

THE ADMINISTRATION OF RELIEF TO THE UNEMPLOYED IN VANCOUVER
DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION

by

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ABSTRACT

Unemployment in Vancouver, Canada, during the Great Depression posed a significant threat to the continuation of political and social norms. The emergence of a large body of workers without jobs, many of whom could vote at the civic level, demanded the attention and intervention of private and government agencies. The response of the City of Vancouver and two major Christian denominations to the unemployment crisis is the subject of this thesis. The documentary evidence utilized came mainly from collections at the Vancouver School of Theology, the Catholic Charities and the City of Vancouver Archives.

The inadequacy and abuse of contemporary statistical resources perpetuated a view of the unemployed that emphasized their potential for social disruption. Despite the fact that most of Vancouver's jobless citizens were permanent residents, community leaders and relief planners took their cues from the single unemployed transients, a group that was more likely to demonstrate hostility to the status quo. The main objective of relief programmes through the 1930s soon came to be, therefore, social control. The United Church and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese, concerned by a general decline in church attendance and the anti-church rhetoric of left-wing agitators among the unemployed, escalated their spiritual and worldly services to the poor. The civic administration, equally perturbed by the proliferation of demonstrations and protest marches, attempted

to derail revolutionary ideas with an extension of its limited relief programmes. However, both church and state were constrained by the shortage of money. Consequently, in the absence of a strong social work ideology, relief was more a reflection of political and fiscal considerations than of the shifting needs of the unemployed. Relief was, simply put, the least expensive means of reintegrating the dispossessed into the established social milieu.

DEDICATION

To my father.

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used throughout this paper:

CVA: City of Vancouver Archives, Vancouver, British Columbia.

PABC: Provincial Archives of British Columbia.

UCA: United Church Archives, Vancouver School of Theology.

CCA: Catholic Charities Archives, Archdiocese of Vancouver.

UBCL: University of British Columbia Library.

MSS: Manuscripts.

TS: Typescript.

I. Introduction

To amend an old adage, the poor are always with us, but in varying degrees. During the 1930s their number seemed to increase exponentially in the wake of the Wall Street crash. In Canada, as throughout much of the industrialized world, one consequence was a crisis in the provision of assistance and social services to the destitute and jobless. During the first quarter of the twentieth century, traditional philanthropic agencies had become circumscribed in the range of their activities by the growing involvement of governments in the sphere of social welfare provision. However, neither private nor public sector could hope to meet the burgeoning demand for unemployment relief in the depression; it was doubtful they could do so even through combined efforts.

Unemployment relief in Vancouver, Canada, was tempered by anxieties over political and social unrest. To be sure, discontent of equally serious proportions could as easily arise out of profligate spending on welfare projects. Churches with shrinking congregations and correspondingly deflated coffers dared not ignore this fiscal imperative. Aldermen found themselves in a similar predicament as they contemplated the corollary of increased civic expenditures, namely, higher taxes. Though primarily a means of social control, relief to the unemployed was rigidly constrained by the cash nexus. The actual needs of the jobless Vancouverites were consulted only when they

coincided or diverged radically from the priorities set by relief administrators in conjunction with their auditors. Direct aid and work relief were the cheapest placebos available. ^{- was more expensive, earned after 327}

Scholarship on unemployment relief in Canada has tended towards fragmented analysis. Few historians have endeavoured to paint a comprehensive picture of the nature and extent of unemployment assistance prior to 1940. Some historians writing on Vancouver, like Diane Matters and John Taylor, have focussed their attention on the public sector response to joblessness, almost completely excluding any private sector efforts in their studies. James Struthers, by way of contrast, has coherently tied together the private and public sectors but really only at the Dominion level. If Struthers can be criticized at all it must be for his rather two-dimensional interpretation of the Canadian political milieu, in that it neglects the influences of municipal interests and the personalities of Provincial premiers. Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, two American scholars, have endeavoured to re-interpret welfare and unemployment relief as integral elements in government's arsenal of social controls. They describe relief programmes as trade-offs between disgruntled workers on the one hand and besieged officials on the other. Alvin Finkel's work is similar in this regard except that he emphasizes the important role played by the business community. Nonetheless, Finkel mistakenly perceives the business sector as a monolithic lobby and not as a diverse group with frequently incompatible and conflicting

interests. In order to understand the ideal and the implementation of relief, it is necessary to come to grips with the total spectrum of all these forces as they influenced both private and governmental assistance.¹

A few research limitations deserve mention at this point. Although lists of civic relief recipients are not available, an awareness of the significance of their situation in the 1930s seems to have infected both bureaucratic and clerical administrators alike. The result was a plethora of tables, charts and maps dealing with relief in this city. While these resources are seldom ideal, they do serve to give a quantitative feel to the qualitative evidence in hand. Other difficulties

¹-----
Diane Matters, "The Development of Public Welfare Institutions in Vancouver, 1910-1920" (B.A. essay, University of Victoria, 1973); Matters, "Public Welfare Vancouver Style, 1910-1920," Journal of Canadian Studies XIV, 1 (Spring 1979): 3-15; John H. Taylor, "Mayors in Depression, A Study of the Evolution and Failure of Social Policy and Collective Organization" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1976); Taylor, "Urban Social Organization and Urban Discontent: the 1930s," Western Perspectives I: Papers of the Western Canadian Studies Conference, 1973, ed. by D.J. Bercuson (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974); Taylor, "The Urban West, Public Welfare, and a Theory of Urban Development," Cities in the West: Papers of the Western Canadian Urban History Conference, ed. A.R. McCormack and Ian Macpherson (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1975); Taylor, "'Relief from Relief': The Cities' Answer to Depression Dependency," Journal of Canadian Studies XIV, 1 (Spring 1979): 16-23; James Struthers, "Prelude to Depression: The Federal Government and Unemployment, 1918-1929," Canadian Historical Review LVIII, 3 (September 1977): 277-293; Struthers, "Two Depressions: Bennett, Trudeau, and the Unemployed," Journal of Canadian Studies XIV, 1 (Spring 1979): 70-80; Struthers, "A Profession in Crisis: Charlotte Whitton and Canadian Social Work in the 1930s," Canadian Historical Review LXII, 2 (June 1981): 169-185; Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971); Alvin Finkel, Business and Social Reform in the Thirties (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1979).

have arisen in the research with respect to the role of churches in relief work.² The activities of several christian denominations have been dealt with only briefly in this study. The clear dominance of the United Church and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese in the field of relief work, however, coupled with the superiority of documentation available through their respective archives make this a logical choice. By way of an example, sectarian churches like the Baptists, divided into "Regular" and "Federationist" camps, will have kept what few records they have on a church by church, congregation by congregation basis. Not surprisingly, almost all are reluctant to open their books to the inquisitive historian (and particularly for the inquisitive agnostic historian). In addition, the role played by senior governments in forcing the hand of municipal agencies deserves further study, though not here. Other historians have dealt with the question of relief arising from Provincial and Dominion coffers and these works must suffice to whet the readers' appetite in this respect. Finally, and in contrast to studies done by Bradbury, LeFresne, and Tanner, work relief has been made secondary to the importance of direct relief simply because the latter was the

²-----
The absence of records on church welfare cases verges on the notorious. M.N.Cote notes that records of the children helped by the Catholic Children's Aid Society were not kept until 1936. Up to that time "The only records of the children were kept on small cards which [the Society Secretary] made a practice of carrying around in his pocket". Maurice N. Cote, "The Children's Aid Society of the Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver: Its Origins and Development, 1905-1953," (M.S.W. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1953), p.23.

preferred form of assistance administered during the 1930s in Vancouver.³

In spite of these limitations, Vancouver serves as a good subject for a comprehensive study of relief during the depression for a number of reasons. First, documentation on civic activities in the field of unemployment aid is plentiful at the City of Vancouver Archives, the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, and the University of British Columbia's Special Collections. Second, the archives at the Vancouver School of Theology and the Catholic Charities have made possible some comparative work on these two private agencies. Third, because of the high concentration of transients in Vancouver during the early years of the depression an examination of the relief programmes established provides a test case for the theories on public programmes and social control postulated by Finkel, Struthers, and Piven and Cloward. It is important to note, however, that pressures applied by the single transients were never as enduring as those brought to bear by the resident unemployed. Nonetheless, the emphasis placed by Marion Lane and R.C. McCandless on riots and demonstrations led by the single men have contributed to a perception of the situation in which the

³ Bettina Bradbury, "The Road to Receivership: unemployment and relief in Burnaby, North Vancouver District, and West Vancouver," (M.A. thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1976); G.M. LeFresne, "The Royal Twenty Centers: The Department of National Defence and Federal Unemployment Relief, 1932-1936," (B.A. essay, Royal Military College of Canada, 1962); Thomas W. Tanner, "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).

role of the resident unemployed is reduced to insignificance.⁴ The local jobless were a more persistent problem for philanthropic agencies in Vancouver and, being enfranchised, they posed a greater political threat to incumbents on City Council. Finally, this thesis will contribute to the growing number of studies on civic politics in Canada during the depression. Hopefully a comparative study will someday emerge from these diverse volumes, one which will tie the disparate approaches into a comprehensive whole.

The present study is an attempt to shed light on the relief system in Vancouver by emphasizing its political undercurrents and the administrative structures that dictated the form relief would take. Chapter II provides the appropriate background to Vancouver's relief network by describing pertinent features of the city's development to 1929, the nature of charity, popular attitudes towards relief, and welfare prospects facing resident unemployed at the time of the "crash". Each of the subsequent chapters deal with the popular perceptions of the unemployed, the relief offered by church organizations, and the important role played by the City of Vancouver. Vancouver in the great depression offered a number of balms to unemployment, all of which underlined an enduring link to the poor laws of the nineteenth century on the one hand and developing social work

⁴Marion Lane, "Unemployment during the Depression: the problem of the single unemployed male transient," (B.A. essay, University of British Columbia, 1966); R.C. McCandless, "Vancouver's 'Red Menace' of 1935: The Waterfront Situation," BC Studies 22 (Summer 1974): 56-70.

mores on the other.

II. Vancouver and Relief

In the first three decades of the twentieth century Vancouver was, then as now, a major shipping point for bulk goods produced elsewhere. The city's economy depended primarily on growth in the lumber markets at home and abroad as well as on overseas contracts for Prairie grain. In addition, the downtown peninsula was buttressed by heavy industry. Lumber mills rimmed False Creek while the Burrard Inlet flank was dotted with warehouses, elevators, docks and shipyards from Coal Harbour through to Burnaby. Although one writer rightly argues that Vancouver was, for its size, "very much under-industrialized", that is a valid observation only insofar as primary industries alone are considered.¹ The estimable activities of the construction sector were evident throughout the city in the form of concrete and gravel yards. Burrard Drydocks was a constant beehive of activity as was the Sweeney cooperage; canneries and fishing boats were a common feature along the waterfront, despite the commanding position held by Steveston in that industry. On the south flank of the city Fraser River traffic thrived throughout the 1920s even though Vancouver had long eclipsed New Westminster as a port. The attractiveness to ships' captains of fresh water quays ensured that industries from

¹Alan Morley, Vancouver: Milltown to Metropolis (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1961), pp.174-175.

Marpole and Eburne east would not quickly yield to the encroaching waves of housing development. The bottom line of Vancouver's economic base during the years prior to the depression was a heavy dependence on bulk goods originating in the provincial hinterland or the east, integrated with perpetually modernizing secondary and tertiary industries throughout the city.

Settlement patterns underlined this reliance on a staple/service economy. Although finance capital had already begun to make its presence felt on the urban skyline the West End, Fairview Slopes, and Strathcona were all dominated by working class housing. The exception was the area near Stanley Park overlooking English Bay, which was interspersed with mansions built before the development of Shaughnessy and British Properties.² South side industry, coupled with the release of residential lands in the old municipality of South Vancouver, sharply increased the population in the area. In fact, by 1932 wards six and seven, which included most of the south side, were the largest in the city, ward seven containing more civic electors than the three downtown wards combined. The working class was heavily represented in all of these jurisdictions. Point Grey, the other junior partner in Vancouver's 1929

² John Taylor divided the city into two rental districts. That containing low rental accommodations excluded the West End. My information (see below, Chapter II) contradicts this and points to a significant number of boarding houses, apartments and shared accommodations well past Burrard Street. Taylor, "Mayors in Depression," p.259.

amalgamation, was lightly populated and was still suburban as well as middle class. At the westernmost edge the permanent campus of the University of British Columbia was reaching the first stage of completion in the late 1920s, although it remained littered with army huts and puny, unpromising saplings. Near the city's geographical center the captains of provincial industries were still erecting huge estates on lands provided by the Canadian Pacific Railway. The Oakridge district immediately south of Shaughnessy, however, was little more than a promoter's daydream before the depression, several acres of C.P.R. land laying fallow except for tenacious bush and stumps. A decidedly sectionalized city, Vancouver had both its working class and bourgeois sections, in many cases separated by unwanted and unused land controlled by speculators.

The people inhabiting this landscape were, by and large, from somewhere else. One student of Canadian urban growth has pointed out that "the Western cities ... were growing mainly from their own demographic resources by the First World War...."³ In the case of Vancouver, however, his own figures refute this contention. Between 1921 and 1931 the city's population increased by a total of 83,373. Of this number 18,880 (22.6%) were the product of natural growth, while the vast majority came from outside of the province (34,697 or 41.6%) and from internal migration (29,796 or 35.7%). Certainly the city was becoming more western Canadian in its composition, although

³ Ibid., p.134.

its economic ties with central Canada were in no way reduced.⁴

The depression drew an awful stillness over Vancouver's economic activities. Industries along the harbour side stood quiet, collecting dust but no new contracts. The peculiarities of Vancouver's economy in the 1920s and 1930s located it in a social and political maelstrom which was distinct from, though not categorically worse than most others in North America. When construction levels went into a tailspin on the coast and across the Prairies so too did the lumber industry and its subsidiaries. The upshot was that the lumbermen could find no buyers for the 200 million-plus board feet they had managed to sell annually through most of the 1920s.⁵ As sales melted away through the rainy winter of 1929-1930, jobs on the quays and in the mills around the city became more and more scarce. Throughout the province the main crop in the still young century had been conifers and suddenly the demand had vanished. Hundreds and thousands of harvesters, refiners and shippers were thrown out of work. The repercussions for Vancouver were severe.

this is p. 5.

Regular patterns of existence on the coast had developed through years of seasonal and migratory work in the forests and fisheries of British Columbia. Vancouver had come to hold an important role as the winter resort for many transient and

⁴-----
See Norbert Macdonald, "Population Growth and Change in Seattle and Vancouver, 1880-1960", Pacific Historical Review, XXXIX, 3 (October 1970): 297-321.

⁵ Margaret Ormsby, British Columbia: A History (Toronto: Macmillan, 1958), p.442.

semi-transient workers.⁶ West End boarding houses thrived in this atmosphere of on- and off-season scheduling as did hotels frequented by working men along Hastings Street and south on either side of Main. After a short winter's de-bushing, the 'jacks and the fishermen returned to their spring, summer and fall haunts outside of the city limits, more likely than not to return with pockets full when the elements once again forbade further labour. The "crash" came, almost conveniently, as the yearly pilgrimage to Vancouver in 1929 was reaching its zenith. An abundance of local unemployed exacerbated the difficult situation which was unfolding. An exodus of depression refugees from the Prairies made matters even worse. While some farm labourers had used Vancouver in the past as an off season base and others had alternated between farm work and urban labour in the metropolis, their number was now enormous. This situation had become accentuated even before the crash by the growing utilization of the combine harvester in the late 1920s, a development which had dramatically reduced the need for floating farm labour.⁷ The damp but mild west coast winters, made accessible by boxcar rides courtesy of the C.P.R. and the Canadian National Railway, proved an almost irresistible magnet, one which placed a great burden on the wallets of city taxpayers

⁶ See Eleanor Bartlett, "Real Wages and the Standard of Living in Vancouver, 1901-1929," BC Studies 51 (Autumn 1981): 8.

⁷ H.M. Cassidy, "Relief & Social Services for Transients," Canada's Unemployment Problem ed. L. Richter (Toronto: The MacMillan Company, 1939), p.178.

Mayor's Council [unclear]?

Past experience, however, led the city fathers to believe that the spring of 1930 would see the usual economic thaw and the concurrent evacuation of flop-houses and rooming houses. Needless to say, history refused to repeat itself.

It was fortuitous, then, that Vancouver's civic administration was not without some experience in the field of social welfare work. In 1912 Vancouver had joined Montreal and Toronto in the vanguard of Canadian cities with respect to public sector relief programmes by establishing a permanent relief office. In fact, as James Struthers observed, "in the early post-[First World] war years Canada was the North American pioneer in unemployment research and relief".⁸ Struthers added, somewhat sardonically, that the problem in the 1930s lay in the fact that the country was unprepared primarily because of "what had been forgotten and abandoned" from its early days of relief experimentation.⁹ Not everything, to be sure, had been lost by 1929. The official, governmental/bureaucratic attitudes towards relief went largely unaltered. In a recent article in the Journal of Canadian Studies, Diane Matters noted that although Vancouver's relief department was in receipt of a respectable budget and although it addressed concerns that were recognized by all to be legitimate, basic prejudices remained:

... relief was to be given to as few as possible, and in a method calculated to discourage as many future requests as possible. The dual step of accepting relief,

⁸ Struthers, "Prelude to Depression", p.278.

⁹ Ibid.

while at the same time adhering to the old poor law approach to the needy, bode ill for the future development of the welfare state in Canada.¹⁰

The City, then, pulled back from the prospect of complete control of social welfare and relief. The rudimentary welfare department still depended (and would come to depend even more heavily) upon private sector aid along traditional lines which could augment public sector programmes.

The fundamental precepts behind newly established relief programmes were solidly rooted in the nineteenth experience of private charities. In the 1800s the local church was frequently the most important administrative unit in the provision of relief to the indigent. This kind of philanthropy had as its checks and balances morality, the minister's partial or full democratic responsibility to his parish or congregation, in many instances a deferential church hierarchy, and, in all cases, a degree of responsibility to authorities in local government. These ensured a distribution system that was in keeping with "community", congregation, and church objectives. Charity and alms-giving, then, were informed by the demands of the status quo rather than the needs of the indigent.

The whole concept of the "gift", as Gareth Stedman Jones has referred to private relief, is one which satisfies three social and personal needs that are common to virtually all cultures and societies.¹¹ To begin with, and this stems from Max
¹⁰ Matters, "Public Welfare Vancouver Style," p.14.

¹¹ Gareth Stedman Jones, Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship Between Classes in Victorian Society (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp.250-252.

Weber's observations in The Sociology of Religion, the gift of alms addresses a need to make sacrifices.¹² One author has stated the essence of this psychology succinctly:

Alms are the result on the one hand of a moral idea about gifts and wealth and on the other an idea about sacrifice. Generosity is necessary because otherwise [God] will take vengeance upon the excessive wealth and happiness of the rich by giving to the poor....¹³

The recipient in this scenario is really incidental: "he has significance only because of his need and solicitation".¹⁴

Furthermore, the gift indicates prestige and a social hierarchy. Obviously the ability to be philanthropic denotes a degree of material success which surpasses that of the recipient. In this way it reaffirms the social and economic status quo. Finally, charity, since it is unilateral and originates on the upper rungs of the social ladder, demands gratitude usually in the form of deference and obedience to authority. It is, therefore, a means of social control. These vital characteristics of charity remained constant throughout the 1800s and continue essentially unchanged at its core today.

Herein we find the origins of the so-called "poor law" attitudes towards social welfare which were in common currency in the 1920s and 1930s. Judith Fingard, writing on the subject

¹² Max Weber, The Sociology of Religion, translated by Ephraim Fischhoff (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), pp.212-214, 224-225.

¹³ Marcel Mauss, The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies, trans. Ian Cunnison (New York: W.W.Norton, 1967), p.15.

¹⁴ Jones, Outcast London, pp.251-252.

of public relief in the Maritimes during the last century, characterized the prevailing disposition of business and the public sector in this way: "Gratuitous charity represented the worst sort of investment for an enterprising community".¹⁵ In the 1800s the public genre of charity continued to be viewed as a means of social control, but with a difference: it was punitive. In England, the raison d'etre for this bias has been explained thus:

Charity could not fulfill its role as a personal relationship [between donor and recipient] dependent upon acceptable behaviour unless the Poor Law was clearly seen as a penalty for moral and economic failure.¹⁶

The Protestant work ethic implied that there was a direct link between moral laxity and economic failure. Acceptance of charity by the unemployed worker therefore constituted the equivalent of an admission of guilt. Charlotte Whitton, the most prominent proto-social worker of the decade, used her offices with the Canadian Welfare Federation to propagate the subtle association of relief eligibility with unworthiness. Severe though it may seem, Whitton's approach sought to discourage dependency by perpetuating a philosophy of relief which was essential chastening.¹⁷

¹⁵ Judith Fingard, "The Relief of the Unemployed: The Poor in Saint John, Halifax and Saint John's, 1815-1869", The Canadian City: Essays in Urban History, ed. Gilbert A. Stetler and Alan F.J. Artibise (Toronto: Macmillan, 1979), p.348.

¹⁶ Jones, Outcast London, p.255.

¹⁷ Struthers, "A Profession in Crisis."

By 1929 the popularity of this position, while in decline, was not yet in eclipse. The institutions that were likely to provide unemployment relief in the 1930s had developed through years of providing "poor relief" and charity. The perceptions held of the destitute by individuals in these agencies was coloured in a predictable fashion and was most certainly out of date. The Charity Organization Society (C.O.S.), for example, was first established in Great Britain with the avowed intent of reducing duplication among private agencies and thereby making life on relief or welfare less and less appealing. The C.O.S. played a major role in many large North American cities during the depression, although not in Vancouver. One historian has noted the impact of traditional views on the newer forms of relief and makes an important observation:

The stigma of accepting charity had outlived its relevance but it was still alive, and very real, both for men on relief and for officials who administered relief. Add to this sentiment the desperate efforts of municipal, provincial and federal governments to avoid bankruptcy, with the imperative of limiting the size of the relief rolls, as well as the usual impersonal and incredible red tape of bureaucracy, and it is easy to understand that to be on relief remained a humiliating experience. To be on the dole was to be something less than human in the Canada of the 1930s.¹⁸

Nevertheless, there was a major distinction to be made between the depression of the 1930s and the economic downturns that had preceded it: the scale and persistence of unemployment created a new class of Canadians --- J.K. Galbraith has recently called

¹⁸-----
H. Blair Neatby, The Politics of Chaos: Canada in the Thirties (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1972), p.26.

them "disemployed"¹⁹ --- who held in common the experience of sudden and sweeping unemployment. This factor placed traditional alms-giving roles and relief into an entirely new perspective.

The results were slow in coming. Harry Cassidy, the social scientist who was recruited into the British Columbia civil service during the 1930s, wrote early in the decade that "'direct relief' ... is merely a polite name for poor relief".²⁰ As another author correctly observed, this was "an attitude which had been strengthened by suspicious and parsimonious officials, dating back to the Elizabethan Poor Law...."²¹ As for public opinion, Frank G. Pedley ventured to say that "Certain it is that the average citizen, while professing sympathy for the destitute, sick and aged, is intolerant of the loafer and in this respect his viewpoint is entirely Elizabethan".²² In 1932, however, Pedley indicated to the Canadian Political Science Association that public opinion had shifted, particularly among intellectuals and the bourgeoisie:

In our armchairs, after a good dinner, we may expand somewhat on the dangers of allowing the doctrine to thrive that the state owes a man a living, but even the

¹⁹ John Kenneth Galbraith, "A Word in Defence of the Maligned Economists", The Vancouver Sun, 29 March 1982, p.6. ✓

²⁰ H.M. Cassidy, "Relief Works as a Remedy for Unemployment in the Light of the Ontario Experience, 1930-32", Papers and Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, IV (Kingston: Jackson Press, 1932):p.25. ✓

²¹ Neatby, Politics of Chaos, p.25.

²² Frank G. Pedley, "The Role of Private Charity in Meeting Distress due to Unemployment". Canadian Political Science Association Papers and Proceedings, v.4 (1932), p.58. }

most hardened industrialist believes that, if a man is able to work and unable to obtain it, he and his family should be supplied with sustenance. The acceptance of this proposition is in measure a repudiation of the doctrine of stark individualism and represents a stage in our emergence from the jungle, where the law of the survival of the fittest reigns supreme. The acceptance of the proposition is, too, a recognition of the community's responsibility in the alleviation of destitution, particularly that destitution which is the direct result of great forces beyond the power of the individual to control.²³

In addition, people like Cassidy were beginning to make a distinction between the chronic poor and the unemployed or disemployed.²⁴ This development, more than any other, contributed to the change in attitudes held by the public and officials of the recipients of relief during the 1930s and to the emergence, although slowly, of new social policies. It was, at bottom, a recognition that personal responsibility for success and failure was a concept that was incompatible with explanations of the depression as a world-wide phenomenon akin to an act of God. While what might be termed traditional views of the jobless continued to hold sway in many relief offices and philanthropic agencies, even there such notions were yielding to new interpretations.

The evolving perceptions of unemployment and the unemployed were articulated in the material response of welfare "agencies" to the economic and social crisis of the 1930s. These were three tiered: private, work, and direct relief.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ H.M. Cassidy, Unemployment and Relief in Ontario, 1929-1930 (Toronto: J.M.Dent & Sons, 1932?), pp.164-165.

Private aid, predominated in Vancouver by charity from churches and benevolent associations, could consist of a free meal, clothing, cash, household goods or consultation. While many of the recipients of this type of support were simply supplementing their income from other sources, some were completely dependent upon this sector. Private relief carried with it problems which had long been implicit in the welfare work of the private sector. It was characterized by an atmosphere of pauperism, a sense of obligation to a patron (be that an organization or an individual), and an unreliability arising out of a deflated economy.

Work relief, which is usually associated with the public sphere, consisted of cash or scrip in exchange for menial labour. The least beneficial of these works were described by the recipient workers as "boondoggles" although some, like road, dike, airstrip and park construction, could arguably have positive ramifications for the rest of the economy. The main benefit of work relief programmes, however, was the maintenance of the morale and physical well-being of the unemployed. Many politicians and entrepreneurs were concerned that the depression, if it proved to be protracted, would reduce the national labour pool to uselessness. As one author has written:

It was agreed by both the Dominion and Provincial governments that the main object of the whole [work camp] scheme was the preservation of the morale of the youth of Canada by keeping them in such physical and mental health that they would be re-employable when economic conditions improved and they could be absorbed

by industry.²⁵

The Government of British Columbia made its mark in this field early in the depression by establishing work relief camps across the province which had these objectives and the further goal of removing potentially radical groups of men from the tense city cores. This idea was picked up by Ottawa and, in 1932, by the Department of National Defence.

Third and finally, the unemployed and disemployed could turn to direct relief for sustenance. The Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly on Unemployment, 1932, gave this definition:

Direct Relief means the supply of the necessaries of life --- namely, food, shelter, and clothing, with, in special cases, fuel, medical treatment, etc. --- to persons actually in need of the same, who are employable but unemployed. A person who is unemployable by reason of physical or other disability is not given direct relief, but is given assistance, if necessary, by the Dominion or the Province, as the case may be, quite distinctly from direct relief.²⁶

While all three levels of government participated to varying degrees in the administration of direct relief, it was the local councils that recognized the sort of demand being created, picked up the tab for administrative costs, and monitored the situation at regular intervals. Though the City of Vancouver relied upon Victoria and Ottawa for funding the two senior governments had little choice but to defer to civic authorities

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Le Fresne, "The Royal Twenty Centers," p.17

²⁶British Columbia, Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly on Unemployment, 1932 (Victoria: Charles Banfield, 1932), p.10.

for an accounting of the situation.

The response of Vancouver agencies to unemployment, then, was shaped by its economic and demographic features, shifting perceptions of philanthropy, and a constitutional alignment of responsibilities which emphasized action by municipal governments and "self-help". The appearance on the scene of a jobless sub-class of workers (whose probable permanence could not be dismissed) was pregnant with implications for a political and economic system which seemed to have bottomed out. The disquieting belief that social unrest walked hand-in-glove with joblessness demanded more than rhetoric from community leaders.

III. The Unemployed in Vancouver: A Profile

In 1931 the Vancouver City Relief Officer, H.W.Cooper, wrote that "there is nothing wrong with the unemployed except unemployment".¹ And, clearly, Cooper was right, there was nothing innately undesirable about the unemployed. Beyond this, however, it was hard for anyone to acquire much of an understanding of the jobless.

Information gathering mechanisms like surveys and the census were not sufficiently sophisticated in the 1930s to make possible an accurate accounting of the unemployment situation. But, since no body, elected or otherwise, was keen to throw money at a problem which was for the most part nebulous, an understanding of how far relief was expected to stretch became an urgent necessity. While this information vacuum spurred on some lively debate as to the usefulness of spending more on relief, it also made for a policy-planning system that was reactive. Unable to anticipate weaknesses in the administration of relief, civic officials waited for the unemployed and the voters to give them direction. Patently incorrect assumptions about the unemployed and their expectations were thereby perpetuated. Perception and myth, consequently, played a

¹H.W.Cooper, Relief Officer, "Memorandum Re the Unemployment Relief Act 1930 and its Operation in Vancouver, 19 January 1931," Office of the City Clerk, Incoming Correspondence, vol.166, 15B4, City of Vancouver Archives (hereafter CVA), Vancouver, British Columbia.

critical role in determining the type of relief administration network that served jobless Vancouverites during the depression.

Before coming to grips with the types of assistance provided by both church and government in the Terminal City during the 'thirties it is necessary to arrive at some understanding of who the unemployed and relief applicants were. To that end, this chapter focusses on three salient aspects of the unemployment question. First, the critical shortcomings in the available contemporary data bases and ways in which these were mitigated will be examined. Second, the types of unemployed in the city will be surveyed with an eye to establishing the sort of threat they posed to either the social order or the fiscal survival of the local administration. Finally, the popular perceptions of the unemployed, which shifted almost daily, deserve consideration. The perception and the reality of unemployment in Vancouver, frequently at odds, must not be overlooked as crucial ~~SPKX~~ elements in the development of relief programmes. Responsible welfare budgeting demanded that funds be spent only where the problem was clearly identified. To this end public sector monitoring systems were established and fine-tuned throughout the depression, though with few positive results. At first, distinctions between the old unemployed and the new were vague. While social scientists in the 1930s called for a clearer demarcation between what one author called the "formerly employed" and the indigent, this perceptual change was

slow in coming.² Further, there was a nascent desire to segregate the "involuntary from the voluntary unemployed."³ These obstacles to a meaningful survey of the unemployed in Vancouver were never satisfactorily removed.

Three statistical sources that had been available since well before the depression were most often called upon by civil servants and social scientists. The Dominion Bureau of Statistics produced an "Employment Index", the Department of Labour gathered figures from trade union returns, and the Federal Employment Service generated its own lists.⁴ All three of these mechanisms suffered from the same deficiency: they looked for employment but not unemployment. These were, of course, entirely different phenomenon. Knowing the number of people who held jobs gave no insights into the size of the labour reserve. Nonetheless, faced with a dearth of quantitative information on the jobless, relief administrators quoted these inadequate resources loyally.

Efforts to gather information on the unemployed were further impaired by problems associated with those who are today called the "hidden" unemployed. Students fresh out of school

² Leonard C. Marsh, Employment Research: An Introduction to the McGill Programme of Research in the Social Sciences (Toronto: Amen House, 1935), p.37.

³ Professor G.T. Drummond, "Unemployment Provision," Vancouver, British Columbia, n.d., Hugh Dobson Papers, Box B4, File D, United Church Archives, Vancouver, British Columbia (hereafter JCA).

⁴ Marsh, Employment Research, p.246.

were usually left off the census tables because they had had no jobs to lose and therefore could not be categorized as unemployed. The same conundrum faced large numbers of women who had either never before entered the official workforce or had done so, perhaps during the Great War, and subsequently returned to tending hearth and home. The mobility of labour also presented significant obstacles to obtaining a true picture of the unemployed. Workers who were highly transient --- by choice or by necessity --- were prone to statistical invisibility. The same held true for those who had moved to Vancouver but were ignored by a local administration chary of gaining additional responsibilities. There is no way of knowing for sure what proportion of this body of unofficially unemployed Canadians found their way to Vancouver.

Two other, more useful statistical resources became available in 1931 and 1932. The Canadian Census, completed in 1931, gave a breakdown of unemployment in major centres. This was a real boon to civic bureaucrats. The greatest weakness of the census lay in its decennial appearance. Going out of date almost as fast as it was printed, the census could not last as a major aid to the relief department or private charities over the long term of the depression. What was more valuable to civic officials was the ongoing registration of relief applicants, a large-scale Provincial version of which was initiated in August 1931. The purpose of registration was twofold: it would give the public administrators some idea of the extent of their charge by

drawing out the hidden cases with the lure of financial aid, and it would serve as a deterrent to prospective immigrants to the province by establishing a retroactive cut off date for eligibility. The effectiveness of the Provincial programme was reduced by the reluctance of some people to register. As Vancouver's Chief Constable observed in his 1931 report to the Police Commission: "The best type of worker, manual or white collar occupations, do not register under any scheme until they are destitute, they do the best they can to be independent of charity or relief."⁵ Often "lame dogs" who were being helped along by private charity or family saw no need to register, and foreign-born unemployed frequently hesitated to apply for relief, "owing to the false rumours circulated by the Communist Party, as to the policy of deportation of the Federal Government."⁶ The major asset of the Provincial programme was the fact that registration was connected with relief eligibility. By emphasizing this aspect, the impression was created among the unemployed that they would only receive the government's consideration by submitting to relief.⁷ The recognition of the need for accurate statistical information on

⁵W.J.Bingham, Chief Constable of Vancouver, "Report to His Worship the Mayor and Members of the Vancouver Police Commission," 21 January 1931, Major James Skitt Matthews Collection, Add.Mss.54, vol.8, file 51, CVA.

⁶Ibid.

⁷C.P.Gilman and Huntly M. Sinclair, Unemployment: Canada's Problem (Ottawa: The Army and Navy Veterans in Canada, 1935), p.79.

the unemployed marked the seriousness of the economic situation and the fact that public agencies had taken a major step towards dealing with the new set of circumstances.⁸

What did the census and registration reveal? In the year ending 1 June 1931, 45.76 percent of all male wage earners in all Vancouver industries had lost time through either temporary or permanent lay-offs. The industries that contributed the greatest number of unemployed males were construction, which showed 6,676 out of work over the year (almost nine percent of the total), transportation and communications with 4,512 (six percent of the total), and the service sector at 3,819 out of work (five percent of the total). The worst hit industry was forestry and logging, in which over eighty-seven percent of the male wage-earners had lost time. The least affected, according to the census, were professionals, who constituted only 0.55 percent of the total unemployed male population in Vancouver. The Canada Census of 1931 indicated the distribution of unemployment and its severity in very telling terms.⁹

Relief registration revealed other patterns which complemented those exposed by the census. To begin with, the registration demonstrated that, of the nearly forty thousand unemployed men and women recorded in the 1930/31 census in Vancouver, only about one half were ever willing to apply for

⁸ Marsh, Employment Research , p.247.

⁹ Canada, Bureau of Statistics, Seventh Census of Canada, 1931, vol.6 (Ottawa: J.O.Patenaude, 1936), pp.700-713.

any governmental assistance at any one time during the decade. As an extreme example, records from City Hall indicate that on the fourth of June 1930, three days after the census had been completed, there were still only about 805 cases registered for relief.¹⁰ One must conclude that the provincial and civic registrations are instructive only about the more desperate cases of unemployment. They were indices of poverty and not necessarily joblessness.

Using the City of Vancouver's registration categories, the largest group of unemployed throughout the depression was constituted by married men. Perhaps because they shouldered a greater responsibility than the single unemployed, the married unemployed seemed more eager to sign on for relief. The 1931 registration provides an insight into the characteristics of the married applicants. It was, as indicated below in figure III:1, a group most heavily concentrated in the lower age brackets. Nearly thirty percent were thirty years old or younger, the greatest number of any five year age group being those between twenty-six and thirty years of age. Twenty-eight percent were in their third decade, 23.7 percent in their forties, and only 18.7 percent over fifty years. While it is certain that there were many more Vancouverites who were unemployed but did not register, if we accept the argument that the married unemployed men applying up to January 1931 constitute some of the most

¹⁰ Relief and Employment Committee of City Council, "Minutes", 9 June 1930, Special Committees of Vancouver City Council, Box 26D - 27D, CVA.

Figure III:1
Age Distribution of the Unemployed, 1930-1932

Years	Married Men	Women
17 - 20	102 (2.75%)	21 (14.3%)
21 - 25	411 (11.10%)	16 (10.9%)
26 - 30	586 (15.82%)	10 (6.8%)
31 - 35	496 (13.39%)	7 (4.8%)
36 - 40	542 (14.63%)	24 (16.3%)
41 - 45	445 (12.01%)	20 (13.6%)
46 - 50	431 (11.64%)	23 (15.7%)
51 - 55	334 (9.02%)	13 (8.8%)
56 - 60	176 (4.75%)	5 (3.4%)
61 - 65	119 (3.21%)	8 (5.4%)
66 - 69	52 (1.40%)	8 (5.4%)
70 plus	10 (0.27%)	
TOTAL	3,704(100.00%)	147(100.0%)
not stated	809	4

(Source: "Unemployment and Relief, 1930 - 1932, Vancouver Social Services Department, Series 4, 106E3, CVA.)

impoverished cases, one must conclude that being in the prime employable age bracket (that is, twenty to forty years old) did not spare one from being laid off early in the crisis.

In occupational categories the married unemployed who registered in 1930/31 were overwhelmingly blue-collar. No more than fifteen percent could have been holding down office or semi-professional jobs prior to the depression, and the largest group of these were "book-keepers," an occupational description with a variety of meanings. Labourers made up the largest group of unemployed industrial workers, followed by carpenters, painters and loggers. The construction industry, therefore, is generally well represented on the registration rolls. These findings reinforce the conventional wisdom that the unemployed came from a few highly vulnerable industries and not evenly from the whole range of occupations.

In terms of residence in Vancouver, the married unemployed were well established. Out of a list of 4,382 registrants, 71.5 percent had lived in Vancouver for more than two years and well over half (64 percent) had resided there for more than five years. In fact, over seventy-one percent of the married men registered claimed they had lived somewhere in British Columbia since before the depression had begun. Nevertheless, as figure III:2 indicates, an extremely large proportion of these men were immigrants. Only about twenty-six percent were natives of Canada and Newfoundland. Most of the immigrants, more than forty-percent of the total, were from the British Isles and

Ireland, leaving thirty percent from other nations. Of the general male population in the city, as shown in the 1931 Census, only 22.7 percent were foreign-born. There seems to be a correlation, therefore, between ethnicity and unemployment.

The married unemployed in Vancouver were, then, a group of men among whom tradesmen, artisans and labourers figured prominently. They were a class of men who had made their homes in the city yet who were by and large from outside of Canada. This point is significant to a study of the unemployed and their treatment by philanthropic agencies because it contradicts the opinion held by some civic leaders that all of the unemployed were recent arrivals involved in an uncoordinated attempt to take advantage of the City's good graces. Given their long-term affiliations with Vancouver, the married unemployed represented a serious political consideration for any ward alderman or mayor.

The unemployed female population of the city also posed a potential political threat. Granted their numbers were much smaller: only 23.46 percent of the female workforce was without work according to the 1931 census and the City relief register showed a total of only 155 in January 1931. They were, however, enfranchised and the treatment of unemployed women became a thornier public issue than one might at first anticipate.

Working women have been almost completely neglected in historical writing on the depression in British Columbia. This may stem from the fact that civic and Provincial officials

Figure III:2
Nationalities of the Unemployed, 1930-1932

Place of Birth	Men		Women
	Married	Single	
Canada	1,095	1,160	69
Great Britain	1,939	1,814	66
(a) England	1,142	946	41
(b) Scotland	572	561	17
(c) Wales	49	64	--
(d) Eire and N.Ireland	176	243	8
Newfoundland	48	41	--
Europe	1,201	1,895	8
(a) Austria	77	26	--
(b) Belgium	19	11	--
(c) Denmark	56	101	--
(d) Finland	223	469	3
(e) France	32	10	3
(f) Germany	54	46	--
(g) Holland	36	72	--
(h) Iceland	3	3	--
(i) Italy	99	72	--
(j) Jugoslavia	112	184	--
(k) Malta	1	---	--
(l) Norway	98	200	1
(m) Hungary	49	18	--
(n) Poland	84	129	2
(o) Roumania	28	28	--
(p) Serbia	2	71	--
(q) Spain	3	1	--
(r) Sweden	115	343	1
(s) Switzerzerland	6	26	--
(t) U.S.S.R.	104	85	--
Australia	19	15	1
New Zealand	3	2	--
U.S.A.	116	98	10
China	7	---	--
Japan	1	---	--
India	4	3	--
Other	6	8	--
Not stated	123	270	4
TOTALS	4,513	5,244	155

(Source: "Unemployment and Relief, 1930-1932," Vancouver Social Services Department, Series 4, 106E3, CVA.)

seldom paid much attention to female workers when planning their programmes. When they did do so it was not always to the women's advantage. Viewed by some as a scourge on the male workforce, female labourers, particularly those who were married, were blamed regularly for taking jobs that were not essential to their survival. The cost-efficiency of this argument was never tested or considered fully. Alderman W. Atherton, for example, fumed in 1930 that married women holding down even part time jobs were stealing work away from single women who were unemployed.¹¹ Even Charlotte Whitton argued that women should not be considered for relief inasmuch as theirs were not problems of unemployment but "desertion, death, and dependency."

¹² It is likely that removing these women from their jobs would have done little more than increase the relief rolls proportionately. Caught in the crossfire of this debate, it is not surprising to find that the condition of unemployed Vancouver women remained a question mark for many years.

In contrast to their male counterparts, unemployed women were largely from the service sector. The greatest number of women without work in any single field were domestics. In the 1931 census these women numbered 880, or about fifty percent of the total female jobless figure. Still, this represented only one quarter of the domestics in the city, a point which underlines both the significance and vulnerability of what

¹¹ Ibid., 3 July 1930.

¹² Struthers, "A Profession in Crisis," p.176.

remained a well-trod route for female labour.

Unemployed women diverged further from the pattern outlined for unemployed men in their national origin and age. Forty-four percent were Canadians, and 42.6 percent were from the British Isles. An additional seven percent were from the United States and Australia, leaving the total non-English element at less than seven percent. This distribution was almost completely consistent with the ethnic diversity and distribution indicated in the census. Like the men, unemployed women were at the young end of the age range. Thirty-one percent of the women who registered with the City Relief Office were between the ages of seventeen and thirty, as compared to the figure of about twenty-nine percent for the men; twenty percent were in their thirties, compared to a male level of twenty-eight; another third were in their forties and the remaining 17.2 percent were over fifty.

Unemployment among women, then, was particularly acute among the young and those with fewer job skills. Domestic, the distaff equivalent of the male "labourers", were the first to be dismissed when hard times struck. They were, one can assume, also the least likely to have savings or even family resources to fall back on. Complete indigency was a very real threat for females without jobs. By 1933 the number of women on relief had grown. Like single men, single women were encouraged to return to the family home (where they would receive roughly thirty-three percent less per month in direct relief from the

City) but they retained the option of leading separate and independent lives. In the sixth week of 1933, shortly after new rates were set, it was calculated that 650 women without dependents were on relief in Vancouver and an extra one hundred were living with their parents.¹³ The total number of jobless women in the city was most likely three or four times that number. The popular perceptions held of the woman without work were confused and shifting in the 1930s. Deficiencies in traditional responses to female unemployment paired with the frustrating inability of jobless women to successfully put their case before any City Council or organization ensured that they would continue to be an administrative afterthought.¹⁴

Minority groups fared at least as poorly as unemployed women. Obtaining reliable information on the extent of unemployment among the Chinese or Japanese in Vancouver was virtually impossible. Ethnic benevolent associations and church groups actively worked with the destitute in these communities but were loath to announce the conditions they found. The characteristics of unemployed Asian-Canadians, consequently, are as difficult to ascertain for the modern historian as they were

¹³W.R.Bone, Vancouver Relief Officer, to Pat Phillip, Deputy Minister of Public Works, 15 February 1933, Social Services Department Papers, Series 4: 106C7, CVA.

¹⁴Some examples of how these communication problems affected the relationship between Vancouver's unemployed women and the local Young Women's Christian Association, which was most active in assisting jobless women, can be found in Mary Patricia Powell's work "Response to the Depression: Three Representative Women's Groups in British Columbia," (M.A. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1967).

for the contemporary civil servant.

One event in particular allowed some light to penetrate the mists surrounding unemployed members of the Asian-Canadian community in the 1930s. Before the evacuation of the hobo jungles in September 1931 several unemployed Chinese were reported to have made their homes among the motley shacks. Nevertheless, they showed great reluctance to file for relief with the City. Once the jungles were cleared a surprising number of Chinese turned up at the Hamilton Hall Emergency Refuge seeking assistance.¹⁵ It was really only at this point that the Provincial Government twigged to the scale of their need. Nonetheless, "domicile qualifications" remained a bone of contention as did the scale of relief to be administered.¹⁶ It was repeatedly argued that since Asians required less to sustain themselves (a debatable assumption), allowing the same level of relief as was given to whites would be unwise. Provincial Relief Investigator G.M.Endacott contended that "... we can never expect Orientals to become self-supporting or even attempt to look for a job so long as they are getting more on relief than they ever earned in good times."¹⁷ Put in similar terms, a Provincial investigation of the civic relief administration in

¹⁵W.R.Bone to Mayor L.D.Taylor, 25 July 1932, Office of the City Clerk, Incoming Correspondence, 15F1, CVA.

¹⁶W.R.Bone to Alderman L.D. McDonald, 8 August 1935, *ibid.*, vol.166, 16D3, CVA.

¹⁷Quoted in W.R.Bone to Alderman W.W.Smith, 29 June 1936, *ibid.*, 16E7, CVA.

1935 suggested that "the city are [sic] creating an indigent class amongst these people that it [sic] may be hard to dispose of."¹⁸ At this juncture only forty married Chinese and about the same number of married Japanese were receiving any relief from the City or Province at all.¹⁹ To summarize the situation, what Dan Gallacher has written of Victoria appears to hold for Vancouver as well:

... judging from the overall performance of the Chinese community during the Thirties, it was obvious that they maintained a greater social stability than virtually any other group.²⁰

One final segment of the unemployed deserves particular mention here. Single unemployed men and women comprised a group which was sizeable, for the most part highly transient, and divorced from the standard social controls effecting permanent residents. Among both genders statistical invisibility could result from simply a return to the family home. Never clearly

¹⁸ Unemployment Relief Branch, "Investigation of Relief Administration, Vancouver, British Columbia," 1935, Kerr Commission Enquiry, 1935, Exhibit 53, 28A7, File 2, CVA.

¹⁹ Government relief to the Chinese in particular was, if nothing else, imaginative. On 12 February 1935 sixty-five Chinese lunatics from the Essondale and Colquitz asylums began a sea voyage to China. They were being "repatriated" at the expense of the Chinese government, saving the Province an expected total of between \$250,000 to \$500,000 in maintenance costs. George S. Pearson, the Provincial Minister of Labour, endeavoured to arrange a similar deal with respect to the unemployed Chinese in British Columbia. A total of about 150 Chinese-Canadians were "repatriated" to China before 1936. Provincial Secretary, "Memo," Provincial Secretary's Correspondence, GR496, file 213, Provincial Archives of British Columbia, Victoria, British Columbia (hereafter PABC).

²⁰ Daniel T. Gallacher, "City in Depression: Victoria, 1929-1931" (M.A. thesis, University of Victoria, 1969), p.153.

identified, the needs of the single unemployed were never satisfactorily met. Moreover, the resident single unemployed were tarred with the same brush as their homeless counterparts in the hobo jungles. In effect, it became common to treat the two groups synonymously. And, as British Columbian Premier T.Dufferin Pattullo remarked in 1938, "The single unemployed man is not in a fortunate position --- he ranks after married men and returned soldiers."²¹

The presence of many transients in Vancouver created insuperable difficulties in judging the extent of unemployment. Arriving on the coast on top of and beneath boxcars, the population of single unemployed transients could not be monitored effectively. Few had so much as a mailing address and they moved freely from one part of the hobo jungles to another. While some families roamed through this milieu together it was mostly inhabited by single men. They were far from being the aristocracy of labour and if the communists found fertile soil here at all it was because they were among the very few to have shown any interest whatsoever in the plight of the jungle men.

The 1931 registration for relief sheds some light on single men applying for assistance. Twenty-three percent were Canadians, thirty-seven percent British and Irish, leaving a much more sizeable proportion of foreign-born applicants than was the case for either women or married men. Among this

²¹T.D.Pattullo to William Lyon Mackenzie-King, 6 July 1938, T.D.Pattullo Papers, Add. Mss. 3, vol.75, file 6, #51, PABC.

remainder, Finns numbered the most at 496 or ten percent of the total. They were followed, in declining order by size, by Swedes (7%), Norwegians (4%), Jugoslavs (3.7%), Poles (2.6%), and Danes (2%). Again, labourers formed the largest contingent (46%) but loggers (14.4%) and truck drivers (6.6%) constituted a larger block than did those in the construction industry. These were, in contrast with what was found among the married unemployed, highly portable job skills. Although the single unemployed consistently numbered fewer than the married unemployed in the city, their impact on the relief rolls before the evacuation of the jungles was more telling. Over 5,000 single unemployed had applied for aid by 1 January 1930 as compared to 4,513 married unemployed. It was partly as a result of this flood of single transient applicants that fears of social chaos gained ground.

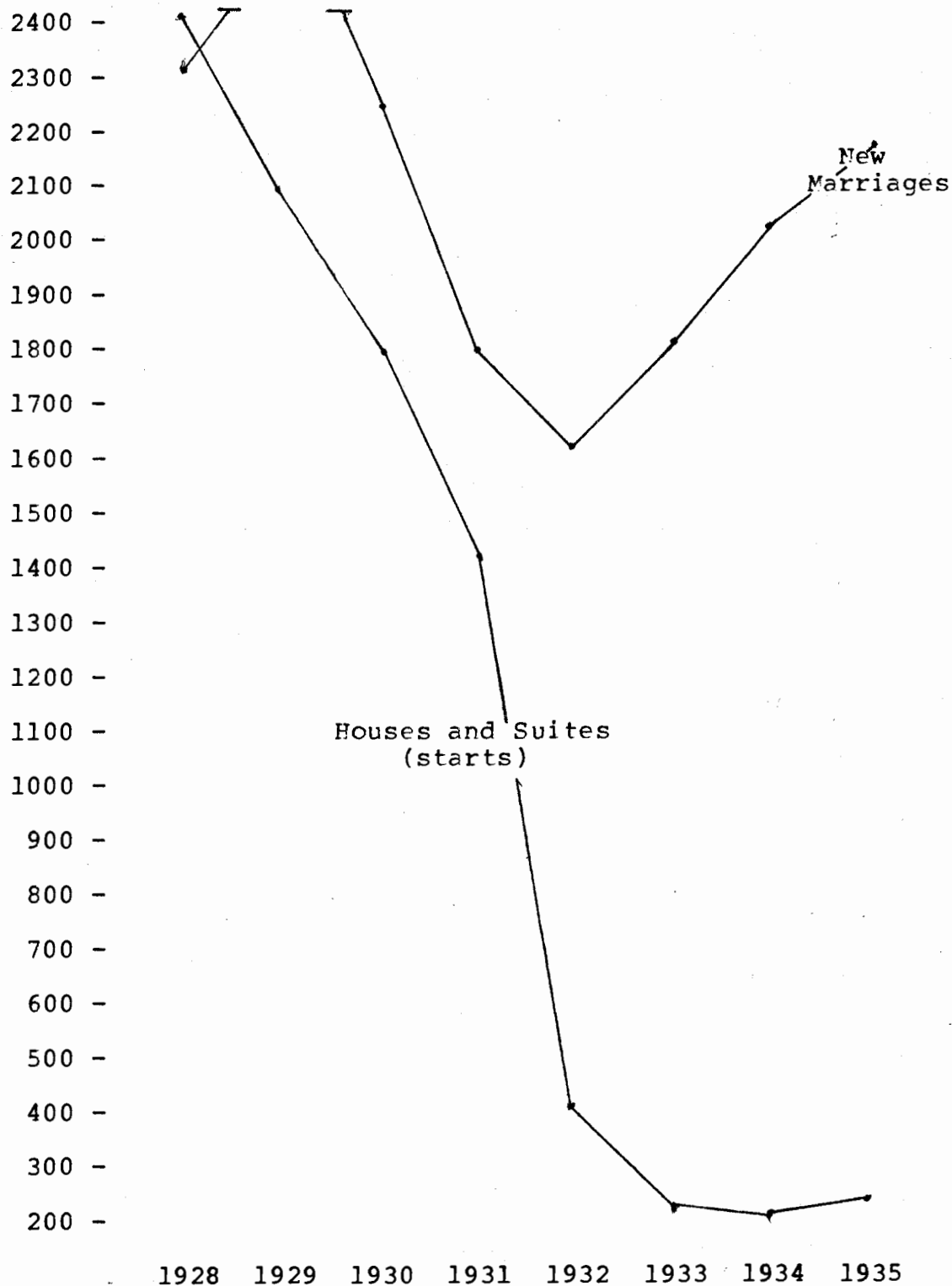
The bulk of the single male unemployed congregated in "hobo jungles" along the city waterfront, underneath the Georgia Viaduct and on the False Creek flats behind the Canadian National Railway yards. There, from 1929 through 1931, they found makeshift shelter, a degree of camaraderie, and an introduction to the hobos' way of life. While many of these men had spent years in the transient workforce, few would have described themselves as true hobos. Their transience was a means to an end and not an end in itself. They were, therefore, not entirely acquiescent in their newfound social niche.

The jungle men and other single unemployed transients served as the focus for much of the public's attention regarding

the unemployed. In the popular consciousness, joblessness and homelessness became confused. This was a crucial flaw in logic which goes far to explain the response of community leaders to the problem of unemployment. Insofar as the single transient unemployed appeared to constitute a threat to the existing social order throughout most of the decade so too did the general body of unemployed in the city.

There was more to suggest that the unemployed were desperate than a handful of rallies and marches. A bleak picture of the social and mental health of the community emerges from an examination of the vital statistics for the decade. Many normal patterns of social behaviour were deteriorating sharply. New marriages, for example, rose marginally from 1928 to 1929 but dropped violently to a trough in 1932. If 1928 is considered the base of 100, then the 1932 level would be around 63. These figures drew worried looks from the city's clergy, as is discussed in chapter IV. Moreover, fewer marriages meant reduced demand for single detached homes, a fact which further frustrated the suffering construction industry. The contour of the declining number of marriages and that for housing starts in Vancouver, as seen in figure III:3, were very nearly parallel. The deferral of marriage vows and/or having a family hints at the depth of the psychological impact of the economic crisis. But, while the number of marriages declined, the suicide rate flourished. The number of suicides for both sexes peaked between 1930 and 1931. Interestingly enough, from a pre-depression norm

Figure III:3
Houses, Suites and Marriages, Vancouver, 1928-1935



(Source: "Vancouver - Relief - Work - Housing," G.G. McGeer Papers, Add Mss 9, v.XVI, file 1, PABC.)

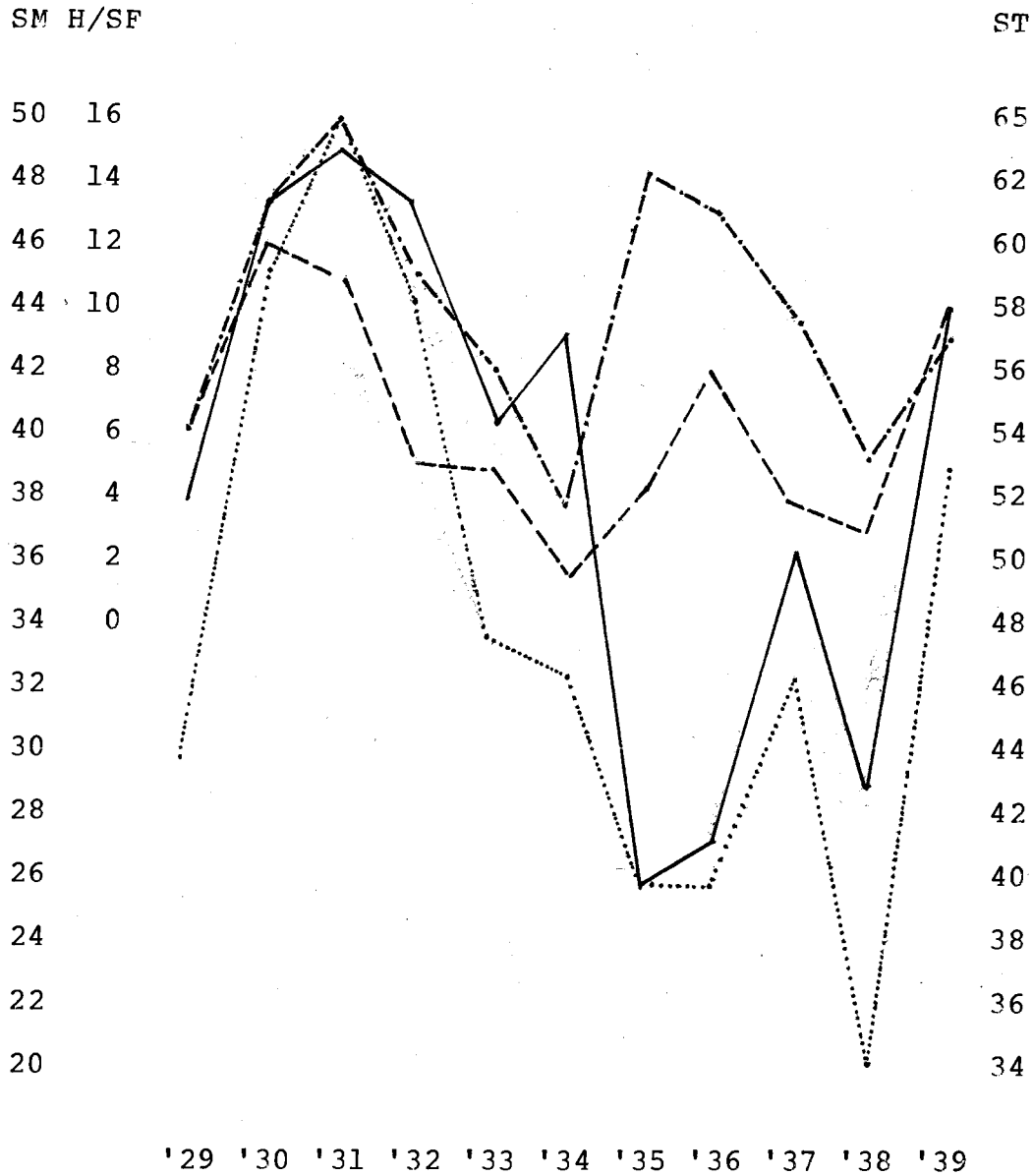
of around six female suicides per year the distaff level climbed to sixteen in 1931. This is too small a sample to be relied on too heavily but it demonstrates one extreme shift in the decade.²² On a similarly morbid note, homicides in Vancouver went from three in 1928 to twelve in 1931. The figures for the rest of the decade indicate that these were no wild or random aberrations in the general flow but, rather, part of a fairly predictable pattern, as can be seen in figure III:3 below. This is not to imply that the unemployed alone were responsible for these statistical fluctuations. Such developments were, however, symptomatic of a crisis and give some indication of the mental state of the community in question.

While social behaviour yardsticks were showing dramatic shifts, the anti-social order was showing signs of activity which reinforced business and police fears. Crime levels jumped to new heights. In 1936 a Provincial Secretary's report noted a 100 percent increase in the average annual number of indictable offences across Canada in the first four years of the depression over the same period in the 1920s. This was especially acute during the period from 1930 through 1932.²³ As one commentator

²²"The destruction of a home through the suicide of a man thrown out of employment --- a not uncommon occurrence in the past few years --- is a social consequence of unemployment that has no economic implications." Gilman and Sinclair, Unemployment, p.34. Leonard Marsh adds that one can observe an inverse relationship between suicide rates and the business cycle. Health and Unemployment: Some Studies of their Relationships (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1938), p.93.

²³British Columbia, Provincial Secretary, "Report of the Advisory Committee on Juvenile Delinquency", 3 October 1930, Provincial Secretary's Papers, GR696, PABC.

Figure III:4
Suicides and Homicides in Vancouver, 1929-1939*



*adjusted.

KEY: SM: Male Suicides (———)
 SF: Female Suicides (---)
 ST: Total Suicides (.....)
 H: Homicides (-----)

(Source: Canada, Bureau of Statistics, Vital Statistics of Canada, 1929-1939 (Ottawa: King's Printer).)

suggested, "idleness leads to an inevitable increase of crime."

²⁴ This was the concern of many members of the community. One Vancouver church minister in 1931 appealed to the public in 1931, "Don't let the underworld win by default."²⁵ Given the widely publicized confession of the local man who turned to crime after being frustrated in his efforts to obtain assistance, a strengthening of relief programmes seemed necessary to many.²⁶ The question was aired with increasing frequency: which purchases law and order more cheaply, relief or police?²⁷

²⁴H.A.Weir, "Unemployed Youth," Canada's Unemployment Problem, p.145.

²⁵The Reverend Andrew Roddan, quoted in The [Vancouver] Star, 7 September 1931, p.5.

²⁶One relief recipient, pushed from pillar to post by the City Relief Department when he tried to obtain medical aid for his infant child, made good on his threat to stage a hold-up. Despite his pitiful case the court sentenced the man to two years in the penitentiary. The Relief Officer, W.R.Bone, denied to City Council that his Department had been anything but helpful in this case. The [Vancouver] Province, 19 June 1932, p.3; Bone to Mayor L.D.Taylor, 2 June 1932, Office of the City Clerk, Incoming Correspondence, Vol.166, 15F1, CVA.

²⁷Bettina Bradbury notes that in the City of North Vancouver "the police department worked closely with officials, especially in 'difficult' relief cases. The idea that destitution was in some way related to criminal activities was solidly entrenched in many minds, influencing the way relief was handled." (Bradbury, "Road to Receivership," p.68.) There is, it must be pointed out, a caveat applying to the use of crime statistics as a social barometer. The number of arrests made or indictments lodged represents nothing more than police and court activity. For example, city councils occasionally feel called upon to clean up the local zona rosa but, in doing so, they become more responsible for any increase in the prostitution "rate" than the hookers themselves. Statistics do, however, act as agents of change or catalysts in forming opinion and that is their significance here.

The geographical distribution of the city's relief recipients also raised some concerns. A map produced by the City Relief Department for the City Archivist in 1934 showing the location of 7,455 relief cases reveals the concentration of relief recipients in the working class districts.²⁸ The homes of the unemployed stretched through the downtown peninsula, arching east from Burrard Street and throughout Strathcona. Many more were living along the Fairview Slopes and in the east side of Kitsilano. Less closely packed but comparable in numbers were the relief households between the C.P.R. lands at Little Mountain and the neighbouring municipality of Burnaby. The absence of all but two cases in the relief vacuum of Shaughnessy, and the relatively light sprinkling of recipients in Kerrisdale underscores the fact that unemployment and relief were almost exclusively working class problems or, as another historian has put it, a matter of downward mobility.²⁹ This map, a copy of which is attached, was suppressed by the Relief Officer because so many people in City Hall found its implications "terrible."³⁰ No doubt the discovery that the unemployed were closely clustered around nodes distributed across the city did not sit well with either politicians or police.

²⁸Major James Skitt Matthews Photograph Collection, RE P11 N9, CVA.

²⁹Struthers, "Two Depressions," p.79.

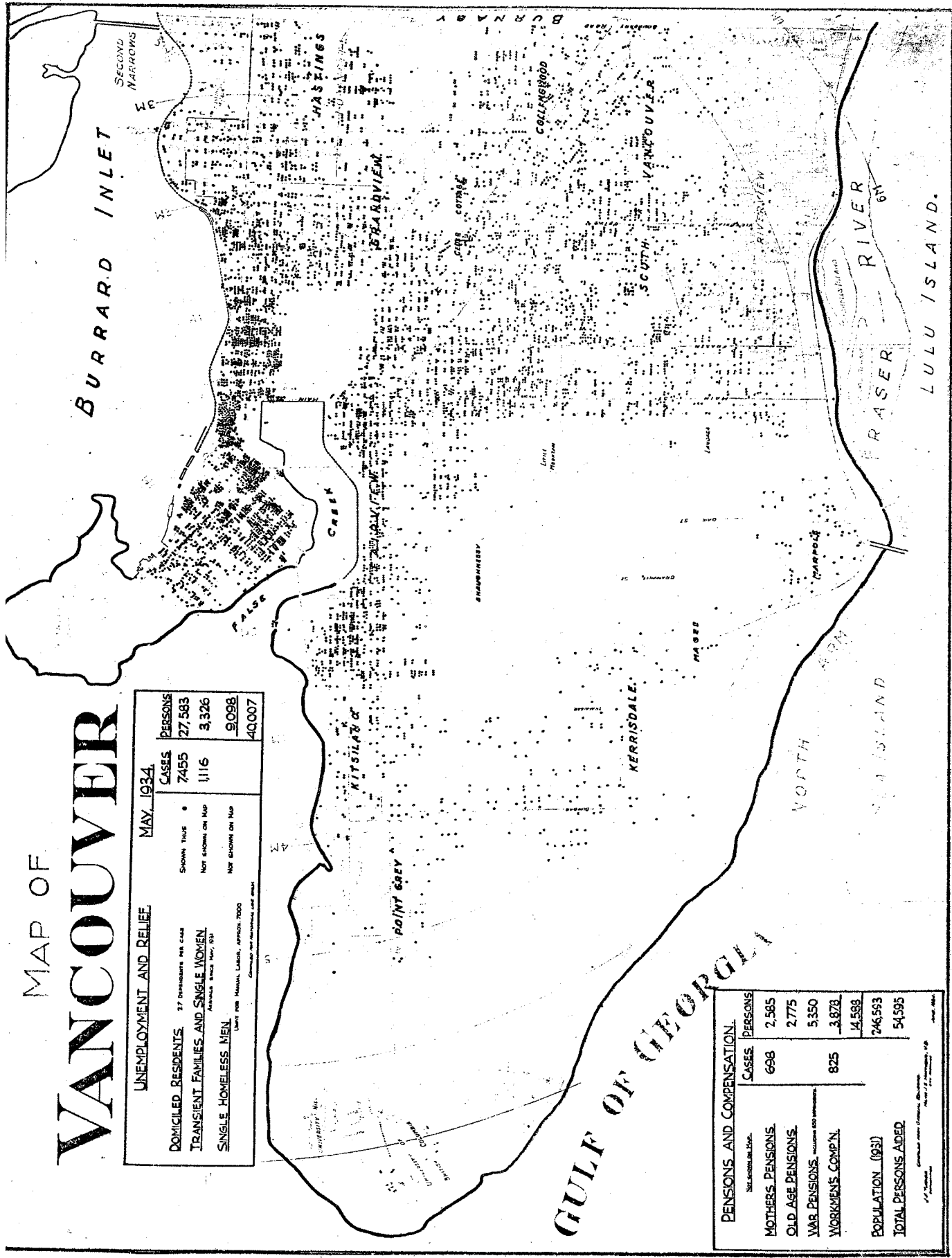
³⁰Major J.S.Matthews to W.R.Bone, 2 June 1934, Matthews Collection, vol.8, no.2, CVA.

MAP OF VANCOUVER

UNEMPLOYMENT AND RELIEF **MAY, 1934**

	SHOWN THIS	CASES	PERSONS
DOMICILED RESIDENTS 27 DISTRICTS PER CASE	•	7455	27,583
TRANSIENT FAMILIES AND SINGLE WOMEN ARRIVED SINCE MAY, 1931		1116	3,326
SINGLE HOMELESS MEN DATA FOR MANUAL LABOR, APPROX. 7000 <small>COMPILED AND INTERPOLATED FROM</small>			9,098
			40,007

NOT SHOWN ON MAP NOT SHOWN ON MAP



PENSIONS AND COMPENSATION

	CASES	PERSONS
MOTHERS' PENSIONS	698	2,585
OLD AGE PENSIONS		2,775
WAR PENSIONS (INCLUDES 800 PENSIONS)		5,350
WORKMEN'S COMPEN.	825	3,878
		14,588
POPULATION (1931)		246,593
TOTAL PERSONS AIDED		54,595

1931 Statistics COMPILED FROM CENSUS, 1931 PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION AIDED 22.1%

The possibility of a breakdown in social stability was becoming a real threat. Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward in their book Regulating the Poor, observed that

The regulation of civil behaviour in all societies is intimately dependent on stable occupational arrangements. So long as people are fixed in their work roles, their activities and outlooks are also fixed; they do what they must and think what they must. [...] But mass unemployment breaks that bond, loosening people from the main institution by which they are regulated and controlled.³¹

Without work, normal relationships break down. Daily life is thrown into a cauldron of uncertainties and unemployed men and women find themselves with less to lose and more free to risk what little they have. Mirra Komarovsky has show how this affects family life and especially the survival of marriages in case studies in the eastern United States.³² Disaffection so deeply seated could manifest itself in divorces and a deteriorating family unit at the one extreme and in bloody street fighting and massive swings at the ballot box at the other. All became familiar flashpoints in Vancouver during the 1930s, creating an unavoidable demand for attention.

The business community and politicians were given cause for concern early in the depression. Despite E.Wight Bakke's contention that there were few signs of the unemployed in North America organizing "for their own protection in spite of the common lot of distress which was theirs," sufficient

³¹ Piven and Cloward, Regulating the Poor, pp.6-7.

³² Mirra Komarovsky, The Unemployed Man and His Family (New York: Dryden Press, 1940).

organization existed to mobilize small to medium sized marches and demonstrations on a regular basis in Vancouver.³³ Once the sense of personal failure among the unemployed had been mitigated, there existed between the class of unemployed and that of the urban bourgeoisie a persistent atmosphere of antagonism. Working class expectations, which could not be realized under the prevailing economic conditions, remained attractive to the unemployed, adding to their frustration.³⁴ Leonard Marsh, surveying the unemployment question from the vantage point of 1940, observed the peculiar distinctions that were made between the employed worker and his unemployed colleagues:

Do the persons and families on unemployment relief constitute a separate class? There are plenty of reasons that make such a suggestion seem reasonable. The condition of complete destitution which alone establishes the claim to receive relief is one of the principal ones.³⁵

Once this formula was accepted, it became a simple extension of logic to assume that the within the unemployed community there existed what approximated a separate culture with unique characteristics.

³³ E. Wight Bakke, Citizens Without Work: A Study of the Effects of Unemployment Upon the Workers' Social Relations and Practices (U.S.A.: Archon Books, 1969), p.72.

³⁴ Struthers, "Two Depressions", p.79.

³⁵ Leonard C. Marsh, Canadians In and Out of Work: A Survey of Economic Classes and Their Relation to the Labour Market (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1940), p.366.

The unemployed were perceived, with some slight justification, as desperate enough to take what they were not given. The view that a decline in morale implied a commensurate moral decline was in common currency. While this assumption might be proven correct among the transient unemployed, the resident unemployed Vancouverite was still subject to a wide range of social controls. Familial responsibilities, ownership of some small amount of property, neighbourhood peer pressures, religious constraints, and, of course, an upbringing in a society which did not condone actions against the property of others mitigated the volatility of discontent among unemployed Vancouverites. The resident unemployed were usually too wrapped up with preserving whatever they could of their pre-depression milieu to give serious consideration to violent or anti-social responses.

On the whole, the picture that crystallizes of the unemployed through statistical records and their behaviour does not completely jibe with the ways in which they were perceived by contemporary community leaders. It was this perception, however, which dictated the form which relief programmes would assume. Having taken the exceptional case of the single unemployed transient as the norm, Vancouver's community leaders modelled their relief programmes accordingly. Viewed by the press, the business community and government as a separate class of workers whose moral standards had or could become warped with the depletion of their personal financial resources, the

unemployed could only expect relief which came as a defensive manoeuvre.

IV. Two Christian Denominations And the Administration of Relief

Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.¹

In keeping with Christ's admonitions in the Sermon on the Mount, clergymen in Vancouver have been reluctant to detail their social work. As a consequence, very little is known of the role played by the traditional centres of alms-giving they operated during the great economic crisis of this century. In fact, civic administration of relief to the unemployed and destitute in the 1930s would likely have foundered were it not for the augmentary works that originated in chapels, missions, and pulpits across the city. Despite experimentation in the previous decade the "municipal machinery already in existence was in many places quite inadequate for the administration of large-scale programmes of unemployment relief...."² As with any administrative structure, the inordinate amount of stretching and tugging in different directions over a very short period of

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¹St. Matthew 6:1-4.

²Cassidy, Unemployment and Relief in Ontario, p.120.

time (and under five different mayors by 1939) proved debilitating for the Vancouver civic relief administration. In keeping with the concentric circles model, the City looked to the unemployed's family, friends and clergy to shore up its programmes.

The churches had a good deal more flexibility in dealing with the unemployed. Harry Cassidy, a leading contemporary social scientist, noted at the time that private agencies

have been prepared to relieve distress in whatever way seemed most necessary for the needs of the applicant, and they have not concerned themselves with such items, purely extraneous to the condition of need, as place of residence.³

What was most often "most necessary" was not, in fact, a matter of merit or residence; quite simply it was a need to be treated with discretion and sensitivity as an individual victim of circumstances, not as an incompetent cipher. Leonard Marsh noted that in Montreal, as government relief rolls shrank, private case loads increased almost by the same number.⁴ The flexibility of church relief, the absence of strict regulations and the promise of confidentiality ensured that the services of the clergy would be irreplaceable components in the whole relief schema in Vancouver.

In addition to a Christian sense of charity the work performed by Vancouver clergy among the poor and unemployed was motivated by two fundamental concerns. First, the clergy had a

³Ibid., p.220.

⁴Marsh, Canadians In and Out of Work, p.342.

continuing role to play in the maintenance of the status quo. In the 'thirties this meant assuring that the social order was not undermined by a disaffected "army of unemployed." Second, each congregation and parish had to come to grips with an increasingly disinterested community, as evinced by declining church memberships and attendance at services. These factors, together with the structural constraints of each respective denomination, defined the type and extent of relief that they distributed in the 1930s.

The United Church and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese in Vancouver were at the forefront of church relief activity. Other denominations, including the smaller protestant sects and the evangelical missions, lent help to the unemployed but failed to make as great an impact in the community. Consequently it is the experience of the United and Catholic churches in the 1930s which will receive the closest attention here.

All denominations demonstrated a strong link with the traditions of Poor Law relief. A general distrust of government control in the affairs of the family, buttressed with a "suspicion or open hostility" towards the administration of relief without personal development were its most prominent features.⁵ The Charity Organization Societies presented a model^o for some to use in setting up relief programmes. Alone it was not sufficient. The prolonged and extreme nature of the economic crisis in the 1930s necessitated thinking beyond the band-aid

⁵Cassidy, Unemployment and Relief in Ontario, p.216.

solutions usually associated with Charity Organization Society efforts.⁶ Indeed, the causes and prospective solutions to the depression weighed heavily on the manse.

To a certain extent the activities of the churches arose quite naturally (although often painfully) from the sudden demands placed upon them by the public. For example, bed space in mission hostels like Central City Mission, the Vancouver Emergency Refuge and St.Vincent's Home was at a premium by November 1930.⁷ The situation at First United Church was determined largely by the veritable "boom" of hobo jungles on its doorstep, a sobering symbol of the difficulties facing the community. One view of the atmosphere these developments engendered perhaps captures best the feelings of priests and ministers during the early months of the crisis:

While some of our unemployed have become modern Saints Simon Stilites there are more who have sought to give truth to the proverb that Satan will surely find work for idle hands to do.⁸

In this manner, "demand", not pre-existing services and institutional structures, brought the churches four-square into the field of relief administration.

Should the civic administration turn him away either empty-handed or not completely succoured, the first line of

⁶Terry Copp, The Anatomy of Poverty: The Condition of the Working Class in Montreal, 1897-1929 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p.107.

⁷Lane, "The Single, Unemployed Male Transient," p.24.

⁸Gilman and Sinclair, Unemployment: Canada's Problem, p.42.

defence in the unemployed Vancouverite's battle with an aching stomach or an uncovered back had almost always been the gospel missions. "Their efforts," wrote Dan Gallacher with respect to Victoria, "were considered by residents as a matter of course, since many of the religious groups such as the Salvation Army had earlier provided years of service to the homeless, destitute, and unfortunate."⁹ Central City, the Sally Ann, Gospel Light --- all filled a special niche in the social system, especially in the city core. It was a task that could not have been attempted by anyone lacking the zeal of the evangelical missionary. In the 1930s the Water Street Mission on Columbia Avenue had a nightly attendance of eighty-plus, with a Sunday congregation of around one hundred. Much of this crowd, no doubt, was a product of the throng of roughly 400 men fed each week at the Mission.¹⁰ The Beulah Rescue Mission, which served up meals twice a day for the indigent, enjoyed similar attendance records. The Beacon Light Gospel Mission, a combination English/Scandinavian operation, tried to integrate more effectively its services with meals, as did the Sunshine Mission on East Cordova Street. While the Salvation Army was less rigid on exchanging suppers for souls, its average attendance of 81 persons on weeknights and 666 on Sundays set it

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Gallacher, "City in Depression," p.38.

¹⁰All figures in this section taken from "Survey of Gospel Halls and Other Activities Carried on By Various Groups and Deominations in this Area," Hugh Dobson Papers, Box B8, File G, UCA.

apart from the others in terms of popularity. In all there were twenty-eight churches and mission halls along with three United Church churches active in that area downtown bordered by Burrard Inlet on the north, Campbell Avenue on the east, Prior Street on the south, and Cambie on the west.

The operation of the gospel halls was not, however, flawless. At the most primary level, the "soup kitchen" menus seldom extended beyond that entree for which they had become famous; monotony alone constituted a problem of some seriousness. In addition, sanitary conditions were a constant headache for City officials reluctant to look even the shabbiest gift horse in the mouth. And there was nothing to guard against any duplication of services. Harry Cassidy's comment on the gospel halls in Ontario could readily be applied to those in Vancouver: "...it was very common for men to move about from one soup kitchen or mission to another, getting two or three lunches or dinners in different places until they were satisfied."¹ From the consumers' point of view, the rule that many such institutions impressed upon their guests that they attend church services in exchange for their meals was not always felt to be an equitable arrangement. At one church it was suggested instead that taking the time to write a note home would be penance as good as prayer or contemplation. While this approach met with more sympathy among supplicants generally the gospel halls were perceived as a last recourse due to their evangelical and

¹ Cassidy, Unemployment and Relief in Ontario, p.231.

patronizing priorities.

Difficulties and complaints such as these do not explain the relatively poor showing made by the Salvation Army during the 1930s in Vancouver. Although managing to retain a respectable following, the Sally Ann had been in an over-all decline since the question of appointing a successor to its leader, Bramwell Booth, spurred an international controversy in 1928. Moreover, as the Army's historian has observed, an increasing reliance on public subsidies made for a greater vulnerability to economic fluctuations and the depression environment. The Salvation Army ceased to enjoy the flexibility which its more independent competitors retained and it disappeared almost entirely as a lobby organization at the political level. To underline the depth of its problems, the national newspaper of the movement, the War Cry, failed to take note of the economic crisis at all. No longer enjoying so much as a western Canadian headquarters, the Salvation Army fell out of touch with its potentially massive clientele.¹²

In the larger churches it was a different story. Organizational and relative financial strength gained through union placed the United Church, for one, in a position amenable to the growth of relief programmes.

The flagship of United Church services to the unemployed was First Church in the city's faded core. Boasting a large

¹²-----
Robert G. Moyles, The Blood and Fire in Canada: A History of the Salvation Army in the Dominion, 1882-1976 (Toronto: Marton, 1977), p.185.

welfare department which repaired, recycled, resold or gave away goods, First United was "transformed from an ordinary city congregation into an institutional mission with a staff equipped to engage in social welfare work."¹³ While each United Church congregation accepted responsibility for the welfare of its own flock, most also agreed to support with money and second-hand goods the work of "the church of the open door" and that of its minister, the Reverend Andrew Roddan.

A preacher in the mould of the fieriest evangelicals, Roddan came to personify the services provided by his church. Having arrived in Vancouver in December 1929 following an apprenticeship with social gospeller Salem Bland and ministerial service in Port Arthur, he soon became identified with social activism, charity, relief, the hobo jungles, and the church building itself. At least one young member of the congregation revealingly admitted that he believed that the name of the church was "St.Roddan's."¹⁴ The Reverend's appeal derived not simply from his oratorical style or a genuine devotion to the poor but also from his controversial habit of naming in sermons the most lax members of the congregation and the community at large. Roddan held in low esteem any individual who placed conditions on their contributions or who might venture an

¹³The Reverend F.E. Runnals, It's God's Country (n.p., 1974), p.224.

¹⁴The Reverend Andrew Roddan, The Church in the Modern City: The Story of Three Score Years of Practical Christian Service, 1885-1945 (n.p., 1945?), p.41.

opinion that ran contrary to Christian notions of charity and brotherhood. Within two years he had established himself as the most prominent member of Vancouver's Protestant clergy and as a community demagogue.

Utilizing techniques and a technology that would catapult other ministers into public office elsewhere in Canada, Roddan made regular appeals in support of his cause via a highly popular radio programme. His success in this undertaking was unparalleled in the city. One appeal for fuel that had called for only 50 sacks of coal ended in a deluge of roughly 300!¹⁵ In another of his marketplace radiothons Roddan announced, no doubt with some amusement, that "we have a pair of lovely blue eyes which were sent in, but so far we have had no further calls."¹⁶ The fate of the two glass orbs remains a mystery.

The extent of Roddan's work is probably best described by the copious statistical records that were maintained by his church. For one of First United's two daily free meals a single November 1930 queue contained over 1,200 men.¹⁷ Between 1930 and 1945, Roddan calculated, First United had administered some form of direct relief to some 165,465 individuals.¹⁸ The Church's dole system was a very orderly process, thanks to First United's

¹⁵ Ibid., p.38.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.37.

¹⁷ Sam Roddan, Batter My Heart (Vancouver: United Church of Canada, British Columbia Conference, 1975), p.76.

¹⁸ Rev. Roddan, The Church, p.29.

obligation to report regularly to its regional conference and supporting congregations elsewhere in the city. Roddan's typically Scottish preoccupation with meticulous book-keeping also played a role in determining the manner in which relief would be disbursed. One author described the daily scene inside the church:

The record card of each man is examined and he explains his need. As each request is made, it is usually accompanied by a practical demonstration; the cracks in boots are displayed, the lack of socks, holes in trousers, thinness of a coat, no shirt, no hat.¹⁹

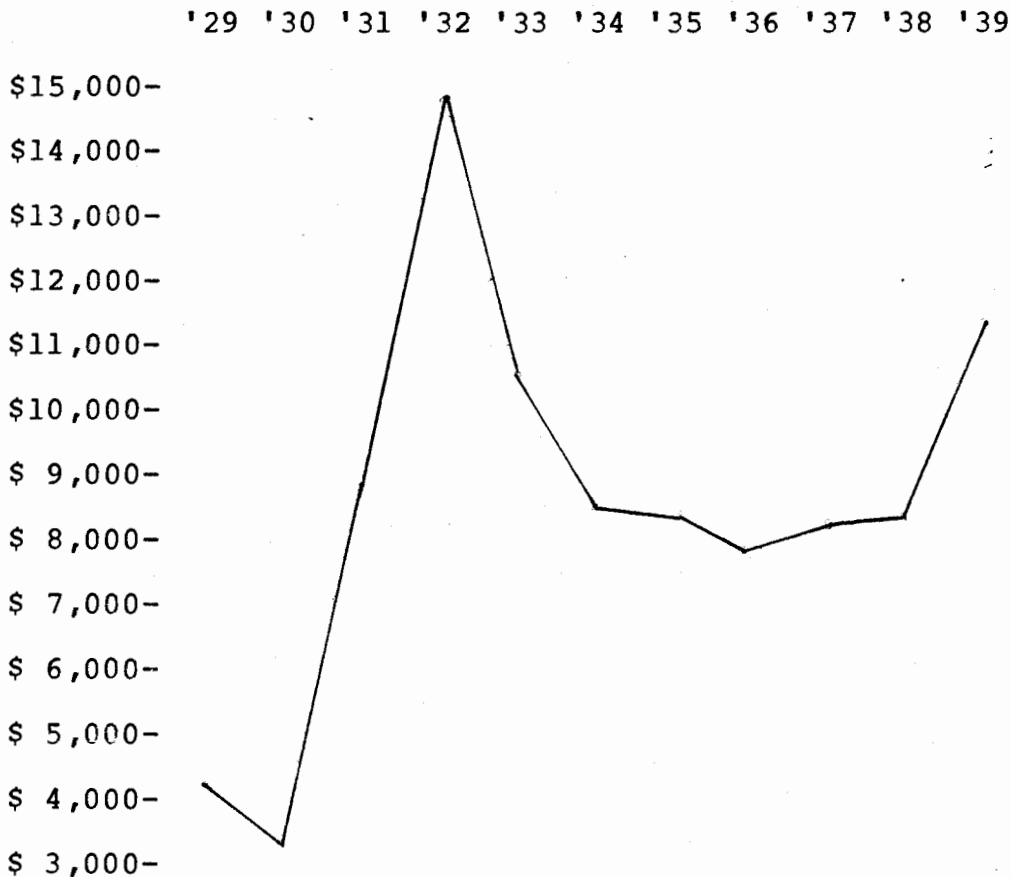
The Church Welfare Department's budget fluctuated considerably but it dipped below twice its 1929/30 level at only one point during the decade (see figure IV:1). In addition to the daily meals at First United, Roddan helped to establish similar programmes at the new St. Andrew's Wesley United Church in the West End and at the Scandinavian Mission. The food was in most instances provided by donation, although credit must go to Roddan for his tireless canvassing and campaigning to meet this need.

It was the presence of First United's staff in the hobo jungles early in the depression that brought its relief work to the public's attention. Roddan described the setting in bold terms, disturbed as he was by what he had found there,

... the great army of hungry, homeless men, eating out of garbage cans and sharing their bread and bed with the rats in the jungles. I had been up against the raw side of human life, saw it bleeding, suffering, dying, caused

¹⁹The [Vancouver] Province, 24 October 1931, weekend supplement.

Figure IV:1
Welfare Department Budget, First United Church, 1929-1939



1929: \$ 4,024	1935: \$ 8,383
1930: \$ 3,525	1936: \$ 7,843
1931: \$ 8,774	1937: \$ 8,397
1932: \$14,600	1938: \$ 8,322
1931: \$10,445	1939: \$11,440
1934: \$ 8,383	

(Source: First United Church, "Annual General Reports, 1929-1939," UCA.)

by a vicious system of greed and get-i-tis.²⁰

Daily Roddan took food trucks into the densely populated squatters' towns around the garbage dumps. To be sure, he and other United Churchmen realized that in terms of their primary vocation --- the saving of souls --- the jungles were an unprecedented opportunity. Roddan also recognized that without an active and visible presence in the jungles the United Church could expect only to lose adherants to other more aggressive denominations, to atheism or, most to be feared, to communism.

For the rest of the United Church in Vancouver an emphasis on discretion and confidentiality shaped their philanthropic activities. Direct relief to families who belonged to United Church congregations was provided quietly and no compromising or accessible records of these gifts were made. Small cash disbursements were frequently released from the minister's personal stipend, a comfortable process which involved only the supplicant and the clergyman. This approach was encouraged by the Associate Secretary of the United Church Board in Canada, the Reverend Hugh Dobson, who referred to "friendship" as one of type of direct relief.

The congregations did not, however, have a single monolithic policy towards unemployment aid. West Point Grey, College Chapel, Ryerson and Canadian Memorial --- all four being west side United churches --- lent their full support to the campaigns of Roddan and First United, gave heartily to relief

²⁰-----
Rev. Roddan, For Doubters Only: How I was Changed (n.p., 1936?), p.4, Andrew Roddan Papers, UCA.

coffers, and tended their own flocks diligently. By way of contrast, Knox United, a west side church with Presbyterian roots, adhered to a policy of isolationism, addressing the needs of its own very small and quite comfortable congregation first and foremost.²¹ The tension engendered by these differences was considerable but it did not curtail activity in the less well-endowed congregations on the east side.

While money and donations were often scarce, especially in Strathcona and Grandview-Woodlands, the churches still found ways to alleviate hardship and obtain funds if only to a limited extent. St.Giles United in Mount Pleasant, for example, put one of its members to work on repairs to the church roof and relieved him of any tithe obligations during the time he was so employed.²² Likewise, First United's staff was comprised in part of former relief recipients who were either hired on a salary or performed voluntary work in lieu of weekly contributions which many could no longer afford. No doubt unwittingly, First United received some of the revenue it so badly needed for welfare programmes from a group of prostitutes who were renting one of its houses in the Strathcona area. A police raid in November 1934 put an end to this source of support.²³

²¹ Marilyn Harrison, "The Social Influences of the United Church of Canada in British Columbia, 1930-1948" (M.A. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1975), pp.60-61.

²² Ibid.

²³ "Rev.Roddan's Crusade Caused Fireworks," The Vancouver Sun, 24 July 1965, p.9.

The United Church's men's club, the A.O.T.S.²⁴, was also active in providing aid to the poor across Vancouver. In 1935 the local clubs approached the Provincial Department of Education with a proposal to establish book-keeping, mathematics and other vocational courses at the Scandinavian Mission. The Government was receptive to the offer and soon over 1,000 individuals graduated from the programmes.²⁵ Acting on one of Dobson's recommendations, the A.O.T.S. set up job placement networks to "canvass all church members by telephone, letters and personal calls asking them to find or create part time or full time jobs for more workers in their homes or businesses."²⁶ These efforts were far more aggressive than those developed by the civic administration.²⁷

The impetus for this wide range of activities was, in large part, Dobson's work as the chairman of the British Columbia Committee on Unemployment and Relief. By 1931 the Committee was a forty-five member organization that enjoyed support from university professors C.W.Topping and Henry F. Angus, other denominations, private charities of a non-religious nature, the Provincial Council of Women, and business representatives. The Committee had evolved from the 1930 recommendations of the

²⁴"As One That Serveth."

²⁵Mimeographed notice, Hugh Dobson Papers, Box B5, File 2, UCA.

²⁶"The Local Church and Unemployment(1932?)" Dobson Papers, UCA.

²⁷Harrison, "The Social Influence of the United Church," pp.60-61.

Vancouver General Ministerial Association that had called for an alliance of city churches and other bodies "to secure cooperation, coordination and prevention of over-lapping of effort." A further objective was to arouse "the conscience of the people to the facing of the problem of unemployment and relief."²⁸ To this end both the Committee and the Ministerial Association put an emphasis on education. Expanding the size and number of "facilities for reading and reference in relation to this particular problem" became a priority.²⁹ The 1931 Convention of the United Church of Canada supported the Committee's position, advocating social action among private citizens and calling upon municipalities to brace themselves for the approaching winter.³⁰

There were, to be sure, disappointments in the United Church. The Women's Missionary Society showed no awareness that Canada was lodged in an economic rut of serious proportions.³¹ As was the case in some other denominations, this women's group was preoccupied with the missionary field. In Asia and Africa and especially in China, the potential for great leaps forward in the number of conversions was matched only by the threat of

²⁸British Columbia Committee on Unemployment and Relief, "Report to the Vancouver General Ministerial Association," Dobson Papers, Box B4, File G, UCA.

²⁹Idem, "Minutes", 14 January 1931, Dobson Papers, Box B4, File G, UCA.

³⁰The [Vancouver] Daily Times, 19 May 1931, p.5.

³¹Powell, "Response to the Depression," pp.36-40.

brooding disaster. An early member-group in the Unemployment Relief Committee of the Ministerial Association, the Women's Missionary Society opted out in late 1931; the Society argued that the ball was now rolling and that their continued involvement in the Committee was an unnecessary distraction from missionary undertakings overseas. Nevertheless, donations from the Society's Supply Committee of clothing, food and quilts proved to be a real boon to First United.

Given the wide range of services provided by the United Church congregations throughout Vancouver, it is perhaps surprising that Dobson's profile grew only marginally in the 1930s. Always overshadowed by the more electric and dramatic Roddan, Dobson in 1938 revealed that a conscious effort had been made by the Committee to keep a low profile: "We avoided all publicity to avoid pressure groups."³² A devoted champion of social justice, Dobson successfully carried the United Church across a tight-rope besieged by reformist ministers on the one extreme and right-wing congregations on the other.

Among Protestant denominations apart from the United Church, a quiet conservatism, determined both by the character of the congregations and a predominantly individualistic theological social perspective, prevailed.

In the Anglican Church indignation at the failure of governments to come up with solutions to the economic and unemployment crises was widespread. Nonetheless, a determination

³²-----
Dobson Papers, Box B4, File H, UCA.

to leave "the practical working out of Christian principles in the contending social structure to Christian laymen within those structures" militated against any calls for reform or radical action.³³ The Anglicans never entered into the limelight or the fray with the vigour displayed by the United or Roman Churches.

Some smaller groups within the Anglican Church involved themselves more directly. In 1932 a "central clothing room" was established which repaired and redistributed clothing among the city's needy. This, however, lasted for less than one year.³⁴ Like almost all other denominations, the Anglicans provided the Relief Work Camps in the interior with ministers who were euphemistically called "salaried spiritual and social workers."³⁵ There was, in addition, a yearly \$200 contribution to the local Girls' Home and two meals daily to 1,200 Chinese-Canadians in the city core at the Anglican Mission (meals which Ronald Liversedge said "consisted of ... rice and fish of a doubtful age").³⁶ Nevertheless, given the conservative bearing of the church, and the presence of particularly blue Tories like

³³ Stewart Crysedale, The Industrial Struggle and Protestant Ethics in Canada: A Survey of Changing Power Structures and Christian Social Ethics (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1961), p.107.

³⁴ Social Services Committee, "Report", Journal of the Forty-Fifth Session of the Synod of the Diocese of New Westminster, April 18 & 19, 1934, p.35, Anglican Church Archives, Vancouver School of Theology.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ronald Liversedge, Recollections of the On-to-Ottawa Trek, 1935, ed. Victor Hoar (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), p.20.

L.J.Ladner on its Social Services Committee, the lack of any high profile social programmes in the Anglican Church might have been anticipated.

The Baptist churches were equally unobtrusive on the social welfare/relief scene during this period, but for different reasons. The split between the Regular and Federationist Baptist churches in the 1920s preoccupied many church officials and laymen. In addition, the sectarian nature of the Baptists meant that no single coordinated front could form, even on one side of the Regular/Federationist schism. The Regulars, for their part, devoted much time and energy to managing a mission in North West Kiangsi province in China. Their eyes trained half a world away, many seemed oblivious to the crisis at hand. Only the semi-anonymous "Deacon's offering" to suffering church members could be pointed to as evidence of a regular link with depression victims.

By 1937 the tone of the Baptists reflected the growing influence of social gospel ideals. As one author suggested, the Baptist churches were freed from their emphasis on individualism by "the influence of nineteenth century scientific theories and modern Biblical criticism";³⁷ the depression allowed this to extend further into a view of humanity which was not so pietistic and allowed for some forays into the social reform field. The continuation of the world-wide crisis and the extent

³⁷ Walter E.W. Ellis, "Some Aspects of Religion in British Columbia Politics" (M.A. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1959), pp.91-96.

of the drought on the Prairies forced the national convention of 1937 to adopt new positions on collective bargaining and unemployment insurance. In addition, Baptists began to play significant roles in the revamped Social Council of Canada, called after 1938 the Christian Social Council of Canada.

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver addressed the situation in a somewhat different fashion. Through the offices of a social welfare clearing house, the Archdiocese administration built up a fairly comprehensive range of services.

Archbishop William Mark Duke, through sermons and announcements, governed the form of Catholic administered relief. Referring to the area of services where the Catholic Church in Vancouver could have some impact, Duke wrote:

... there still remain many charitable services which can not be supplied by Governmental Agencies. Many works of mercy in the Archdiocese must, therefore, fall under the leadership and guidance of the Church....³⁸

One way in which the Archbishop felt the individual parishes could effect some alleviation of hardship while making the best of a bad situation was through building maintenance projects.

"This is a time when wages are very low," he wrote,

and when necessary repairs can be made at the lowest possible cost and if everyone would try to distribute a little work even if he gave low wages, they would be helping to keep employed many who are only too anxious to work for the smallest possible wages.³⁹

³⁸ B.C.Catholic, 16 October 1936, p.1.

³⁹ Archbishop William Mark Duke, "Sermon", n.d. (1933?), Catholic Charities Archives, Vancouver, British Columbia (hereafter CCA).

The Archbishop had studied the growth in organized charities in the early part of the century and, in the first few months of the 1930s, he approached New York's Cardinal Hayes for information on the operation of the church's system in that city. The Cardinal, along with one of his priests, Father McEntegart, visited Vancouver with an eye to establishing such an operation on the west coast of Canada. The result was Vancouver's Catholic Charities, an umbrella organization which had as its objective canvassing for donations and administering funds to the assorted Catholic societies. The member organizations covered almost the full gamut of human needs. The St. Vincent's Home, the Monastery of Our Lady of Charity and Our Lady of Mercy Home (both of which dealt with "wayward" girls and unmarried mothers), the Catholic Chinese Health Clinic, the Catholic Family and Child Welfare Office, Big Brothers, and the Catholic Women's Hostel were all coordinated by the Catholic Charities administration. A link with the inter-denominational Vancouver Welfare Federation was initiated in 1931, but for only one year. This union with Protestant and Jewish causes was renewed in 1940 when, with the outbreak of war, it became clear that a single charity campaign was more effective than separate endeavours by the forty-five or so participating agencies.

The leading street-level relief agency in the Catholic Charities was, unquestionably, the St. Vincent's Home. Located in the downtown east side, St. Vincent's provided food and clothing

for the "aged and destitute men of the city...."⁴⁰ The Board of the Home made a conscious effort to combine charity with counselling and to emphasize the personal touch of visits at home and individual attention. Faced with the twin hardships of reduced donations at a time of increased frugality and greater demand due to high unemployment, the Home found itself treading a narrow course between service availability and complete closure. It was only on the strength of rents from senior tenants (about \$15 per month) and young transients' relief chits (about \$12 per month) that the doors remained open at all.

The main vehicle for disseminating information on the relief programmes of the St. Vincent's Home and the other Catholic Charities agencies was the weekly B.C. Catholic newspaper. This broadsheet, seldom more than four pages in length, acts as a barometer for the historian in charting diverging views within the church during the 1930s. In the depression the two main editors were the Reverend Aidan Angle (until the spring of 1937) and his colleague, compatriot and friend, the Reverend A.F. Carlyle. The two men had joined the Church in part of an en masse conversion of Benedictine Anglican monks in the 1920s. They arrived in British Columbia together and worked through the parishes of the interior as a team. Upon their arrival in Vancouver in the earliest hours of the depression their paths forked and Angle, who first took on the editor's job, became isolated from the street level hardships of

⁴⁰ Ibid.

the economic crisis. During his tenure the B.C.Catholic could be characterized, without fear of offending Angle, as almost exclusively concerned with dogma. Angle was fascinated by ritual, hierarchy, church history and trivia. What was most conspicuously absent from his paper was any mention of current events in Canada. In the year 1936, for example, the economic and social situation was mentioned no more than four or five times, notwithstanding two Archbishop's messages which did dwell on the subject to some extent. A regular feature of the paper under Angle's direction was a scenes-from-life column which featured the pontifications of a layman named Albert, his friends in the clergy, his not terribly bright wife Milly, and a couple of other lay friends in a Kitsilano backyard. These pieces always centered on some discussion of responsibility to God and Church, and were punctuated with some fairly esoteric snippets of Church history. It is perhaps significant that Albert had no visible source of income and certainly no interest whatsoever in earthly affairs. The B.C.Catholic in these years eschewed the grief of the depression and the Church's endeavours in favour of a format which stressed the otherworldly aspects of Catholicism.

In contrast, Father Carlyle's editorialship of the B.C.Catholic reflected that cruel side of the times with which he felt quite familiar. Carlyle had gone directly from mission work into the service of the St.Vincent's Home. It would be easy to draw parallels between this priest's prose and that of Andrew

Roddan. Carlyle's view of the poor strikes a familiar chord:

This is Tuesday night, and it is still pouring with rain, coming down in buckets full. In the past hour three Catholic lads have come to St.Vincent's Home without a dry stitch on them. Every bed in the Home is occupied; the sisters have found a corner and a blanket for one ... if we had fifty rooms here they would all be filled ... but we can't turn these boys out into the night, to walk the streets as they have been doing lately. And so we must give them 15 cents to pay for a bed in a rooming house for the night. But what is to happen tomorrow, and after that?⁴¹

"It is not alms they want," he wrote of the unemployed in 1937, "but a good steady job, and enough money to live on." As one might expect, the newspapers which Carlyle produced in the latter half of the decade regularly addressed the twin questions of unemployment and almsgiving.

At the individual Catholic parish level there is no question that assistance was being administered on a fairly extensive basis. Rummage sales and clothing exchange depots proliferated with the support of wealthy parishes in Shaughnessy and Kerrisdale. In addition, meal tickets purchased by the individual parishes from neighbouring restaurants were issued until demand outstripped supply.⁴² Frequently aid might take the form of a few bills in an unmarked envelope; the recipient need not know from whence the money had come, only that a prayer had been answered. The Vancouver Archdiocese was not particularly innovative in this respect and, in fact, this response to the

⁴¹ Ibid., 23 October 1937, p.2.

⁴² Monsignor F.A. Clinton, telephone interview, Vancouver, British Columbia, 9 February 1982.

need for relief addressed problems that were common to virtually all denominations in the city.

The activities of the United and Roman Catholic churches in the field of relief in the 1930s points to a continued need for augmentation of public programmes by the private sector. It goes without saying that Christian churches would be encouraged by their theologies to aid the poor and the suffering. But to launch campaigns the size of which were witnessed during the depression other motivating factors would have had to have been at work. The first of these was the concern, registered by members of several denominations, that anything short of a full-blown commitment to provide relief would cost the churches dearly in attendance figures. This created a catch-22: to keep the pews full each church needed to step up its relief programmes but, in order to do so, the financial support of a secure congregation was a necessary prerequisite.

The Canada Census indicates that from 1921 through 1941 declared memberships in Vancouver's Anglican, United, Catholic, Baptist, Presbyterian, and Salvation Army denominations were increasing, although there was little fluctuation in percentage distribution (see figure IV:2 below). Nevertheless, the Baptists, Presbyterians, Roman Catholics and the United Church all noted a marked decline in church attendance as distinct from affiliation.

The drop in church attendance did not respect class boundaries. At St. John's United in the West End, described by

Figure IV:2
Some Declared Religious Affiliations in Vancouver, 1921-1941

	1921	(%)	1931	(%)	1941	(%)
Total Pop'n	117,217	(100)	246,593	(100)	275,353	(100)
Anglicans	35,137	(30)	71,739	(29)	84,947	(30)
Baptists	5,473	(5)	10,578	(4)	12,663	(5)
Confucian/ Buddhist	8,710	(7)	15,729	(6)	10,700	(4)
Jews	1,248	(2)	2,372	(1)	2,742	(1)
Lutherans	2,036	(3)	8,953	(4)	10,151	(4)
Pentecostal	58	(0.1)	846	(0.3)	1,326	(0.5)
Salvation Army	447	(0.4)	1,111	(0.5)	1,356	(0.5)
Congregational	829	(0.7)	---	---	---	---
Methodists	14,968	(13)	26	(.01)	---	---
Presbyterian	31,595	(26)	35,366	(14)	39,637	(15)
United Church	---	---	61,213	(25)	69,246	(25)
Roman Catholic	10,842	(9)	23,635	(10)	29,343	(11)

(Source: Canada, Bureau of Statistics, Sixth Census, 1921, vol.1 (Ottawa: J.O.Patenaude, 1926), pp.756-757; idem., Seventh Census, 1931, (Ottawa: J.O.Patenaude, 1936), pp.704-705; idem., Eighth Census, 1941, (Ottawa: J.O. Patenaude, 1946), pp.644-647.)

one historian as "a solid middle class church caught in the dilemma of urban change," the 1930s saw a steady falling off of attendance.⁴³ A similar situation prevailed at First United where Roddan suggested an explanation. Observing the hobo jungles, he commented:

These men know that the organized Christian church has not done very much to help them with their problems. Many of these men, as I have found out, were brought up in the church, and have been bitterly disappointed at the indifference of many of the churches to their needs. Like one of old they have said, "No man careth for my soul."⁴⁴

Mirra Komarovsky, in her study of the unemployed family man, explained that many relief families ceased going to church on a regular basis because they did not have the money needed for the donation plate, proper clothing, or transportation. In one case study she found a family which refused to attend services because they blamed God for their jobless condition.⁴⁵ One can safely assume that ministers and priests across North America worried about members of their respective flocks reaching similar conclusions. Despite the fact that First United was one of the busiest centres of church relief activity in the city, the turnout figures and patterns indicated in figures IV:3 and IV:4 below substantiate some of Roddan's fears and suggest that Komarovsky's American subjects were not greatly different from

⁴³F.Pannekeok and C.Gostelow, "St.John's: A History" (manuscript, 1975), pp.11,18, UCA.

⁴⁴Rev.Roddan, Canada's Untouchables: The Story of the Man Without a Home (Vancouver: Clarke and Stewart, 1936), pp.14-15.

⁴⁵Komarovsky, The Unemployed Man, pp.124-125.

their Vancouver counterparts.

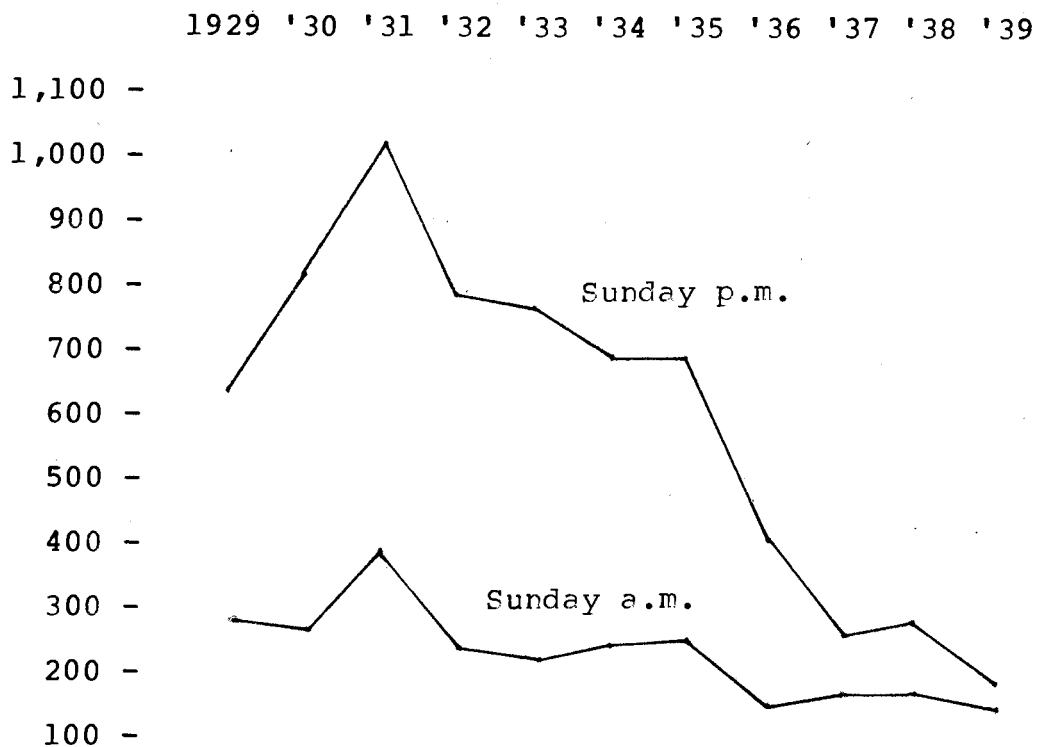
Figure IV:4 indicates the unimpeded decline of church attendance at First United for evening services from 1931 on. The causes for this are several but one factor in particular deserves mention. Andrew Roddan's work in the hobo jungles won the support of the unemployed transients. Once this body of men were removed to work camps elsewhere in the province in the autumn of 1931 the church's attendance record dipped sharply. Subsequent drops, however, would have to be attributed almost entirely to domestic explanations similar (if not identical) to the ones revealed by Komarovsky. It should be added that the luxury of either stability or growth in attendance could be offset by the financial exigencies of the day, meaning smaller collection plate revenues. Even during the best days of the decade, then, high attendance levels frequently translated into small collections and therefore an economically diminished congregation.

The view from the pulpit and the parish office revealed by the mid-thirties another pattern which would have reinforced fears of declining attendance and devotion. Since 1929 the number of marriage vows taken in Vancouver had decreased sharply, as seen in chapter III. This trend would most certainly have been apparent to priests and ministers. Coupled with this decline was, not surprisingly, a drop in the annual number of births in the city (and presumably the number of baptisms performed). This shift (see figures IV:5 and IV:6 below) would

Figure IV:3
Attendance Levels, First United Church, Vancouver, 1929-1939

	'29	'30	'31	'32	'33	'34	'35	'36	'37	'38	'39
Sunday a.m. services	293	289	400	258	241	250	259	171	184	183	173
Sunday p.m. services	649	838	1012	784	764	680	680	412	266	294	195

Figure IV:4
Attendance Levels, First United Church, Vancouver, 1929-1939



(Source: First United Church, "Annual Reports, 1929-1939," UCA.)

go far to justify the concerns raised by clergy over shrinking congregations.

If they were to survive financially and succeed in their vocation, church fathers were going to have to face the crisis. The formula was simple: ignore the poor and they would respond in kind by ignoring the church.

But what was even more repugnant was the prospect that in turning away from God the unemployed might turn to Marx. The proximity of the ubiquitous communist agitators to the "jungles" of frustrated and angry unemployed men could not be ignored. While there is little doubt that the contemporary press exaggerated the threat of creeping communism among the unemployed, church officials and city bureaucrats alike saw sufficient danger to call for what amounted to radical compromises to the existing social order. Raising the spectre of Bolshevik revolution, the Reverend Roddan once wrote:

... when I stood in the jungles and saw the conditions there I did not know whether I was in Russia or in Canada I had just finished reading the book, by Sherwood Eddy, entitled "The Challenge of Russia", and I had not seen any picture or read any story that equalled that condition as a breeding place for Bolshevism.⁴⁶

One City Relief Officer, H.W.Cooper, concurred with this assessment, adding that the situation in the jungles made "them a hot-bed for every form of disease, physical, moral and social."⁴⁷ Others concurred. The Women's Missionary Society of

⁴⁶Rev.Roddan, Canada's Untouchables, p.20.

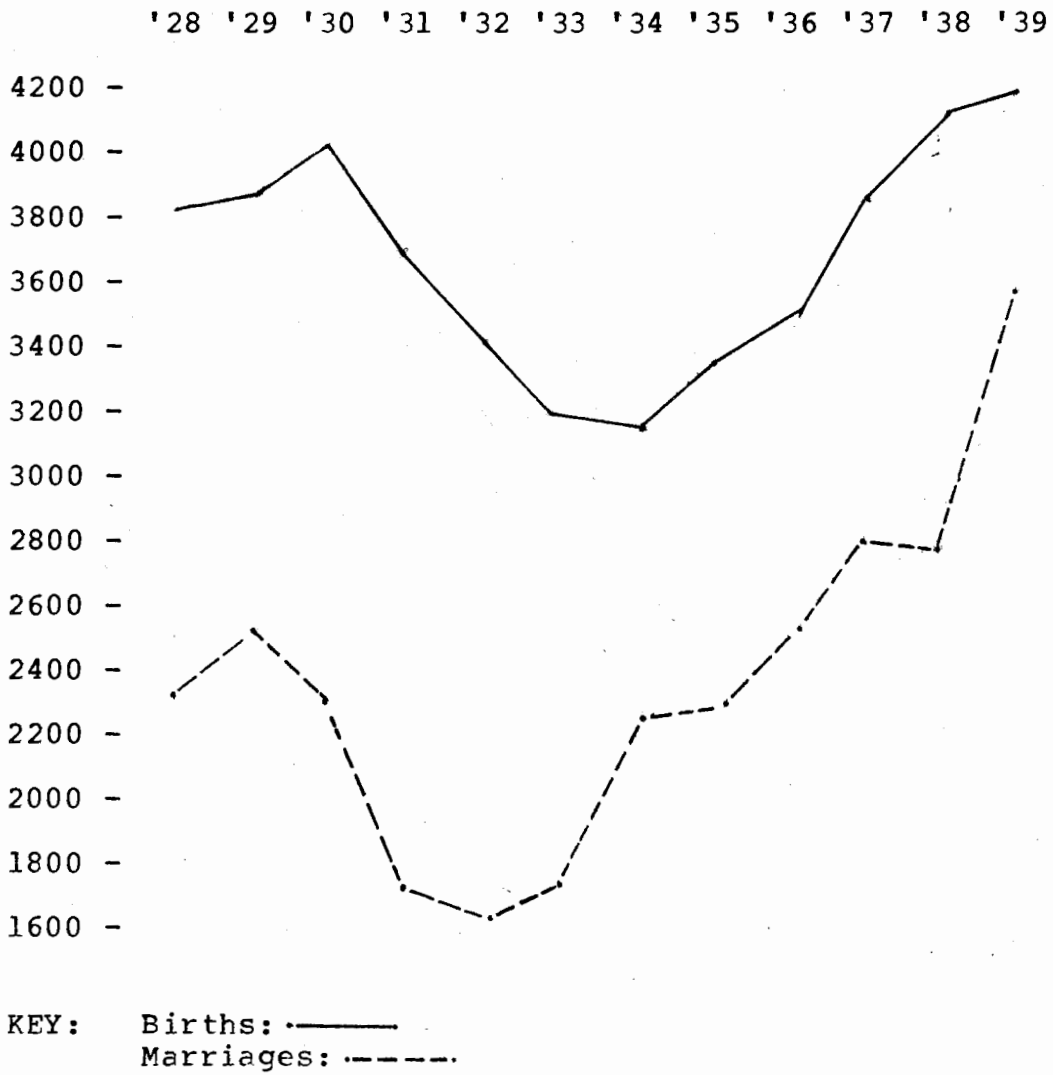
⁴⁷Quoted in The [Vancouver] Province, 4 September 1931, p.3.

Figure IV:5
Marriages and Births, Vancouver, 1928-1939

Year	Marriages	% change	Births	% change
1928	2,347	0.00	3,812	0.00
1929	2,585	10.14	3,869	1.50
1930	2,250	-12.96	4,003	3.46
1931	1,767	-21.47	3,730	-6.82
1932	1,633	- 7.58	3,450	-7.51
1933	1,776	8.76	3,188	-7.59
1934	2,137	20.33	3,179	-0.28
1935	2,227	4.21	3,248	2.17
1936	2,441	9.61	3,410	4.98
1937	2,783	14.01	3,780	10.85
1938	2,761	- 0.72	4,095	5.56
1939	3,496	26.62	4,107	0.29

(Source: Canada, Bureau of Statistics, Vital Statistics, 1928-1939 (Ottawa: King's Printer).)

Figure IV:6
Marriages and Births, Vancouver, 1928-1939



the United Church in British Columbia contended that the work of First United "did more to keep the red element in check than any other influence."⁴⁸ Commenting to The Province newspaper almost four years after the jungles had been razed, Roddan took credit for defusing potential rebellion: "One civic official publicly stated that if it had not been for [First United's] services there would have been bloodshed on the streets of Vancouver."⁴⁹ In the same article he explained the foundation of his success was his recognition of worldly needs among the unemployed: "... we believe it is more helpful to render service than it is to explain some theory of opinion or point of view regarding our social or political life." Clearly Roddan saw himself in competition with purveyors of left-wing propaganda among the unemployed. He attempted to derail the communists by meeting the physical needs of their audience, by appealing to the spiritual requirements of the jobless, and by marshalling through church conferences "daring resolutions that would challenge the politicians and frighten the capitalists."⁵⁰ If he could not satisfy all and sundry that the church represented a system which was sympathetic to the needs of the unemployed Roddan feared that neither his church nor the system itself could withstand the backlash.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Powell, "Response to the Depression", p.41.

⁴⁹ The [Vancouver] Province, 5 January 1935, p.5.

⁵⁰ Rev.Roddan, For Doubters Only, p.2.

The tack taken by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese was essentially the same. Spurred by encyclicals from Rome in the early 1930s, the Archdiocese viewed its main task as doing good works which would negate any growth in the popularity of socialistic politics. One of Pope Pius XI's two major statements of the decade, the Divini Redemptoris, identified Christian charity as the best means of staving off revolution. One author has interpreted the encyclical to mean "that it is of the very essence of social justice to demand all that is necessary for the common (economic) good from each individual."⁵¹ Social justice and social charity were so inextricably linked that the Church would have to address the crucial issues of the depression if it wished to retain the loyalty of its flock, let alone their respect. One analyst of the situation in the American Roman Catholic community makes a similar argument which can be extended to the Vancouver experience:

As the decade of the 1930s neared its end, the Catholic leadership realized that the Church's safety and progress now rested in large part on social gains. What with unemployment continuing, the birth control movement making inroads on the Catholic population, and Communists infiltrating the new industrial unions, the Church's hold on her membership would be jeopardized unless a large measure of social justice could be speedily secured.⁵²

At its most primary level this meant acting to avert starvation

⁵¹Marguerite T. Boylan and The Reverend Thomas J. Harte, "The Historical Background of Catholic Social Welfare Work Today", The Catholic Church and Social Welfare: A Symposium, ed. M.T. Boylan (New York: Greenwich Book Publishers, 1961), p.41.

⁵²Aaron I. Abell, American Catholicism and Social Action: A Search for Social Justice, 1865-1950 (New York: Hanover House, 1960), p.256.

and hopelessness among the members of the Archdiocese.

In the matter of socialism in its institutional forms, the Archbishop and his priests were no shrinking violets. From 1933 on, candidates for public office who belonged to the social democratic Cooperative Commonwealth Federation were identified in the Archdiocese newspaper and it was stated in unambiguous terms that no "conscientious Catholic voter" could lend his or her support to the C.C.F.⁵³ In a world smouldering with anti-Church revolutions such a move was not unpredictable although in its vitriol it succeeded in marking a clear distinction in perspective between Catholic authorities and the social gospel Protestants.

No clergyman living in the twin shadows of Mexico and Spain could afford to ignore the perceived spread of radical thought. In Vancouver the reasons for this were two-fold. As in every other jurisdiction, revolution had become synonymous with the suppression of religious rights; "the opiate of the masses" was a phrase too frequently on the lips of agitators at home and abroad to allow the clergy much comfort. Second, generally speaking, radicalism did not pay tithes: business and the free enterprise system did. It seemed wise to act decisively against socialist rhetoric rather risk losing both funds and congregation. The response of Vancouver's churches to unemployment and the need for relief, then was tempered by such disquieting prospects.

⁵³-----
B.C. Catholic, 28 October 1936, p.2.

The Reverend Dobson viewed the position of the city's churches as one which could bring pressure to bear on the situation before the creative and social impulses of the unemployed reached a state of violent despair. Discussing unemployment in Vancouver he wrote:

It ought to be reiterated again and again that this is a moral and a religious problem. The spirit of man enters upon periods of despair, fear, suspicion, prejudice and revolt, when unemployment has its way with him. In such a state he often becomes a hater of society, a fatalist, inclined to denial of God or of any intelligently directed order in the Universe. A Christian congregation or ministry that neglects consideration of this problem is asleep on guard.⁵⁴

Therefore, it became imperative for the church to take an active role of some description during the crisis. Given the alternatives of providing material aid to the destitute or reclining into apathy in the face of apparent left-wing insurgency, the clergy in Vancouver were clearly disposed towards the former.

The attendant fears, then, of Bolshevism and declining attendance sparked churches in Vancouver into addressing the unemployment problem in a manner most appropriate to their respective abilities and requirements. These objectives were met when, as one minister stated, in the hearts of many of the unemployed, "there is a kindlier feeling toward the Christian Church because of the interest shown in a time of need."⁵⁵

⁵⁴Quoted in The [Vancouver] Province, 31 March 1937, p.1.

⁵⁵Rev.Roddan, The Church in the Modern City, p.35.

V. The Civic Response to Unemployment

Whatever reasons Vancouver clergymen used to justify the provision of relief to their flocks, the city fathers were pleased. The civic department responsible for unemployment relief had found itself pinned between the strident demands of resident unemployed and ward-elected aldermen on the one hand and public sector budgetting on the other. Although the notion of the "garrison mentality" was conceived in the 1970s to describe Canadian literature, it captures well the mood at City Hall during the 1930s.

The evolution of the City's policy on relief reflects this environment. What statistical evidence was available to the bureaucrats and Council suggested the need for an improved system of monitoring the unemployed. The best that City resources could produce on such short notice, however, was police surveillance of suspected agitators and disgruntled relief recipients. The experience of city police and civil servants in the first two years of the depression revealed that the intensity of emotions flowing from the crisis could not be contained or pacified simply by an occasional show of force. The Province and the Dominion did not cooperate fully in the search for a solution to the problem posed by the unemployed. The senior governments provided catch-as-catch-can support at the best of times and displayed a decided predilection towards

the expensive and untenable option of work relief. Ongoing programmes of this nature, which were running low in cash, demonstrated the need for reliable and consistent forms of relief. The City Relief Department, however, soon came to have as its central objectives transferring responsibility for cases to the senior governments wherever possible and minimizing expenses. In 1935 this approach came under fire, as opposition to the Department's insensitivity mounted and three enquiries exposed its byzantine workings. One aspect which gained some fleeting attention but posed significant questions about the goals of civic relief was the dearth of trained social workers and the absence of a social work ideology in the local administration. Although its crucially important role as a patronage pool spared the Department from serious surgery, in the mid-decade it began to display signs of professionalization. The City of Vancouver's administration of relief in the 1930s was designed to meet exigencies which, in large part, had little or nothing to do with the needs of jobless citizens.

In the civic administration of relief three factors were paramount in influencing policy: financial resources, administrative convenience, and political pressure. The programmes which evolved were designed not to address hardship directly but to reduce political discontent while catering to budgetary exigencies and ease of operation.

As one might expect, the response to the unemployment crisis by City relief planners was at first just a continuation

of approaches developed over the previous two and one half decades.¹ No changes were hurriedly put into place. The City Council of the day, led by the conservative W.H.Melkin, did little more than increase the amount of money spent on relief as more eligible applicants arrived in the relief office. The spring of 1930, it was hoped, would see a revitalization of industry and a commensurate decline in the number of unemployed in the city. Initially, the function of relief continued to be the amelioration of poverty and discontent as it had been defined in Vancouver since 1912.

As demands on the City budget escalated and social tensions developed, Council was forced to act. One step was an expansion of police activity and surveillance of the hobo jungles. Another was an increase in the size and scope of work relief programmes.

Beginning in December 1929 parades to the Relief Office and City Hall were regular events. Since even the smallest march required a permit from Council and the Police, these could be controlled at a bureaucratic level with some effectiveness. Also, the withholding of permits left any illegal march open to charges of civil disobedience and buttressed the arguments made in the press and by politicians and police that the protesters were set upon instigating social upheaval. It was in this spirit

¹The best comprehensive summary of social welfare politics in Vancouver up to 1929 is Patricia Roy's article "Vancouver: 'The Mecca of the Unemployed,' 1907-1929," Town and City: Aspects of Western Canadian Urban Development, ed. Alan F.J. Artibise, Canadian Plains Studies, 10 (Regina: Plains Research Center, University of Regina, 1981), pp.393-413.

that Chief Constable W.J.Bingham was ordered to keep a close watch on suspected agitators and communists.

Among the single transient unemployed especially, Bingham soon earned a poor reputation. Confrontations between these men and whip-swinging mounted city police were not rare and Bingham was usually in attendance as an active participant. This is not to suggest that indiscriminate police brutality formed a part of the City's relief policy. Far from it. For example, on 17 December 1930 a band of about 800 to 1,000 unemployed men and women and their sympathizers marched on the Relief Office. The Relief Officer met with the protesters, heard their complaints, took a nose count and gently implored them to disperse, which they did. The next day a much smaller group of demonstrators repeated the march, nine of whom (including four relief recipients) were arrested following a run-in with Bingham's finest. Clearly, examples could be made of the militant unemployed but only when the odds allowed. And, as Patricia Roy has observed,

memories of organized agitation and the sense that Vancouver was unduly burdened as a mecca for the unemployed were not readily forgotten and undoubtedly contributed to the apprehension felt in the city as the unemployed congregated there in unprecedented numbers.²

One month after the engagement described above, Bingham filed a report with the Mayor and the Vancouver Police Commission covering his department's activities. He claimed that his undercover agents had attended over one hundred

²Ibid., p.411.

"Communistic" meetings in 1930 and that little if any money at all seemed to be coming from Russia to support the various labour, unemployed, and left-leaning associations under observation. Local "Soviet Agents" were "under review from time to time, but changes are many and new ones are always arriving or being elected."³ At this point Bingham felt the matter was well in hand. Six months later his perspective had changed dramatically. On 11 June 1931 Bingham complained to then-Mayor L.D.Taylor that "the unspoken determination of the unemployed to harrass the Police" was "being put into effect."⁴ It had become commonplace to find 2,000 to 5,000 individuals in demonstrations now and rumours abounded of window-smashing campaigns to come. If Bingham's reports are any indicator, the police were being run ragged and the constabulary had ceased to differentiate between the unemployed and the communists.

It was not the married unemployed of the city who gave Bingham sleepless nights. It was the single unemployed transients concentrated in the hobo jungles. This group constituted a ready body of demonstrators who could provide a catalyst to bring out dissatisfied locals. The solution promoted by the chairman of the Council's Relief and Employment Committee, Alderman W.Atherton, was the clearance of these squatter settlements. On the third of September 1931

³ Chief Constable W.J. Bingham to His Worship the Mayor and Members of the Vancouver Police Commission, 21 January 1931, Major J.S. Matthews Collection, file 51, CVA.

⁴ Bingham to Mayor L.D.Taylor, 11 June 1931, *ibid.*

H.A.McDonald, an M.D. in the City's employ, filed a report on conditions prevailing in the Georgia Viaduct jungle:

There are about 250 men. Grounds are filthy and covered with decaying garbage, with open toilets. Flies swarm over everything and then on all open food. I consider that with the rainy season approaching we are in grave danger of an epidemic of Typhoid, or other diseases. Many of the men are lying on the ground, which is becoming damp, and they are sure to suffer from Bronchial and Rheumatic troubles.⁵

This warning struck a responsive chord. That same evening a letter from Atherton to the Dominion Minister of Labour and the Provincial Minister of Public Works was printed in its entirety in The Province:

Rain bringing unemployment conditions to a crisis. More than 15,000 registered in city. Twenty-five hundred relief families now requiring clothing and rent. Two thousand homeless single men increasing by seventy floaters daily. One thousand men in jungles one man found dead this morning and another new arrival sent to hospital with possible typhoid. Medical officer states epidemic possible. Inertness of Dominion Government in failing to control transients and in delaying decision (on relief policy) has paralyzed municipalities.⁶

Within a matter of hours the jungles were evacuated and plowed under by a crew recruited from the breadlines. Finally roused from its somnolence, the Provincial Government opened Hamilton Hall downtown to administer to the needs of the

⁵ H.A.McDonald, M.D., "Affidavit," 3 September 1931, Vancouver Social Services Department, Series 4, Box 106C2, CVA.

⁶ Alderman W.Atherton to Hon. Gideon S. Robertson, Minister of Labour, and Hon. R.W.Bruhn, Minister of Public Works, British Columbia, reprinted in The [Vancouver] Province, 4 September 1931, pp.2,3.

single unemployed, pending their removal from the city.⁷ The evacuation and the subsequent establishment of provincially- then nationally-run work camps in the Interior marked the end of the City's involvement with the single transient unemployed as local responsibilities.

As hoped, the evacuation reduced the tension between the unemployed and the civic administration. It did not relieve it completely, but it gave the City breathing room.⁸ The lesson for Vancouver's politicians was a simple one: by a show of force and by throwing a significant number of unemployed on to the broader shoulders of the Provincial Government political stability could be retained. This was not, however, the sort of trick that could be repeated over and over again. The remaining unemployed were too decentralized and disorganized to make police action worthwhile and the Province by 1931 was set to dig in its heels against further municipal claims.

In the summer of 1930 City Relief Officer G.D. Ireland set out a list of objectives for his department to follow which became the essential guide for the remainder of the decade. To

⁷ This was not the first occasion in which the City had forced a crisis to obtain Provincial involvement in an unemployment related problem. Professor Roy provides examples during the Great War which might have set a precedent to be followed among the older staff members and Relief Officer G.D. Ireland in particular. Roy, "Vancouver", p.401.

⁸ While the unemployed in Vancouver continued to hold marches and to lodge protests these ceased to be on the same scale as those witnessed in the first two years of the depression. Exceptions included the major actions precipitated in 1933, 1935, and 1937 by work camp strikers.

begin with, the residence requirements for relief were to be maintained at a single level for both single men and families; Ireland hoped that this could be set at no less than twelve months. The Dominion and Provincial Governments, he maintained, should be held responsible for the care of the single unemployed and all transients. Moreover, the Province should be forced to make this retroactive, so as to reimburse the City for the great expense it had incurred. Ireland called for a coordination of private sector agencies to avoid overlapping and to encourage services that would fill in gaps in the City's programmes. The establishment of the Vancouver Welfare Federation and the Catholic Charities did much to meet this particular goal. Cash grants for relief work were to be terminated, due to the risk of duplicate disbursements from the direct relief programme. Finally, Ireland wanted to see a universal registration of the unemployed in Vancouver to discover how many jobless were falling through the cracks of the system and to identify recipients of relief who were less needy. These statistics would also figure prominently as negotiating tokens between the City and senior governments. While it is true that several of Ireland's objectives were soon met, some became irrelevant and others were allowed to die of neglect.⁹ Most importantly to this discussion, Ireland's propositions helped to push the City further away from actual social work among the unemployed.

⁹G.D.Ireland to Ald.Atherton, 28 July 1930, Office of the City Clerk, Incoming Correspondence, Box 15P4, CVA.

Social work and counselling were to be left, with few regrets, to the churches and private agencies.

Finding the money for the civic responses posed further difficulties. A firmly entrenched aspect of Canadian welfare policy in the 1930s has been described as the concentric circles model.¹⁰ This assigns to the family and friends of the unemployed, destitute or disabled the first responsibility for their welfare. Next, local community agencies, like churches and benevolent associations, are expected to step in. Should the problem become sufficiently widespread to demand any government attention at all this duty falls to the local administrations. The provincial and, finally, the dominion governments only play a role when the situation has been proven to be of "unusual" proportions. Enshrined in the British North America Act, this delegation of authority did not sit well with near bankrupt municipal governments during the 1930s.¹¹

The response of cities and municipalities across Canada was almost uniform. Saddled with an unmanageable burden they turned to Ottawa. John Taylor's study of the "Relief from Relief" campaign among Canadian mayors in the mid-1930s shows how civic

¹⁰ See John H. Taylor, "'Relief from Relief': The Cities' Answer to Depression Dependence," Journal of Canadian Studies XIV, 1 (Spring 1979): 16-23.

¹¹ For a contemporary overview of the constitutional side, see W.P.M. Kennedy, Essays in Constitutional Law (London: Oxford University Press, 1934).

demands reached their most vocal stage.¹² Nevertheless, the concentric circles pecking order guaranteed that the last body to come under real pressure would be Ottawa. As late as 1938 the Provincial Government of British Columbia wrote that the Dominion's belated recognition of "the inability of the provinces to shoulder all the relief expenditures necessary in terms of widespread unemployment" was nevertheless qualified.¹³

This is not to say that Dominion Governments, either Conservative or Liberal, failed completely to acknowledge a federal role. The Unemployment Relief Act, 1930, committed Ottawa to paying 25 percent of British Columbia's public works schemes and one-third of the direct relief costs incurred at the local level. Issued in the form of a single grant, this was designed, as Relief Officer H.W.Cooper noted, to meet "actual destitution" and not unemployment. Cooper based his conclusion on the fact that although Vancouver could lay claim to almost ten percent of the "unplaced" or transient unemployed in the country, the City received only 1.3 percent or \$220,000 of the \$16 million fund. Further disagreement arose when the Dominion refused to lend anymore money to the provinces to cover the latter's share (another one-third).¹⁴ The Unemployment and Farm

¹² John Taylor, "Mayors in Depression: A Study of the Evolution and Failure of Social Policy and Collective Organization" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1976).

¹³ British Columbia, British Columbia in the Canadian Confederation (Victoria: Charles Banfield, 1938), p.119.

¹⁴ H.W.Cooper, "Memorandum Re The Unemployment Relief Act, 1930 and Its Operation in Vancouver," 19 January 1931, Vancouver Social Services Department, Series 4, Box 106C7, CVA.

Relief Act, 1931, did not make clear what percentage of the tab Ottawa would accept, although it was certainly not to be more than fifty percent under normal circumstances. When the Province and the Dominion took joint responsibility for the single transient unemployed from 1931 to 1937, considerable pressure was removed from the City. Anyone who had arrived in the municipality after 1 May 1931, however, remained a local burden.¹⁵ New legislation in 1932 recognized the failure of the public works programmes on the civic level and was addressed only to direct relief.¹⁶

As the number of unemployed declined in the latter half of the decade so too did the financial commitment from Ottawa. By 1937 Victoria was responsible for grants totaling 80 percent of the direct relief costs in the city as well as 100 percent of direct relief to Provincial and transient cases within municipal limits.¹⁷ The steady growth in the Provincial participation during the first half of the 1930s can be seen in figure V:1 below.

¹⁵ British Columbia, Department of Labour, "Report of The Deputy Minister of Labour, 1932," Sessional Papers (Victoria: Charles Banfield, 1933), p.69.

¹⁶ Bettina Bradbury, "The Road to Receivership: Unemployment and Relief in Burnaby, North Vancouver City, North Vancouver District, and West Vancouver: 1929-1933" (M.A. thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1976), p.130.

¹⁷ British Columbia, Department of Labour, "Report of the Administrator of Unemployment Relief, 1937", Sessional Papers (Victoria: Charles F. Banfield, 1938), p.S92.

Figure V:1
Costs of Relief, Civic and Provincial, 1930-1935

Year	City Share	(%)	Provincial	(%)	Total
1930	\$ 551,997	(78)	\$ 150,702	(21)	\$ 702,680
1931	\$ 727,473	(56)	\$ 557,887	(43)	\$1,285,361
1932	\$ 904,473	(40)	\$1,347,867	(59)	\$2,252,759
1933	\$1,078,417	(44)	\$1,356,624	(55)	\$2,434,041
1934	\$1,101,604	(42)	\$1,524,525	(58)	\$2,865,739

(Source: W.J.Barrett-Leonard, "Report on the Reorganization of the Administration of the City of Vancouver, 1936," mimeographed typescript, Vancouver Public Library, p.56.)

The matching share designated as a Provincial responsibility promptly became a political football. Due to a constellation of financial barriers and errors, the Province in late 1931 and early 1932 held back its matching share of direct relief to Vancouver. The City countered by hiring more relief recipients for work projects, thereby exhausting its resources by February and forcing Victoria to act. This set the tone for City-Provincial relations in the Treasury Board for the coming years.

To be fair, the Province made two significant contributions to the administration of relief at the civic level. The first was the province-wide registration of the unemployed initiated in August 1931. The rule that those unemployed who had not been in British Columbia prior to the first of January were ineligible for registration after the twelfth of September had the effect of reducing the "size of the influx" of jobless during the critical autumn months.¹⁸ Also the registration programme, as seen in chapter III, gave the local administration an idea of the size of the unemployed population.

The second Provincial innovation was the so-called "Jones Scale." Named after the Provincial Minister of Finance, J.W.Jones, this set the rate for individual cases. In the original version, which appeared in 1931, the first adult in a family was to receive nine dollars monthly with \$3.50 for any

¹⁸ Ibid., 1931, p.#50.

second adult and \$2.50 for each dependent.¹⁹ This was increased in early 1932 to \$3.50 for each dependent plus an across the board 10 percent bonus. Other costs, like fuel, light or rent were lumped together but a distinction was made between the amounts available to those who owned and those who rented their homes. The former received a supplementary forty percent of the Jones Scale while tenants received twenty percent plus an extra five to eight dollars per month. Under this arrangement the City was required to notify the Provincial Government of its share for reimbursement. It was in this phase that serious weaknesses in the Jones Scale system began to appear.

It was actually a question of logistics. Direct relief in Vancouver went out on a "rateable basis so that practically the same number of recipients would attend each day of the week for relief."²⁰ Food relief was administered once every two weeks to recipients. One consequence was that within a thirty-one day month the City would make three payments of relief to many recipients to cover a period of six weeks. Since the Jones Scale was geared to a four week format, the Provincial Treasury refused to allow full payments to Vancouver. These two week civic excesses each month were called "overages", and they represented roughly one-third more than the City should have

¹⁹ H.T.Whitehead, Secretary of the Committee of the Executive Council on Unemployment Relief to W.R.Bone, 23 December 1932, Vancouver Social Services Department, Series 4, 106C7, CVA.

²⁰ Vancouver, Kerr Commission Enquiry, "Relief Department Enquiry, 1935," p.107, CVA.

been paying.

With an eye to remedying the overages problem the Jones Scale was revamped somewhat in 1932. Set unto a day-by-day format which was calculated on a 1/31st basis, it aimed to eliminate the earlier inequity. This "Split System" carried with it new defects. The eight dollar supplement for miscellaneous monthly expenses was added to the original base rate but during a twenty-eight day month the total Provincial responsibility declined markedly from sixty percent of the thirty-one day month share. The result was that the City faced losses though overages in, twenty-eight and thirty day months. The City lost between \$56,000 and \$80,000 in this manner by 1935.²¹

The Provincial Government was not particularly sympathetic to the City's plight. The hope fostered by both Jones and his leader, Premier S.F.Tolmie, was that Vancouver Council would find ways of obtaining more revenue for its relief needs from within its own jurisdiction. In fact, the Conservative Government in Victoria actively pursued a policy of fiscal coercion which drew Vancouver closer to heavy taxation. In October 1931 a message from a Dominion government agent to Jones indicated as much:

Government pressure on municipalities to raise more money to assist own people bringing results. Vancouver City submitting bylaws for one and a quarter million...."²²

²¹ Ibid., "Report," CVA.

²² H.M.McGeough to Jones, 31 October 1931, J.W.Jones Papers, Add.Mss.23, vol.1, file 4, #193, PABC.

Three months later the Province made an only slightly veiled threat to the City indicating that, if the latter disagreed with new proposals from Victoria on work relief, funding negotiations would be reopened on the question of responsibility for the single unemployed. The resurrection of this funding debate was something the City was loath to face.²³ Reluctantly, Council acquiesced to the demands of Victoria.

The relationship between the Province and the City during the early part of the depression was one of mutual antagonism. This atmosphere only made life on relief less enviable than it had been during the 1920s. The constant bickering between all levels of government succeeded most in setting up a smokescreen over responsibility. The unemployed --- and the administrations too --- were confused as to which party should take the blame or receive the credit for the relief programmes.²⁴ Buck-passing reached a peak when, in the last half of the decade the City and Victoria exchanged lists of as many as 1,900 "unemployables" in repeated attempts to leave the responsibility for these cases on the opposite side of Georgia Strait.²⁵ The confusing criteria

²³Cooper to Ald.A.G.Harvey, 25 February 1932, Office of the City Clerk, Incoming Correspondence, Box 15F1, CVA.

²⁴"The constant interaction between the Federal, Provincial and Municipal governments and the attempt to shift responsibility from one authority to another meant that the average relief recipient was totally confused as to who was in control." Alma Lawton, "Relief Administration in Saskatoon During the Depression," Saskatchewan History XII, 2 (Spring 1969), p.42.

²⁵Ald. Fred Crone to Premier T.D.Pattullo, 12 July 1938, Pattullo Papers, v67, file 2, PABC.

that determined who could be labelled "unemployable" perpetuated this absurd situation.²⁶ In addition, the City had managed to snooker the Province into accepting responsibility for all single unemployed and not just transients.²⁷ In 1938 the City gleefully relinquished to the Provincial Government part of its responsibility for Vancouver's indigents and unemployables on the basis of a 60/40 City/Province split. However, this new arrangement lasted only to November of the same year. In 1939 the Dominion government attempted to settle the dispute by adjudicating a forty percent share from each of the senior governments and twenty percent from the City. This modification brought cost-sharing formulae generally almost full circle to where it had stood in 1930.²⁸

Running concurrently with the dispute over fiscal obligations was a debate on the most efficient type of relief to be issued. Work relief was the preferred approach of all administrations. Operated on a hit-and-miss basis in the 1920s, work programmes provided the unemployed with a minimal source of

²⁶ Relief Officer W.R.Bone to Ald.W.W.Smith, 3 August 1936, Box 27C4, CVA; Provincial Relief Branch, "Serial no.207, 10 February 1938," Vancouver Social Services Department, Series 4, Box 106C7, CVA.

²⁷ See E.W.Griffith's testimony in the Kerr Commission Enquiry, "Proceedings", pp.1,851-1,852, CVA.

²⁸ The cost-sharing arrangements for this period are one aspect of inter-administrative relations which merit further study. No solid effort has been made yet to compare relief policies and programmes under both the Tolmie and T.D.Pattullo governments in British Columbia. Scholarship in this area would definitely be welcome.

income and a new set of responsibilities. Also it acted as a "work test" for the jobless, theoretically having the effect of deterring would-be freeloaders from descending on Vancouver in still greater numbers. During short depressions work relief had represented a relatively inexpensive and effective method of dealing with unemployment. If well conceived it could also help to shorten the period of economic stagnation by channelling scarce resources into the extension or improvement of roads, sewers, and power lines, as well as civic or regional beautification. Business, therefore, could benefit from improvements in the economic infrastructure which it had long lobbied for but had been denied due to the high costs of labour.²⁹ In addition, as a means of social control relief work was far and away superior to direct relief because it provided a substitute employment environment that bore similarities to an employee-employer relationship. There was, however, little support for the increased civic expenditures relief work represented and even less for its corollary --- increased taxes. Still, in a community not yet completely disposed towards welfare programmes (and certainly not towards direct relief), work projects represented a palatable alternative.

The City programme of relief work in 1929 and 1930 could not be described as richly rewarding for the unemployed. The rates, set initially at two dollars per day for married

²⁹ Joanna C. Colcord, Setting Up a Program of Work Relief (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1931), Hugh Dobson Papers, Box B4, fileA, UCA.

*women benefit
by day
the wages paid by*

unemployed and one dollar for single unemployed, were well below the four dollar daily wage set out in the Fair Wages and Eight Hour Day Act of 1930. Even if one assumes a six day work week, the wage for a married man would be less than half of that recorded on the average weekly industrial wage indices for 1929, 1930 and 1931 (see pages 119-120 below). This was also well below the average national cost of living. By April 1930 the rates paid out had been reduced to a uniform seven dollars for six days work.³⁰ Not only would the work aspect of this response to unemployment serve as a deterrent to itinerant layabouts but certainly the rate of pay would have the same effect. *lessor*

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that labour groups were among the first to protest relief work programmes. Giving precedence to the claims of civic employees, the Vancouver, New Westminster and District Trades and Labour Council confronted the Public Works Committee of the City Council with the argument that work relief discriminated against regular full-paid workers. It was exploitative, they argued. One alderman replied that to abandon the programme "would be to do a great deal of harm to real, honest-to-God fellows who want to earn what they eat."³¹ By making the outdoor employees redundant, however, the work relief programme was counter-productive. This was the argument made by Angus MacInnis after he was elected to the

³⁰C. Maxwell to Ireland, 16 April 1930, Office of the City Clerk, Incoming Correspondence, Box 14F5, CVA.

³¹The Vancouver Sun, 7 March 1934, p.3.

House of Commons, having resigned from City Council in 1931.³² Even the argument that work relief spared the unemployed from the indignities of accepting direct relief did not hold much water: the ad hoc nature of the projects³³ meant that whenever civic budgets became severely strained the unemployed were thrown back onto direct relief anyway.

If work relief was to succeed it needed to be an on-going and permanent proposition. A permanent civic works scheme, however, would run counter to the City's view of relief as a means to tide people over hard times while encouraging them to look for work elsewhere. Moreover, to make the projects pay, the Civic administration had always insisted on labour intensive undertakings. The use of machinery or the provision of protective clothing by the City was avoided wherever possible. There were two limitations to relief work of this description. First, the emphasis on menial labour effectively ruled out applicants who had done little other than clerical work in the past. Though they might be "hired" on, the physical strain to which they were unaccustomed could prove too great, thus removing them from the civic relief rolls and pointing them

³²Canada, Debates, 26 March 1931, p.1,993.

³³A few examples of proposed work relief projects in Vancouver include a new stadium on stadium (either on C.P.R. land at 16th and Trafalgar or on the Kitsilano Indian Reserve), grounds clearing at Exhibition Park, sporadic parks and sewerage projects, and the sea wall in Stanley Park.

towards lasting destitution.³⁴ Second, the absence of machinery slowed down the work considerably and increased the number of man-hours necessary to complete a given task.³⁵ Relief work, originally intended to be a stop-gap measure with significant social and economic benefits, thus became an expensive luxury.

It is, therefore, somewhat amazing that work relief programmes lasted for as long as they did. Municipal administrations were, for the most part, apprized of the expensive nature of this particular approach. Harry Cassidy estimated very early in the depression that the cost of providing flood prevention through relief works programmes in Ontario was 100 percent greater than the normal costs. Likewise the amounts spent on sewer installation, street grading and road improvement by relief workers were higher by 128%, 25%, and 91% respectively.³⁶ In Vancouver, as early as 15 April 1929 the

³⁴ Leonard Marsh noticed the difficulties connected with forcing work relief on the physically unfit: "Thus, persons whose occupational aptitudes fit them for clerical or skilled mechanical work are unsuited for and may indeed be harmed by manual labour on 'relief works'." Marsh, Employment Research: An Introduction to the McGill Programme of Research in the Social Sciences (Toronto: Amen House, 1935), p.251.

³⁵ One Canadian author who participated on work relief projects in Manitoba has voiced the complaint that was common among the unemployed: "they (the machines) stood idle in silent mockery of our puny efforts as the administrators of unemployment relief repudiating the machine age set their course back through history in the general direction of the stone age." James H. Gray, The Winter Years (Toronto: MacMillan, 1966), p.39.

³⁶ H.M. Cassidy, "Relief Works as a Remedy for Unemployment in the Light of the Ontario Experience," Papers and Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, IV (Kingston: Jackson Press, 1932), p.29.

Relief Officer recommended an end to work relief programmes because the City was overdrawn on its relief account and could no longer afford the exorbitant costs.³⁷ W.R.Bone, who held the position of Relief Officer from 1932 to 1945, was also eager to shut down all work projects. He perceived the emergence of a link between the recipients of work relief and his Department which, he felt, was not conducive to developing notions of self-support.³⁸ The inexperience of the workers employed, the increase in man-hours required, as well as the additional costs incurred by trying to continue projects through the winter months when working conditions and unemployment statistics were both at their worst, had made civic work relief a poor second choice by early 1932.

Vancouver, in conjunction with the Provincial Government, flirted with a few innovative approaches to relief but few had anything to recommend them. Wherever the unemployed showed initiative and a desire to be free of the relief system both governments were eager to oblige them. Four relief cases in April 1935, for example, were given a grubstake totalling over \$1,000 to establish a cooperative farming community in Sayward on Vancouver Island. They failed to survive their first winter

³⁷ Ireland to Ald.Atherton, 15 April 1929, Office of the City Clerk, Incoming Correspondence, Box 14F5, CVA.

³⁸ W.R.Bone to Ald.R.P.Pettipiece, 8 January 1937, *ibid.*, Box 16F6, CVA.

and were soon back on the City rolls.³⁹ Another case, which involved five relief recipients in the business of refurbishing and recycling all types of containers, continued to receive the dole during their first year of operation. The criteria for eligibility under these makeshift programmes, although largely unwritten, was that they not compete with existing enterprises yet show signs of viability. The "Utility Containers" story was also short, collapsing due to a lack of business within one year of its inception.⁴⁰ In a similar fashion, relief land settlement was seen by many as a potential solution. After dealing with about fifty large sized families in this way, however, settlement was also deemed to be an expensive and unsuitable response to unemployment.⁴¹ For the most part these options merely served to postpone the inevitable full reliance on direct relief.

Direct relief was a most unhappy alternative. Few social scientists, social workers, community leaders, labour leaders or unemployed Canadians had kind words to say about direct relief. Two commentators, writing in 1935, went so far as to argue that "the whole system of direct relief is wrong in principle and

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³⁹Bone to Ald.Smith, 11 April 1935, Office of the Director, Social Services Department, Box 106A5, file 11, CVA.

⁴⁰E.W.Griffith to Bone, 1 May 1935, ibid.

⁴¹Bone to Mayor Taylor, 3 June 1933, Office of the City Clerk, Incoming Correspondence, Box 16A5, CVA; Vancouver, Special Committee Minutes, 14 January 1933, Box 26D, vol.67, pp.324-325, CVA.

pernicious in its workings."⁴² This form of unemployment assistance was an inferior response to the crisis because

it admits the inability of society to provide work for its members --- a lamentable admission --- , because it is a tax on industry for the support of idleness --- ever a danger to society --- , and because it is granted unwillingly to deserving and undeserving alike --- always a demoralizing condition.⁴³

Further concern was raised by the prospect of a relatively wealthy city like Vancouver churning out relief chits to its unemployed and thereby attracting the jobless and impoverished of other cities and provinces. This prospect was, to be sure, a problem inherent in the local administration of relief, one which had been observed time and again in other jurisdictions.⁴⁴

In the Crowsnest Pass region on the British Columbia - Alberta border, for example, relief recipients who were obliged to work for their share of the dole protested to their local councils and to Victoria over the discrimination practiced to the benefit of unemployed Vancouverites on direct relief.⁴⁵ The critics of direct relief believed that it undermined "self-reliance, individualism, and saving habits, which, long regarded as characteristics of Canadians, have been replaced in the lives of many relief recipients by 'relief-mindedness' or readiness to

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Gilman and Sinclair, Unemployment: Canada's Problem, p.39.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Fred Reid, Keir Hardie: The Making of a Socialist (London: Croom Helm, 1978), p.156.

⁴⁵ W.A.Sloan, "The Crowsnest Pass During the Depression: A Socio-Economic History of South-Eastern British Columbia: 1918-39" (M.A. thesis, University of Victoria, 1968), p.21.

lean on the governments."⁴⁶ Painted into a fiscal corner, however, the City had few alternatives to which it could turn.

During his tenure as Relief Officer, G.D.Ireland had laid the groundwork for the widespread use of direct relief by re-christening his Department "Public Welfare and Relief." Here public welfare pertained only to the indigent, the unemployable and the disabled. This arm of administration was concerned with social work to some degree. The previous title of Ireland's branch, "Employment and Relief", had suggested administrative involvement in securing work for the unemployed, something which Ireland felt was clearly beyond the mandate of City Hall staff. Ireland's successor, H.W.Cooper took the redefinition of objectives one step further by partitioning the Department into "Relief" and "Unemployment" branches. The former dealt with what had been the traditional cases of the Department while the latter was purely a creature of the 'thirties. The Unemployment Relief Department was thus the culmination of Ireland's ambition to divorce the direct and work relief programmes from any functions other than providing incremental aid.

W.R.Bone was the man whom Cooper placed in charge of the new branch and he was similarly dedicated to this objective. Young and ambitious, Bone established an administrative system which viewed unemployment relief as a temporary balm for the jobless but a permanent feature of the 1930s bureaucracy. He

⁴⁶A.MacNamara, "Public Works as a Relief Measure," Canada's Unemployment Problem, ed. L.Richter (Toronto: MacMillan, 1939), pp.318-319.

might have found fault with unemployment insurance proposals but he believed that a reliable, ongoing programme of aid to stave over the most extreme cases was essential.

One of Bone's earliest additions to the relief system in Vancouver was a "destitution" form. Suggested by the Provincial Relief Branch, these were affidavits declaring the applicant's complete penury. Bank accounts, superannuation funds, loan values on insurance policies, and assets like automobiles, homes, etc. had to be detailed and evidence given that these resources had been, for the most part, exhausted.⁴⁷ The Provincial Government, in its 1938 monograph, British Columbia in the Canadian Confederation, correctly observed that the "real basis of assistance has been poverty, but the basis of poverty has been varied."⁴⁸ Not infrequently homeowners with assets in excess of \$2,000 were allowed onto the rolls while tenants who had as little as ten dollars in a bank account were not. The argument was repeatedly put that relief "penalized the thrifty workman by denying him aid until his savings and property were exhausted, while it gave relief after loss of his job to the man who was careless with his wages while he was at work."⁴⁹ Founded

⁴⁷ Vancouver, Special Committee Re Superannuation Funds and Insurance Funds, 26 September 1934, "Minutes", Box 21D, vol.68, p.74, CVA.

⁴⁸ British Columbia, British Columbia in the Canadian Confederation, p.122.

⁴⁹ A.J.Wright, "The Winter Years in Cowichan: A Study of the Depression in a Vancouver Island Community" (M.A. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1967), p.76.

more on sour grapes than a logically defensible concept of need, this position ignored the stated objective of direct relief, which was to provide aid to those who could not survive otherwise.

Eligibility for direct relief involved more than signing one affidavit. One had to submit to an interview (the subject matter of which could range from work experience to personal life), the completion of duplicate destitution forms everytime an application was made, and regular visits from Department staff to check on the validity and administration of the claim. As one applicant discovered, this inquisitional process, which was a necessary preliminary to the issuance of any relief, might take up to a week before any ^{money never changed hands & stay} money changed hands.⁵⁰ Given the requirement of destitution at the outset of application, one very difficult week faced potential recipients as their cards were being processed. Time saving changes in the application process could have improved this situation but the Department staff was chary of anything which gave the applicants a role in the completion of crucial documents. One of the chief clerks, a man named McNeill, argued that it was essential for the "record-takers" to complete all the forms because, he opined from experience,

when you handed it to the man himself to make out it is not accurate. It has never been done yet. I have never seen a relief recipient that made it out accurately

⁵⁰ Vancouver, Kerr Commission Enquiry, "Proceedings," pp.200-219, CVA.

according to how it has to be made up.⁵¹

As might be imagined this application and interview process was a demoralizing one. The establishment of sub-depots in late 1933 alleviated the hardship of crosstown treks (usually on foot) to the Relief Office downtown and a proposal was made in May 1939 to take this decentralization further.⁵² Still, week long time lags in service, the embarrassment of interviews in open and crowded waiting rooms, as well as the prospect of eviction from rented accommodations while the rent scrip was delayed were the order of the day. Ironically, these elements encouraged recipients to stay on relief.⁵³ Angus MacInnis complained of this problem in the House of Commons, citing an example:

I was in a position to put a man who had been on relief some few months ago in Vancouver in touch with a little temporary work, and he refused to do the work. It would have taken only a week or two. He said that he had found it so hard and had suffered so much before getting on relief that he did not wish to go through the ordeal

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McNeill's worries of incompetence on the part of the unemployed were reciprocated. It was alleged, although McNeill denied it at the Kerr Commission hearings in 1935, that a frustrated recipient blackened one of the clerk's eyes. A "barbed wire" grill was subsequently installed in front of his wicket for his own protection. Ibid., pp.932, 1,160-1,161, 1,996.

⁵²Vancouver, Special Committee Re Relief Sub-Depots, "Minutes," 31 May 1939, Box 27D6, CVA.

⁵³The recipient "may refuse work, not because he prefers unemployment aid to independence, but, especially if he has a family, because he weighs the luxury of a job against the delay and inconvenience of re-instatement on aid should the work prove only temporary, or because deductions on account of earnings may be so great as to make the job practically worthless." Dorothy King, "Unemployment Aid (Direct Relief)," Canada's Unemployment Problem, pp.108-109.

again.⁵⁴

The negative aspects of the administration of direct relief, therefore, actually constituted an incentive to remain reliant on the City until permanent work appeared.

The City's relief programmes covered almost all of the ND recipients' needs. Food, shelter, fuel, medical attention, clothing and dental care (albeit only extractions at \$1 per tooth)⁵⁵ were all provided. In 1934 tax sales of properties were discontinued because of the discontent they had fostered generally, to the further benefit of the resident unemployed. Gaps in relief occurred in scavenging services (which were provided free of charge only after a health menace loomed)⁵⁶, household supplies, and haircuts.⁵⁷ Moreover, fuel, light, and rent payments were so inconsistent and unreliable from one month to the next as to precipitate en masse evictions and cut-offs a number of times in the decade.⁵⁸ Breadlines were a punishing necessity, as were the queues outside the Central Clothing Committee's depot at 309 Cordova Street, the latter containing

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⁵⁴Canada, Debates of the House of Commons, 26 February 1935, p.1,237.

⁵⁵This was approved by the Vancouver Dental Society at a cost of \$200 per month which was split equally between the City and the Province. Vancouver, Special Committee Re Dental Services for Relief Recipients, "Minutes," 11 June 1934, Box 26D, vol.68, p.60, CVA.

⁵⁶Cooper to Ald.Harvey, 18 March 1932, Office of the City Clerk, Incoming Correspondence, Box 15F1, CVA.

⁵⁷Cooper to Mayor Taylor, 16 June 1932, *ibid.*

⁵⁸Bone to Ald.C.E.Tisdall, 15 January 1936, *ibid.*, Box 16F2, CVA.

as many as three hundred men in a single overnight wait.⁵⁹ The shortcomings of the direct relief programme seldom improved and even on those rare occasions only by degrees.

The cash value of direct relief, notwithstanding fluctuations of the Jones Scale, did not remain static. Following the introduction of the original scale, the amount allocated monthly changed with the seasons. In June 1933 the fuel supplement, for example, was dropped to twenty percent from forty to reflect the reduction in need in the summer months, but it climbed back up when winter was portended. Also, a wider range of rent allowances was added, raising the top end to fourteen dollars per month for a furnished suite in the hypothetical case of two adults blessed with eleven dependents.⁶⁰ Married couples and unmarried couples living together were to be treated identically while single unemployed adults living at home where parents were on direct relief were viewed as "dependents" and received only \$2.50 per month plus the forty percent catch-all bonus.⁶¹ If the rest of the family were not on relief, the amount given to single unemployed cases

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In fact, the Relief Department had no obligations or responsibilities in the provision of clothing except to certify eligibility for the benefit of the Central Clothing Committee which was run privately on donations and grants from City Hall and from the Provincial Government. Vancouver, Kerr Commission Enquiry, "Proceedings," pp.345-347.

⁶⁰Bone to Mayor Taylor, 26 May 1933, Office of the City Clerk, Incoming Correspondence, Box 16A5, CVA.

⁶¹H.T.Whitehead to Bone, 23 December 1932, Vancouver Social Services Department, Series 4, Box 106C7, CVA.

was increased to twenty cents per day or about six dollars per month. This amount varied in those instances where single female recipients resided in boarding houses, in which case the allowance was twenty cents per day for each of food and shelter.⁶² Similarly, mother-daughter or sister combinations wherein each partner was employable received treatment that was indistinguishable from that accorded married couples.⁶³ No allowances were made for anyone who owned their own business or for those who insisted on retaining a domestic servant.⁶⁴ Direct relief, even in the most generous cases, did not constitute a princely sum.

The cost of living in the city of Vancouver during the depression was well above the maximum allowed for direct relief, just as it had been for those on work relief. In 1932 Labour Minister W.M.Dennies reported that the cost of living for the

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The Young Women's Christian Association protested the \$1.40 per week shelter allowance, calling it completely unreasonable. In 1935 the YWCA advertised for vacancies letting at that rate but after fourteen days only eight suitable accommodations had been found. An increase of at least thirty-five cents per week seemed in order. The objectives of the YWCA's executive went beyond providing a roof over girls' heads, however, and a definite bias is revealed in their missive to City Hall: "Certainly if a girl wishes to keep her self-respect she will not live in a hostel labeled [sic] for unemployed girls. Since this is so, if we are to help girls the rate must be raised." Edna Pierce to Bone, 18 April 1935, Office of the City Clerk, Incoming Correspondence, Box 16D3, CVA.

⁶³Bone to Mayor Taylor, 8 June 1933, *ibid.*, Box 16D3, CVA.

⁶⁴Whitehead to Mayor Taylor, 8 June 1933, Vancouver Social Services Department, Series 4, Box 107C3, CVA.

port city was about \$15.62 for a family of five per week.⁶⁵ This was roughly twice that available on the Jones Scale. The average weekly industrial wage in the province for adult males throughout the decade, shown in figure V:2, underlined this inequity. Protests made by labour groups and citizens' organizations as well as suggestions made as late as 1937 by Council sub-committees that the relief level should be brought up to the average cost of living level met with little success.⁶⁶ A generally bad situation had been made worse by the fact that British Columbia had the highest average cost of staple foods in the dominion, a dubious distinction which the province nevertheless secured each October from 1900 through the 1930s.⁶⁷ Some of the main components of this survey are indicated in figure V:3 and show the high cost of beef, salmon, eggs, butter, bread and rent in Vancouver compared to Montreal and Toronto. It was no wonder that Vancouver had relief rates that were at least marginally higher than those in many other Canadian centres, although to call the Vancouver dole "generous," as did one Chairman of the Relief and Employment

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The [Vancouver] Province, 3 May 1932, pp.1,2.

⁶⁶Vancouver, Special Committee Re Relief and Increased Cost of Living, "Minutes," 12 April 1937, Box 27C6, CVA.

⁶⁷Canada, Department of Laoubr, "Prices, Retail and Wholesale, in Canada, October 1932: Cost of Living, Prices of Staple Articles and Index Numbers," Labour Gazette, XXXII, 11 (November 1932), p.1225.

Committee, was to exaggerate matters excessively.⁶⁸

The number on direct relief peaked in 1933 but refused to decline significantly before 1939. As indicated in figure V:4 below, the opening of the Dominion relief camps in 1933 resulted in a major contraction of the City's unemployment rolls but the closure of the same facilities in 1938 saw a small rise in case numbers. What is significant to this study is the abrupt increase of general relief cases in the last two years of the depression, an indicator of the all-out effort being made by both City and Province to saddle the other with additional responsibilities. Having endured once the experience of being swamped with unemployed supplicants, the City was eager to avoid a repetition.⁶⁹

In an effort to thin out the relief rolls Vancouver established, under Bone's aegis, an investigation branch. Fraudulent applications and serious defalcations were never considered to be widespread although they were sufficiently common and took enough forms to keep the branch busy. For example, in the three weeks leading up to 19 June 1933, twenty-one men who had been on relief as single resident unemployed applied anew for married relief status. Bone had this sudden matrimonial stampede checked and found that at least

⁶⁸ Ald. Smith to City Council, 27 August 1934, Office of the City Clerk, Incoming Correspondence, Box 16B7, CVA.

⁶⁹ In 1932, for example, the level of need was such that it became impossible for the Department to close its doors for the usual four-day Easter break. Cooper to Ald. Harvey, 21 March 1932, *ibid.*, Box 15F1, CVA.

Figure V:2
Average Weekly Industrial Wage for Adult Males in B.C.

Year	Amount	Year	Amount	Year	Amount
1918	\$27.97	1925	\$27.82	1932	\$23.62
1919	29.11	1926	27.99	1933	22.30
1920	31.51	1927	28.29	1934	23.57
1921	27.62	1928	28.69	1935	24.09
1922	27.29	1929	29.20	1936	26.36
1923	28.05	1930	28.64	1937	26.64
1924	28.39	1931	26.17	1938	26.80

(Source: British Columbia, Department of Labour, "Report of Deputy Minister of Labour, 1939" Sessional Papers (Victoria: Charles E. Banfield, 1940), p.611.)

Figure V:3
Average Costs of Selected Staple Goods, October 1932

Product	Montreal	Toronto	Vancouver
beef (per lb.)	8.1	11.8	13.1
bacon (per lb.)	20.9	25.1	21.4
salmon (per can)	21.0	31.3	25.0
eggs (per dozen)	37.3	31.3	38.4
milk (per quart)	10.0	10.0	8.3
butter (per lb.)	26.6	27.9	28.6
cheese (per lb.)	19.7	23.4	21.7
bread (per loaf)	4.7-6.0	5.3-6.7	6.2-7.0
flour (per lb.)	3.4	2.6	3.1
coffee (per lb.)	44.1	46.7	38.4
rent (per month)	\$15-18	\$17-22	\$20.00

(Source: Canada, Department of Labour, "Prices, Retail and Wholesale in Canada, October 1932: Cost of Living, Prices of Staple Articles and Index Numbers," Labour Gazette XXXII, 11 (November 1932): 1,225.)

Figure V:4
Relief Caseloads

Year	General Families	Relief Single Men	Unemployment			Total
			Married	Single M	Single F	
1930	761	810	972	1,134	-----	3,677
1931	807	646	2,588	4,664	175	8,880
1932	493	593	6,247	3,443	636	11,412
1933	250	566	7,062	85	496	8,459
1934	207	487	6,741	89	419	7,943
1935	301	439	6,574	84	433	7,831
1936	305	350	5,948	86	390	7,079
1937	423	264	4,884	67	373	6,011
1938	1,513	1,604	4,719	1,955	181	9,972
1939	1,156	1,110	3,523	1,810	176	7,775

(Source: "Annual Reports to Council," Vancouver Social Services Department, Series 4, 106D3, CVA.)

half of the men involved had been "warned for camp" shortly before getting hitched.⁷⁰ In another especially extreme case one man signed a destitution form claiming a house assessed at two thousand dollars as his sole asset and filed a claim for himself, his wife and five dependents. It later emerged that he had clear title to his home, another house rented out at \$18 per month, a third one mortgaged, 320 acres in Weyburn, Saskatchewan valued at \$4,500 with \$2,500 against it, and two "dependents" earning a monthly combined income of \$166.⁷¹ Cases like this easily justified the expense of an investigative capacity.

A special division of the investigation branch dealt only with the married unemployed and came to be one of the busiest arms of the civic administration. In 1934 alone 52,737 investigative calls were made and special enquiries conducted into 444 cases "in which exploitation was indicated."⁷² The total restitution accruing to the City from these efforts was over two thousand dollars, and some investigations resulted in deportations and criminal convictions. Harry Cassidy called the investigative component "one of the most important duties of the relief offices."⁷³ In Vancouver, it was the most thoroughly executed, investigators tapping information resources like

⁷⁰ Bone to Mayor Taylor, 19 June 1933, *ibid.*, Box 16A5, CVA.

⁷¹ Cooper to Ald. Harvey, 21 March 1932, *ibid.*, Box 15F1, CVA.

⁷² Ald. Smith to City Council, Report of the Relief and Unemployment Committee, 31 December 1934, Kerr Commission Enquiry, "Exhibits," Box 28A7, file 2, CVA.

⁷³ H.M. Cassidy, Unemployment and Relief in Ontario, p.173.

banks, former employers, clergymen and neighbours of the unemployed. It was also the most expensive to operate.⁷⁴

When changes came about in the administration of direct relief the catalysts were popular protest and budgetary concerns. Also a changing view of the unemployed played a role. The Provincial Government, as indicated above, put increasing pressure on the City to accept more responsibilities, some of which proved to be unavoidable. The result was a continual search in Vancouver for methods and means of cutting back service to reduce lengthening rolls. Delays in rent payments, water bills and sanitation credit were all calculated to have this effect. The outcry which frequently came in response to such tactics was therefore regular enough to constitute a major influence on policy planning. Often the loudest protest came not from relief recipients but from the commercial interests who relied on their patronage. Landlords were probably the most notorious group around the Relief Office. Through 1931-1933 the Rooming House and Cafe Owners' Association wreaked havoc by periodically evicting relief cases en masse as a form of protest against their low and laggardly payments.⁷⁵

⁷⁴Vancouver, Kerr Commission Enquiry, "Exhibits," #78, CVA.

⁷⁵In 1932 landlords in Vancouver were stopped from using an eviction ploy which had proven to be particularly effective when dealing with the unemployed. To avoid eviction proceedings the landlords demanded that the Water Department cease supplying relief tenants whom they wished to remove. This was often complied with despite the fact that the tenant in question may have paid his water bill regularly. The landlords went so far as to threaten the City with suit "should they turn on the water." Discomfort was a more effective lever for removing unwanted tenants than was legal haranguing. Vancouver, Special

⁷⁵ This was a destabilizing influence in its own right.⁷⁶ The Milk Board was also less than cooperative, rejecting Alderman George Miller's proposal for wholesale relief outlets which it cited as a threat to the business of retailers.⁷⁷ Similarly, grocery store owners and the British Columbia Electric Railway Company (which provided electrical power to city consumers) formed significant lobbies in the 1930s. Though not exactly a form of "popular" protest these examples indicate the activity of an uncoordinated but politically potent body of opinion.

The most widely reported voices of dissent, however, were those of the unemployed themselves. Prior to the evacuation of the single transients this group represented the greatest headache for City officials, holding rallies and marches despite repeated confrontations with the police. The unemployed who remained in Vancouver, to be sure, contributed their share to the general unrest of the decade. Cafes which failed to provide satisfactory service to relief recipients frequently lost their share of the relief business when disgruntled customers took

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(cont'd) Committees, "Minutes," 18 May 1932, Box 26D, vol.67, pp.211-212.

⁷⁶ In the House of Commons in 1933 the Liberal M.P. for Vancouver-Centre, Ian MacKenzie, read into Hansard the following message from Mayor Taylor: "Critical condition exists in Vancouver due to inadequacy of relief scale as as allowed by provincial government to meet shelter. Wholesale evictions involving hundreds of families under way resulting in increasing threatening situation." Canada, Debates. House of Commons, 16 March 1933 (Ottawa: J.O.Patenaude, 1933), p.3,099.

⁷⁷ Ald.George Miller, "Report of the Special Committee Re The Price of Milk for Relief Recipients," 17 May 1935, Box 27D2, CVA.

their complaints to City Council.⁷⁸ In a like fashion pressure was brought to bear on the Medical Section of the Relief Office by the "Unemployed Councils," a loosely affiliated group of jobless and ideologues.⁷⁹ The most extreme local example of the unemployed exacting demands on a local council came in the nearby community of Coquitlam. On the 24th and 25th of April 1933, local unemployed held the Reeve hostage in the municipal hall for several hours for a ransom of meal tickets. In Vancouver a comparable situation developed at Hamilton Hall, which was established as the Provincial Government's Unemployment Relief Branch office there. In June of 1933 it was stormed and ransacked by 150 work camp protesters who had descended on the city with about 1,400 others. This action, and the events in the Post Office and Art Gallery in 1935 and 1937, was directed against the senior governments, not Vancouver City Council. Having successfully inculcated among the unemployed some idea of where responsibility for their plight really resided, the City Council could afford to ignore all but the most impassioned protests.

⁷⁸ By way of an example, the American, Vancouver, and Winnipeg Cafes were criticized repeatedly in 1932 with respect to the quality and quantity of servings they provided. These particular complaints were lodged by the United Front of Ex-Servicemen and resulted in the removal of the Winnipeg from the City list following a series of visits by Relief Department staff. Vancouver, Special Committee Re Relief Tickets on Restaurants, "Minutes," 12 December 1932, CVA.

⁷⁹ Vancouver, Special Committee Re Charges against Medical Section of the Relief Department, "Minutes," 9 June 1933, Box 26D, vol.67, p.367.

Nonetheless, the first priority of the relief administrators remained fiscal and not social concerns. The popular view that government should be run in a business-like manner (showing low taxes instead of outright dividends) meant that the young social work movement in western Canada would first have to establish its credentials as a means of saving money. The City Relief Department could boast no social workers at all prior to 1935 and after that date one would be hard pressed to grant professional status to those few staff members who had completed a couple of social work evening courses. In fact, very few of the civil servants in the Department had spent any time at all in university, the majority having obtained their post-secondary education in vocational and business schools.⁸⁰ The social work profession was, for all intents and purposes, unrepresented in City Hall and it had few opportunities to promote its virtues.

Alternatively, if the incumbent administration fouled up sufficiently --- in terms of both finances and humanitarianism --- social work mores might obtain a foothold. This was the situation which developed in Vancouver. In 1930 Relief Officer G.D.Ireland was forced to resign in the wake of a kick-back scandal involving himself, another staff member and at least two of the meal ticket cafes. Four years later W.R.Bone faced a triad of enquiries in one year over his turn.

⁸⁰ Vancouver, Kerr Commission Enquiry, "Exhibits," Box 28A7, file 4, CVA.

Department's role as a source of patronage posts. While the Ireland case might be written off as an example of human pettiness, the second revealed fundamental structural problems within the Department and a conflict between objectives, means and the material at hand.

Bone's position had been made more important in the civic administration by a hiring policy which conspicuously excluded the Relief Department from any centralized control. In April 1933 Council had first decided that the Staff Secretary would be used as a sort of prototypical personnel officer. As the same sitting, Alderman Miller (a staunch and loyal supporter of Bone) successfully moved that "the recommendation of Council ... regarding the rehiring of employees laid off shall not be applicable to any temporary help required by the Relief Department".⁸¹ With the Relief Department thus established as the only branch of civic government outside of the Staff Secretary's auspices, its size grew phenomenally. When Ireland was forced out of the Department it had a staff hovering around forty-two in number; by the time of the 1935 enquiries at least eighty new faces had been added. It was the activities of these individuals, though especially Bone and the head of the Investigative Branch, James Bailey, which drew salvos from Alderman L.D.McDonald, the Chairman of the Relief and Employment Committee of Council in 1935.

⁸¹Vancouver, Finance Committee, "Minutes," 28 April 1933, in *ibid.*, Box 28A7, file 2, #56.

The very different personalities and objectives of the "enquirers" led to completely different examinations and recommendations.⁸² McDonald's complaints, lodged after weeks of hanging about the Relief Office, riding in the bread truck, and interviewing relief recipients, spawned the Commission headed up by J.McD.Kerr, a Liberal lawyer who had aided Gerry Gratton McGeer in his successful bid for the mayoralty in 1934. A political aspirant with a penchant for losing his deposits, Kerr was erudite and charming, qualities which would serve him well under both establishment and socialist mayors. Simultaneously, the City's best-known blood-hound, Wilfred A. Tucker, was instructed to expand his investigation of the issue of fuel scrip to cover the activities of the whole Department. In less than five years with the City Internal Audit Department Tucker had shown an awesome ability to sniff out scandal where others had found only minor irregularities. His investigations of Exhibition Park and the Police Commission did not endear him to the politicians, nor did his mop-up of the Scavenging Department --- which drove its chief to suicide --- but the diminutive

⁸²In January 1935 the British Columbia Department of Labour launched its own investigation of the Vancouver Relief Department. This was headed by two men who had no background whatsoever in relief or social welfare work, nor for that matter in the field of municipal administration. The result was a superficial whitewash of the Department. Observing that this report was well-publicized nationally and that Bone was on very good terms with the chief Provincial Relief Officer who assigned the investigators, Wilfred Tucker commented that "It appears to have been stage managed very successfully." Wilfred A. Tucker, "Final Report on Special Investigation of City Relief Department, City of Vancouver," 28 September 1935, Box 28B3, CVA.

Tucker had become a popular figure among City accountants and the public. Finally, Walter Wardhaugh, the City Comptroller, was called upon to follow up on both the Kerr and Tucker reports. Wardhaugh was an unfortunate choice, having carried a grudge against Tucker since the 1930 Scavenging Department enquiry had caught him lying. His involvement with the Relief Department would result in his own premature dismissal in November 1935. Although Kerr, Tucker and Wardhaugh could not agree on solutions to the problems which plagued the administration of relief, the three men were forced to conclude that Bone, Bailey, sundry staff members and some aldermen had acted improperly in the execution of their duties.

The first thing that became obvious to all was that Bone was in no way qualified to hold his position. A journalist first and a bureaucrat second, Bone did, however, have a point when he told the Kerr Commission that "in those days --- in 1930 it is problematic as to whether there was any one experienced in relief matters."⁸³ There were, nevertheless, a good number of staff members with seniority on Bone who were passed over completely in the appointment process. Cooper, who had recommended his successor, was little more qualified than Bone himself but recognized that Bone's appointment would "cause friction among the staff of the Relief Department."⁸⁴ This insightful but overlooked caveat had grave implications for the

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Vancouver, Kerr Commission Enquiry, "Proceedings," p.1570.

⁸⁴Tucker, "Final Report", p.1.

administrative system that would develop.

Recognizing his unpopularity among the staff Bone had moved quickly to buttress his position. Bailey, a temporary employee in a section which had slipped into administrative atrophy in 1932, was approached by Bone with a plan to secure the loyalty of the most potentially powerful division in the Department. Bone enlisted Bailey in his scheme by allowing him complete discretion over the status of every other member in the Investigation Branch. Bailey's own status was to remain temporary, which implied that Bone could still dismiss him at a moment's notice.⁸⁵ Bailey was quick to catch on, pushing to the periphery staff members whose loyalty to himself and to Bone was at all in doubt. Inside of one year the Department would find itself surrounded from within by "Bailey's Machine," a surveillance team which spent almost as much time investigating City staff as it did on relief cases. The nature of this operation is perhaps best indicated by Bailey's choice of titles for his revamped investigative squad: "interrogators" replaced investigators in tracking down the more recalcitrant fraud cases and "operatives", identified only by numbers, were selected from

⁸⁵When Tucker initiated his investigation he found that both Cooper and Bone had been diligent in keeping diaries covering their daily activities in the Department. Although Bone attempted to deny Tucker access to the diaries Tucker pointed out that since they were purchased with City funds, compiled on City time and by a City-paid stenographer, Bone was in no position to dictate their use. These diaries proved to be a goldmine of information on the running of the Department, containing minute details of how Bone manoeuvred in the corridors of power. Kerr Commission Enquiry, "Proceedings," pp.2,637-2,638.

this group to work surreptitiously on a wide range of a cases. Tucker described Operative No.1 as "a catch basin for the Department," and

a civic employee working the beer parlours and alleys, consorting with bootleggers, etc. with a special allowance of \$3.00 per month to pay out of pocket expenses while engaged on such work as furnishing so called "CONFIDENTIAL" reports....⁸⁶

Not only was this section active in the pursuit of fraud among relief recipients and meal ticket restaurants, but it served as an internal security force for Bone. When a meeting of the Civic Workers' Federation was called to examine the possibility of recruiting temporary employees from the Relief Department, Bone dispatched two operatives to take down names of the staff members who attended. Next day he made it clear to the twenty-plus involved that although he was in no way hostile to unions per se he was still capable of dismissing them without any further notice unless they disavowed themselves of the Federation in short order. All destroyed their union cards that day.⁸⁷ It could hardly have been coincidental that Bone's favourites on Council, Miller, Smith and sometimes-mayor L.D.Taylor were all strongly opposed to the Federation. With the help of Bailey, Bone had quickly turned an uncomfortable situation to his advantage.

⁸⁶ One of the objectives of this cloak-and-dagger approach to administering relief was to find out which beer parlours, restaurants and department stores wre accepting scrip for anything but its stated purpose. Tucker, "Final Report," p.6.

⁸⁷ Tucker, "Interim Report," pp.28-34.

Although this had the makings of a good dime-store detective novel, the climax did not fit the mold. Kerr was strongly critical of Bone and the Department staff (especially Bailey) but he gave Council little in the line of substantive recommendations. Tucker, on the other hand, proffered an axe. Bone, Bailey, the "Operatives," and the "Interrogators" were all irredeemable liabilities for the City, he contended, and the whole lot should be sacked if not sued. Tucker criticized Kerr as well for dodging the real issues:

You picture a deplorable condition of affairs at the Relief Department and find the Mayor, Aldermen, leading City Officials and subordinate employees of the Department all in some measure responsible for such a condition, yet the HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT is not only absolved by you, but commended for his "administrative and executive ability." How do you do it?⁸⁸

In contrast to Tucker, Wardhaugh advocated restraint. He agreed with Tucker on Kerr's shortcomings in logic but painted the auditor, not without some reason, as a civil servant with a chip on his shoulder, a characterization which threw Tucker's reports into limbo. The result was that although Bailey was dismissed and his squad reprimanded, Bone stayed on and the suggested staff cuts came at the expense of McDonald's informers in the Department and those who had aided Tucker. At the polls in 1936 the issue of corruption in civic politics played a major role in unseating all but one alderman, although this result did in part

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⁸⁸ Ibid., p.19 (Tucker's emphasis).

reflect the new emerging partisan politics on the civic level.⁸⁹

The political question was further complicated by Bone's relationship with a succession of mayors and Council members. McDonald, unsuccessfully wooed by the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, was at the very least a left-liberal. Along with Angus MacInnis and, later, Dr. Lyle Telford, he was one of very few Council members who did not find a welcome mat outside Bone's office. Malkin, Taylor, and after 1935, George Miller, were all mayors who had made full use of Bone's services and had been regular guests in the Relief Office. McGeer, on the other hand, recognized the political value of an enquiry which would possibly incriminate (if only by association) his strongest rival, L.D. Taylor. Like the City Hall building project and the jubilee celebrations, scandals distracted the public from asking pithy questions about what sort of a job McGeer was doing as mayor. This strategy, if it can be called that, almost backfired on McGeer in the 1937 election by thrusting McDonald into the limelight as a civic crusader and a serious contender for the mayoralty.

The implications of this scenario for the administration of relief were serious indeed. Bone, over-endowed with patrons on

89 Andrea Smith has presented the argument that the new at-large system contributed to the defeat of all but one of the incumbents in 1937 because, except for the CCF candidates, they were all disunified and disorganized. She fails to note, however, that of the nine "new" aldermen six had sat on Council earlier in the decade. They were, then, almost entirely clean of any involvement in the ongoing scandals, though every bit as disorganized as their opponents. "The CCF, NPA, and Civic Change: Provincial Forces Behind Vancouver Politics, 1930-1940," BC Studies 53 (Spring 1982), pp.45-65.

Council, could afford to be cavalier with the unemployed. His energies, as his diaries reveal, were directed more towards making himself indispensable than invaluable. With no appeal process available to dissatisfied relief recipients, except to turn again to Bone, the system was seriously flawed.⁹⁰ To make matters worse the uncontrolled growth of the Department, which was a symptom of its patronage role for Council, had introduced staff who were entirely unqualified for their responsibilities. One individual hired by Bone testified at the Kerr hearings that he "just walked in off the street" and, waving a letter of introduction from the City Comptroller, cajoled Bone into hiring him.⁹¹ Additionally, Bone was interested in producing statistics which emphasized his accomplishments. To that end he once asked a police magistrate to "impose severe penalties on two out of seven relief recipients being prosecuted" who were scheduled to appear before him.⁹² Miller had admonished Bone to be "good and tough" with the unemployed. "Don't get too soft," he added. "Don't be too kind-hearted."⁹³ These things Bone definitely was not, nor was he likely to be in a Department which came to have as little to do with social work as any in the civic

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When, in late 1935, Alderman C.E.Tisdall replaced McDonald as chairman of the Employment and Relief Committee the under-utilized approach of filing appeals with the Committee ended completely, although over McDonald's protests. The [Vancouver] Province, 10 September 1935, p.12.

⁹¹Tucker, "Interim Report," pp.52-53.

⁹²Tucker, "Final Report," p.6.

⁹³Kerr Commission Enquiry, "Proceedings," p.1,255.

administration.

Even after the dust had settled in 1935, the move towards professionalization was slow and social work failed to rise significantly in stature before 1940. James Struthers, in a recent article in the Canadian Historical Review, contends that the failure of Prime Minister R.B.Bennett's Relief Act schemes in 1932 marks a watershed in the evolution of programmes from an employment orientation to a welfare orientation. The study of Vancouver during the 1930s suggests that this would hold true only for the Dominion level of administration. At the public or street level, where municipalities reluctantly held the reins, Struther's theory does not follow through.⁹⁴ A wider diffusion of social work ideology was a necessary precondition but this could only occur with difficulty in Vancouver before the opening of a school of social work at the University of British Columbia in 1938.

For the City of Vancouver, then, direct relief boiled down to the least expensive means of buying time. Faith in the inevitability of economic recovery convinced politicians and officials alike to avoid long-range commitments to social welfare programmes. It also blinded them to the inadequacies of their direct relief programmes. Designed for the short-term, the amounts provided by the Jones Scale would have made for a threadbare but enduring existence. When stretched out over two, three, or as many as ten years the amounts budgeted shrank in

⁹⁴Struthers, "A Profession in Crisis," p.175.

relation to increased needs. The uncertainty surrounding the administration of relief was a function of ad hocery necessitated by an unclear time frame.

But if the objectives of Council and the Relief Department seemed confused to voters and the unemployed they were no less so for officials. Improvements in the system were incremental and had no part in a composite schema, except as a means to dump more cases onto the Provincial Treasury's doorstep. Politicians contributed to this disorganization by distracting public attention with grandiose proposals or contrived scandals. Twice in the decade mayors called for the construction of a new major sports stadium, hoping to whip up local enthusiasm for something other than tag-days. Alderman Atherton saw that this was a factor in the appearance of recurrent scandal enquiries and sardonically remarked, "I would like to get to the stage someday when the relief office is not under investigation."⁹⁵ Bread and circuses were the order of the day, although the bread was laid on a little thin.

As the decade wore on, these features became institutionalized in the democratic structure of local politics. The introduction of the at-large system of election in 1936 with the intent of stifling partisan politics at the civic level had the almost immediate effect of removing direct responsibility from the shoulders of individual Council members. In 1938 the editors of The Vancouver Sun noted "a growing disposition on the

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The [Vancouver] Province, 14 October 1931, p.24.

City Council for aldermen to 'wash their hands' of various distasteful decisions" and a declining willingness to take a leading role in improving the civic administration.⁹⁶ The Barrett-Leonard Report on the organization of City Hall in December 1936 recognized the corruption and patronage usually associated with party politics at the municipal level but, also, it warned against adoption of the at-large system because of the very same problems.⁹⁷ McGeer countered bluntly that the Report "out-Tuckers Tucker" and dismissed Barrett-Leonard's concerns out of hand.⁹⁸

One thing which resulted from these changes in the democratic structure of the city was a more responsible civic bureaucracy, or at least one that was more involved in decision-making. By 1931 bureaucratic buck-passing between Vancouver and Victoria had become an entrenched aspect of the administration of relief, as had internal fine-tuning and semi-regular purges independent of Council. No new mayor or Council brought sweeping changes to the administrative system attached to relief. Those few reforms brought in as a response to various lobbies and to head off angry mobs were almost always announced as temporary and, more often than not, reversed when a suitable cooling off period had passed. In the last analysis,

⁹⁶The Vancouver Sun, 21 October 1938, p.8.

⁹⁷Vancouver, W.J.Barrett-Leonard, "Report on the Reorganizaiton of the Civic Administration of the City of Vancouver," 9 December 1936, p.5, CVA.

⁹⁸The Vancouver Sun, 17 December 1936, p.1.

the City's administration of relief was designed more to help Council along than to ameliorate the hardships of unemployment among the citizenry.

VI. Conclusion

The civic administration, like Vancouver's church welfare agencies, was expressing something other than altruism when its relief programmes were modified during the 1930s. The threat of social upheaval became a progressively greater concern through the decade and, as political disaster loomed more ominously over successive City Councils, civic social policies came to reflect the fears that this inspired. Vancouver clergymen fretted over their shrinking congregations while aldermen became anxious for their wards. In both cases the community's leadership saw relief as a means by which they could vindicate the status quo. All parties were also aware of the dangers inherent in spending great amounts of money at a time when cash itself had become a scarce resource.

Shaped by inadequate statistical tools and the legacy of several smaller depressions, the dominant perceptions of the unemployed disquieted community leaders. The United Church and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese went far towards accomplishing their primary aim of retaining credibility among their flocks by catering to both the spiritual and physical needs of the jobless. The City met its political and fiscal concerns by strengthening an administrative wing which attempted to counter starvation among the jobless while aggressively investigating the slightest hint of relief fraud. Both church and state

believed they could preserve their respective constituencies through relief programmes.

Relief to the unemployed in Vancouver can be summarized in three important ways. First, it was a form of social control calculated to protect the political establishment and its allies. Second, since by necessity it was reactive it was bound to demonstrate planning weaknesses; relief in Vancouver never anticipated difficulties, it merely addressed existing or, more usually, past situations. Third, the absence of a social work ideology in the City's Relief Department ensured that the needs of the unemployed would remain secondary to those of elected and appointed civic officials. These were the features of relief in Vancouver that were most prominent in both the events and the rhetoric of the day.

In British Columbian municipalities during the depression the franchise for local elections was sweeping. The Municipal Elections Act excluded only Asians, Indians, and those residents who were not British subjects. All those who were twenty-one years of age or older and either held property, ran a business, or paid poll taxes of \$2 per year in the community could vote. While it might be argued that the obligation to pay any poll tax, no matter how nominal, could act as a deterrent to potential voters, the fact remains that virtually anyone who wished to vote could do so. An electorate that, therefore, could be comprised in large part of unemployed men and women posed a troubling question mark for politicians in Vancouver.

Traditionally, municipalities had ranked relief somewhere below "streets and highways, education, sanitation, parks and playgrounds, and ... health."¹ Vancouver was no exception. Although the City shouldered a far greater responsibility for social welfare programmes than it does now, it was a mantle accepted by default and with misgivings. Aldermen were already accountable for enough politically turbulent territory. As one author has observed:

The municipal representative ... carries out his duties in the community and environment in which he was elected. He is in daily contact with his constituents and is subject to the same day-to-day community experiences as are the people he represents.²

His proximity to his constituents made the alderman a more vulnerable target than his provincial or federal counterparts. Vancouver's first significant casualty in the depression was Mayor W.H.Malkin, whose connection with a relief department seemingly riddled with graft, cost him his bid for re-election in 1930. Notwithstanding the regular turnover in the Chief Magistrate's office, the lessons of Malkin's fate were not lost on subsequent mayors.

Beginning in 1931 City Council was ready to accept the likelihood and implications of a prolonged depression. It was also at this time that clergymen like Andrew Roddan and Archbishop Duke became more visible in the welfare field through

¹ Cassidy, Unemployment and Relief in Ontario, p.120.

² Kenneth Grant Crawford, Canadian Municipal Government (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1954), p.58.

either direct action among the unemployed or the comprehensive responses they tried to orchestrate across the city. Given the respective track records of the City and the churches in the administration of relief it is clear that in the 1930s both dramatically increased the amount of energy and money they directed to the unemployed. One study proposes an explanation for the growth in the activities of welfare agencies in the depression:

During periods of electoral upset ... political leaders proffer concessions to win the allegiance of disaffected voting blocs. It is this objective --- the political "reintegration" of disaffected groups --- that impels electoral leaders to expand relief programmes at times of political crisis engendered by economic distress.³

Political stability, tempered with fears of church or civic bankruptcy, informed relief planners in Vancouver during the 1930s.

Nevertheless, relief failed on a number of counts. The recipients could never plan their lives more than a week or two in advance, not knowing for certain if relief scrip for electricity and rent would be available at the next application. The difficulties they faced getting onto the dole and the uncertainties of the economy served to keep the unemployed dependent on charity rather than encouraging them to become self-reliant again. Moreover, their diets suffered. For example, a family of five would receive a set amount of food relief regardless of the age distribution of its members; this

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Piven and Cloward, Regulating the Poor, pp.40-41.

inflexibility failed to recognize the greater food requirements of, say, two teenagers compared to two infants.⁴ Similarly, clothing relief practices in Vancouver left much to be desired. The quality of the garments varied sharply, overnight line-ups for the City's disbursements were the norm, and relief clothing was frequently marked as such, with predictable results.⁵ The shabbiness of life on the dole was conceived as a deterrent to further applications, but it was one that had to be endured so long as employment opportunities were remote.

Community leaders were not, to be sure, eager to develop an undernourished and demoralized workforce. The deterioration of the unemployed was an inevitable and inescapable result of a social welfare philosophy which sought only to prevent starvation while discouraging dependency. Leonard Marsh warned that

If unemployment is prolonged, its effects are cumulative, not merely on standards of living, but on

⁴Marsh, Health and Unemployment, p.165.

⁵During the Kerr Enquiry one recipient's views on the clothing problem were elicited:

Q: Now, is this clothing you got [from the Central Clothing Room] all marked as relief clothing?

A: Is it labelled? Yes, sure.

Q: How is it labelled?

A: It has got big letters on it "Central Clothing Committee." You can tell anybody of the street that is on relief if you have ever had the clothes yourself.

Q: Would that tend to break down the morale of the recipients?

A: It don't look very nice.

Kerr Commission Enquiry, "Proceedings," p.365, CVA.

morale and psychology; it is damaging to skill, incentive and the habit of work, the cause not only of physical deprivations which fall on dependents and breadwinners, but of tension in the home and disaffection in society.⁶

In contrast, Charlotte Whitton, whose role in the formation of a social services ideology in Canada was of major importance during the depression, implored governments to keep relief rates below regional and local wage rates as an inducement for the jobless to hunt for employment. Whitton's perspective, shared by relief officers in Vancouver, reflected a conviction that relief existed "not simply to relieve human need, but to maintain the work ethic."⁷ Although the desire to work could survive life on the dole, the ability to be so engaged might not. The title of a 1933 pamphlet on the subject of maintaining a healthy labour pool summed up neatly the sort of risks involved: "Morale: The Mental Hygiene of Unemployment."⁸ Under a relief regime that sought to minimize costs and to encourage independence, the Canadian workforce slid towards atrophy and apathy but not revolution.

Why would a labour reserve that was so demoralized be unlikely to rebel? And if the various relief agencies feared revolution why were they, almost without exception, so parsimonious? The fact that the City and the churches depended on the lead provided by the unemployed helps to explain the

⁶Marsh, Employment Research, pp.40-42.

⁷Struthers, "Profession in Crisis," p.184.

⁸"Mental Hygiene and Unemployment," Child and Family Welfare IX, 2 (July 1933): 32-34.

meanness of the dole. Had a greater degree of organization and disaffection been evident among the resident unemployed doubtless relief levels would have risen accordingly. The fears held by Vancouver's elites were ill-founded. As Camus has so rightly observed, "Poverty and degeneration have never ceased to be what they were before Marx's time: factors contributing to servitude not to revolution."⁹ More recently, Lawrence Goodwyn applied this thesis to North American populist movements and reached a similar conclusion:

"The masses" do not rebel in instinctive response to hard times and exploitation because they have been culturally organized by their societies not to rebel.¹⁰ They have, instead, been instructed in deference.

Unemployment relief, as a form of charity or gift-giving, reinforced deferential relationships in Vancouver during the 1930s. Derailing revolution dove-tailed nicely with limited efforts to reduce the negative impact of unemployment on the labour reserve. The United and Roman Catholic Churches along with the civic administration, therefore, nursed the jobless for reasons that were for the most part removed from questions of individual welfare. Social work in Vancouver during the 1930s consistently took a backseat to social control.

⁹ Albert Camus, The Rebel (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), p.214.

¹⁰ Lawrence Goodwyn, The Populist Moment: A Short History of Agrarian Revolt in America (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1979), p.x.

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