. 114, file 1258, "Review of Unemployment and Relief, 1937," p. 53; *ibid.*, vol. 115, file 1267, J. Bracken to J.T. Hulme, 1 February 1938. In 1934 Arthur MacNamara had described the kind of men remaining in the dining halls as "simply 'crooks'--old men--crippled men--partially blind in some cases--social diseased in others and a goodly sprinkling of agitators of the worst type." Public Works, M.O., vol. 23, file Unemployment 1934, "Address Delivered to the Union of Municipalities Convention, Dauphin," 6 July 1934.

⁵⁷Bracken Papers, vol. 115, file 1262, W.R. Clubb to N. McL. Rogers, 20 September 1938.

summer. With poor prospects of a regular job and no more than two days of transient relief available anywhere in Western Canada, it is little wonder that so many men worked as farm labourers as the decade edged towards its tortuous conclusion.

IV

With the responsibility for single men removed, most of Winnipeg's relief efforts were directed towards the thousands of families who needed assistance. In many ways married men and their families presented a much more formidable problem than did any other group of unemployed. This was due in the first instance to the much greater numbers involved. According to Relief Department statistics, the average unemployed family unit was a fraction over four persons. Thus when in December 1932 the Unemployment Relief Department registered 8050 married men on relief, the City actually assisted 32,833 persons. The basic needs of a family were also greater and more diverse. Unlike the single men, a family's physical needs increased as the cashless period lengthened; clothes grew threadbare, combs became toothless, mirrors cracked, pots and pans and even stoves wore out. The very different needs of young children and infirm grandparents had to be accommodated within the family structure. Families could not be bundled off to camps, nor could they be gathered together in one central location. The large number of married men meant a heightened concern about the effects of prolonged joblessness on the ex-bread

winner and, most important, upon his young dependents. It was especially to those individuals that Premier Bracken and others referred when worrying about the increasing attitude of dependency. Finally, the numbers involved made necessary a large administrative machinery and huge expenditures. As these needs and concerns coincided, the provincial government emerged once more the arbiter of City relief policy.

The Province's primary concern was to ensure that the available relief money was expended efficiently and economically and with the best possible influence on the relief recipients. This was clearly in its own self-interest, for the Province had guaranteed municipal debentures worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. The federal government insisted on the strictest economy as a condition of financial assistance to the Province, and the Province itself had to reduce expenditures if a balanced budget was to be achieved. Strenuous efforts were made at the provincial level to cut costs. Civil service salaries, for example, were cut from between 2 percent and 12 percent in September 1931. On 1 January 1932 a further across-the-board cut of 6 percent was made. By 1 September 1932 salaries, depending on classification, had been cut by 15 percent to 25 percent from the level of one year previous. Premier Bracken also ordered all controllable expenditures, such as travelling expenses and telephone calls, pared to the bone.⁵⁸

The problem which the provincial government faced was

⁵⁸Ibid., vol. 65, file 685, "Salary Reductions," n.d.; Kendle, Bracken, pp. 114-15.

that it could do little about the single largest item of expenditure, unemployment relief. This was brought forcefully to the attention of the government when researchers in the Department of Public Works presented to the minister, W.R. Clubb, tabulations showing the average cost of relief in the urban centres of the province. Clubb was shocked. He was shown that a family of five on relief in Brandon received assistance worth \$25.56 in December 1931. The same family in Winnipeg would have received \$38.50, but anywhere else in Manitoba only \$17.29. Shock turned to alarm when it was also realized that well over three-quarters of the total spent on relief in Manitoba was expended in Winnipeg.

"There may be some good reasons for this wide difference in the cost per case which I am not aware of," Clubb noted when informing Winnipeg's Unemployment Relief Committee of these figures. "However, I would suggest that standardization of relief measures is desirable, and it would seem that the same measure of relief should be found sufficient for destitute persons no matter where located in urban centres." The minister asked the Unemployment Relief Committee to reduce its expenditures to the minimum and warned that "the Province does not feel justified in continuing to share on the one-third basis these increasingly large direct relief expenditures. . . ." To make his point absolutely clear, Clubb concluded: "If reductions cannot be effected, the Government will have to give serious consideration, in fairness to the rest of the province, to limiting its

participation in the expenditures in the City of Winnipeg."⁵⁹ This threat had been used successfully before and some minor reductions again were made. But when the fiscal year ended four months later, the total cost of direct relief in Manitoba had escalated to \$3,385,292. It was a staggering increase from the \$871,245 spent the previous fiscal year.⁶⁰

The need for firmer control of expenditures was clear to the Province, and became more so when the Dominion and the provinces agreed to curtail public works for 1932-1933 and concentrate instead on direct relief. This would undoubtedly mean a significant increase in the number requiring assistance, and unless greater order was inserted into relief administration the disparities in relief schedules would grow and the demands on the provincial treasury would be increased. The Bracken administration had other good reasons for wanting greater control of the system. The winter sitting of the legislature had been an acrimonious one, with much criticism of the government for allowing the scale of relief to vary so widely across the province. Municipalities were upset with the fluctuations, for those which offered higher relief schedules complained bitterly that those with lower schedules encouraged the destitute to move on to the more generous ones.

⁵⁹Bracken Papers, vol. 61, file 658, W.R. Clubb to Aldermen A. Ryley and Members of the Unemployment Relief Committee, 26 January 1932.

⁶⁰Public Works, M.O., vol. 24, file Unemployment 1936, "Unemployment Relief Costs," 1 August 1936. Tripartite financing was calculated as having begun 1 October 1930 so the amount for the fiscal year ending 30 April 1931 is only for seven months.

Well-placed and respectable citizens of Winnipeg also criticized the provincial government for its lax handling of relief. Finally, tighter control and uniformity of standards would, noted Arthur MacNamara, considerably reduce "the continuous drive from recipients of relief[,] and those who claim to represent them, for an increased allowance."⁶¹

The provincial government decided to establish an independent board to supervise all relief expenditures. The board would be composed of representatives of the Greater Winnipeg municipalities, of the provincial government and of such interested bodies as the Province chose to include. In August 1932 the Greater Winnipeg Unemployment Advisory Board came into existence. As an advisory body, the Board did not have direct control of relief spending, but there were sound reasons for this. First, and most important, the provincial government did not want to assume direct control of relief, for that would mean taking on the administrative costs which were then being paid by the municipalities. The alternative would have been to have the municipalities share the administrative expenses on a pro rata basis. But they, noted Arthur MacNamara, would not be "willing to contribute city or municipal money to an independent body over which expenditures such councils have no control."⁶²

⁶¹Ibid., vol. 23, file Unemployment 1932, A. MacNamara to Municipalities of Greater Winnipeg Area, 27 April 1932; ibid., MacNamara, "Memorandum to Hon. W.R. Clubb," 23 June 1932; ibid., T.A. Crerar to W.R. Clubb, 24 August 1932; Bennett Papers, p. 487900, MacNamara to R.K. Finlayson, 27 March 1934.

⁶²Public Works, M.O., vol. 23, file Unemployment 1932, A. MacNamara, "Memorandum to Hon. W.R. Clubb," 23 June 1932.

An advisory board had the advantage of appearing non-compulsory in nature, thus perpetuating the illusion of local control. The government, however, dictated the Board's mandate, appointed its members and made the Board the instrument by which, in fact, it assumed control of relief policy in Manitoba.

This control was made effective by the simple expedient of adopting the Board's recommendations as the basis of provincial financial assistance. As the Goldenberg Commission noted, several years later:

While the functions of the board are solely advisory, it exercises an effective control over relief administration and costs by the fact that provincial participation in the financing of unemployment relief by municipalities is limited by the rates, schedules and practices fixed by the board.⁶³

It was the old threat of withdrawing financial assistance in a new guise. For example, since February 1932 the Greater Winnipeg Welfare Association had supplied relief clothing under an agreement with the provincial and civic governments; on 6 December 1932 Winnipeg City Council voted to assume direct control of the distribution of clothing.⁶⁴ The following day W.R. Clubb, concerned about the financial implications of such a change, dictated a letter to City Council clearly establishing the limits within which the City was expected to operate. The City of Winnipeg, Clubb agreed had every right to issue relief clothing in any manner it

⁶³Royal Commission on Municipal Finances, p. 134.

⁶⁴Public Works, M.O., vol. 23, file Unemployment 1933, Executive Committee of the Greater Winnipeg Welfare Association, "A Report on Unemployment in Winnipeg," 1 June 1933, pp. 5-6, 8-9; Winnipeg, M.C.C., 6 December 1932, pp. 991-92.

wished, provided this was at the City's expense. However, if the City expected a sharing of costs, Clubb had to remind Council that provincial participation had been conditional on the government being consulted on any major changes in relief policy. Since the establishment of the Unemployment Advisory Board, such questions were to be put to it prior to any action.⁶⁵ Council wisely put the question to the Board, which recommended a depot system of distribution administered directly by itself. When the government in turn recommended adoption of the recommendation, City Council quickly concurred.⁶⁶

In this manner the provincial government used the Unemployment Advisory Board to prevent changes in relief which may have resulted in increases of its financial commitments or in relief costs generally. The government also used the Board as a means of establishing definite and uniform relief policies across the province, something it could not have done so easily in the absence of the Board. By May 1933 the government was seriously concerned about the demoralizing effect of direct relief on the unemployed. It

⁶⁵Public Works, M.O., vol. 23, file Unemployment 1932, W.R. Clubb to M. Peterson, 7 December 1932.

⁶⁶Ibid., file Unemployment 1933, R. Jacob to W.R. Clubb, 14 January 1933; *ibid.*, Clubb to Mayor of Winnipeg, 19 January 1933; *ibid.*, M. Peterson to Clubb, 24 January 1933; Winnipeg, *M.C.C.*, 23 January 1933, p. 68. Aldermen had no illusions about who controlled relief policy. Referring to the Province's attempt to shift more of the financial burden to the City in 1934, Alderman J.A. Barry declared: "The people might as well realize now that the provincial government runs the city. The aldermen are merely figure-heads." Manitoba Free Press, 19 September 1934, p. 2.

wanted the municipalities to start relief works so that at least some of the unemployed would be off relief for a time. Accordingly, Arthur MacNamara, who was also a member of the Unemployment Advisory Board, suggested to the chairman, Robert Jacob, that the Board recommend a policy of relief works to the government, and then outlined that policy. At a meeting of the Board later the same day MacNamara's suggestions were adopted. The only substantive change made by the Board was to allow men working on the projects to earn up to 25 percent more than their relief issue; MacNamara had suggested 20 percent. The recommendations were submitted to W.R. Clubb, were duly approved and passed on to the municipalities, and a small relief work programme was again started in Manitoba.⁶⁷

With the Greater Winnipeg Unemployment Advisory Board in place, the provincial government could be satisfied that the scale of relief was the most economical, consistent with the nutritional needs of relievers, that could be achieved. But still the costs and the numbers increased. In September 1933 there were 53,305 persons on direct relief in Manitoba outside the drought-stricken areas. By December the number had increased to 69,740 and by March 1934 it would be 90,573. As the numbers on relief increased so did the cost. Most disturbing to the provincial government was the fact that its share of the total cost of direct relief was increasing while the Dominion's share remained stable

⁶⁷Public Works, M.O., vol. 23, file Unemployment 1933, A. MacNamara to R. Jacob, 25 May 1933; *ibid.*, Jacob to W.R. Clubb, 26 May 1933.

and the municipalities' had dropped.⁶⁸

The provincial government did not want to become involved in the daily routine of local relief administration, yet it had to find some means of supervising that administration. The method chosen was to institute, in cooperation with the City of Winnipeg, a systematic and continuous re-registration of all relief recipients. The Province in 1934 established an Unemployment Relief Appeal Board, chaired by Justice S.E. Richards of the Manitoba Court of Appeal (and a member of the Greater Winnipeg Unemployment Advisory Board) to conduct the re-registration. The Appeal Board was to investigate the validity of each relief applicant's claim, to ensure that every penny of allowable earnings was reported, and to make sure that no one received more than he properly deserved. Such investigations, wrote MacNamara to the chairman of the Unemployment Relief Committee, would "go far towards satisfying the Public that care is being taken in the expenditure of relief funds."⁶⁹

The intent of the Appeal Board's investigations was set out clearly in the instructions given to its registration staff. This was most serious work, they were told, "as upon your judgement and decision rests the expenditure of very

⁶⁸Dept. of Labour, U.R.C., temporary vol. 2096, file Y40, J.K. Houston, "An Appreciation of Relief as Related to Economic and Employment Tendencies in Canada," 31 October 1936; Public Works, M.O., vol. 24, file Unemployment 1936, "Unemployment Relief Costs," 1 August 1936.

⁶⁹Public Works, M.O., vol. 24, file Unemployment 1934, A. MacNamara to H. Andrews, 24 March 1934.

large sums of money. . . . It is important that you be alert to detect evidence of intent of willingness on the part of the applicant to defraud. . . ." To those who might object to this apparent cold-bloodedness, the Appeal Board instructions continued:

While it is right that you should have in mind the interests of the applicant, you should also keep in mind the public interest; the ratepayers have to pay the bills and they are represented by you, and therefore rely on your good judgement to protect them against fraud, false representation and deceit.

Bear in mind at all times that the State wishes to relieve actual destitution, but at the same time the State (i.e., the ratepayers) is entitled to protection against misrepresentation and fraudulent intent.⁷⁰

This was really no more than had ever been the case when applying for relief. From the start of City relief, the onus had been on the applicant to prove his need for relief. As the applicant swore: "I hereby represent to the relief officials of the City of Winnipeg that I am in necessitous circumstances and do so for the purpose of influencing and inducing the said officials to grant me relief."⁷¹

The results of the first re-registration in 1934 and of those in the following years indicated that in fact those who received relief did need it. The first registration took place between 1 May and 1 September 1934 and involved 12,620 cases. Only 872 cases were removed from the relief rolls but 410 of these were for not appearing at the registration office when requested; most were reinstated when they

⁷⁰Ibid., "Instructions to Examiners," [April 1934].

⁷¹Ibid., "Application for Relief," n.d.

registered. Investigations in 1935, 1936 and 1937 produced similar results.⁷² The work of the Unemployment Relief Appeal Board probably did not materially reduce the costs of unemployment relief but it did indicate to the public that every effort was being made to provide for the needs of the destitute and to do that responsibly and economically. Its most important function was to complement the work of the Greater Winnipeg Unemployment Advisory Board in providing for effective control of relief policy and relief administration in Winnipeg by the provincial government. That function was fulfilled quite satisfactorily.

The Unemployment Relief Appeal Board was financed equally by the provincial government and the City of Winnipeg. It was the only facet of family relief in which the Province participated without the cooperation of the federal government, so provincial assistance in direct relief was limited to food, fuel, clothing and shelter. Detailed schedules for relief allowances were drawn up by the Greater Winnipeg Unemployment Advisory Board, which also made monthly test purchases of grocery items and adjusted the food allowances as the market price fluctuated. Great care was taken to ensure that food allowances were nutritionally adequate as well as economic. Even before it was formally constituted the Unemployment Advisory Board had

⁷²Ibid., W. Morrison, Chief Registrar, to A. MacNamara, 30 September 1934; Bracken Papers, vol. 90, file 960, "Review of Unemployment and Relief, 1935," p. 31; *ibid.*, vol. 114, file 1258, "Review of Unemployment and Relief, 1937," p. 49.

obtained the food schedules of all major cities in the Dominion and compared Winnipeg's allowances with them. Nutritional experts were consulted, and all agreed that Winnipeg's food schedules were satisfactory.⁷³ Rent and charges for gas, electricity and water were paid and clothing was provided when necessary. Destitute homeowners no longer had to fear the loss of their property through non-payment of taxes, as after 1933 they were granted a monthly rent of one-twelfth the annual taxes and insurance premiums, but this only after taxes were two years in arrears.⁷⁴

Food, fuel, clothing and shelter provided the bare necessities for human existence but did not fill all the basic needs of a family on relief. This had been recognized quite early. Winnipeg's Unemployment Relief Committee, for example, suggested in March 1931 that married men on relief

⁷³The results of the Advisory Board's investigation provide a useful summary of the relief systems and schedules across Canada and are found in Bennett Papers, pp. 478694-704, "Comparative Statements of Costs Prepared for Use of Greater Winnipeg Unemployment Advisory Board," [August 1932]. On nutritionists' opinions see Public Works, M.O., vol. 23, file Unemployment 1933, A.W. Currie, Principal, McGill University, to A. MacNamara, 31 March 1933; *ibid.*, L. Stanley, U.S. Department of Agriculture, to MacNamara, 9 May 1933; *ibid.*, F.T. Tisdale, Toronto Hospital for Sick Children, to C. Whitton, 15 May 1933. Summaries of test purchases between 1933 and 1937 may be found in *ibid.*, vols. 23-24, *passim*.

⁷⁴Public Works, M.O., vol. 23, file Unemployment 1933, W.R. Clubb to H. Hereford, 18 March 1933; Royal Commission on Municipal Finances, p. 139. A more limited form of homeowners relief had been in effect previously: "Persons on relief [who] are in danger of losing their homes, whether for failure to pay the mortgage or make payments under their agreements for sale, . . . [are] instructed to interview the Debt Adjustment Commissioner . . . and have an order made under Section 9 of the Act, and if the rent so ordered is in accordance with the scale of rents as paid by this Committee, . . . such rent should be paid." U.R.C., "Minutes," 17 August 1931.

should receive 20 percent of their issue in cash. The provincial government refused to agree to any kind of cash payment because, it argued, the relief recipient might purchase luxuries rather than necessities and so cause the family to suffer; this would be a complete waste of relief funds.⁷⁵ It was on these grounds that the Province continually refused to consider cash relief. The problems far outweighed the advantages, as a 1934 memorandum to the Department of Public Works by Charlotte Whitton, the Executive Director of the Canadian Council on Child and Family Welfare, made clear. The one undeniable advantage of cash relief, Whitton wrote, was that it preserved "the independence and self-respect of the recipient, when that recipient is known to be capable of its wise use." However, cash relief would also entail an inordinately large and complex administration to investigate and supervise relief families. Whitton acknowledged that the low-paid or under-employed worker was in a worse financial position than a family on relief, but he did have the compensating "freedom of using his own cash. If the relief recipient is given cash, then this last distinction disappears, and the hard-pressed low-income worker will undoubtedly lose heart and cease his bitter struggle to get by, adding to the numbers on relief." There would be an influx of unemployed from other areas, further adding to relief costs. Finally, cash relief would increase relief costs by nullifying the economic benefits of contracts for special relief rates negotiated

⁷⁵U.R.C., "Minutes," 4 May 1931.

between governments and retailers. "Cash relief will come some day," Whitton wrote, "but when our systems are developed to the point where it is safe and when our numbers reach a fairly stable average minimum. That time is in the future, indefinitely." In the meantime, "we just have to choose which the public authority decide is the most important, family initiative and planning or the preservation of health and care of the children in the family."⁷⁶ Miss Whitton should have added that the crucial factor in this decision was the relative cost of these choices.

Whitton's arguments simply confirmed the Manitoba government's position on cash relief. But the government also confronted the decision she presented, and found ways to encourage family planning and initiative while preserving the health of children in the family, and to do so at no cost to the public treasury. It would re-emphasize the role of private charity in caring for society's victims and it would give relief recipients the opportunity to earn money while still retaining their relief status.

As the pressing demand for government assistance since the war indicated, even in the best of economic times private charity in Winnipeg had proven unable to succour the unemployed. Under the crushing burden of the first years of this latest depression, private charity virtually disappeared as a factor in the relief of the destitute. It had neither the financial or physical resources nor the administrative capability which

⁷⁶Public Works, M.O., vol. 23, file Unemployment 1934, C. Whitton, "Memorandum on Cash Relief," 13 September 1934.

the governments possessed. This is not to say that charity organizations ceased to exist, for some such as the Margaret Scott Mission and the Salvation Army continued to be important supplements to public assistance. But as private funding disappeared and governments assumed responsibility for almost every kind of assistance, there was little which charity could do.

The diminution of the role of private charity had not gone unnoticed. The charities themselves and the three levels of government all worried about the "dependency complex" they saw taking root, not only among the unemployed but in the general population as well, as the result of continued and pervasive governmental assistance. They also worried about the huge government expenditures on relief and the ever increasing demands for more assistance by the relief recipients. By the time the provincial government was trying to bring more order to the relief system in late 1932, it was also trying to encourage an increased role of private charity in public relief. W.R. Clubb wrote to T.A. Crerar in August 1932, for example, stressing the need for the charitable organizations to cooperate with the government's efforts. The government, Clubb noted, "is very desirous that public expenditure be lessened as far as it possibly can be through the medium of voluntary assistance. It has been the opinion of the members of the Government that too much is left to public authorities in the City of Winnipeg rather than to leave some of the burden for admin-

istration through charitable organizations."⁷⁷

These sentiments had been backed by action. The provincial government and the municipal councils of Greater Winnipeg had turned over the distribution of relief clothing to the Greater Winnipeg Welfare Association. The Association simply administered the distribution, as the clothing was purchased under the Dominion-provincial cost-sharing agreements. By assuming some of the administrative expenses, the Association lessened the cost to the governments and removed the hand of government from the relief recipient. Only when relief clothing and the role played by the Greater Winnipeg Welfare Association became a political question was the Association removed from the scene and clothing distribution assumed by the Greater Winnipeg Unemployment Advisory Board.⁷⁸

Other attempts to encourage private charity were more successful. By refusing to furnish household goods, such as pots and pans, the Dominion and provincial governments hoped to encourage private charity to provide them. All senior governments agreed that "something should be left to be taken care of by voluntary efforts, and that charitable organizations should be able to take care of needs for

⁷⁷Ibid., file Unemployment 1933, W.R. Clubb to T.A. Crerar, 18 August 1932.

⁷⁸Winnipeg, M.C.C., 6 December 1932, pp. 991-92; Public Works, M.O., vol. 23, file Unemployment 1933, Executive Committee of the Greater Winnipeg Welfare Association, "A Report on Unemployment in Winnipeg," 1 June 1933, pp. 6-9, 12-13; *ibid.*, R. Jacob to W.R. Clubb, 14 January 1933; *ibid.*, Clubb to Mayor of Winnipeg, 19 January 1933.

household effects." The successful drives for kitchen utensils held in Winnipeg by the Central Council of Social Agencies seemed to bear this out.⁷⁹

At times the provincial government took a direct hand in encouraging individuals and corporations to exercise the virtue of charity. In September 1933 Arthur MacNamara proposed to Famous Players Canadian Corporation, owner of a large chain of movie houses, that it should start an appeal through its theatres for various intimate needs which the unemployed could not obtain through regular relief. The theatres could collect the goods and turn them over to the relief offices for distribution. Such a scheme, suggested MacNamara, would save the taxpayers' money, would let the Corporation know it was doing "real good" and, of course, would provide it with much desired publicity. Famous Players agreed to sponsor performances in its nine Winnipeg theatres for which it would charge an admission of donations of food, clothing and other items. The provincial government even provided free advertising over its radio station, CKY.⁸⁰ Soon these performances became well-known events in Winnipeg and across the country. In these ways relief families were supplied with some of the basic items which governments refused to provide. But not all needs could be taken care

⁷⁹Public Works, M.O., vol. 23, file Unemployment 1934, A. MacNamara, "Memo for Hon. W.R. Clubb," 19 March 1934.

⁸⁰Ibid., file Unemployment 1933, A. MacNamara to T.J. Bragg, 6 September 1933; *ibid.*, file Unemployment 1934, H.S. Dahn to W.R. Clubb, 29 January 1934; *ibid.*, file Unemployment 1933, MacNamara to W.J. Major, 7 November 1933.

of in this manner, and it left largely untouched the thorny question of the "dependency complex."

Encouraging relievers to seek work seemed to be a more promising approach. The Greater Winnipeg Unemployment Advisory Board dealt with this method of supplementing the basic provisions of relief in its third report, issued 25 November 1932. In establishing an earnings policy, the Board first endorsed the principle that "it should be clearly stated that no undertakings on the part of the Government shall be understood as abrogating the principle that the heads of a family are responsible for supplying its needs." To encourage relief recipients to earn money it was necessary to remove the threat that they would be struck off relief or that their relief issue would be reduced if they reported any income. The Board suggested that a husband on relief, his wife, or both, could take casual employment and have ten dollars per month or 25 percent of the combined total exempted from application to the family budget. Other members of the family were each permitted to retain 50 percent of their earnings with the balance applied to the family budget; if those earnings were below forty dollars a month, twenty dollars could be retained. Those receiving income from roomers were also allowed to retain one-quarter of such income after the municipal taxes, insurance, light and water charges had been paid.⁸¹

⁸¹Bracken Papers, vol. 67, file 697, R. Jacob to W.R. Clubb, 25 November 1932; Public Works, M.O., vol. 23, file Unemployment 1934, "Deductions and Exemptions from Earnings or Income," n.d.

This policy of earning exemptions was quickly adopted and remained a feature of unemployment relief through the remaining years of the depression. The only change made was to permit retention of one-third of any earnings when the family unit was five persons or more.⁸² In the absence of relief case files and departmental commentary it is impossible to say precisely how many families were able or attempted to take advantage of the exemptions and to what extent they did so. In April 1935 the provincial government surveyed five hundred relief families in Winnipeg. Two hundred of the families reported income. Average gross income was \$20.83 for the month, but when this was applied to the relief budget the average net income was \$11.48 for the month.⁸³ The net gain for a family in such circumstances would be about two dollars over the relief budget. It may be questioned whether many families really believed the effort involved for two dollars worthwhile. To relief officials, the importance of exempting earnings was the incentive to accept casual work. Thus it dealt directly with the problem of dependency created by years of the dole. Equally important was the fact that 45 percent of the gross amount earned was applied to the relief budget and so government expenditure was reduced by a like amount. At a time of the most stringent economy these sums, even if only

⁸²Royal Commission on Municipal Finances, p. 136.

⁸³Public Works, M.O., vol. 23, file Unemployment 1934, "Statement of Income of Relief Recipients, April 1935," 6 June 1935.

in a few cases, made a crucial difference on provincial and civic balance sheets.

The policy of exempting earnings demonstrates the dominant theme of unemployment relief during the middle years of the 1930s. That theme was the shifting of the burden of caring for the unemployed from senior to lower levels of government and from governments to individuals, including the unemployed themselves, in an attempt to cure dependency and reduce relief expenditures. In the case of unemployed single men, dependency and expenses were dealt with by replacing direct relief with low-wage labour. For married men and their families, there was a renewed emphasis on the role of private charity and on incentives to take casual employment. Accompanying this shift was an increasing bureaucratization of relief and an assertion of provincial authority over the municipalities. Attempts to cure dependency reflected the basic social function of relief in enforcing and instilling work discipline; the consequence was often to force men to accept low-wage labour. This function of relief had almost collapsed under the deluge of destitution in 1931, 1932 and 1933, but it re-emerged in programmes such as Rural Rehabilitation, Farm Placement and the "Royal Twenty-Centers" and in policies such as exemption of casual earnings. These programmes also promised a lessened degree of financial commitment, for a corollary of eliminating dependency, it was thought, was a lower level of relief expenditure.

As the decade neared its end, an old relief scheme

reappeared and a new one for unemployed youth was instituted. Both were touted as new approaches in aiding the unemployed, but a revised Work-for-Relief plan and Youth Training projects were no different than the relief schemes which had gone before. They were the last major relief programmes to be instituted before a war-powered economy gave governments the opportunity to end relief.

CHAPTER SIX

THE END OF RELIEF: 1937-1942

As the decade neared its end, all governments were casting about in a desperate search for some means of extricating themselves from the morass of relief. Great efforts had been made to reduce relief rolls, to root out pauperism and to reduce costs. In the last years of the 1930s an old programme was resurrected to pursue these aims even further. At the same time another problem was finally addressed, one which had been growing increasingly worrisome every year. By 1938 governments confronted the unemployed children of the unemployed parents whom they had perhaps been assisting for over a decade. The youth problem was treated in new ways but with traditional objectives. Coming at the close of the "depression decade," these two programmes showed that over a period of thirty years little had changed in dealing with the unemployed. The coming of war finally solved the puzzle of unemployment for politicians and granted them a breathing space in which to reflect on the past and to test the temper of the population. After the mid-1940s things would apparently be much different for the unemployed.

I

The policy of exempting from the relief budget earnings from casual work had been instituted as a means of encouraging personal initiative. While the economic aspect of this policy was important to relief officials, so was its impact on relievers' morale. The former gave grounds for satisfaction, as has been noted, but the latter did not. Married men simply were not taking advantage of all possible opportunities; certain proof, it appeared, of the dangerous rooting of a "dole mentality." The Greater Winnipeg Unemployment Advisory Board had since 1933 tried to maximize casual employment opportunities by offering special inducements during the harvest season. Married men were encouraged to go to the harvest fields by offers of free transportation, continued relief assistance to the family, and the promise that no money earned in harvest work would be deducted from the relief budget. This failed to attract sufficient numbers of the unemployed city dwellers, so in 1935 the provincial government suggested to the Greater Winnipeg municipalities that they "should use their influence to see that physically fit adult males take the jobs available."¹ Two years later the Province took the next logical step and ordered the relief of able-bodied married or single men cut off for August and September, thus forcing these men to take the

¹Public Works, M.O., vol. 23, file Unemployment 1935, R. Jacob to W.R. Clubb, 29 July 1935; *ibid.*, Clubb to Municipalities of Greater Winnipeg, 7 August 1935.

available low-wage labour in the country.²

This development in harvest work illustrates the function of relief in encouraging low-wage labour. It also indicates a renewed emphasis on the importance of work in unemployment relief. In the spring of 1937 Arthur MacNamara proposed the resurrection of "Work-for-Relief" to Norman McLeod Rogers, the federal Minister of Labour. MacNamara proposed putting relief recipients to work on City improvements at \$.325 per hour, five cents less than the Fair Wage Rate, and allowing them to earn up to an amount equal to their relief issue plus 25 percent. The relief worker would continue to receive direct relief and all earnings would be applied to his relief budget. Any sum earned above the amount of the relief issue would be paid to the worker in cash. The earning exemption rule would not apply to men occupied on these projects and "no work shall be done which has been provided for in the city budget, nor which is a definite necessity." A similar plan had been tried in St. Boniface the previous summer and had seemed satisfactory, and both the provincial government and the Mayor of Winnipeg, F.E. Warriner, were enthusiastic about it.³

²Bracken Papers, vol. 105, file 1157, W.R. Clubb to [Fifty-four Rural Newspapers], 30 July 1937. Men were reported to be receiving wages as low as \$15 to \$20 per month that summer and faced stiff competition for jobs from Saskatchewan farmers who flocked over the border because of the crop failure in that province. Ibid., J.J. Enns to J. Bracken, 4 August 1937; ibid., J. Neish to A. MacNamara, 6 August 1937.

³Public Works, M.O., vol. 24, file Unemployment 1936, A. MacNamara to N. McL. Rogers, 31 March 1937.

Rogers was much struck with the plan, though he proposed several changes to better realize its intent. He suggested, for example, that the Fair Wage Rate should be paid and the work be expanded to any City work. "Make this offer of work a test of a man's desire to help himself," said Rogers. "In this way you would purge your relief rolls of loafers." Rogers also proposed a deferred payment plan by which a reliefer would work continuously until he had earned the equivalent of four months relief plus 25 percent. For the balance of the four month period, the man would receive cash equal to the amount he had earned less the deductions for direct relief. The advantage of this, argued Rogers, is that the man is thus "grub-staked and free to go pick up any casual employment without fear of losing 'earned relief.'"⁴

After further consideration by the provincial government, the plan was submitted to the Greater Winnipeg Unemployment Advisory Board, to the Unemployment Relief Committee of Winnipeg City Council and to Council itself. It was approved at each stage, though the U.R.C. and Council reduced the maximum earnings to relief plus 12.5 percent.⁵

Whatever Norman Rogers may have thought about the plan, Work-for-Relief was simply one more device to reduce relief rolls and, by establishing an earnings limit, to encourage reliefers to take alternate employment. The

⁴Ibid., N. McL. Rogers to A. MacNamara, 5 April 1937.

⁵Ibid., "Report of Special Committee on Unemployment Relief," 29 April 1937; Winnipeg, M.C.C., 3 May 1937, pp. 353-54.

number of men involved was not large, but Work-for-Relief was an impressive way of checking the growth of relief rolls. A special effort was made to insist that men receiving partial relief take work, with the result, reported the government engineer in charge, that many did not show up and so were cut off relief. After the first two months of street cleaning operations the engineer looked forward to a new two hundred man crew since "this will provide an opportunity to weed out a few more delinquents."⁶

The plan also served a disciplinary function. Men who violated the rules regarding casual income, for instance, were forced to work out the equivalent of their relief. It was only slightly more preferable to being cut off relief. On a crew of 250 men building a sewer at the Greater Winnipeg airport, 130 were Winnipeg relievers who had violated the earnings rules. It was cold arduous work, for the construction took place over the winter of 1938-39. Reporting this to Norman Rogers in 1939 W.R. Clubb remarked: "This particular job is a remarkable example of the success of this plan."⁷

To further purge relief rolls and restore work discipline the federal government insisted on changes in relief works programmes. Prior to 1932 much of the work done under Dominion-provincial relief agreements had been intended to prevent increases in the relief rolls by employing those not yet reduced to needing public assistance. It was hoped

⁶Ibid., G. Wallace to A. MacNamara, 27 July 1937.

⁷Bracken Papers, vol. 124, file 1370, W.R. Clubb to N. McL. Rogers, 25 January 1939.

that the wages paid would be sufficient to keep those workers off the relief rolls. When relief works began again in 1933 this principle remained the same. The problem was that this did not necessarily provide work for the most needy unemployed; there was never enough work available, and relief works had little impact on the numbers actually on relief. Determined that the money it spent on relief works would reduce the relief rolls and lower the total cost of relief, the federal government insisted as part of the 1936 cost-sharing agreement that a minimum of 50 percent of the total personnel employed on relief works in Manitoba be taken directly from the relief rolls. "The essential purpose of Dominion assistance must be kept in mind," explained Norman Rogers to John Bracken. Federal money was not meant to help complete provincial public works "but is to assist the Province to initiate and carry on additional works upon which persons who are in receipt of direct relief may be employed." The Dominion "must have some assurance that its large expenditures for relief works are having their effect in the reduction of relief rolls."⁸ Eligibility for employment on relief works was restricted even further in the following years. As part of the 1937 works agreement the federal government directed that at least 50 percent of those employed were to be selected from those who had received at least twenty dollars worth of

⁸Ibid., vol. 98, file 1057, N. McL. Rogers to J. Bracken, 14 July 1936; *ibid.*, Rogers to Bracken, 24 July 1936; J.R. Rowell, "An Intellectual in Politics: Norman Rogers as an Intellectual and Minister of Labour, 1929-1939," M.A. thesis, Queen's University, 1978, p. 132.

relief between 1 January 1937 and 31 March 1937 or who had been employed at least thirty days under the Farm Placement plan. In 1938 and 1939 all workers on relief projects were to be in receipt of material aid, as relief was now termed, at the time they obtained employment.⁹

The clear purpose of such a works policy was to reduce the relief rolls, and so relief costs, for at least part of the year and hopefully for all. In this plan, no less than in the Work-for-Relief scheme, Rogers also saw the possibility of a reliefer "grub-staking" himself. With guaranteed employment at Fair Wage rates, it was assumed that a man could support his family and save enough, as in the more prosperous past, to tide the family over the winter. To ensure that he did, a man who got a job on a relief project was the last allowed back on relief. Thus, Work-for-Relief and the works projects were useful ways to combat dependency, lower expenditures and facilitate the federal government's withdrawal from unemployment relief.

II

As year followed dreary year in the 1930s there was one group of the unemployed which increasingly worried all those who took an interest in the problems of the day. These were the "youthful unemployed," young men and women generally between eighteen and twenty-five, most of whom graduated from

⁹Bracken Papers, vol. 105, file 1157, "Memorandum of Agreement," 14 June 1937; *ibid.*, vol. 114, file 1258, "Memorandum of Agreement," 22 July 1938; *ibid.*, vol. 124, file 1370, "Memorandum of Agreement," 17 July 1939.

school directly to the ranks of the unemployed. The vast majority had likely never had a steady job and, it seemed, might never secure one in the foreseeable future. Their work experience was limited to whatever casual employment they might find or to the relief works and Work-for-Relief projects. There was great concern that these people, reaching maturity at a time when the government provided the necessities of life, would lose their sense of initiative and self-reliance and expect society to provide for them. They seemed certain to become lazy, careless workers without a proper experience of work discipline. At the very least they would be condemned to marginal and casual employment, since schools did not offer vocational training and the traditional apprenticeship avenue to the skilled trades had greatly contracted. The result, concluded H.A. Weir, a school inspector with the Nova Scotia Department of Education writing for a national audience, would be "an inevitable toll in loss of ambition and initiative--in the decline of efficiency and general morale--in the disregard of moral responsibility and the growth of delinquency and crime--and finally in the engendering of anti-social and anti-democratic tendencies."¹⁰ In sum, unemployed youth were a patent threat to the economic and social structure of the nation.

This threat, posed by the unemployed generally, had

¹⁰H.A. Weir, "Unemployed Youth," in Canada's Unemployment Problem, ed. Richter, pp. 114-25, 126-48, 159.

been a motivating factor in shaping most relief policies, but the danger was becoming more obvious among the younger unemployed only in the later 1930s. Not until 1937 was a programme designed specifically to deal with them. In the closing days of the 1936-37 winter session the House of Commons voted a meagre one million dollars for "development and training projects" for the youthful unemployed. Allocating \$100,000 of this to Manitoba, Norman Rogers outlined the four categories into which youth training projects were to fall. First was occupational training "to increase the employability of young unemployed persons pending employment." Learnership was to be short-term industrial apprenticeships combined with theoretical training. Reconditioning would be work "undertaken for the purpose of restoring the loss of morale among the unemployed and conserving natural resources." Finally, physical training would "assist in the maintenance of health and morale pending employment."¹¹

Congratulating the federal government on taking such a forward step in dealing with unemployment, the Manitoba government quickly established its youth training projects. Administered by the Single Men's Relief Commission, now renamed the Single Men's Employment and Youth Training Commission, Youth Training was divided into rural and urban components. On the rural side were two month courses in

¹¹Bracken Papers, vol. 116, file 1264, N. McL. Rogers to J. Bracken, 15 May 1937; House of Commons, Debates, 9 April 1937, pp. 2837-49.

practical and scientific agriculture and in homemaking. These were offered in a number of rural communities and drew on Agricultural Representatives and local experts as instructors. Agricultural courses at the University of Manitoba were offered to a select group of men and women. The aim of rural training, while it incidentally might make for more scientific farming in the future, was to usefully occupy rural youth, to renew their interest in agriculture and to lift the malaise which had settled on them as a result of the prolonged agricultural depression. On this point the United Farmers of Manitoba were convinced of the efficiency of Youth Training. After the first winter of courses they noted a "quicken interest in the minds of the youth . . . a fresh pride in finding themselves capable of doing worthwhile things efficiently . . . and a fine sense of responsibility for real service to their communities and to the agricultural industry in the utilization of the new things brought to them in these courses." Rural training had another equally practical side. Engendering "a keener interest and appreciation of rural life," noted W.R. Clubb, would discourage "the drift citywards to become unemployed."¹²

This latter point was important, for the dangers inherent in the enforced idleness of young people, those things enumerated by H.A. Weir, were to be found in the

¹²Bracken Papers, vol. 116, file 1265, W.R. Wood to I. Schultz, Minister of Education, 18 April 1938; *ibid.*, file 1264, W.R. Clubb to N. McL. Rogers, 14 July 1938.

city. The urban component of Youth Training had five sectors which kept youth occupied, accustomed them to work discipline, and made them more employable. Women generally received instructions from the Home Service Training School and the Specialized Service Bureau. The former offered women a three month course in household management and various domestic skills. The Specialized Service Bureau catered to those who either were unfit to be domestic servants or who had some particular skill or aptitude. The Bureau, operated in cooperation with the Y.W.C.A., operated as a placement office but with only minimal success. It also gave classes such as catering, sewing and weaving through which women could hone their skills pending employment. This, in fact, was the Bureau's chief attraction. Through it, reported the Commissioners of Youth Training, "much has been done to build up the morale of girls who have been adversely affected by a long period of unemployment."¹³

Greater emphasis and more money were directed to the other three sectors, which dealt largely with males. Learnership, occupational training, and forest conservation and training emphasized work experience as a key component though they were not, as the federal government carefully noted, work projects. They were training "with the object

¹³Ibid., file 1264, W.R. Clubb to N. McL. Rogers, 21 May 1937; *ibid.*, vol. 124, file 1374, "Manitoba: Dominion-Provincial Youth Training Programme," [1939]. The Home Service Training School was a continuation of one begun in 1936 by the Junior League of Winnipeg with provincial and municipal assistance.

of fitting young people for employment, though not necessarily wage-earning employment."¹⁴

Learnership was a form of apprenticeship through which youths were placed in industry and attended training classes in the evening to receive instruction on subjects appropriate to the job. The project rested on the willingness of employers to take on an extra hand. They were promised "better trained and more skillful tradesmen" and "artisans whose products will be able to successfully compete with those produced elsewhere." This was an attractive prospect, but most likely the decisive factor in business participation was "some concession in regard to the Minimum Wage for a limited period while the employee is learning the trade." Possibilities of abuse were limited by restricting the number of "learners" any employer could have and by federal assurances that learners would not displace existing staff.¹⁵ Learnership had wide support among the business community but also among the city's unions. Sitting on the advisory committee with employers like Ben Jacob, A.K. Mackenzie and W.T. Kennedy were union men as diverse as R.B. Russell of the O.B.U. and Sam Herbst, organizer for the International Ladies Garment Workers Union.

Forest conservation projects took men from the city

¹⁴Ibid., vol. 124, file 1374, "Review of the Dominion-Provincial Youth Training Programme for the Fiscal Year 1938-39," p. 4.

¹⁵Ibid., "Manitoba: Dominion-Provincial Youth Training Programme," [1939]; *ibid.*, W.T. Davis, "Learnership Project: A Short Explanation of the Aims, Objects and Methods of Procedure," [1939].

and placed them as assistant rangers in provincial forests. For three months they worked a forty-four hour week at twenty-one cents an hour. They cleared brush, built fire-guards, planted seedlings, fought fires and did all other activities associated with forestry. They also received class instruction for four hours a week on forestry and other related topics.¹⁶ There was no pretense that this was training for future occupations. The experience of wage-earning work was itself the value. Acknowledging after the first year that few boys had obtained employment as a result of their forest work, W.R. Clubb noted that nevertheless "character building and improved health had been accomplished." These were just as important as actually placing youths in jobs.¹⁷

Learnership and forestry service could deal with only a relatively small number of the unemployed. The largest and most important programme was occupational training. A technical school was established in a renovated bag factory at 831 Henry Avenue. Here young men and women received training in subjects ranging from auto mechanics, carpentry and commercial art to electrical repair, sewing and welding. To acquaint students with a work situation "an effort was

¹⁶Ibid., vol. 116, file 1264, W.R. Clubb to N. McL. Rogers, 20 May 1937; *ibid.*, vol. 124, file 1374, "Review of the Dominion Provincial Youth Training Programme for the Fiscal Year 1938-39," pp. 6-7; *ibid.*, "Manitoba: Dominion-Provincial Youth Training Programme."

¹⁷Ibid., vol. 116, file 1264, W.R. Clubb to N. McL. Rogers, 27 April 1938.

made to reproduce shop conditions and discipline."

Improving work skills was one aim of occupational training, but more important to its sponsors was the thought that training would "provide the necessary stimulus to young people to seek employment by their own efforts." Thus, dependency would be rooted out and the relief rolls would be reduced.¹⁸

As with most other relief programmes, Youth Training actually affected very few of the population it was intended to assist. In 1938-39 a total of 5292 persons were at some time involved in one of the Youth Training projects. At the same time, noted a report published by the Manitoba Economic Survey Board, "there are about 78,000 young people in Manitoba between the ages of 14 and 24 who are without gainful employment. Out of that group it is known that 16,000 have never worked at all and that about 90% of them are unskilled in any trade."¹⁹

Although Youth Training involved less than 7 percent of its target population, it was judged to be one of the more successful relief programmes. It involved a large number of individuals at a relatively low cost. Assisting the development of work skills in the young was politically popular. Training held the promise of substantially lowering the number on relief and so permitting the federal government

¹⁸Ibid., vol. 124, file 1374, "Review of the Dominion Provincial Youth Training Programme for the Fiscal Year 1938-39," pp. 4-5.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 18; A.M. Stewart, The Youth Problem in Manitoba (Winnipeg, 1939), p. 8.

to withdraw some of its commitment to relief. Finally, Youth Training reached its intended population, those urban youths who were about to leave school or who had left and had never successfully secured employment. The average age of Manitoba trainees was 19.6 years; three quarters of them lived in Winnipeg or Brandon.²⁰ The objectives of Youth Training had been clearly defined:

To bridge the gap between leaving school and finding employment with constructive and beneficial activity; to instill in the minds of our youth the WORK HABIT; . . . to fit youth so that when employment is found they will be of real value to Industry, and will be Loyal, Valuable Canadian Citizens.²¹

Whether these objectives would have been successfully met in the longer term remains unknown, for soon Youth Training was overwhelmed by the juggernaut of war.

III

A quarter of a century earlier the coming of war quickly brought unemployment and distress to crisis proportions; now a bloody international conflict slowly brought an end to mass unemployment. The unemployed did not quickly disappear into the military services and the arms factories. In November 1938 there had been nearly 22,500 persons in Winnipeg receiving relief or employed on relief works. In March 1940 there were over 23,000

²⁰Bracken Papers, vol. 124, file 1374, "Review of the Dominion Provincial Youth Training Programme for the Fiscal Year 1938-39," pp. 16-18; Rowell, "Intellectual in Politics," pp. 229-32, 237.

²¹Bracken Papers, vol. 124, file 1374, "Manitoba: Dominion-Provincial Youth Training Programme," [1939].

such individuals. But soon the number dropped from 13,000 in November 1940 to 10,000 in June 1941 and to 5300 in March 1942. By the end of October 1942 there were fewer than 1700 individuals registered on Winnipeg's relief records.²²

Much of this drop was due to the momentum of war, but it was also due to a continued policy of restricting eligibility, increasing investigation and shifting responsibility away from governments. In other words, the unemployed were treated no differently in 1942 than they had been in 1932 or 1922. Discussing the drop in unemployment relief cases in 1942, J.D. Fraser, superintendent of the City's new Public Welfare Department, admitted that the demand for labour in war industry was important but declared that the substantial decrease in cases "could not have been effected without the concentrated effort of each member of the staff." Fraser was referring to more intense investigation of cases; as the caseload dropped, even more time could be devoted to investigating suspected "imposition or misrepresentation." As a result, the Public Welfare Department was often able to place "responsibility for assistance on members of the family who were quite able to support but, who, as long as the Department gave aid, were satisfied to let the City bear the expense."²³

²²Public Works, M.O., vol. 25, "Review of Unemployment and Relief, 1930-42," p. 4.

²³Ibid., vol. 23, file P-45, "Report of the Public Welfare Department for the Year 1942," n.d., p. 1.

Financial assistance from the provincial and federal governments decreased as the numbers of people on relief dropped. In March 1941 the federal government withdrew from involvement in direct relief. Since 1939 the Dominion and provincial governments had been sharing 80 percent of unemployment relief costs; federal withdrawal shifted an additional 20 percent of costs to the City. Even with a doubling of its share of relief expenditures, however, the economic situation had improved so much and relief officials had terminated the aid of so many individuals that the chairman of the Public Welfare Committee confidently anticipated finishing the year with a surplus in the budget.²⁴ In May 1942 the Single Men's Relief Commission ceased operation and in October it was dissolved. Most men were transferred to the care of their home municipalities while the Province took responsibility for the remaining transients. The Commission sent 805 men to Winnipeg but the City accepted only 633, judging the others physically fit for work. Concerted efforts were made to find work or families for the single men and by December 1942 only one hundred men still received assistance from the City.²⁵

In the spring of 1942 the provincial government

²⁴Ibid., "Chairman's Report to the Members of the Public Welfare Committee, City of Winnipeg, Covering the Year 1941," 22 December 1941, p. 1.

²⁵Ibid., "Report of the Public Welfare Department for the Year 1942," p. 1; *ibid.*, vol. 25, file Unemployment Relief Branch, "Relief of Distress and Unemployment, May 1, 1943-April 30, 1944."

discontinued its financial assistance for unemployment relief in Winnipeg. The government gave a cash grant equivalent to 60 percent of the City's appropriation for relief in the fiscal year 1942-43. Thus quitting itself of further responsibility, the Province began dismantling its part of the relief structure, a process not completed until after the war.²⁶

By the end of 1942 the City of Winnipeg was assisting very few unemployed individuals. The introduction of national unemployment insurance in 1940 had relieved local governments of primary responsibility for the relief of unemployment, though they still supported those not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. Traditional eleemosynary functions were also continued, but the mark of the searing experience of the 1930s was evident.

In 1941 Garnet Coulter, chairman of Winnipeg's Public Welfare Committee, noted "certain changes, which time and the existence of organized Unemployment Relief have brought about in the relation between the Municipality and certain groups of indigent recipients." Coulter identified three such groups: those marginally employable, those with low incomes and large families, and those living on low fixed incomes. These were people largely untouched by unemployment insurance or any other

²⁶Ibid., vol. 33, file P-45, "Report of the Public Welfare Department for the Year 1942," p. 1; *ibid.*, vol. 25, file Unemployment Relief Branch, "Relief of Distress and Unemployment, 1945-46."

public welfare programme yet in existence. Many were "living under conditions of extreme poverty and of actual need." "Although Volunteer Agencies are doing noble work in this field," Coulter said, "the institution of Unemployment Relief on an organized basis has created a community consciousness that it is the duty of Governmental Agencies to take a greater part in the amelioration of [poverty]." Therefore, Coulter concluded, municipalities must be "prepared to take a larger part in the betterment of these conditions of distress both by a greater expenditure of money and by an expansion of the present social service organizations."²⁷

Coulter was not charting a bold new path for government, but his statements did reflect a new attitude. Years of unemployment and distress, and now a world war, had changed conceptions about the duties of governments. Canadians were now demanding that all governments, but especially the federal government, be more responsive to the social needs of the people. The expectations thus aroused were reflected in the increasing popularity of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation and in the general approbation with which the Marsh Report on Social Security in Canada was received. Eventually recognizing the public mood and fearful also of "postwar unemployment, depression and disorder," the Mackenzie King administration began

²⁷Ibid., vol. 33, file P-45, "Chairman's Report to the Members of the Public Welfare Committee," 22 December 1941, pp. 7-8.

preparations for a vigorous new role in public welfare.²⁸

In January 1944 Members of Parliament were told that "the postwar object of our domestic policy is social security and human welfare." To unemployment insurance the federal government now proposed to add family allowances, contributory old-age pensions and health insurance.²⁹ Fear of unsettled postwar conditions was important, but largely the government was reacting to the change in the "community consciousness" of Canadians. Failure to respond would be courting electoral defeat. Years of destitution and unemployment relief had changed Canadians' ideas about the role and function of government in society. Confronted with this, the federal government retreated into the welfare state.

²⁸J.L. Granatstein, Canada's War: The Politics of the Mackenzie King Government, 1939-45 (Toronto, 1975), pp. 249-88, 276.

²⁹House of Commons, Debates, 27 January 1944, pp. 1-2.

CONCLUSION

Unemployment relief was a response to one symptom of unemployment, destitution. Christian morality required that destitution be relieved, but doing so created many problems. It was to these problems that relief policies were directed.

Destitution created problems of disorder. Unemployment relief in Winnipeg began because the charitable infrastructure of the city threatened to collapse under the heavy weight of destitution in 1907-08. Concern about the social disorder which would result prompted the civic administration to become more actively involved in social services. This involvement was spurred by threats of actual violence in the streets. The institution of organized unemployment relief and the cooperation of all three levels of government after World War I was the direct result of fears of violence in the streets of Winnipeg and other Canadian cities. The Unionist government was sensitive to the brittle nature of post-war Canada and recognized the need for relief. Only when the threat of disorder had passed and other needs weighed more heavily in the balance did the federal government withdraw from relief activities. At the local level such a withdrawal was never possible.

Relief assistance in the 1930s was expanded because of a recognized problem of destitution, but the specific character of that assistance was often a response to potential or actual disorder. The development of the Grassmere camp was largely an attempt to minimize the possibility of disorder by segregating a large body of potentially dangerous men. Similarly, facilities at the Grassmere camp were improved directly because of fears that the men might become uncontrollable. One legacy of unemployment and relief in the 1920s and 1930s was an expansion of government into many social spheres. But even the post-World War II welfare state, as J.L. Granatstein has noted, was rooted in "the fear of postwar unemployment, depression and possible disorder."¹

Dependency was one of the most serious problems created by destitution so prevention of dependency was one of the major thrusts of relief policies. The first organized response to destitution caused by unemployment was the Associated Charities; it was an administrative reform designed to minimize the possibility of dependency among the destitute. A work test was essential to relief, for a lack of desire to work indicated a pauper spirit and, therefore, one who was not worthy of assistance. The work itself was also valuable, for the recipient of assistance was thus earning his aid. Concern about dependency also

¹Granatstein, Canada's War, p. 276.

dictated that only the minimum of assistance be given so as to encourage the destitute to find alternative means of support. Disincentives were built into relief by, for example, setting relief work wage rates at levels lower than the prevailing Fair Wage Rate. The result in the 1920s and 1930s was often to enforce low-wage labour.

Concern about dependency peaked in the 1930s because of the large numbers of people receiving relief and the long time that they remained on the relief rolls. Much of the discontent and disorder of those years was traced to a growing "dependency complex" among relievers. Many relief programmes, such as Rural Rehabilitation and the earnings exemption policy, were introduced specifically to counter this tendency. Much of the impetus for programmes for the single unemployed was also rooted in a concern about dependency. The Farm Placement programme and the Department of National Defence relief camps had as a primary aim the restoration of morale; only by doing so would the influence of agitators and the threat of disorder be undercut. Youth Training projects and a revitalized Work-for-Relief programme in the last years of the 1930s were further attempts to root out dependency.

Orthodox economics rested on minimal government expenditures and balanced budgets. The expenditure of public funds on relief ran counter to the fiscal responsibility thus demanded. Accordingly, a constant theme of unemployment relief was the attempt by each level of government to reduce relief costs to a minimum. Relief

policies were an uneasy balance between the needs of the destitute, the worries of relief officials and the requirements of the public purse. Work tests, for example, exposed those not deserving of assistance and in so doing reduced overall costs. Relief was periodically terminated to force relief recipients to seek out available low-wage work. While this struck at dependency, it was also a direct means of cutting costs. The disincentives built into the relief structure also served to lower expenditures by deterring potential relief applicants.

Because of the much greater expenditures in the 1930s governments made more strenuous efforts to cut costs. The federal government in 1934 proposed simply to terminate direct relief. The establishment of soup kitchens in Winnipeg was the result of a search for cheaper methods of assisting the single unemployed. Programmes such as Rural Rehabilitation and Farm Placement were proposed because they would counter dependency; they were adopted and expanded because they were cheaper alternatives to direct relief.

Pursuit of fiscal responsibility led the City of Winnipeg to become actively involved in relief. As it became the sole source of funds, the City insisted on direct supervision of the Social Welfare Association. This led to the creation in 1917 of the Social Welfare Commission and the City's assumption of many public welfare services, among them unemployment relief. The same pursuit of fiscal responsibility brought the civic government to

surrender control of relief policies in the 1920s and again in the 1930s. Dependent on the provincial government sharing the costs of unemployment relief, the civic government allowed the Province to formulate policy and have an effective veto over City initiatives. To have done otherwise would have resulted in an unacceptable rise in civic expenditures.

Unemployment relief did not address the causes of unemployment. From the first appearance of heavy unemployment to the continuing crisis of the 1930s all efforts were aimed at relieving the destitution caused by unemployment. For a society which valued work for the act itself, which believed in the inherent stability of the economy and which asserted that the least government was best, no other response was possible. Unemployment relief demonstrated the inadequacy of such assumptions for the country in the twentieth century, a lesson taken to heart only in the Second World War. Thirty-five years of unemployment and distress had a cumulative effect on the nation; the Canada of 1945, as a result, would be much different from the Canada of 1942.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CAUSES OF DESTITUTION OF INDIVIDUALS ASSISTED BY THE SOCIAL WELFARE ASSOCIATION, WINNIPEG, 1913-15

Month	Total Assisted	Causes of Destitution							
		Unemployment		Physical Incapacity		Widowhood		Character Failing	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1913									
January	221	38	17.19	91	41.18	53	23.98	39	17.65
February	229	33	14.41	107	46.72	48	20.96	41	17.90
March	209	27	12.92	105	50.24	44	21.05	33	15.79
April	142	9	6.34	62	43.66	33	23.24	38	26.76
May	126	3	2.38	52	41.27	32	25.40	39	30.95
June	124	15	12.10	51	41.13	23	18.55	35	28.23
July	128	17	13.28	50	39.06	24	18.75	37	28.91
August	118	7	5.93	48	40.68	26	22.03	37	31.36
September	115	6	5.22	51	44.35	24	20.87	34	29.57
October	116	2	1.72	50	43.10	29	25.00	35	30.17
November	155	22	14.19	70	45.16	28	18.06	35	22.58
December	241	73	30.29	89	36.93	36	14.94	43	17.84
1914									
January	366	202	55.19	86	23.50	46	12.57	32	8.74
February	293	80	27.30	115	39.25	51	17.41	47	16.04

APPENDIX A--Continued

Month	Total Assisted	Causes of Destitution							
		Unemployment		Physical Incapacity		Widowhood		Character Failing	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1914									
March	361	152	42.11	109	30.19	51	14.13	49	13.57
April	260	76	29.23	85	32.69	53	20.38	46	17.69
May	197	50	25.38	68	34.52	35	17.77	44	22.34
June	187	52	27.81	50	26.74	39	20.86	46	24.60
July	156	37	23.72	48	30.77	39	25.00	32	20.51
August	174	53	30.46	45	25.86	43	24.71	33	18.97
September	255	98	38.43	60	23.53	46	18.04	51	20.00
October	362	177	48.90	73	20.17	59	16.30	53	14.64
November	631	399	63.23	100	15.85	70	11.09	62	9.83
December	621	322	51.85	131	21.10	102	16.43	66	10.63
1915									
January	696	327	46.98	188	27.01	106	15.23	75	10.76
February	703	315	44.87	230	32.72	98	13.94	60	8.53
March	651	268	41.17	213	32.72	103	15.82	67	10.29
April	532	205	38.53	172	32.33	94	17.67	61	11.47
May	454	154	33.92	157	34.58	86	18.94	57	12.56

APPENDIX A--Continued

Month	Total Assisted	Causes of Destitution							
		Unemployment		Physical Incapacity		Widowhood		Character Failing	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1915									
June	359	75	20.89	143	39.83	85	23.68	56	15.60
July	356	77	21.63	132	37.08	82	23.03	65	18.26
August	332	66	19.88	123	37.05	80	24.10	63	18.98
September	288	46	15.97	116	40.28	64	22.22	62	21.53
October	270	38	14.07	95	35.19	70	25.93	67	24.81
November	269	58	21.56	80	29.74	74	27.51	57	21.19
December	314	43	13.69	143	45.54	78	24.84	50	15.92

SOURCE: Dominion Royal Commission, Evidence 1916, chart interleaved between p. 38 and p. 39.

APPENDIX B

COST OF UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF IN WINNIPEG 1920-1930

Winter	Total Cost	Cost to Winnipeg		Cost to Provincial and Federal Governments		Federal Government Participation
		Amount	%	Amount	%	
1920-21	190,677.22	66,009.76	34.62	124,677.46	65.38	Yes
1921-22	476,668.34	121,699.25	25.53	354,969.09	74.47	Yes
1922-23	195,689.53	116,597.61	59.58	79,091.92	40.42	No
1923-24	242,240.89	187,568.90	77.43	54,671.99	22.57	No
1924-25	277,695.91	---	---	---	---	No
1925-26	77,375.14	52,639.27	68.03	24,735.87	31.97	Yes
1926-27	53,127.08	44,836.57	84.39	8,290.51	15.61	No
1927-28	32,521.03	23,847.34	73.33	8,673.69	26.67	No
1928-29	31,394.60	22,874.54	72.86	8,520.06	27.14	No
1929-30	156,512.24	99,419.96	63.52	57,092.28	36.48	No

SOURCE: U.R.C., "Report 1924-25," p. 5; U.R.C., "Report 1933," p. 8.

APPENDIX C

OCCUPATION OF MARRIED MEN ON RELIEF IN WINNIPEG SELECTED YEARS 1921-1941

Year	Total Appli- cations	Labourers		Building Trades		Other Trades		Clerical		Professional		Sundry or No Record	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
1921-22	5204	3485	66.97	332	6.38	1169	22.46	218	4.19	---	---	---	---
1922-23	2561	1569	61.27	270	10.52	566	22.10	110	4.30	41	1.60	5	0.2
1923-24	2721	1799	66.12	257	9.45	503	18.49	95	3.49	34	1.25	33	1.21
1924-25	4228	2938	69.50	317	7.50	798	18.87	68	1.61	50	1.18	57	1.35
1925-26	868	637	73.39	94	10.83	99	11.41	13	1.50	17	1.96	8	0.92
1926-27	578	432	74.74	41	7.90	94	16.26	9	1.56	2	0.35	---	---
1931-32	8050	2828	35.13	1319	16.39	2478	30.78	643	7.99	45	0.56	737	9.16
1933*	7890	2980	37.77	1298	16.45	2169	27.49	672	8.52	47	0.60	724	9.18
1938+	4214	1628	38.63	546	12.96	1138	27.01	477	11.32	49	1.16	376	8.92
1941	554	260	46.92	72	13.00	73	13.18	81	14.62	12	2.17	56	10.11

* at 31 December 1933

+ at 30 July 1938

SOURCE: Seasonal Unemployment in Manitoba, p. 79; U.R.C., "Report 1931-32"; U.R.C., "Report 1933"; Royal Commission on Municipal Finances, pp. 159-162; Public Works, M.O., vol. 33, file P-45, "Chairman's Report to the Members of the Public Welfare Committee," 22 December 1941.

APPENDIX D

COST OF ALL UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF IN MANITOBA ACCORDING TO SOURCE OF FUNDS, 1930-42

Year Ended 30 April	Total	Dominion		Province		Municipalities	
		Amount	%	Amount	%	Amount	%
1931	\$1,543,483.02	\$556,928.60	36.08	\$559,300.81	36.24	\$427,253.61	27.68
1932	8,474,947.98	3,183,128.22	37.56	3,015,246.37	35.58	2,276,573.39	26.86
1933	7,803,730.72	2,945,055.93	37.74	2,681,346.82	34.36	2,177,327.97	27.90
1934	6,549,582.25	2,433,410.29	37.15	2,329,019.64	35.56	1,787,152.32	27.29
1935	7,154,078.99	2,030,531.20	28.38	2,548,563.87	35.62	2,574,983.92	35.99
1936	9,905,057.88	3,547,607.95	35.82	3,357,027.38	33.89	3,000,422.55	30.29
1937	11,847,895.14	4,906,035.45	41.41	4,060,067.23	34.27	2,881,792.46	24.32
1938	9,142,985.94	3,361,511.55	36.77	3,673,487.77	40.18	2,107,986.62	23.06
1939	8,247,709.01	2,714,482.32	32.91	3,633,862.96	44.06	1,899,363.73	23.03
1940	8,078,999.74	2,960,915.72	36.65	3,758,297.44	46.52	1,359,786.58	16.83
1941	4,626,783.21	1,667,619.98	36.04	1,986,256.41	42.93	972,906.82	21.03
1942	2,331,639.22	339,444.57	14.56	1,246,544.00	53.46	745,650.65	31.98
Total	85,706,893.10	30,646,671.78	35.75	32,849,020.70	38.33	22,211,200.62	25.92

SOURCE: Public Works, M.O., vol. 25, "Review of Unemployment and Relief 1930-1942,"
p. 1.

APPENDIX E

DIRECT RELIEF EXPENDITURES IN MANITOBA ACCORDING TO SOURCE OF FUNDS, 1930-42

Year Ended 30 April	Total	Dominion		Province		Municipalities	
		Amount	%	Amount	%	Amount	%
1931	\$871,245.06	\$292,231.59	33.54	\$294,603.61	33.81	\$284,409.86	32.64
1932	3,385,292.44	1,109,499.88	32.77	1,113,246.88	32.88	1,162,545.68	34.34
1933	4,723,638.86	1,564,696.20	33.12	1,551,698.28	32.85	1,607,244.38	34.03
1934	5,541,180.91	1,840,360.45	33.21	1,951,742.76	35.22	1,749,077.70	31.57
1935	6,096,635.08	1,566,874.89	25.70	2,095,186.00	34.37	2,434,574.19	39.93
1936	5,952,469.80	1,783,609.49	29.96	1,868,476.76	31.39	2,300,383.55	38.65
1937	6,187,991.48	2,364,109.86	38.20	1,763,457.61	28.50	2,060,424.01	33.30
1938	5,259,423.11	1,661,832.58	31.60	1,917,506.16	36.46	1,670,084.37	31.75
1939	4,773,543.33	1,535,180.93	32.16	1,629,167.94	34.13	1,609,194.46	33.71
1940	4,479,458.84	1,639,278.98	36.60	1,674,789.98	37.39	1,165,380.88	26.01
1941	3,289,937.28	1,166,404.21	35.45	1,246,004.57	37.87	877,528.50	26.67
1942	1,512,916.31	Cr 60,798.39	---	849,777.33	56.17	663,138.98	43.83
Total	52,002.934.11	16,463,280.67	31.66	17,955,666.88	34.53	17,583,986.56	33.81

SOURCE: Public Works, M.O., vol. 25, "Review of Unemployment and Relief 1930-1942,"
p. 1.

APPENDIX F

DIRECT RELIEF EXPENDITURES IN WINNIPEG ACCORDING TO SOURCE OF FUNDS, 1931-37

Year	Total	Winnipeg		Dominion and Provincial Governments	
		Amount	Percent	Amount	Percent
1931	\$2,473,504	\$905,750	36.62	\$1,567,754	63.38
1932	3,129,444	1,146,897	36.65	1,982,547	63.35
1933	3,623,353	1,324,263	36.55	2,299,090	63.45
1934	3,635,185	1,556,627	42.82	2,078,558	57.18
1935	3,765,776	1,886,504	50.10	1,879,272	49.90
1936	3,824,927	1,604,040	41.94	2,220,887	58.06
1937	3,711,311	1,530,015	41.23	2,181,316	58.77
Total	24,163,520	9,954,096	41.19	14,209,424	58.81

SOURCE: Royal Commission on Municipal Finances, p. 166.

APPENDIX G

COMPARATIVE STATEMENT OF INDIVIDUALS PROVIDED RELIEF OR WORKS

NOVEMBER, MARCH AND JUNE 1930 to 1942

Percentage of Population
according to 1936 Census

Month and Year		Winnipeg City (Pop. 215,814)		Greater Winnipeg (Pop. 283,439)		Entire Province (Pop. 711,216)	
		Total Indiv.	Percentage Population	Total Indiv.	Percentage Population	Total Indiv.	Percentage Population
<u>1930</u>	November	7,300	3.3	8,520	3	16,001	2.3
<u>1931</u>	March	17,715	8.1	23,760	8.3	35,720	5
	June	17,135	7.8	22,255	7.7	33,265	4.7
	November	28,866	13.	35,492	12.	56,410	8.
<u>1932</u>	March	35,524	16.2	46,086	16.	64,349	9.2
	June	30,017	13.7	41,029	14.3	49,077	7.
	November	41,142	19.	53,910	19.	64,590	9.
<u>1933</u>	March	36,163	17.4	52,740	18.4	91,318	13.
	June	34,954	15.9	48,316	16.8	73,119	10.4
	November	44,651	20	57,846	20.	74,185	10.8
<u>1934</u>	March	37,367	17	51,762	18.	105,587	15.
	June	33,348	15.2	46,568	16.2	73,217	10.5
	November	31,741	14.5	43,525	15.2	71,378	10.
<u>1935</u>	March	34,489	15.7	47,523	16.6	96,155	13.6
	June	31,746	14.5	43,281	15.1	82,039	11.6
	November	29,223	13.0	43,459	15.1	80,566	11.5

APPENDIX G--Continued

Month and Year		Winnipeg City (Pop. 215,814)		Greater Winnipeg (Pop. 283,439)		Entire Province (Pop. 711,216)	
		Total Indiv.	Percentage Population	Total Indiv.	Percentage Population	Total Indiv.	Percentage Population
<u>1936</u>	March	31,765	14.5	51,418	17.8	103,613	14.8
	June	30,010	13.7	41,232	14.3	77,758	11.7
	November	28,952	13.2	39,394	14.1	81,528	11.5
<u>1937</u>	March	32,856	14.6	44,816	15.2	115,155	16.2
	June	28,412	13.2	39,380	14.1	81,335	11.4
	November	24,214	11.1	33,229	11.6	60,776	8.6
<u>1938</u>	March	28,314	13.1	38,999	13.8	82,681	11.6
	June	24,784	11.5	33,518	11.8	56,332	7.9
	November	22,495	10.4	31,393	11.0	59,509	8.4
<u>1939</u>	March	28,071	13.0	39,248	13.8	84,679	11.9
	June	24,565	11.3	34,006	11.9	65,162	9.1
	November	19,776	9.1	27,799	9.8	56,270	7.9
<u>1940</u>	March	23,063	10.7	32,682	11.5	69,389	9.7
	June	20,045	9.3	27,779	9.8	53,934	7.6
	November	13,073	6.1	18,389	6.5	39,043	5.5
<u>1941</u>	March	13,929	6.5	20,045	7.1	28,758	5.4
	June	9,944	4.6	13,716	4.8	26,671	3.7
	November	4,987	2.3	7,347	2.6	18,065	2.5
<u>1942</u>	March	5,293	2.5	7,793	2.7	17,412	2.4

SOURCE: Public Works, M.O., vol. 25, "Review of Unemployment and Relief 1930-1942," p. 4.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS:

Provincial Archives of Manitoba

Bracken, John.

Margaret Scott Nursing Mission.

Maybank, Ralph.

Norris, T.C.

Polson, Alexander.

Roblin, Rodmond.

Public Archives of Canada

Beaverbrook (William Maxwell Aitken).

Bennett, Richard Bedford.

Borden, Robert Laird.

Canadian Patriotic Fund Association.

Foster, George Eulas.

Frontier College.

King, William Lyon Mackenzie.

Meighen, Arthur.

Rigg, Richard A.

Rowell, Newton Wesley.

Sifton, Clifford.

Whitton, Charlotte.

Woodsworth, James Shaver.

Queen's University Archives

Crerar, Thomas A.

Rogers, Norman McLeod.

University of Manitoba Library

Dafoe, John.

King, William Lyon Mackenzie. Diaries.

UNPUBLISHED GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS:

Provincial Archives of Manitoba

Canada. Immigration Branch Records.

Manitoba. Department of the Attorney General.

_____. Department of Labour.

_____. Department of Public Works.

Public Archives of Canada

Canada. Department of Labour.

_____. Unemployment Insurance Commission.

UNPUBLISHED REPORTS AND PROCEEDINGS:

Men's Own of the City of Winnipeg. "Sixth Annual Report."

Rural Rehabilitation Commission. "Minutes of the Advisory Committee." 1932-46.

Winnipeg. "Minutes of the Unemployment Relief Committee."

_____. [Unemployment Relief Committee]. "Emergency Unemployment Relief, 1921-22."

_____. [Unemployment Relief Committee]. "Report on Emergency Unemployment Relief, Winnipeg 1924-25."

_____. [Unemployment Relief Committee]. "Report on Unemployment Relief Covering Winter 1925-26, Winnipeg, Manitoba."

- _____. [Unemployment Relief Committee]. "Report on Unemployment Relief, City of Winnipeg, September 1, 1930-August 31, 1931."
- _____. [Unemployment Relief Committee], "Unemployment Relief Committee Report, September 1, 1931-December 31, 1932."
- _____. Unemployment Relief Department. "Report of Operations and Costs, Year ending December 31, 1933."

PUBLISHED REPORTS, PROCEEDINGS AND SUBMISSIONS:

- Canada. Department of Labour. National Conference Regarding Winter Employment in Canada. Ottawa: King's Printer, 1924.
- _____. Dominion-Provincial Conference 1925. Record of Proceedings, Ottawa, December 9-13, 1935. Ottawa: King's Printer, 1936.
- _____. House of Commons. Debates. 1907-1942.
- Davidson, C.B. Employment in Manitoba. Winnipeg: Manitoba Economic Survey Board, 1938.
- _____. Unemployment in Manitoba. Winnipeg: Manitoba Economic Survey Board, 1938.
- Grauer, A.E. Public Assistance and Social Insurance; a Study Prepared for the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations. Ottawa: King's Printer, 1939.
- Great Britain. Royal Commission on the Natural Resources, Trade, and Legislation of Certain Portions of His Majesty's Dominions. Minutes of Evidence Taken in the Central and Western Provinces of Canada in 1916, Part I. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1917.
- Manitoba. Department of Public Works and Department of Labour. Memoranda to Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations. n.p., n.d.
- Manitoba's Case. A Submission Presented to the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations by the Government of Manitoba. Winnipeg: King's Printer, 1937.
- Pearson, R. McN. Provincial Finance in Manitoba. Winnipeg: Manitoba Economic Survey Board, 1938.

Report of the Ontario Commission on Unemployment. By J.S. Willison, Chairman. Toronto: King's Printer, 1916.

Report of the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations. By N.W. Rowell and J. Sirois, Chairmen. Ottawa: King's Printer, 1939.

Report of the Royal Commission on the Municipal Finances and Administration of the City of Winnipeg, 1939. By H.C. Goldenberg, Chairman. Winnipeg: King's Printer, 1939.

Seasonal Unemployment in Manitoba; a Report. By R.W. Murchie, Chairman. Winnipeg: King's Printer, 1938.

Stapleford, E.W. Report on Rural Relief due to Drought Conditions and Crop Failures in Western Canada, 1930-37. Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, 1939.

Stewart, A.M. The Youth Problem in Manitoba. Winnipeg: Manitoba Economic Survey Board, 1939.

Winnipeg. Minutes of City Council. 1907-1942.

_____. Submission to Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations. n.p., 1937.

Winnipeg Board of Trade. Brief Submitted to Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations. n.p., 1937.

PUBLISHED GOVERNMENT RECORDS:

Canada. Department of Labour. Labour Gazette. Ottawa: King's Printer, 1907-1942.

_____. Department of Trade and Commerce. Canada Year Book. Ottawa: King's Printer, 1907-1942.

_____. Dominion Bureau of Statistics. Seventh Census of Canada, 1931. Ottawa: King's Printer, 1933-1942.

_____. Dominion Bureau of Statistics. Sixth Census of Canada, 1921. Ottawa: King's Printer, 1924-1929.

_____. House of Commons. Sessional Papers, Ottawa: King's Printer, 1907-1942.

NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS:

Canadian Annual Review. 1907-1942.

Manitoba Free Press. 1907-1942.

Social Welfare. 1918-1928.

The Voice. 1907-1915.

Winnipeg Evening Tribune. 1907-1942.

CONTEMPORARY BOOKS:

Administration of Public Employment Offices and Unemployment Insurance: Canada, France, Sweden, Switzerland.
New York: Industrial Relations Counselors, Inc., 1935.

Baird, I. Waste Heritage. 1939; reprint ed., Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1974.

Cassidy, H.M. Public Health and Welfare Reorganization: The Postwar Problem in the Canadian Provinces.
Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1945.

_____. Social Security and Reconstruction in Canada. Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1943.

_____. Unemployment and Relief in Ontario 1929-1932: A Survey and Report. Toronto and Vancouver: J.M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1932.

Dingman, H.J. The Unemployed: A World Problem. Toronto: n.p., 1914.

Gilman, C.P. and H.M. Sinclair. Unemployment: Canada's Problem. Ottawa: Army and Navy Veterans in Canada, 1935.

Hope, A.T. Canada and the Unemployed Problem; Some Suggestions for its Solution. London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., Ltd., 1909.

Kirkconnell, Watson. International Aspects of Unemployment. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1923.

Mackintosh, W.A. The Economic Background of Dominion-Provincial Relations. 1939; reprint ed., Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1964.

- Marsh, L.C. Social Security in Canada. 1943 ; reprint ed., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975.
- Morris, P.H., ed., The Canadian Patriotic Fund; A Record of its Activities from 1914 to 1919, n.p., n.d.
- Richter, L., ed., Canada's Unemployment Problem. Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1939.
- Strong, M.K. Public Welfare Administration in Canada. Montclair, N.J.: Patterson Smith Publishing Corporation, 1930, 1969.
- Swanson, W.W. Depression and the Way Out. Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1931.
- Watson, F.D. The Charity Organization Movement in the United States: A Study in American Philanthropy. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922.
- Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. 5th ed., Toronto: Thomas Allen, Ltd., 1936.
- Whitton, C. The Dawn of Ampler Life. Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1943.
- Woodsworth, J.S. My Neighbor. A Study of City Conditions; A Plea for Social Service. 1911; reprint ed., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972.
- Yendall, W.R. The Common Problem. Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1942.

ORAL SOURCES:

Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature. Human History Division.

Interview with Ben Jacob, January 1973. Tape #589.

Interview with Joseph Kay, June 1972. Tape #427.

Interview with Mike Kostaniuk, January 1973. Tape #291.

Interview with Andrew Robertson, January 1973. Tape #303.

Interview with Mr. Robson, summer 1973. Tape #118.

Interview with Mrs. Stankovic, February 1973. Tape #317.

SECONDARY SOURCES

BOOKS:

- Adams, I.; Cameron, W.; Hill, B.; and Penz, P. The Real Poverty Report. Edmonton: M.G. Hurtig Limited, 1971.
- Artibise, A.F.J. Winnipeg: An Illustrated History. Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1977.
- _____. Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban Growth, 1874-1914. Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975.
- _____. ed, Town and City: Aspects of Western Canadian Urban Development. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1981.
- Avakumovic, I. The Communist Party in Canada; A History. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1975.
- Bellan, R. Winnipeg First Century: An Economic History. Winnipeg: Queenston Publishing House Co. Ltd., 1978.
- Bercuson, D.J. Confrontation at Winnipeg: Labour, Industrial Relations, and the General Strike. Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1974.
- Broadfoot, B. Ten Lost Years 1929-1939: Memories of Canadians Who Survived the Depression. Toronto: Doubleday Canada Ltd., 1973.
- Brown, R.C. and Cook, R. Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1974.
- Copp, T. The Anatomy of Poverty: The Condition of the Working Class in Montreal, 1897-1929. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1974.
- Creighton, D.G. The Forked Road: Canada 1939-1957. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1976.
- Dawson, R. McG. William Lyon Mackenzie King 1874-1923: A Political Biography. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958.
- De Schweinitz, K. England's Road to Social Security: From the Statute of Laborers in 1349 to the Beveridge Report of 1942. New York: A.S. Barnes & Company, Inc., 1943.

- Eayrs, J. In Defence of Canada: From the Great War to the Great Depression. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964.
- Finkel, A. Business and Social Reform in the Thirties. Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1979.
- Garraty, J.A. Unemployment in History: Economic Thought and Public Policy. New York: Harper and Row, 1978.
- Graham, R. Arthur Meighen, vol. 2: And Fortune Fled. Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Company Ltd., 1963.
- Granatstein, J.L. Canada's War: The Politics of the Mackenzie King Government, 1939-1945. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1975.
- Gray, J.H. The Winter Years: The Depression on the Prairies. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1966.
- Grayson, L.M. and Bliss, M., eds. The Wretched of Canada: Letters to R.B. Bennett, 1930-1935. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971.
- Hoar, V., ed. The Great Depression; Essays and Memoirs from Canada and the United States. Toronto: Copp Clarke Publishing Company, 1969.
- Horn, M., ed. The Dirty Thirties. Toronto: The Copp Clarke Publishing Company, 1972.
- Houghton, W.E. The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1957.
- Jackson, J.A. The Centennial History of Manitoba. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, Ltd., 1970.
- Jordan, M.V. Survival: Labour's Trials and Tribulations in Canada, Toronto: McDonald House, 1975.
- Kendle, J. John Bracken: A Political Biography. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979.
- Kuz, T.J., ed. Winnipeg, 1874-1974: Progress and Prospects. Winnipeg: Man. Dept. of Industry and Commerce, 1974.
- Liversedge, R. Recollections of the On to Ottawa Trek; With Documents Related to the Vancouver Strike and the On to Ottawa Trek. Edited by V. Hoar. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1973.
- McCormack, A.R. Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899-1919. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977.

- McCormack, A.R. and Macpherson, I., eds. Cities in the West: Papers of the Western Canada Urban History Conference, University of Winnipeg, October 1974. Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1975.
- Morton, D. The Canadian General: Sir William Otter. Toronto: A.M. Hakkert Ltd., 1974.
- Morton, W.L. Manitoba: A History. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967.
- Neatby, H.B. The Politics of Chaos: Canada in the Thirties. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1972.
- _____. William Lyon Mackenzie King, 1924-1932: The Lonely Heights. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963.
- _____. William Lyon Mackenzie King, 1932-1939: The Prism of Unity. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976.
- Piven, F.F. and Cloward, R.A. Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare. New York: Pantheon Books, 1971.
- Prang, M. N.W. Rowell: Ontario Nationalist. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975.
- Ringenbach, P.T. Tramps and Reformers, 1873-1916: The Discovery of Unemployment in New York. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1973.
- Safarian, A.E. The Canadian Economy in the Great Depression. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, Ltd., 1971.
- Thompson, J.H. The Harvests of War: The Prairie West, 1914-1918. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, Ltd., 1978.
- Urquhart, M.C. and Buckley, K.A.H. Historical Statistics of Canada. Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1965.
- Watkins, E. R.B. Bennett: A Biography. Toronto: Kingswood House, 1963.
- Wilbur, J.R.H., ed. The Bennett New Deal: Fraud or Portent? Toronto: Copp Clarke Publishing Company, 1968.

ARTICLES:

- Artibise, A.F.J. "An Urban Economy: Patterns of Economic Change in Winnipeg," Prairie Forum, 1(2), 1976, pp. 163-88.
- Bator, P.A. "'The Struggle to Raise the Lower Classes': Public Health Reform and the Problem of Poverty in Toronto, 1910 to 1921," Journal of Canadian Studies, 14(1), 1979, pp. 43-49.
- Browne, L. "Unemployment Relief Camps in Saskatchewan, 1933-1936," Saskatchewan History, 23(1), 1970, pp. 83-104.
- Cassidy, H.M. "Relief and Other Social Services for Transients," in Canada's Unemployment Problem. Edited by L. Richter. Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1939, pp. 172-221.
- Chambers, E.J. "The 1937-38 Recession in Canada," Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, 22, 1955, pp. 293-308.
- Childs, G. "History of Relief Work in Winnipeg," Social Welfare, February 1927, pp. 363-64.
- Conn, K.S. "Employment and Unemployment in Canada: Its Measurement with Special Reference to 1919," Canadian Historical Review, 6(3), 1925, pp. 236-44.
- "Experiences of a Depression Hobo," Saskatchewan History, 22(2), 1969, pp. 60-65.
- Fingard, J. "The Winter's Tale: Contours of Pre-industrial Poverty in British America, 1815-1860." Canadian Historical Association. Historical Papers, 1974, pp. 65-94.
- Finkel, A. "Origins of the Welfare State in Canada," in The Canadian State: Political Economy and Political Power. Edited by L. Panitch. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1977, pp. 344-70.
- Goffman, I.J. "Canadian Social Welfare Policy," in Contemporary Canada. Edited by R. Leach. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968, pp. 191-224.
- Hareven, T.K. "An Ambiguous Alliance: Some Aspects of American Influences on Canadian Social Welfare," Social History, 2, 1969, pp. 82-98.
- Horn, M. "Great Depression: Past and Present," Journal of Canadian Studies, 11(1), 1976, pp. 41-50.

- Horn, M. "Transient Men in the Depression," Canadian Forum, October 1974, pp. 36-38.
- Jaffary, S.K. "Social Security: The Beveridge and Marsh Reports," Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, 9, 1943, pp. 571-92.
- Kolisnyk, W.N. "In Canada Since the Spring of 1898," Marxist Review, January-February 1961, pp. 37-40.
- Lawton, A. "Relief Administration in Saskatoon During the Depression," Saskatchewan History, 22(2), 1969, pp. 41-59.
- McCormack, A.R. "Radical Politics in Winnipeg: 1899-1915." Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba. Transactions, Series 3, 29, 1972-73, pp. 81-97.
- McKillop, A.B. "The Communist as Conscience: Jacob Penner and Winnipeg Civic Politics, 1934-35," in Cities in the West: Papers of the Western Canada Urban History Conference, University of Winnipeg, October 1974. Edited by I. Macpherson and A.R. McCormack. Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1975, pp. 181-210.
- _____. "The Socialist as Citizen: John Queen and the Mayoralty of Winnipeg, 1935." Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba. Transactions, Series 3, 30, 1973-74, pp. 61-80.
- MacLean, M.C.; LeNeveu, A.H.; Tedford, W.C.; and Keyfitz, N. "Unemployment," in Canada. Seventh Census of Canada, 1931, vol. 13, Monographs. Ottawa: King's Printer, 1942, pp. 1-375.
- MacNamara, A. "Public Works as a Relief Measure," in Canada's Unemployment Problem. Edited by L. Richter. Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1939, pp. 296-321.
- Matters, D.L. "Public Welfare, Vancouver Style, 1910-1920," Journal of Canadian Studies, 14(1), 1979, pp. 3-15.
- Morgan, E.C. "Soldier Settlement in the Prairie Provinces," Saskatchewan History, 22(2), 1968, pp. 41-55.
- Morton, D. "Sir William Otter and Internment Operations in Canada During the First World War," Canadian Historical Review, 55(1), 1974, pp. 32-58.
- Neatby, B. "The Liberal Way: Fiscal and Monetary Policy in the 1930s," in The Great Depression: Essays and Memoirs from Canada and the United States. Edited by V. Hoar. Toronto: Copp Clarke Publishing Company, 1969, pp. 84-114.

- Neatby, B. "The Saskatchewan Relief Commission, 1931-34," Saskatchewan History, 3(2), 1950, pp. 41-56.
- Oliver, Capt. E.H. "A Viewpoint in Educational Reconstruction," Social Welfare, November 1918, pp. 27-28.
- Pitsula, J. "The Emergence of Social Work in Toronto," Journal of Canadian Studies, 14(1), 1979, pp. 35-42.
- Rea, J.E. "The Politics of Class: Winnipeg City Council, 1919-1945," in The West and the Nation: Essays in Honour of W.L. Morton. Edited by C. Berger and R. Cook. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, Ltd., 1976, pp. 232-49.
- _____. "The Politics of Conscience: Winnipeg after the Strike." Canadian Historical Association. Historical Papers, 1971, pp. 276-88.
- Riendeau, R.E. "A Clash of Interests: Dependency and the Municipal Problem in the Great Depression," Journal of Canadian Studies, 14(1), 1979, pp. 50-58.
- Robbins, J.E. "Dependency of Youth," in Canada. Seventh Census of Canada, 1931, vol. 13, Monographs. Ottawa: King's Printer, 1942, pp. 377-439.
- Roy, P. "Vancouver: 'The Mecca of the Unemployed,' 1907-1929," in Town and City: Aspects of Western Canadian Urban Development. Edited by A.F.J. Artibise. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1981, pp. 393-413.
- Russell, P.A. "The Co-operative Government's Response to the Depression, 1930-1934," Saskatchewan History, 24(3), 1971, pp. 81-100.
- Stewart, B.M. "The Problem of Unemployment," Social Welfare, March 1921, pp. 168-70.
- Strong-Boag, V. "'Wages of Housework': Mothers' Allowances and the Beginnings of Social Security in Canada," Journal of Canadian Studies, 14(1), 1979, pp. 24-34.
- Struthers, J. "Prelude to Depression: The Federal Government and Unemployment, 1918-1929," Canadian Historical Review, 58(3), 1977, pp. 277-93.
- _____. "Two Depressions: Bennett, Trudeau and the Unemployed," Journal of Canadian Studies, 14(1), 1979, pp. 70-80.
- Swankey, B. "Reflections of an Alberta Communist: The Hungry Thirties," Alberta History, 27(4), 1979, pp. 1-2.

Taylor, J. "'Relief from Relief': The Cities' Answer to Depression Dependency," Journal of Canadian Studies, 14(1), 1979, pp. 16-23.

_____. "Urban Social Organization and Urban Discontent: The 1930s," in Western Perspectives 1: Papers of the Western Canadian Studies Conference, 1973. Edited by D.J. Bercuson. Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada Ltd., 1974, pp. 33-44.

_____. "The Urban West: Public Welfare and a Theory of Urban Development," in Cities in the West: Papers of the Western Canada Urban History Conference, University of Winnipeg, October 1974. Edited by I. Macpherson and A.R. McCormack. Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1975, pp. 286-313.

Thompson, J.H. "Bringing in the Sheaves: The Harvest Excursionists, 1890-1929," Canadian Historical Review, 59(4), 1978, pp. 467-89.

_____. "The Political Career of Ralph H. Webb," Red River Valley Historian, Summer 1976, pp. 1-7.

Wallace, E. "The Origin of the Social Welfare State in Canada, 1867-1900," Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, 16, 1950, pp. 383-93.

Wilbur, J.R.H. "R.B. Bennett as a Reformer." Canadian Historical Association. Historical Papers, 1969, pp. 103-111.

Woodroffe, K. "The Making of the Welfare State in England: A Summary of Its Origin and Development," Journal of Social History, 1, 1967-68, pp. 303-324.

UNPUBLISHED THESES AND PAPERS:

Barber, P. "Class Conflict in Winnipeg Civic Politics: The Role of the Citizens and Civic Election Organizations," unpublished paper, March 1970. Copy deposited in Provincial Archives of Manitoba.

Bellan, R.C. "The Development of Winnipeg as a Metropolitan Centre," Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 1958.

_____. "Relief in Winnipeg; the Economic Background." M.A. thesis, University of Toronto, 1941.

Bradbury, B. "The Road to Receivership: Unemployment and Relief in Burnaby, North Vancouver City and District and West Vancouver, 1929-1933," M.A. thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1975.

- Hall, D.E. "Times of Trouble: Labour Quiescence in Manitoba, 1920-29," unpublished paper, March 1980. Copy in possession of the author.
- Inglis, A.I. "Some Political Factors in the Demise of the Roblin Government, 1915," M.A. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1968.
- Lawton, A. "Urban Relief in Saskatchewan During the Years of Depression, 1930-1939," M.A. thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1969.
- LeFresne, G.M. "'The Royal Twenty-Centers': The Department of National Defence and Federal Unemployment Relief, 1932-1936," B.A. thesis, Royal Military College, 1962.
- McCormack, A.R. "The Blanketstiffs: Immigrant Workers and Railway Construction in Canada, 1899-1913," unpublished paper, 1979. Copy in possession of the author.
- _____. "Wobblies and Blanketstiffs: The Constituency of the I.W.W. in Western Canada," Paper delivered to the Second Annual North American Labour History Conference at Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan, 9-11 October 1980. Copy in possession of the author.
- McKillop, A.B. "Citizen and Socialist: The Ethos of Political Winnipeg, 1919-1935," M.A. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1970.
- Marshall, D.B. "The National Employment Commission and the Challenge to Economic and Constitutional Orthodoxy," M.A. thesis, Queen's University, 1977.
- Newman, J.F. "Depression Attitudes: A Study of the Social Philosophy of the People in Southwestern Manitoba during the Depression (1930-1934), as Revealed Through Local Newspapers," unpublished paper, 1970. Copy deposited in Provincial Archives of Manitoba.
- Puttee, D.F. "The Development of State Relief in the Province of Manitoba," M.A. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1927.
- Roberts, B.A. "'Purely Administrative Proceedings': The Management of Canadian Deportation, Montreal, 1900-1935," Ph. D. thesis, University of Ottawa, 1980.
- Rowell, J.R. "An Intellectual in Politics: Norman Rogers as an Intellectual and Minister of Labour, 1929-1939," M.A. thesis, Queen's University, 1978.

- Ryback, S. "A Hasty Patching Up: An Examination of Unemployment and Relief Programs as They Affected Canada's Transient and Single Jobless, 1935-1940," M.A. thesis, Concordia University, Montreal, 1976.
- Stone, F.V. "Unemployment and Unemployment Relief in Western Canada," M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1933.
- Sutcliffe, J.H. "The Economic Background to the Winnipeg General Strike--Wages and Working Conditions," M.A. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1972.
- Swift, M.D. "R.B. Bennett and the Depression, 1930-1935," M.A. thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1964.
- Tanner, T.W. "Microcosms of Misfortune: Canada's Unemployment Relief Camps Administered by the Department of National Defence, 1932-1936," M.A. thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1965.