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THE DEVELOPMENT OF STATE RELIEF

IN

THE PROVINCE OF MANITOBA.

BY

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Foreword -

It is the object of this paper and the hope of the writer, that, by tracing the development of relief through its various 'charity' stages, by examining the organization, aims and policies of the various relief channels as found today, and by examining the records of those organizations, it may be possible to apply the principles of relief as found in the history of the English Poor Law, to our Manitoba system, and to estimate whether or not the policies followed have stable economic foundation. The problem of relief is so far-reaching in its causes and its consequences, that it has been necessary to confine consideration to very definite channels. For this reason we have omitted Soldiers' Pensions as being rewards of service, the Deserted Wives' Fund and the Red Cross Society as having arisen out of the war, Workmen's Compensation as being in lieu of wages, and Rural Credits and Settlement Schemes as investments on the part of the Government, in the land.

To avoid confusion we have used the terms 'indigent', 'necessitous' and 'destitute', when referring to those unable or unwilling to provide the necessities of life for themselves, and their families, and have refrained from using the terms 'pauper', 'poor' and 'poverty', which terms are generally used without specific meaning.

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## Chapter I - History.

The history of the development of relief organizations in the Province of Manitoba, falls naturally into three divisions coinciding with the periods of the growth of the province. From the Red River Settlement to about 1890, the little group of pioneers attained its status, the regime of the Hudson Bay Company passed, and the Settlement became a Province. From 1890 to 1910, roughly, the few grew to the many, the rapid growth brought its wake of attendant evils, and the Province attained a solidarity. From 1910 to 1927, the evils of the former period have been more or less systematically attacked, and an effort made to improve conditions for the entire province. The periods might well be characterized by the terms "Settlement", "Growth" and "Progress".

The early period began with the paternalistic regime of the Hudson Bay Company, (the feudal system applied to trade), and no relief or charity records were kept. Tuttle, in his History of Manitoba, mentions that in 1829, after the barren summer of 1828, the early and cold winter of 1828-9 drove the buffalo beyond the reach of the white man, and food became very scarce. Spring brought the great flood, and retreat was made to the hills to the west. Assistance was given by the Hudson Bay Company.

The earliest recorded relief was in 1868. In Tuttle's History we find the following statement:- "The crop of 1868 was entirely destroyed by grasshoppers, the fall buffalo hunt proved a failure as well as the fall fisheries, so that starvation stared the colony in the face. Under these circumstances, aid was solicited from England, Canada, and the United States of America, and a committee called the Red River Co-operative Relief Committee, composed of the principal gentlemen of the

colony, was formed. The appeal resulted in £3,000 coming from England, \$3,600 from Canada, and £ 900 from the United States of America."

Supporting this statement, there is in the Provincial Library, the Minute Book of the Red River Co-operative Relief Committee. Under the date of October 9th, 1868, is the record of an organization meeting, with a preamble as follows:- "Pursuant to a call issued by the Editor of the Nor'Wester newspaper, the gentlemen delegated to form this committee, met at the Nor'Wester rooms, in the town of Winnipeg, for the purpose of organization and for the transaction of other important business." Thereafter is recorded the organization of the Committee, the appeals for assistance, and the methods of distribution to those in distress. It is interesting to note that, in these minutes, three very modern aspects of the relief problem come to light. An effort was apparently made to set people to work, for the sub-committees were asked, "to report whether there were any male members in any family, who are able to work and can leave home," to work on the construction of the Fort Garry section of the Lake Superior road. By the twenty-fifth meeting, April 14th, 1869, it was found necessary to put a limit on the amount of relief issued,-"Be it resolved that the extreme limit of gratuitous giving be five bushels, which shall be given only to those who are in circumstances of actual poverty." Lastly, monies voted were never received. From the record of the thirty-first meeting, June 2nd, is the following quotation:-"It was proposed that Governor McFavish should write an official letter to the Hon. John McDonald, requesting him to remit to the Committee, the funds voted for the relief of the Red River sufferers by the Ontario Legislature."

The end of our first period reveals a City, with a Charter,