

**"BROTHER, CAN YOU SPARE A DIME?"
THE ADMINISTRATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT-RELIEF
IN THE CITY OF MONTREAL
1931-1941**

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ABSTRACT

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The depression of the 1930s found most cities in Canada unable to cope with its effects. This study concerns itself with the way in which one city, Montreal, was drawn into setting up a bureaucracy to deal with unemployment and so assist those of its citizens caught up in the catastrophe.

While private institutions had been offering financial help to the unemployed during the early part of the 20th century, the enormity of the unemployment problem found these institutions without the funds to cope during the Thirties. As federal and provincial governments entered this field, municipalities too were drawn in. At first Montreal channelled funds through the private institutions but eventually City Council made the decision to set up its own administration to hand out funds which in 1933 amounted to almost \$16m of which the City contributed approximately one-third. The petty manner in which these funds were distributed and the restrictions placed upon receiving them makes it evident that the unemployed in the city suffered enormously from the depression. In spite of increasing evidence, accumulated throughout the Thirties, of the deleterious effect the depression was having, both on the physical and mental health of the unemployed, unemployment aid was never expanded nor restrictions eased and, in fact, in the latter case requirements for aid became more inflexible.

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PREFACE

They used to tell me I was building a dream,
And so I followed the mob
When there was earth to plough or guns to bear
I was always there right on the job.
They used to tell me I was building a dream
With peace and glory ahead
Why should I be standing in line
Just waiting for bread?

Once I built a railroad, made it run
Made it race against time.
Once I built a railroad, now it's done
Brother, can you spare a dime?

I am a child of the Depression. But I did not suffer as the children of the unemployed did. My father had a job. He worked on split-time, that is he worked mornings and some other man worked afternoons. We had a small, modest home but very little money. However, my mother was a good manager, a good cook, and a good seamstress. I was always well-fed and well-dressed. Physically all my needs were taken care of. Mentally I lived my childhood in an aura of fear which I somehow understood was connected with my father's job. I came to realize that both my parents were obsessed with the fear that my father might be laid-off or fired. The strain and anxiety for my parents in that period of time led to frustrations and tensions in our home. My father, a gentle, soft-spoken, giant of a man, felt it necessary to act in a servile manner at work in order to maintain his job and this made him bitter for years. But still we were not on relief.

As I did the research for this paper, I began to realize how fortunate my family had been. How much greater must have been the

mental stress on families where the father was unemployed. What must it have done to a man who had held a job, who had taken pride in his work, to find himself reduced to an unemployment statistic--literally begging for a dime for his family. I think that is what is so poignant about the song "Brother Can You Spare a Dime?" How did an individual cope with a crisis not of his making and for which he did not have the solutions? Where did he turn for help? Was the community prepared to aid him?

The purpose of this paper is to examine the way in which one Canadian community, Montreal, dealt with this problem. The research for the paper was under the direction of Professor J. T. Copp and was begun in a seminar entitled "Research Problems in Modern Canadian Social and Economic History 1897 to 1961." Many of the students in the seminar chose topics which dealt with the treatment of the working class in Montreal in the 1930's. I am especially indebted to Sally Jones, Ruth Flicker, and Peter Kralik for information contained in their papers. The titles of these unpublished typescripts were "Unemployment and Relief in Montreal, 1930 to 1933", "A Study of the Relief Practices of The Baron de Hirsch Institute's Family Welfare Department to 1939", and "A Brief Description of the Manner in which the Depression Affected the People of Montreal, September 1933 to March 1934", respectively. These studies helped to provide a framework within which the administration of unemployment relief in the City of Montreal can be seen as part of the other services rendered by the community in the form of private charitable institutions and the attitude of the community toward the depression in 1933, the worst year of all.

An extensive bureaucracy was set up to administer the relief fund. However, access to this fund was hedged about by restrictions, often as senseless as the example of the unemployed working man becoming ineligible because he had moved from Verdun to Montreal. As time passed the regulations governing the distribution of funds became even more restrictive while the amount of relief assistance set in 1933 was never changed. Contemporary accounts reveal the meagre allowance granted to the unemployed was insufficient for maintenance of health. Yet, contrary to expectations, as evidence was accumulated throughout the Thirties of the deleterious effect this was having on both the physical and mental health of the unemployed and their children, nothing was done to counteract the situation. The unemployed were victims of a situation in which politicians seemed more concerned with having control of the funds for their own uses and in pleasing the taxpaying public rather than acknowledging the plight of the unemployed and taking steps to rectify matters. Examination of the administration of the relief fund of the City of Montreal reveals a total lack of concern with the suffering of human beings who were unemployed through no fault of their own. Montreal's record is an unenviable one.

THE IMPACT OF THE DEPRESSION ON MONTREAL

One out of every four persons was on relief in Montreal during the height of the depression. That was the situation in Canada's largest city. In 1933, 205,136 people in Montreal were on direct relief.¹ Nevertheless, the population of Montreal continued to increase during the Thirties as people migrated to Montreal hoping for jobs or at least for some assistance which was often lacking in smaller communities. This placed a great deal of pressure on the resources available for relief within the city.

Many men who were without jobs became drifters and Montreal received its share of these transients. However, young men preferred the life of riding the rails and picking up casual work and hand-outs to the indignity of being on relief.² But many older men could not accommodate to this style of living and for them there was, as a last resort, the Meurling Institute supported by the City of Montreal. In the year 1932, the Meurling Municipal Refuge gave a total of 204,489 bed-nights to these men and served 435,518 meals. The average age of the men accommodated was 43.³

Not only single men but also families arrived in the thousands seeking relief. It was reported in the Gazette in December 1935 that "between six and seven thousand families, embracing some twenty

1 Annual Report of the Montreal Board of Health, 1933, p. 239.

2 Hugh Garner, "On the Road", in M. Horn, ed., The Dirty Thirties, pp. 706-711.

3 Annual Report of the Montreal Board of Health, 1933, p. 233.

thousand souls" had arrived in Montreal after May 1933.¹

Even though the population was increasing the marriage rate was declining--from a high of 9.45 per 1000 inhabitants in 1929 to a low of 6.93 in 1932.² Eddie Cantor might be singing "Potatoes are cheaper, Tomatoes are cheaper, Now's the time to fall in love" but Montrealers weren't joining in the chorus as fewer were making the trip to the altar. True, prices were declining but the uncertainty of having a job tomorrow must have kept many from taking the fatal plunge and, of course, all advice to young people warned that one must never contemplate marriage without a steady job as this letter from Dorothy Dix' Letter Box counsels.

Dear Miss Dix: We are two young people who have known each other for a long time and we are desperately in love with each other. The man of us is fortunate enough to have a job. No big salary, but enough to get by on. We have waited so long to get married merely because everyone discouraged us and joined in a chorus of wait until times pick up. Is there any reason why we shouldn't take the risk and marry now? Isn't all our life a chance? Isn't it better to go ahead now while we are young and strong? Why should we keep looking around the corner for the old black crow to nip our happiness. Betty.

Reply: No reason in the world to wait Betty and if you will take my advice you will simply beat it down to the parsons. Of course if your young man didn't have a job at all it would be a foolhardy thing to do, for alas and alack, a marriage to be successful has to have bread and cheese as well as kisses.³

Thus it was that the young unemployed man and woman had to forgo normal expectations of marriage and parenthood.

¹ The Non-Resident Problem in Montreal, p. 3.

² Annual Report of the Montreal Board of Health, 1934, p. 17.

³ "Dorothy Dix' Letter Box", The Montreal Star, March 2, 1933, p. 13.

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For as well as a decline in the marriage rate there was an even sharper decline in the birth rate from 26.32 per 1000 inhabitants in 1929 to a low of 19.11 in 1936. According to the comments of the City Statistician, this was one of only two unfavorable aspects of the statistical information presented in 1936; the other being the rate of increase in deaths from tuberculosis. On the plus side of the ledger, however, he noted that the general death rate was declining while marriages were on the increase.¹

The depression was particularly hard on the children of the unemployed. La Federation des Oeuvres de Charites Canadiennes-Francaises reported that in the winter of 1936, 3,000 children had had to drop out of school since the beginning of September due to a lack of warm clothing.² Even more shocking was the rate of malnutrition discovered by Marsh amongst the children who were at school. Of the 46,996 examinations done on students in schools in 1933, approximately 13.5% were shown to be suffering from malnutrition; while, as a result of control re-examination, only 24% were cured.³

As the depression continued, over-crowding became common even though the number of unoccupied houses increased. This was because people were forced to move from adequate housing to meager, cheaper accommodation or to double-up with relatives or friends.⁴

1 Annual Report of the Montreal Board of Health, 1936, p. 220.

2 "Appalling Results of Unemployment Shown", The Montreal Star, March 2, 1937, p. 6.

3 L.C. Marsh, Health and Unemployment, pp. 134-136.

4 Annual Report of the Montreal Board of Health, 1933, p. 277.

Thus the picture which emerges of the unemployed in Montreal is one of miserable circumstances in which their health is adversely affected, in which they have to sacrifice normal expectations of careers, marriage and family life, and suffer the privations of inadequate accommodations. Added to this was the way they were treated as they faced bureaucratic indifference in their quest to find adequate funds on which to exist. For one of the greatest problems the unemployed had to deal with was the question of who was to be responsible for their care and support.

THE UNEMPLOYED—WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY?

Being unemployed in the Thirties was like being an illegitimate child. Everyone knew you existed but no one wanted to acknowledge responsibility for your existence.

Not one of the three levels of government wished to accept total responsibility for the unemployed. Consistently, the view put forward by the Canadian government was that unemployment relief was the responsibility of the municipalities with the provinces constituting a second line of defense. This view derived from the fact that under the BNA Act the power to legislate on such matters as relief rested with the provinces rather than with the federal government. Since the municipalities were creatures of the provinces the Canadian government might wash its hands of such troublesome matters. However, the recession of 1921-24 necessitated another look at the position adopted by the federal government. Although the provinces might have the responsibility they certainly did not have the revenues to deal with abnormal periods of high unemployment. Thus the federal authorities were forced to acknowledge some financial responsibility and assist the provinces and municipalities.¹

The Unemployment Relief Act of 1930 set aside \$20m to assist in various projects, of which \$4m was for direct relief to the unemployed. From this latter amount the federal government paid one-third of the municipalities' costs with regard to direct relief providing the

¹ H.M. Cassidy, Unemployment and Relief in Ontario 1929-1932, pp. 61-81.

province did also. By 1933 the City of Montreal was distributing direct relief to an average of 205,136 persons per month or as much as 24% of the population of 847,000. The total cost was \$15,897,090.42 of which the City's share was \$6,428,145.22.¹ As costs for direct relief rose, the federal government became increasingly concerned about the large cash outlay and decided to discontinue the former system in favor of a lump sum payable in monthly instalments. This did not find favor with provincial premiers. Taschereau estimated that the lump sum payment would be less than the one-third previously given, but

Bennett told them [the premiers] plainly that in places direct relief is disclosed to have turned into a "racket" which if unchecked would undermine the whole financial structure of the country. In consequence he held it was up to the provinces and municipalities to take hold of their respective situations, exercise their powers and assume the responsibility for proper and honest relief administration . . .

In order to relieve some of the pressures on the municipalities' relief rolls, the federal government adopted several schemes to reduce the number of applicants for relief. One of these schemes was Deportation, voluntary or otherwise. Many British and other immigrants who requested assistance to return to their homeland were given aid while many who would have preferred to remain, even though unemployed, were quickly shipped off. In Montreal "The cases of deportation of immigrants figures at 822 in 1932. After investigation these cases were disposed of as follows:

¹ Annual Report of the Montreal Board of Health, 1933, p. 299.
² "Dominion Cuts Cash to Provinces", The Montreal Star, July 31, 1934, p. 1.

Immigrants deported	322
Proceedings discontinued	111
Under investigation at Ottawa on the 31st of December 1932	389 ¹

Between 1930 and 1933 nearly 15,000 new Canadians were deported as a result of being classified as public charges.

<u>1930</u>	<u>1931</u>	<u>1932</u>	<u>1933</u>	<u>Total</u>
2,106	4,084	5,217	3,541	14,978 ²

By 1936 the number of people deported as public charges was reported at 52 for Canada, while in Montreal the number of cases reported was 25, of which 7 immigrants were deported, while in 15 cases proceedings were discontinued or refused and three remained under investigation.³ Whether all the aliens had been deported or whether they no longer sought assistance in fear of being deported is not known. Gray reports that:

The threat of deportation, which suddenly became terribly real for every alien on relief in western Canada, cast a pall over the Woodyard. The foreign-born, who had once chattered amiably while waiting in lines, sought more and more to melt into the background, say nothing, hear nothing and escape to the protective coloration of their own communities. Those of radical persuasion would have faced prison or death in Poland, Germany, or Italy. For all of them, it would have meant taking their families back to an environment they had tried to leave behind. From 1931 onward, the deportations kept the subject in the newspapers, and the relief lines in a turmoil. A family might be seized in Winnipeg and spirited away to Halifax. Then there would be habeas corpus proceedings, Immigration Department hearings, questions in Parliament, and sometimes they would regain their freedom. In the intervals between alarms, the super-patriotic groups

1 Annual Report of the Montreal Board of Health, 1932, p. 168.
 2 M. Urquhart & K.A. Buckley, Historical Statistics of Canada, p. 29.
 3 Annual Report of the Montreal Board of Health, 1936, p. 173.

kept things stirred up with inflammatory resolutions at conventions.¹

Obviously, however, the same end was achieved, deportation or the threat of deportation removed many people from the relief rolls.

Another scheme endorsed by the federal government was a "Back-to-the-Land" movement.

Ever since Canadians had first begun to leave the farm for work in the cities, one reflexive response to hard times had been to go back to the land. The idea that somehow agriculture could take up the slack when industrial society broke down was one of the most prevalent, and by then one of the most anachronistic, notions of the 1930's. Beginning with the "Colonization at Home Movement" of the 1930's and the Relief Land Settlement Agreement of 1932, the Dominion Government and every province except Prince Edward Island supported programs to establish would-be relievers on farm lands in Canada's unsettled regions. In theory the money spent to support a city family on relief in one year could make that family self-sustaining on a farm. Aside from one notable success with Dutch settlers on the marshland north of Toronto the back-to-the-land schemes were tragic failures . . .²

The Family Welfare reports one such case. A man had left Montreal in 1932 to go to New Brunswick as a colonist and was joined by his wife and children in 1935. By 1936 they found themselves unable to make a living and had to return to Montreal. Fortunately, as the wife and children had been in receipt of relief until 1935 the family was again accepted. However, not all families were able to re-establish their residence requirements.³

To get the single men off the streets and out of the cities where they might stir up trouble the government established Relief Camps

¹ James H. Gray, The Winter Years, p. 131.

² L.H. Grayson & Michael Bliss, ed., The Wretched of Canada, pp. xv, xvi.

³ The Non-Resident Problem in Montreal, p. 20.

in 1932. Twenty cents a day, bed and board, and military discipline was the lot of the men in the camps. Conditions in the camps led to the type of agitation manifested in the "On-to-Ottawa Trek" that the government had been trying to avoid. The Liberals committed themselves to the abolition of the camps in the election of 1935 and after 1936 they were closed. However, while they lasted it was the municipalities' dream to get as many men as possible into the camps.

Public works was another way of making sure that unemployed men were not given something for nothing. The federal government subsidized municipal relief works to the extent of 25% providing the provincial government would do the same.¹ To the municipalities it was important that only residents be given work, and that family men be given preference. An announcement that Montreal would undertake an \$800,000 public works scheme carried the following admonition:

It will be useless for people from out of town to come here and try to get jobs on these relief works . . . We have arranged with the Chairman of the Commission that only such people as have resided in Montreal long enough to have received a water bill will be considered for work.²

The work the men were expected to do was mostly road making and the grading of rock. In spite of the fact that many men were unsuited to this type of work, that some of the relief works were unneeded and produced burdens of debt, "for it has required the expenditure of nearly two dollars in most Ontario municipalities, to provide a worker with a

¹ H.M. Cassidy, Unemployment and Relief in Ontario 1929-1932, p. 57.

² "Alderman Gabais Announces \$800,000 Scheme Will Be First of Public Works to Aid Unemployed", The Montreal Star, August 9, 1933, p. 3.

dollar in wages",¹ many people supported "the broad principle of giving the unemployed work rather than a dole . . . providing it is applied in the right way."² Nevertheless, most of the work provided seemed to be of the former make-work variety of which a vivid description is found in James Gray's *THE WINTER YEARS*.

Many streets and lanes in the outlying sections of the city needed ditching and grading. This work, however, could only have been done if the work was charged to the frontage property, and regular employees of the city would have had to do the work for regular wages. The taxpayers would not pay for it, and regular employees would not permit the work to be done by the unemployed. The net result was that the work was not done, and regular employees of the city were laid off and went on relief. Nevertheless we were put to work digging ditches and grading streets, but deep in the woods where nobody lived . . . When we were finished, it was a nice mud road that started nowhere, and, for all I know, still leads nowhere.³

The attitude of the federal government towards providing work for the unemployed changed during the early Thirties, no doubt due to the kinds of municipal projects that James Gray found so idiotic. In the course of the debate on the Relief Act 1932, Hon. W.A. Gordon, the Minister of Labor, stated, "the decision is not to carry on works as heretofore but to direct the main efforts of all concerned towards direct relief."⁴ However, this did not mean that the Canadian Government intended to assume responsibility for the distribution of direct relief. Only very general regulations were set forth with regard to the issuance of direct relief. As a result, regulations throughout Canada varied, creating an anomalous situation where, according to the federal

1 H.M. Cassidy, Unemployment and Relief in Ontario 1929-1932, p. 269.

2 Ibid., p. 280

3 James H. Gray, The Winter Years, p. 41.

4 H.M. Cassidy, Unemployment and Relief in Ontario 1929-1932, p. 71.

government, unemployed Canadians were entitled to aid but could not get it unless they conformed to regulations of a particular municipality or region.

BACKGROUND TO UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF IN MONTREAL

In line with the philosophy of leaving social assistance to private charity, Montreal had no municipal funds for relief purposes when the depression struck. But due to its varied racial-religious background it did have several main agencies to which individuals could apply for assistance. There was the St. Vincent de Paul Society for French Roman Catholics, the Montreal Council of Social Agencies for English Protestants, the Federation of Catholic Charities for English Catholics, and the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies.¹

According to a report prepared by the Montreal Branch of Social Workers, unemployment was not a serious problem prior to the Great War,² therefore the necessity for a fund was non-existent. This was not the case after 1918 and, as early as 1924, Montreal businessmen in cooperation with Protestant clergy established an Emergency Unemployment Relief Committee financed by private subscriptions to help alleviate the worst of winter unemployment. This was an obvious acknowledgement that the existing agencies were unable to cope with seasonal unemployment and should have been a portent of things to come. The Committee set up by the businessmen to deal with unemployment was to operate from November to April. However, by 1931, it was forced to remain open throughout the year. Increasing unemployment made a mockery of the idea of leaving unemployment relief to private charity.

¹ Dorothy King, "Unemployment Aid (Direct Relief)", in L. Ritcher, ed., Canada's Unemployment Problem, p. 80.

² The Realities of Relief, pp. 9-10.

By 1930, unable to cope with the demand on their resources, private charities appealed to Montreal to accept the responsibility of providing for the unemployed or of giving the agencies funds to do the job. Acting at last in 1931 the Montreal City Council set up an Advisory Relief Committee, under the Chairmanship of the Superintendent of Municipal Assistance, to coordinate the disbursement of funds for direct relief. At that point private agencies were partially reimbursed for monies dispensed from October 1, 1930 for unemployment relief. As well as the four agencies mentioned above, two others were authorized to distribute funds:-The Canadian Red Cross, under whose auspices the Montreal Relief Committee operated a shelter for homeless men; and Le Refuge Catholique Incorporé, a shelter for French Canadian homeless men.¹ During the period from October 1930 to December 1933, when direct relief was implemented in this manner, Montreal distributed the following funds of which approximately one-third was its share:

<u>1930</u>	<u>1931</u>	<u>1932</u>	<u>1933²</u>
\$96,000	\$896,000	\$5,725,761	\$15,216,494

However, even this solution was not totally satisfactory to the private agencies who felt that the work involved in the administration of unemployment relief was contrary to their avowed purpose of counseling.³ It was also obvious that the Montreal City Council was not too happy about the manner of distribution of funds. Throughout March 1933

¹ Dorothy King, "Unemployment Aid (Direct Relief)", in L. Ritcher, ed., Canada's Unemployment Problem, p. 81.

² Annual Report of the Montreal Board of Health, see reports for the various years.

³ Survey Committee of the Financial Federation and Montreal Council of Social Workers Report, Section 5, pp. 2-3.

accusations by aldermen are reported in the press to the effect that the private agencies were mishandling funds. Alderman DesRoches, Chairman of the Aldermanic Unemployment Committee and one of the city representatives on the Direct Relief Commission was reported to advocate a new commission to supervise the distribution of relief. "Such a commission would put an end to the waste and theft of funds of which he has several times complained and which, according to him have reached as high as \$250,000 a month."¹ Several months earlier the Commission had appointed some 18 inspectors to check up on all persons receiving relief from the charities dispensing the money which the City votes monthly" however the article goes on to report that this elaborate system of checking which was started had faltered to a halt because the private charities were not cooperating. Specifically singled out in this regard was the St. Vincent de Paul Society.²

As a result the City appointed a Civic Unemployment Commission in August 1933 to take over the job of dispensing funds to the unemployed. This Commission, sometimes called the Terrault Commission, after the man who headed it, did not begin transfer of operations until December 1933.

Even after the new Unemployment Commission was set up the Protestant, Jewish and English Catholic welfare organizations met with the Unemployment Commission and the aldermen in an attempt to retain

1 "Alderman DesRoches Urges a Uniform System to Supervise the Distribution of Relief", The Montreal Star, March 15, 1933, p. 3.

2 "City May Change System of Relief", The Montreal Star, March 21, 1933, p. 3.

the handling of funds.¹ Alderman Gabais, Chairman of the Executive Committee of Montreal City Council, "made it clear from the start that it was up to the Commission and the welfare organizations to show the City which of them could handle this work at least expense to the City."² The over-riding concern of the Council was to reduce the cost of unemployment relief as much as possible, and as it transpired it was also to get its hands on the direct distribution of funds which would make for an aldermanic pork-barrel. Even though the private agencies argued that they could do the work cheaper and with a more experienced eye to the human element, they lost out.

¹ The Realities of Relief, A Report submitted by the Unemployment Study Group of the Montreal Branch of the Canadian Association of Social Workers in March 1938, states that "after pressure had been brought to bear by the Montreal Council of Social Agencies . . . the city accepted responsibility for the unemployed." However, contemporary evidence suggests that the various welfare organizations desired to retain control of the distribution of these funds.

² "Protestant, Jewish, English Catholic Welfare Organisations Meet With Aldermen and Unemployment Commission", The Montreal Star, November 24, 1933, p. 3.

CIVIC ADMINISTRATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF

In attempting to build up an organization to handle the thousands of people eligible for direct relief the Commission encountered many problems. First of all it began with untrained personnel unused to work of this nature, at least the private agencies had had experience in these matters. As well, relief standards were inadequate and the regulations constantly changing.

In August 1933 the Commission Chairman, Terrault, noted that:

. . . at the present time the Commission is faced with a list of 60,000 names. It is hoped that thorough pruning will scale down this number to 6,000 names of citizens who fill the requirements necessary for obtaining work on public relief schemes . . . A special staff of the Commission inspectors is now at work on the relief lists of the 35 wards and should be through by the end of this week. Their work may result in the placing of a number of men, but in all probability will mean the loss of work for many ineligibles now employed.¹

This was the continuing concern of the Commission, that no one who was ineligible should receive funds from the City. In a meeting between the aldermen and the Unemployment Commission the aldermen were assured, "The first thing to do was to determine exactly who were deserving of relief, those out of work by reason of unemployment. All others have been left to private charity as before, sick, aged, infirm, crippled, widows."²

Compounding the problems of dealing with the question of who was

1 "New Relief Board Commences Work", The Montreal Star, August 28, 1933, p. 3.

2 "System of Relief in City Explained", The Montreal Star, November 13, 1933, p. 3.

eligible was the fact that the Commission's offices were set up on a municipal ward basis.¹ In each ward the Commission's representative was also the alderman's secretary. This double role brought with it conflicts and accusations of patronage which were not unfounded. One racket uncovered involved a payment to the ward secretary. An agent would approach the secretary and ask for the names and addresses of all men provided with jobs on relief works in return for which he paid two cents a name.

With these names and addresses other agents of the commodity dealers would visit the homes of the formerly unemployed, now earning money, and state that the alderman and ward secretary had expressed the opinion that it would be a good thing if they gave their trade to the peddlers in question.

The game worked until one of the ward secretaries told his alderman that it seemed a funny thing for the city to countenance such a thing whereat the duplicity of the agents was discovered.²

But an even greater scandal was in the offing. On July 11, 1934 the following article appeared in the Star.

A bombshell was exploded in the office of the Unemployment Relief Commission this morning as an aftermath of the exposure of two confidential employees of the commission for accepting bribes, when it was discovered that \$169,007.88 had secretly been paid out in redemption of 'bons' between December 1933 and July 1934. These²⁵ payments one as high as \$14,000 were made to 170 firms including coal companies, packing firms, and the railways.

We protest strenuously against the secret payment of creditors, Mr. Leclair declared indignantly, while all

1 Dorothy King, "Unemployment Aid (Direct Relief)", Canada's Unemployment Problem, p. 81.

2 "Racket on Jobless", The Montreal Star, August 28, 1933, p. 3

the time we have been telling the poor corner-store merchants that nobody would be paid until sufficient funds were obtained to liquidate the complete issue of outstanding 'bons' against the city . . .¹

'Bons' were the cheques given to companies by the city in lieu of payments for relief supplies until such time as provincial funds were received. While provisions were made to pay firms facing bankruptcy the Commission had pledged that it would pay none until all could be paid. The list of those paid showed that over 90% of the firms were well-known and were not facing bankruptcy and included Canada Packers Limited \$18,932; Scotch Anthracite Coal \$6,075.20; Canadian Import Company \$9,194; and others. Thus it was the little corner-store merchant who was left with his fistful of City 'bons' to bear the burden until more money was available. Terrault was asked to resign and become head of the Town Planning Commission.

One of the interesting aspects of this is that throughout the Thirties a debate raged as to whether relief recipients should be paid in cash or kind (vouchers for stores). Those in favor of the latter argued from the position that the poor would waste their money as they were obviously incompetent otherwise they would not be without work. Therefore it behooved the state to oversee the management of money for them. In light of the corrupt way in which the city managed the relief funds this seems a ludicrous view.

In August 1934 a new Commission was formed headed by Brig.-General E. de B. Panet. As a result of the change-over from Terrault to Panet many reforms were made. One of the first was to combine certain wards

¹ "Secret Payments Found by Relief Commission", The Montreal Star, July 11, 1934, p. 3.

and reduce the number of Unemployment Commission offices from 36 to 20. Also to each office an official representative of the Commission was appointed. Known as registrars, these officials served only the Commission, leaving the aldermen's secretaries to the aldermen. Panet spoke glowingly of the modern business practices introduced into the Commission's operations. He noted that the Commission employed 500 persons in seven departments: (1) General Office; (2) Investigation Department; (3) Production Department; (4) Distribution Department; (5) Accounting Department; (6) Special Investigation Department; and (7) Statistical Department. In 1935 the Commission distributed approximately 40,000 relief cheques each week and 17,000 cheques a month to landlords housing the unemployed. The administrative costs of this program were about \$55,000 monthly. According to General Panet this was 4.48% of the cost of relief and compared most favorably with other cities in North America whose costs generally ran about 10%.¹ Since the administrative costs were borne entirely by the city it is easy to understand why it would be looked upon as a notable achievement to keep them down. However commendable it is to lower administrative costs, this attitude seems to have spilled over to the distribution of funds to the unemployed as will be documented later.

Early in 1937 complaints about the Commission prompted aldermen to name a Jobless Inquiry Board. Chief complaints about the Commission centered on the aldermen's desire to place the unemployed in jobs rather

¹ Brig. General E. de B. Panet, The Work of the Unemployment Relief Commission of Montreal, 1934-1935, pp. 5-10.

than keep them on the dole and the fact that the administrative costs of the Commission had risen¹ by 1936 to 5.20% of the budget.² This explanation was viewed suspiciously by an editorial writer in the Star.

Disquieting rumors are heard that our worthy aldermen are thinking of taking over more directly the task of distributing relief. At the present time the distribution is in the hands of a Commission capably headed by Brig.-Gen. Panet. This commission has been most unsatisfactory to a certain class of alderman. It does not seem ever to have heard of the word "patronage". It gives relief to citizens who need it and not to the citizens whom these self-seeking aldermen would like to get it. Hence, the tears!

The suggestion that is heard is that this commission be dismissed and an aldermanic commission appointed. It would be hard to imagine anything that would more profoundly alarm the taxpayers! They are willing to pay for relief. They do not want any worthy citizen or his family to go hungry. But they are most bigoted in the opinion that the general run of aldermen are precisely the worst people to have charge of this relief. When an alderman has a job to give out, we know in how too many cases he chooses his nominee. Most of us are fearful lest he apply the same principle to the giving out of relief.³

The objections of various other community organizations to this scheme led to the establishment of a committee consisting not only of four aldermen but also three outsiders who would investigate the Relief Commission.⁴

- 1 "City to Put End to Relief Body", The Montreal Star, February 17, 1937, p. 3.
- 2 "Unemployment Relief on Scale of Big Business", The Montreal Star, January 30, 1937, p. 17.
- 3 "Hands Off the Relief Commission", The Montreal Star, February 22, 1937, p. 10.
- 4 "City Plan to Suspend Relief Board Suspended", The Montreal Star, February 26, 1937, p. 3.

Before the Committee could begin its investigation, Premier Duplessis closed the offices and seized the records of the Commission, citing "ruinous and intolerable abuses" as the reason.¹ Panet and two other commissioners were suspended along with 10 department heads.² With regard to "abuses", aldermen questioned this as there had been between 20 and 30 provincial auditors at the Commission ever since it opened, checking up every item, so as to facilitate the payment by Quebec of its contribution to direct relief.³ Panet countered by demanding a Royal Commission Inquiry⁴ and the Mayor and Executive Committee backed the Commissioners and re-instated them, evidently believing Duplessis' move was planned to erode city autonomy.⁵ In defence M. Duplessis replied that when the government had sent a representative of the auditor's department to the Unemployment Commission, M. Panet had not received this representative in a cooperative manner; he added that the attitude of Gen. Panet made him believe that Panet was a friend of the autonomy of Montreal not of the province but that the Attorney General [Duplessis] would not permit Panet to violate the autonomy of the province.⁶

1 "Declaration de M. Duplessis", Le Devoir, 16 Mars 1937, p. 3.

2 "La Police Provinciale Garde les Bureaux", Le Devoir, 17 Mars 1937, p. 3.

3 "How Can There Have Been Intolerable Abuses", The Montreal Star, March 17, 1937, p. 2.

4 "Panet Demands Royal Commission Inquiry", The Montreal Star, March 17, 1937, p. 1.

5 "Executive Reinstates Relief Commission", The Montreal Star, March 20, 1937, p. 1.

6 "M. Duplessis et la Commission du Chômage", Le Devoir, 23 Mars, 1937, p. 7.

The question of who was to have complete control over the funds of the Unemployment Relief Commission and to what extent Montreal was to be allowed autonomy in this field appears to have been the crux of the matter. With the re-instatement of Panet, Duplessis retreated, and the matter was allowed to drop.

However, in July 1937, the Commission was abolished by the Executive Committee without consulting City Council and this work was placed under the Health Department.¹ Mayor Raynault explained that this was done to cut relief costs with regard to administration.² And it was done in spite of the fact that the Board of Trade, Chambre de Commerce, Trades and Labor Council, Citizens' Committee, CMA and Retail Merchants Association, all sent representatives to request that the Panet Commission be retained.³ It was noted that while Brig.-General Panet was a \$1 a year man loaned from the C.P.R. the new manager would receive \$9,000 a year. Nevertheless, Mayor Raynault contended that by switching jobs around money could be saved.⁴

Once having established a Commission to dispense funds to the unemployed it was necessary for the city to establish the rules under which one might receive these funds. For the mere fact of being

1 "Distribution of Unemployment Relief Placed Under Control of City Health Department With N.R. Beaudet as General Manager", The Montreal Star, July 16, 1937, p. 3.

2 "Mayor Explains Panet Removal", The Montreal Star, July 17, 1937, p. 3.

3 "Three Man Commission on City Relief Promised", The Montreal Star, July 8, 1937, p. 3.

4 In order to substantiate the Mayor's contention it would be necessary to compare administrative costs after the change-over with those of the Unemployment Relief Commission. This information was not available to the researcher.

unemployed and willing to work did not entitle one to aid. Each municipality set up its own rules. The requirements for aid from Montreal were as follows:

Application is made on a prescribed form at the branch office in the ward in which an applicant resides. The person applying must be (1) employable, (2) have resided continuously in the city of Montreal for three consecutive years prior to the date of application for relief or if non-resident for any period during this time must prove residence for double the period of absence prior to the beginning of the three-year period, but within the last ten years¹ and (3) possess an identification card issued by the City of proof of residence. He is further required to make a declaration on oath as to his destitution, the inability of his relatives to support him, and the correctness of all information recorded on the application form.

If one considers the first requirement, "employable", to mean those who involuntarily lack paid employment and who are willing to work this immediately excludes, according to the Commission, the aged and the handicapped.² No other provisions were made for this group which had to fall back on private charity. Another group discriminated against was the very young, those who had never held jobs. They had to look to their families and where the father was unemployed were counted as dependents.³ In some cases "the income in the home from part-time work, or the earnings of children disqualified families from receipt of City relief even though the total income does not amount to what the Commission would allow the same sized family if totally unemployed."

1 Dorothy King, "Unemployment Aid (Direct Relief)", Canada's Unemployment Problem, p. 82.

2 Survey Committee of Financial Federation and Montreal Council of Social Workers Report, Section 5, pp. 5-6.

3 L.G. Marsh, Canadians In and Out of Work, p. 342.

Other employable unemployed excluded from benefits because of regulations laid down by the Executive Committee of City Council were "recently deserted women with families, childless couples, unmarried mothers and their children; other individuals about whom there is any suggestion of immorality, separated women who do not have legal separation papers and individuals or heads of families who are suffering from a chronic or even temporary disability but who are able to do light work."¹ In other words that group in society least able to fend for itself was the group most discriminated against.

Residence requirements changed throughout this period but seldom was it changed to favor those who moved from place to place looking for work. Many migrant families came to Montreal

. . . in good faith with every intention of settling down and making the new community their new home. They come to find work in what seems to them to be a more hopeful environment, or they may even be transferred to a job, only to find that the job was temporary and they are stranded without funds. When they apply for relief, they are refused because they do not conform to residence regulations of the municipality. In some cases, where residence rulings provide for repatriation, the family may be successfully adjusted to their place of residence. In other instances, such a return is likely to prove useless if the conditions still exist which led the family to move in the first place. Moreover, with residence rulings as diverse as they are today, it is quite possible for a family to find itself without legal residence anywhere. In fact the very stringency of our residence laws may force a family into a transient existence.²

In 1934 the residence requirement was based on one year's continuous residence in the city and only persons in the City prior to May 1933 were to be eligible for relief. The following report appeared in

¹ The Realities of Relief, p. 14.

² The Non-Resident Problem in Montreal, p. 11.

the press on December 2, 1935.

Denied the dole in Montreal because they arrived here after May 1st, 1933, at the mercy of charity which has not the funds to maintain them, between six and seven thousand families, embracing some twenty thousand souls, are in a desperate plight and the city administration is baffled because at least five hundred thousand (\$500,000) would be required for winter food, fuel, and shelter and the aldermen hesitate to tax real estate owners further for the benefit of people who drift during the crisis. Most of the families are from rural Quebec and in their home towns or villages there is no dole because the local communities cannot support it, so they filtered in to the metropolis in the hope of finding work or of getting on the dole rolls . . . Several weeks ago there was the suggestion that the residence qualifications be modified to allow relief to all here by September 1st, 1934, but obligations of City Council to Montreal taxpayers set that idea aside.¹

In January 1936 the residence ruling was changed to May 1, 1934.

But still people came knowing there was no hope of qualifying for relief. In 1935 the Family Welfare Association cared for 240 families which had been classed as non-residents for some period that year. In an attempt to reduce this burden the Family Welfare refused to take non-residents cases for the first nine months in 1936 but even after reversing this policy the total number of families helped for this reason for the year was 178. The cases which were refused were referred to the Department of Municipal Assistance, which was also short of funds, but no help was extended to return these people to their former residences with the result that families lost residence everywhere.²

As the depression continued the Family Welfare Council noted that "the trend in 1937 seems to be towards a much stricter enforcement of regulations than has been

¹ Ibid., p. 3.

² Ibid., p. 5.

experienced before."¹ This foreboding was prophetic for in January 1938 the residence requirement was raised to a period of four consecutive years.² It is evident then that in an effort to keep costs down Montreal was constantly making requirements for relief more stringent to keep transients out. Since the Family Welfare Association was only one of a group of private agencies dealing with the non-resident problem the number of individuals or families on direct relief in the City according to Montreal statistics does not give a full picture.

It was not even necessary for a family to come from a great distance to Montreal to find itself disqualified for relief. The Family Welfare Association noted a typical case from their files:

o Mr. Blank and his family lived for 16 years prior to May 1933, in Verdun. From May 1933 to November 1933, he lived across the river. During all these years he worked in Montreal. From November, 1933 to December, 1934, he lived in Point St. Charles and was accepted for City Relief. Now, being disqualified, he is not eligible for relief from any of the three municipalities in which he has lived during the past 19 years.³

If a person is employable and meets the residence requirement he must still take an oath that he is destitute and that his relatives in direct line are unable to support him. Mr. Leclair, a commissioner in 1933, stated "that two objects were in the minds of the commission-- 'economy' and 'relief'. These had to be considered together. The reason why immense amounts were still unpaid by the federal and provincial governments was that under the old regime many families had been

1 Ibid., p. 20.

2 The Realities of Relief, p. 12.

3 Survey Committee of Financial Federation and Montreal Council of Social Agencies Report, Section 5, pp. 5-6.

helped who had no right to relief . . . Fathers must help sons or daughters, sons or daughters must assist their parents so long as any of them have the funds to do it."¹

In this respect it is certain that in many cases there was a doubling up amongst families and rent payments were refused by the city to "fathers, mothers, grandparents, and parents-in-law." Before September 1934 brothers, sisters, or brothers- or sisters-in-law were also considered as being in direct line and were refused rent payments. After that date they did receive payment.²

It is not unreasonable to assume that since the burden of unemployment fell on the lowest group of workers in the economic scale their relatives would be in only a slightly better position. Perhaps they might have to deplete their savings or do without in order to take in relatives—the hardships must have been extremely severe. A study done in Ontario for 1931 showed that all the men on unemployment relief in Toronto, "single or married, had no property or savings or had exhausted by that date all they once had."³ In spite of the hardships which would be encountered by having to support indigent relatives and the subsequent lowering of the standard of living in such situations, Brig.-General Panet pointed with pride to the fact that insistence on the seriousness of this oath had resulted in a drop of 5% of the cases revised. In this regard he publically thanked the Catholic clergy for their help in making

¹ "Aldermen for Unemployment Commission Hold Conference", The Montreal Star, November 13, 1933, p. 3.

² Brig. General E. de B. Panet, The Work of the Unemployment Relief Commission of Montreal 1934-35, p. 11.

³ L.C. Marsh, Canadians In and Out of Work, p. 345.

it clear to relief applicants that the taking of the oath was extremely important and serious.¹

Even the taking of an oath was not sufficient assurance for the Commission that an undeserving individual might not receive funds. After filing an application for relief the individual was subjected to investigation. Both a home investigation and an employment investigation were undertaken. Where no difficulties were encountered in obtaining information and completing the investigation, the applicant received his cheque within three days. The Montreal Branch of the Canadian Association of Social Workers acknowledged the efficiency of the modern business system introduced by Brig. General Panet but the system broke down when applicants were suspected of being ineligible. Applicants were not given the benefit of the doubt. Identification cards were necessary before obtaining relief and were often difficult to obtain. Any difficulty in securing an employer's report meant that the lack of funds during the waiting period was sustained by the individual. The burden of obtaining proof in the case of inaccurate information was also left to the individual who was often unable to procure the correct documentation.² By 1938 one hundred investigators were retained by the City to check up on suspected cases of fraud. Those convicted of fraud could expect a jail sentence and fine as the following report in the Star testifies.

¹ Brig. General E. de B. Panet, The Work of the Unemployment Relief Commission, 1934-35, p. 11.

² The Realities of Relief, pp. 14-16.

Having pleaded guilty to fraud in connection with relief vouchers Joseph Manette, 36, 215 Suth Avenue was sentenced by Judge Lacroix in the Court of Sessions yesterday to 20 days in jail, a fine of \$200 and costs and was bound over to keep the peace for a year. Failure to pay the fine will entail an additional term of six months in jail.¹

The Annual Report of the Department of Health for the year 1935 noted that 866 cases were brought to the attention of the Commission for investigation:

Allocations reduced or discontinued	691
Unchanged	68
Not getting relief or not located	41
Going to soup kitchens as well as getting relief	33
Required medical examination	32
Special case	<u>1</u>
	<u>866</u>

The weekly savings thus realized by this decreased allocation was \$1,115.20.²

Similar reports can be found in the Annual Reports of the Department of Health for other years. In view of the meagre allowance provided by the Unemployment Commission it is only surprising that more people did not avail themselves of the soup kitchens. Since in 1935 Montreal distributed \$15,591,009.05 in relief funds, the savings realized by the investigations were 0.37% of the annual budget. Either the unemployed were extremely honest or the fear of investigation was strong. It would be interesting to know if the savings justified the salaries of the investigators. Throughout the emphasis is placed on financial savings rather than on human considerations.

¹ "Jail and Fine in Relief Fraud", The Montreal Star, March 1, 1933, p. 13.

² Annual Report of the Montreal Board of Health, 1935, pp. 178-179.

The Montreal Council of Social Workers notes that applicants were refused assistance without any other provisions being made for their care. Perhaps this was because the Commission's philosophy was that these people should fall back on the private charities in Montreal. In a study done for Ontario it was reported that in Ontario communities where no private agencies existed the relief officers violated the rules rather than allow the applicants to starve.¹ Had no private charities existed in Montreal it is possible that the municipal government would have been forced to have provided assistance to a much wider number of people.

¹ H.M. Cassidy, Unemployment and Relief in Ontario 1929-1932, pp. 174-175

**EXTENT OF AID PROVIDED BY THE CIVIC UNEMPLOYMENT
RELIEF COMMISSION**

In THE WINTER YEARS James Gray points out that:

The key to a good life in the '1930s was the price of everything. The best rib-roasts cost nine or twelve cents a pound, depending on whether the year was 1932 or 1935. The blouses and skirts girls wore to work could be bought for fifty cents to \$2.00. Men's woollen underwear was often on sale for \$1.19, good shoes were available at \$4.50, overshoes for ninety-five cents, and men's dress shirts of good quality could be bought for a dollar . . . a family of three, such as ours, could get by comfortably on \$20 or \$25 a week.¹

This was a happy circumstance for those who were employed, but for those on relief low prices had little meaning when they did not receive sufficient to keep themselves and their families adequately nourished. For it is not to be supposed that having surpassed all the hurdles to become eligible for relief that one would live in the lap of luxury or even close to it. Reading aldermen's comments in the newspapers of the time one is struck by their fear that the unemployed will receive something for nothing.²

For aid purposes the employable unemployed were divided into three groups, unattached women, unattached men, and families. The single man or woman received an allowance of \$1.86 per week plus \$1.38 rent allowance, making a total of \$3.18, while a family of five received an average of \$10.00.³

1 James H. Gray, The Winter Years, p. 211.

2 "Will Ask Public Works Money--Aldermen Do Not Favor Relief Without Work", The Montreal Star, March 30, 1933, p. 3

3 The Realities of Relief, p. 12.

Unattached Women

Regulations in effect for single men and women were similar. When the revenue from work exceeded the relief allowance by \$1.00 per week, relief was cut off. Any type of regular employment, even if on the basis of two or three days a week, disqualified the individual from further aid.¹ Brig. General Panet notes that in 1935 the unemployed list contained the names of 2,308 unattached women: married, separated, widows, or spinsters.² This was approximately 25% of the number of unattached men on relief. This smaller number can be accounted for in several ways.

First of all there was the tendency of young unattached girls to fall back on their families for support, and, secondly, the fact that the lowest paying jobs in what was considered women's work, domestic service, did not suffer a reduction during the Thirties as did the lowest paying jobs in the area of men's work, manual labor.³

According to all accounts there was a constant demand for women for domestic service and one of the Unemployment Commission's fondest hopes was to funnel women into this work. Panet expressed this hope in his address to the City Improvement League in December 1935.

Despite the large number of unemployed women, we are informed by the various organizations of the great difficulty in obtaining domestic servants. In order to justify this state of affairs, after consulting with the

1 Dorothy King, "Unemployment Aid (Direct Relief)", Canada's Unemployment Problem, pp. 83-84.
 2 Brig. General E. de B. Panet, The Work of the Unemployment Relief Commission 1934-35, p. 7.
 3. L.C. Marsh, Canadians In and Out of Work, pp. 308-310.

Provincial Minister of Labor, we decided to demand from every unattached woman seeking relief a certificate from the Provincial Employment Bureau to the effect that she had sought work.

This measure is still under study, however, for it has not borne the good fruit that we expected of it.¹

The Census of 1931 reported that a female domestic servant could expect to earn \$252 yearly for an average of 46.83 weeks worked, and this was by far the largest category for female workers.² It was also the area in which women could be most exploited. The Secretary of the YWCA gave her views of wages in a report quoted in the Star.

Dealing with the question of wages to employees in private houses and residences, Miss Posthill declared that in some cases girls were asked to work for their board. Domestic servants had been offered as low as one dollar a week, while \$30 a month was considered a good wage; the average offered was from \$12 to \$15 a month.³

In 1933 people living in Westmount had no problems finding domestics:

The chef got \$40 a month and his board and room. My maid got \$30 and board and room. The first domestic got \$25 and the second maid got \$15. The gardener, and he was the chauffeur too if we wanted it, he got \$25. The laundress got two dollars a day, and she scrubbed by hand and lived at home. I paid her carfare too, ten cents a day. Perfectly ridiculous, isn't it? Buying a human being, an excellent chef, for \$10 a week, or a small maid for 50 cents a day. Nobody thought anything of it.⁴

¹ Brig. General E. de B. Panet, The Work of the Unemployment Relief Commission, p. 7.

² Labor Gazette, November 1933, p. 1095.

³ "'Y Secretary' Gives Views", The Montreal Star, March 3, 1933, p. 18.

⁴ Barry Broadfoot, Ten Lost Years, p. 6.

The fact that salaries were so low for domestics helped push up the demand and illustrates that there were many people, even in the Thirties, who could afford to pay for servants. Coupled with the low wage were the long hours and hand work which domestics were expected to endure without complaint. An acknowledgment of this fact was made by the National Council of Women at their annual convention in 1936.

The National Council of Women . . . are reported to have adopted in principle, a code for household workers and employers which, among other things would call for a work week of not more than 69 hours, overtime pay, and a minimum wage schedule,²

It points out why women who were trained for other occupations would prefer to accept the assistance of their families or remain on unemployment rather than go into domestic service.

One other factor accounting for the small number of women on relief in Montreal was the lack of mobility for unattached females. Whereas young men could 'ride the rods' this was not the case for young girls. Edith Swanson, a married woman at 18, was an exception. She rode the rails with her husband when their farm failed.

At the time numerous people were riding boxcars from town to town in search of work, but few of them were women she said. In addition, many of the men who rode the trains in the early days of the 1930s were "rough customers".

When I got into a boxcar, I just stayed close to John and kept my mouth shut. At times, I was afraid of what they'd do to me if they knew I was a woman.³

1 L.C. Marsh. Canadians In and Out of Work, p. 289.
2 Labor Gazette, 1936, p. 497
3 "Edith Rode the Rails", The Montreal Star, February 4, 1975, Section B, p. 2

The policy of Travellers' Aid was to assist young girls to return to their place of residence. Very often these girls were met at the train stations and advised to return to their home immediately. The same procedure was followed when these girls applied to the FWCA for cheap lodgings.¹

Single Men

Single men were dealt with in a different manner. The Commission's policy was to encourage young men to go to the Relief Camps. Men in the camps were not a charge on the municipal relief rolls nor were they a threat to the maintenance of law and order in the city. Commissioner Panet described the success of this policy.

Last April, there were 8,614 men: bachelors, widowers and separated husbands, on relief in Montreal. After consultation with Federal authorities, we tried sending men physically fit for the purpose to the Government Relief Camps.

Well-informed lecturers attended the registrars' offices on paydays to tell the unemployed about the real advantages of the plan. If the conditions of life are not ideal, they are at any rate a great deal better than life in the city at \$1.80 a week. In addition to being housed, fed and clothed, and getting 20 cents a day, men are given decent work in healthy surroundings, which is a sterling guarantee against the moral debacle which threatens these unfortunates. Results of the campaign were successful, as the figures show, for October last, the number of unattached men on direct relief was 4,242, a reduction of 4,372 since April 1935.²

There were many complaints about the military discipline in the camps but the regulations for the homeless men seeking lodging for the

¹ The Non-Resident Problem in Montreal, p. 19.

² Brig. General E. de B. Panet, The Work of the Unemployment Relief Commission 1934-35, pp. 7-8.

night at the City supported Meurling Refuge were also severe. The Annual Report of the Montreal Board of Health for 1936 states:

We have found out that the Meurling Refuge is more appreciated every day; by the increase in 1936 of 53,332 more beds occupied than in the year 1935. This increase is due to the closing of the concentration camps.

These poor refugees who come every night are sure to find a good bed and supper.

The doors are open from 6 to 7 p.m. As soon as they come in they are sent to the basement which is well heated, and take off their clothes which are sent to be disinfected. They are obliged to take a bath. During the past year only 2 or 3 objected to this procedure and were refused.

After their bath, they are examined by the Doctor and vaccinated if needed, or given medicine for their complaints: Constipation, cough, stomach, rheumatism, etc.

During winter we mostly had some colds to treat, but no severe case of influenza.

After the Doctor examination, they pass in another room, where a white shirt is given to them. These shirts are washed daily. After that a good meal is served, consisting of bread, bologna and 1 or 2 cups of tea or coffee, everything is of first quality. The fare is always the same, but excellent for these poor people who have walked the City streets all day long.

After eating, in strict silence they go to their beds which are very clean and where they can rest in comfort.

In the morning, they get up at 6.00 o'clock, take a light breakfast and by 8.00 o'clock everyone must have left the refuge

In order to alleviate the problem of having all these unemployed men wandering the streets during the day a Day Shelter for Unemployed Men was established in the winter of 1931-32. According to Dr. F.D. Adams, Vice-President of McGill University and chairman of the

1 Annual Report Montreal Board of Health, 1936, pp. 190-191.

executive committee in charge of this social effort:

. . . the Shelter represented what was 'practically a new departure among the many attempts to meet the unemployment situation in North America, and one which has attracted widespread attention and interest on the part of social workers. The Shelter was intended to provide for men who were turned out on the street after breakfast every morning from other refuges. As Dr. Adams says, these men 'naturally sought shelter wherever it could be secured, in the waiting rooms of the railway stations, in public libraries, in shops, or in any covered places on the streets. They were naturally in the way wherever they went, in consequence, continually 'moved on' and chivied about by the police.' . . . This social experiment achieved the following results: it kept between 3,000 and 5,000 destitute men off the streets all winter, provided them with a warm place where they could sit down and amuse themselves, and if they desired to do so, could learn something useful; it made these men, who through no fault of their own were unable to obtain work, feel that they were being decently treated by the community; it had a marked influence in promoting sobriety among the men; and according to the testimony of the chief of police and the city recorders, it greatly reduced the vagrancy and crime in the city.¹

City Hall itself was divided on the treatment to be accorded to single men. Some aldermen as well as the Unemployment Commission felt that single men should be clothed and required to go to a Federal Camp. Others felt that it was better to keep the men in refuges at a cost of several hundred dollars per year than to face the multitude of troubles which would arise if these men were thrown out on the street. Mayor Houde had the last word on this subject at the Council meeting as reported in the Star.

Mayor Houde differs in opinion from at least two members of the executive . . . in that he is opposed to any proposal for closing the refuges. He has indicated on more than one occasion his fear that civil disturbances and troubles of Communistic origin may result if the present order is changed. He thinks it worth the money

¹ Labor Gazette, April 1933, p. 367.

to know that these men are living peacefully in the refuges and not plotting any kind of revolutionary movement.¹

It is not surprising the men did not riot, their diet hardly gave them enough strength for that. In Toronto in 1933 when the city applied a "work-test" for relief the unemployed men refused to turn up for work on the Don Valley. "The striking unemployed declared they were not in fit condition to work for their food and lodging."² However, regardless of the treatment they received from the Montreal authorities, many men indicated "that the reason they were in Montreal was because conditions in the regions from which they came, where there was no organized relief, were intolerable."³

Families

Families with children were not accorded any better treatment than that given to unattached women and men. Thus a family of five could expect to receive the following from the Unemployment Commission.

	<u>Food</u>	<u>Fuel</u>		<u>Clothes</u>	<u>Rent</u>	<u>Electric Light</u>	
		<u>Summer</u>	<u>Winter</u>			<u>Summer</u>	<u>Winter</u>
Week	5.05	0.75	1.35	0.75			
Month	21.88	3.25	5.85	3.25	10.50	0.70	0.90
Total in summer					\$38.58		
Total in winter					41.38		

All relief is paid by cheque; rents are paid directly to the landlord. A small light and gas allowance is also

1 "City Hall Divided on Treatment to be Accorded Single Men", The Montreal Star, July 7, 1934, p. 3.

2 "Hundred Toronto Unemployed Refuse Work Test for Relief", The Montreal Star, November 13, 1933, p. 1.

3 L.C. Marsh, Health and Unemployment, p. 94.

paid each month by cheque in favor of the Montreal Light Heat and Power Company, the cost being borne entirely by the city.

In addition to the above, a sum, calculated on the basis of twenty-five cents per month for each relief recipient, is paid by the municipality for medical care. This care is provided through a panel of doctors whose services are paid proportionately to the number of patients visited and treated.

The head of a household may have casual earnings not exceeding \$3.00 per week; the wife or children must contribute 50% of their earnings to the support of the household. All income must be declared and is verified by the Relief Department.¹

To be able to understand what this meant for the family on relief it is necessary to know that a minimum living income for the average Canadian family based on urban standards but limited to the barest essentials was "set at \$1040 (at 1930-1931 prices).² Even if all members in a family contributed the maximum allowable it is obvious that the relief allowance was not capable of sustaining a family at even a minimum standard. However, a look at other "relief" budgets will help to put the Montreal allowance in perspective. (See "A Comparison of Standard & Relief Budgets", page 40.)

The most notable observation from the comparison of the various budgets is that families on the Family Welfare Association budget are better off than those on unemployment, especially since the Family Welfare Association provided clothing from a clothing depot and medical services were also provided. In the case of those on civic relief excess expenditures for such items as toothpaste, soap, a newspaper, etc., would have to come from the food budget.

¹ The Realities of Relief, pp. 12-13.

² L.C. Marsh, Canadians In and Out of Work, p. 193.

A Comparison of Standard & Relief Budgets.¹
(As for a Family of Five in 1936)
(Monthly average, winter and summer scales)

Item	Montreal Social Agencies (1)	Washington Social Agencies (2)	Family Welfare Assoc. (3)	Unemployment Relief Comm. (4)
Food	40.35	31.50	21.36	21.88
Housing	17.14	26.85	18.00	10.50(c)
Fuel, light	6.13	7.00	6.20	5.35(d)
Clothing	13.04	21.66	10.90(b)	3.25
Other items	6.67	28.05		1.25(e)
Total				
(a) Necessities	76.66	87.01	(51.00)	40.98
(b) All items	83.33	115.06(a)	56.46	42.23

(a) The monthly budget at the time of compilation (1934) was \$107.62 or \$1,291 per year since when cost of living (US) has risen over 7 per cent.
(b) Joint allowance for clothing replacements and sundries. Medical care not included but could be secured in majority of cases. Figure in brackets in the total is an estimate only, excluding medical costs.
(c) Includes municipal addition (\$2) to federal allowance. (d) Does not include gas. (e) Payment to medical fund.

In his book, HEALTH AND UNEMPLOYMENT, Marsh has also priced a restricted emergency diet and an adequate minimum diet for comparison purposes.

<u>Members of the Family</u>	<u>Restricted Emergency Diet</u>	<u>Adequate Minimum Diet</u>
Moderately active man	\$ 6.89	\$ 9.08
Moderately active woman	5.58	7.64
Girl aged 11-13	5.19	6.85
Boy aged 7-8	4.80	6.22
Child under 4	3.44	5.38
Total food allowances	\$25.90	\$35.17²

It is noted that the emergency standard diet is recommended "only when

1 L.C. Marsh, Health and Unemployment, p. 163.

2 Ibid., p. 164.

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funds are insufficient to provide a fully adequate diet. It contains irreducible amounts of protective and other foods below which it is unsafe for diet to fall, and which may not be adequate for use over a long period of time."¹

While the statistics speak for themselves, showing that the food allowance provided was quite inadequate, a look at a week's menus for a family of five prepared by the Federated Agencies of Montreal in 1932 brings home much more clearly the kind of dull monotonous fare waiting the family at the dining table. (See the menus on the next page.)

By way of experiment I persuaded my typical five member family to follow this menu for a week. However, by the end of the second day there was outright rebellion as all three boys, growing adolescents, who need a high level of protein and calories to keep up their energy for hockey, snowshoeing, etc. complained of being hungry. When they examined the menu for the rest of the week they refused to continue the experiment.

In his study on the relationship between health and unemployment, Marsh has documented ill-health and poor nutrition among the unemployed. Not only were underweight and malnutrition found to be more common among the unemployed than among employed industrial workers but also a high percentage of all unemployed groups had badly decayed teeth and infected gums.² The effects on the children of the unemployed has already been discussed elsewhere in the paper.

Nowhere is it disclosed on what basis the allowance was calculated for Montreal. It can only be assumed that it was calculated either

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., pp. 49-76.

THE FEDERATED AGENCIES OF MONTPELIER SCHEDULE¹

	Breakfast	Dinner	Supper
Sunday	Rolled Oats or Cracked Wheat Molasses Bread and Butter Milk	Chuck Roast Baked Potato Turnip Prunes	Chopped Raw Cabbage Grated Raw Carrot or Cheese Sauce on Toast Hot Water Gingerbread Milk
Monday	Rolled Oats or Cracked Wheat Molasses Bread and Butter Milk	Sliced Meat Tomato Sauce Onion, Potato or/ Stew with Dumplings/ Bread and Butter	Scalloped or Creamed Potatoes Bread and Butter Figs Milk
Tues.	Rolled Oats or Cracked Wheat Molasses Bread and Butter Milk	Split Pea Soup Bread Rice Pudding	Scalloped Rice with Cheese Bread and Butter Milk
Wed.	Rolled Oats or Cracked Wheat Molasses Bread and Butter Milk	Baked Liver Carrots and Onions Potatoes	Soup made with left over meat with barley and vegs. Bread and Peanut Butter Milk
Thurs.	Rolled Oats or Cracked Wheat Molasses Bread and Butter Milk	Baked Beans Bread and Butter Figs	Cream of Tomato Soup Baking Powder Biscuits Milk
Friday	Rolled Oats or Cracked Wheat Molasses Bread and Butter Milk	Scalloped Potatoes/ Cheese Tomato with Bread Crumbs Bread with Peanut Butter	Split Pea Soup or Creamed Bean Soup Prunes Bread and Butter Milk
Sat.	Rolled Oats or Cracked Wheat Molasses Bread and Butter Milk	Scotch Soup (made with Rolled Oats) Onion, Potato, Tomato/ Rice Pudding	Cabbage with Cheese Sauce Bread and Peanut Butter Milk

¹ Michiel Horn, ed., The Dirty Thirties, p. 285.

without reference to what an adequate budget was and only with an eye to the cost to the city or deliberately set at that scale in order to encourage people to get off relief as soon as possible. It was almost as if the City Councillors felt that their largesse was being personally abused. And the pettiness of their attitude was revealed in a remark by an alderman who suggested that those on relief should be given wood instead of coal and made to split it themselves.

More difficult to evaluate is the mental stress which accompanies unemployment, and Marsh considers mental health to be more adversely affected by unemployment than physical health.¹

Observation of some homes of the unemployed also showed evidence of mental strain. The exacting care of food stuffs, skimping and economizing in all things, and above all the anxieties of parents, whether spoken or implied, led to feelings of insecurity. A particular example worth recording was the case of "hunger-strike" which developed in a girl sixteen years old. She was a brilliant child, leading her class at school. When some extra money came into the home and a little of the old-time cheerfulness was in evidence, the situation cleared up promptly. Of all the sections of the survey of the adult unemployed, this led most clearly from the individual to other members of the family, from the abnormal case to the general maladjustments of large groups.²

By 1937 when long-term effects of the Depression on families could be better assessed, the Family Welfare Association reported:

In every 100 families unemployed there are:

- 30 cases of more or less permanently disabling illness.
- 7 families in which lack of clothing prevents the children from going to school.
- 9 where overcrowding was serious enough to cause immorality or serious family difficulty.
- 23 showing complete loss or badly impaired moral standards.

¹ L.C. Marsh, Health and Unemployment, p. 91.

² Ibid., p. 94.

Pool Copy

44

19 cases of malnutrition reported by medical authorities.
14 where the children were running wild.

Surveys made by the Catholic Welfare Bureau and the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies at the same time show similar conditions found by these organizations.

All of the above families were receiving relief from the Montreal Unemployment Relief Commission. The average length of time that the heads of families have been on relief is thought to be about six years . . .

The years of depression have caused an immense deterioration in the character and in the household equipment of families on relief according to the case workers of the FWA.

Unemployment relief is sufficient to cover rent, food, fuel, clothing, light and medical care. But the social workers have found many of the families have practically nothing left in their homes that is usable. During the years on relief the families in many cases have completely worn out all their bedding, their furniture, and their cooking utensils.

In one case that was investigated it was found that all members of a family, father, mother, and several children, were eating their meals from one frying pan. The only furniture left in the home was a chair made out of a barrel. No bedding was left, no mattresses, and no springs . . .

In 66 of the 591 unemployed families studied by the Association the strain of worry has precipitated situations that in January were trending to break up the home. In 51 other cases the father had actually deserted leaving wife and children ineligible for relief. In one month there were 84 cases of juvenile delinquency.¹

As many of these families were on relief for the duration of the Thirties, the harm done to the next generation of Canadians is incalculable.

¹ "Appalling Results of Unemployment Shown", The Montreal Star, March 2, 1937, p. 3.

TOO LITTLE--TOO LATE

January 1937 was a month that brought promise of "Good News for The New Year" to all Canadians. New Year's parties were celebrated as in the pre-depression period and the editorialist rejoiced that periodic bulletins and statistical computations showed Canada's return to better times.¹ A prominent labor leader agreed.

Tremendous recovery in North America in the last 18 months has done more than anything else to help the world along, Harold Butler, Director of the ILO, said in a New Year's broadcast to Canada and the U.S. last night.

He said it appeared the world had thrown off the depression . . . 2

The general concensus of opinion amongst bankers, economists, business and government leaders was that he was right. All leading indicators pointed to an improving economic situation. As S. J. Hungerford, President and Chairman of the C.N.R. stated in the Annual Report of the Company issued January 2, 1937:

. . . The outstanding feature of the year 1936 is that industrial activity has increased to a point where continued steady improvement may be expected and planned for . . . 3

Even unemployment statistics showed an improvement. In January 1937 in Montreal there were 42,000 unemployed on direct relief,

- 1 "Good News for the New Year", The Montreal Star, January 4, 1937, p. 10.
- 2 "World Throws Off Long Depression", The Montreal Star, January 2, 1937, p. 3.
- 3 "C.N.R. Income Shows Increase", The Montreal Star, January 2, 1937, p. 18.

representing 180,000 persons,¹ as compared to January 1934 when there were 46,342 unemployed on direct relief, representing 202,433 persons.² However, this is still a sizeable number and since so few of the unemployed could afford to buy newspapers they were probably unaware that they had any great cause for happiness. Nor, circumstanced as they were, still in the unemployment lines, it is doubtful if they shared the enthusiasm of the nation's leaders.

With increased optimism over returning prosperity, attacks were renewed on the unemployed as lazy and shiftless and a costly drain on the treasury. President G. Compton of the Union of Manitoba Municipalities charged "towns and cities provide their relief recipients with a higher standard of living than any other of our ratepayers can secure by honest and energetic effort."³ No less a person than Sir Edward Beatty, Chairman of the C.P.R., criticized the vast sums being spent on relief and advised that "strong action on the part of government authorities would be required to curb relief expenditures which were tending to increase despite returning prosperity."⁴ It is ironic that he should attack the government for its spending on relief because "In no year from 1930 through 1936 did the Dominion Government spend as much on relief (including relief works charged to capital account) as it spent

1 "Honesty Shown in Refunds Made to Relief Office", The Montreal Star, February 22, 1938, p. 3.

2 Annual Report Montreal Board of Health, 1934, p. 215.

3 "Relief Recipients 'Coddled' Charged", The Montreal Star, December 1, 1937, p. 4.

4 "Sir Edward Beatty Criticizes Vast Sums Spent on Relief", The Montreal Star, May 5, 1937, p. 1.

in meeting C.N.R. deficits, and much of that money went to bondholders."¹
 Perhaps Sir Edward's time could have been more profitably spent in attacking his rival railway company for its gross misuse of federal funds. That this titan of business was not alone in his opinion with regard to relief was confirmed almost immediately by a government announcement that relief aid to the provinces would be cut by 25% all around.²

No wonder people were singing:

In the winter, in the summer, Ain't we got fun!
 Times are bum and getting bummer, Still we have fun!
 There's nothing surer,
 The rich get rich and the poor get poorer,
 In the meantime, in between time, Ain't we got fun!

While the business community was busily prophesying better times ahead the cost-of-living, which had declined at the beginning of the 30s was on the rise again.

Cost-of-living index³
 (1935-39 = 100)

Year	Total	Food	Fuel and light	Rent	Clothing	Home furnishings	Miscellaneous	Retail prices (commodities only)
1929	121.6	135.4	111.8	120.5	135.2	105.3	-	-
1930	120.8	132.3	111.0	123.6	131.0	105.8	-	-
1931	109.0	103.0	109.2	120.2	114.6	103.5	-	-
1932	98.9	86.2	106.2	110.3	100.9	100.6	-	-
1933	94.3	85.3	101.7	99.3	93.6	98.4	-	-
1934	95.6	93.0	101.8	93.4	97.2	97.9	-	-

1 Michiel Horn, ed., The Dirty Thirties, p. 23.
 2 "Beatty on the Railways and National Expenditure", The Montreal Star, May 6, 1937, p. 12.
 3 M. Urquhart & K.A. Buckley, ed., Historical Statistics of Canada, p. 304. "The 1935-39 weights were based on the consumption patterns of a group of urban wage-earning families, obtained from the budget study of 1938; and the object was changed to measure, in the first instance, the average cost-of-living of a particular, although important, group."

Year	Total	Food	Fuel and light	Rent	Cloth- ing	Home furnish- ings	Miscel- laneous	Retail prices (commo- dities only).
1935	96.2	94.6	100.9	94.0	97.6	95.4	98.7	95.9
1936	98.1	97.8	101.5	96.1	99.3	97.2	99.1	98.1
1937	101.2	103.2	98.9	99.7	101.4	101.5	100.1	102.0
1938	102.2	103.8	97.7	103.1	100.9	102.4	101.2	102.8
1939	101.5	100.6	101.2	103.8	100.7	101.4	101.4	101.0
1940	105.6	105.6	107.1	106.3	109.2	107.2	102.3	106.6
1941	111.7	116.1	110.3	109.4	116.1	113.8	105.1	114.9

While perhaps not a significant rise it can best be understood in terms of what it meant for the unemployed, as no thought was given to increasing the amount of relief which had been set in 1933. Statistics are only one part of the story—a rise in food prices could be extremely serious for those suffering from prolonged effects of the depression. And food prices were rising.

The Montreal household is having to pay considerably more for its staple food products . . . According to all indications, increased demand and reduced supply will cause the rise in the average price level of prices to continue.

Conditions on the world wheat market are bringing an increase in the price of flour. On account of the short crop of various farm products in Canada, canned goods are costing more. The wholesale price of canned tomatoes is 80% above what it was a year ago. Strawberries and raspberries have been so scarce that supplies have had to be obtained at considerable cost from Holland. Meat prices have been showing wide advances and the prices of many boxed groceries have been marked up.

The rise of food products imported into Canada is as great as those produced in the country. Rice quotations are half as great again as they were a year ago. Fruits from the U.S., the West Indies and South America are more expensive . . . 1

1 "Food Prices Again Due for an Increase", The Montreal Star, January 2, 1937, pp. 3 and 11.

The chuck roast recommended in the sample budget of the Federated Agencies of Montreal Schedule [reproduced following page 41] climbed from seven cents a pound in 1933 to twelve cents a pound in 1937 and this was one of the few meat items on the menu for welfare and relief recipients.¹ One of the beliefs of the 30s was that if the poor were taught better food preparation and more economical shopping habits their food allowance would be adequate. However, after his intensive study, Marsh came to a different conclusion.

. . . careful budgeting and a knowledge of dietary make a vital difference at the marginal levels of income. In those families in which there is an appreciation of food values, with close attention to economical marketing, the nutritional state of growing children in particular can be much more satisfactory. But there are two ways of interpreting this fact. For low-income families, whether they are on relief or still self-supporting, it is obviously desirable to provide systematic practical instruction in budgeting, marketing, meal planning and cooking, in order to avoid serious malnutrition. None the less, poverty and unemployment, rather than ignorance of the principles of nutrition or poor household economy, are the primary sources of malnutrition. Unsystematic buying and improper preparation of food is not confined to any one socio-economic group. Higher incomes and more adequate relief allowances which allow a reasonable "margin of error" are a direct part of the remedy.²

As well as increased food prices the cost of clothing had risen. In 1937 the Local Council of Women petitioned "the civic authorities to increase the allowance for clothing to persons on relief, which at present it was stated, amounts to 15 cents per week for each recipient."³

1 This information was taken from advertisements in The Montreal Star. See A&P advertisement for September 7, 1933, p. 25, and Dominion Stores advertisement for September 9, 1937, p. 11.

2 L.C. Marsh, Health and Unemployment, pp. 158-159.

3 "Women's Work and Interests", The Montreal Star, November 18, 1937, p. 24.

An allowance, therefore, for an individual would have been \$7.90 a year. It is no wonder that children were being withdrawn from school--it would have been absolutely impossible, even at 30s prices to adequately clothe a child for a year on such a stipend as the "Back-to-School" ads of September 1937 for Eaton's attest. [See Appendix 1.] It is obvious why the Family Welfare felt it necessary to maintain a separate clothing depot.

The rise in the cost-of-living did not escape the notice of landlords and they petitioned the City Council for an increase in rents.

Fearing that a shortage of houses and a tendency towards higher rentals would result in the unemployed being unable to find lodgings on May 1, a delegation of 10 members of the East End proprietors League asked the Executive Committee last evening for a general increase of 20 per cent in rentals paid to unemployed on relief.

They were introduced by Ald. Armand Taillon, President, who said that, with prices on the upgrade, owners were obliged to follow the trend and would increase rentals in some districts this spring. They could no longer afford to help the unemployed at the rentals offered by the City, they stated. Otherwise they would have to cease paying taxes and let the City take their houses for arrears or let them be absorbed by mortgage holders. 1

No doubt these were some of the very houses mentioned in a report commissioned by the City which showed that "Montreal has 25,000 sub-standard dwellings, not always exactly, but bordering."²

One other aspect of the situation which shows the increasing poverty of the poor and unemployed during the period in question is the increasing number of requests for the burial of indigents which the City

1 "City Asked to Pay More for Rents", The Montreal Star, February 4, 1938, p. 5.

2 "Sanitary Dwelling Board for City Recommended", The Montreal Star, May 11, 1938, p. 8.

of Montreal received. After the year 1933, which was the worst of the

Requests for burial of poor persons¹
at the City's expense

1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
310	333	351	342	600	1,713	1,668	1,425	1,525	1,177	1,160

depression, there was a 300 per cent increase in the number of such requests.

It is understandable that the governments had been unable to cope with the effects of the depression in the early 30s. Not only were they not convinced a depression existed, they had neither the philosophy nor the machinery to deal with it. However, by the late 30s evidence was beginning to accumulate as to the injurious results to the unemployed. Dr. Marsh's study, HEALTH AND UNEMPLOYMENT, was not unknown to the Montreal community. Indeed, it was well reported in the Montreal press under the heading "Health of Jobless Youth Declared in Jeopardy".

There is a grave implication in the nutritional needs of youth, the report states. "Growing boys need adequate food if they are to maintain growth as well as vigor, while the effects of under-nourishment are likely to have more serious repercussions during youth than its occurrence in later life . . . Using the same standards as for the adults, the nutritional status of 53 per cent of the boys was judged below average, while nearly a third were classed as poor or definitely malnourished."

The report calls for a fuller investigation into the effects of poverty upon youth. Not only was there definite malnourishment found but also other detrimental factors in a large proportion of the youth of unemployed families. Among the other factors, "most important is the fact that poverty means overcrowding, which in turn frequently means loss of sleep, unsanitary living conditions and irregular domestic arrangements."

¹ Annual Report of the Montreal Board of Health, see the years concerned.

The exigencies of employment for other members of the family as well as the boys also play a part. One case was recorded of a boy who got up at four a.m. when his mother rose to go to her work of cleaning an office downtown. Other boys worked late at night, seldom getting home before midnight; these were engaged as messenger boys for grocery stores, particularly to deliver beer. Unsatisfactory housing, fatigue and malnutrition interact on each other and all of these on the general state of health. It is clear that a fuller enquiry into these important aspects of juvenile life and labor is badly needed.

Dr. Marsh, in his introduction, points out that the effects of unemployment "stretch into the future. Poor health standards and employment handicaps among the marginal families of the community will breed a new generation of 'C-3' citizens unless counteracting forces are put into operation.¹

Dr. Marsh's conclusions about long-term health problems were confirmed in 1941 in a report issued by Dr. Leo Ladouceur, Chief of the Tuberculosis Section of the Montreal Department of Health.

In 1941 there were 1,713 new cases entered as against 1,453 the year previous. That is undoubtedly a substantial increase, attributable to more faithful reporting on the part of the doctor of tuberculosis patients and to the fact that our population, unemployed and undernourished during the years of crisis, has in the meantime undertaken long working hours in war industries without required relaxation.²

Almost at the same time as Dr. Marsh's study, the Educational Committee of the Junior Red Cross of Quebec had undertaken a survey of school children. It was found that almost 70% of the 462 children examined had physical defects in varying degrees.³ A year earlier Dr. S. Boucher, Director of Public Health for the City of Montreal,

1 "Health of Jobless Youth Declared in Jeopardy", The Montreal Star, July 6, 1938, p. 3.

2 Annual Report of the Montreal Board of Health, 1941, p. 106.

3 "Health Conditions in Quebec Schools", The Montreal Star, June 1, 1938, p. 3.

drew attention to the rise in infantile and maternal death rates. The increase in maternal deaths he attributed in greater part to abortion.¹ Death, it would seem, was preferable to bringing a child into the rather inhospitable climate of the Montreal community.

But as these facts were coming to light what was the reaction of the various levels of government? The federal government decided on a cut to the relief paid to the provinces. Probably as a result of this and in an effort to alleviate the drain on the Quebec treasury, the provincial government announced that it would be necessary to strictly enforce regulations governing unemployment relief.

One group struck off relief was women with children.² Women with very young children who need care are not really available for work and thus it would be understandable if these women were struck from the rolls providing some other means of assistance were available to them. Therefore, it would seem the Mothers' Allowance legislation introduced into the Quebec Legislature in March 1937, prior to the issuance of stricter regulations with regard to unemployment relief, was a sensible move guaranteed to take care of these women. According to the Department of Labor "This legislation . . . will enable the Government to give

1 "Maternal and Infantile Death Rates Increasing", The Montreal Star, June 1, 1937, p. 3. See also "Report of the Provincial Ministry of Health," The Montreal Star, April 30, 1937, p. 3, and "Infant Mortality Rate Takes Big Jump This Year", The Montreal Star, September 28, 1937, p. 3.

2 "Officials Refuse Relief to Women", The Montreal Star, May 5, 1937, p. 8.

financial help to thousands of widowed mothers of the province . . .¹

The bill passed into law on March 31, 1937, but "the debate revealed that the law would apply only to British subjects having lived in the province for 15 years and only to mothers having two or more children."²

Under these conditions the province was hardly likely to be bankrupt⁴ but even so a year later the allowance had not been put into effect.

In March 1938, Quebec was able to announce a budget surplus of \$10,205,380 and advise that direct relief and welfare money was being met by current revenue. Though Mothers' Allowances were not mentioned in the speech placing the estimates before the legislature the Montreal Star reporter "learned on good authority that it is intended to delay their application until such time as the ordinary revenue of the province allows it to pay the cost out of current revenue."³ In fact the pensions were not to be paid to needy Quebec mothers until December 15, 1938.⁴

In the meantime just what did the municipality have in store for these mothers, now cut off from relief and not to receive aid under the new legislation until December 1938? The new regulations were contained in a letter to General Panet from Hon. Wm. Tremblay, Quebec Minister of Labor, stating that aid should be limited to persons capable of working

1 "Mothers' Pensions in Quebec Planned", The Montreal Star, February 3, 1937, p. 3.

2 "Mothers' Allowance Bill Passed After Fight", The Montreal Star, March 31, 1937, p. 5.

3 "Quebec Announces Budget Surplus", The Montreal Star, March 1, 1938, p. 1.

4 "Aid to Mothers to Start December 15", The Montreal Star, October 17, 1938, p. 3.

but incapable of procuring work and directed that no one may receive a pension who:

- A- has become a charity case
- B- who lives in a state of concubinage . . .
- D- unmarried mothers . . .¹

Others who were later noted as being ineligible for relief were widows with young children and women whose husbands were in jail, in insane asylums, or in hospitals for incurables.²

At first, the Executive Committee of the City of Montreal seemed disposed to continue to pay relief to those struck off the rolls by the provincial government. Of course, the City would then have had to bear the whole cost of these groups of people and that was considerable as evidenced by the following estimates:

Approx. number of women struck off relief roll	3,000
Relief & Rent allowance for each woman per month	13.70
Monthly allowance for the 3,000 women	39,100.00
Annual total	469,200.00
Of this the City now pays one-third	158,400.00
Additional burden now falling on city	302,800.00

This does not take into consideration the allowance for children. As a large number of these women have been disqualified as "unmarried mothers". It is presumable that there is some allowance for their children. That might easily add another \$50,000 to the city's burden.³

- 1 "Trenblay-Panet Letters on Relief Made Public", The Montreal Star, May 11, 1937, p. 15.
- 2 "Executive Committee Bows to Duplessis", The Montreal Star, June 4, 1937, p. 3.
- 3 "Executive Committee Restores Relief Rolls", The Montreal Star, May 21, 1937, pp. 3 and 14.

Some aldermen even went so far as to suggest they supported a protest of the unemployed to be held on Champs de Mar against the provincial government ruling.¹ However, when only 300 jobless appeared, the aldermen recovered themselves sufficiently to remember where their votes came from and by a quick volte face recommended the stoppage of all relief.²

The Chairman of the City Executive Committee, the spokesman of the Brien Investigating Committee . . . and the pro-mayor, were this morning unanimous in favoring the abolition of the Unemployment Relief Commission and the abandoning of the unemployed to their own resources or to whatever help they can get from the Provincial and Dominion Governments and from charity organizations.

This attitude which has been growing for some time at the City Hall was strengthened and crystallized this morning by the news from Quebec that the Provincial Premier has practically washed his hands of all responsibility and advised Montreal to take all complaints to Ottawa.

"Let Ottawa take the whole business and let them worry about it", was the recommendation of the Executive Chairman Alderman O. Tailleffer this morning.

Pro-Mayor Ald. Cote: "Relief legislation is anti-social, communistic, and tends to put a premium on idleness and immorality."

Ald. Taillon endorsed the Executive Chairman's attitude adding that Quebec had a perfect right to make regulations excluding classes of people from relief. He thought Montreal should have been consulted first but he presumes that public charities will do their best to care for the unemployed as they had in the days when direct relief was unknown.³

Bowing to Duplessis' dictums the Executive Committee cut these

- 1 "Aldermen to Support Unemployed Protest", The Montreal Star, May 22, 1937, p. 3.
- 2 "Aldermen and Executive Head Would Stop Relief", The Montreal Star, May 26, 1937, p. 3.
- 3 Ibid.

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women off the relief rolls.¹ These women were to be left to their own devices—a suggestion was made that perhaps tag days or other fund raising events could be held for them or they could be assisted by private charities. Or, as Ald. Brien put it, "At all events but it be understood that there is to be a two or three week period of 'simmering down' in which hunger and destitution will perhaps speed up the process of absorption before anything can be done for those who cannot be absorbed."² Truly the Biblical stricture that the sins of the fathers (and in this case the mothers too) shall be visited upon the children held sway in the hearts and minds of Quebec legislators.

The private charities knew only too well what could happen as a result of this decision. At a meeting of the Lions Club, G. B. Clarke, of the Family Welfare Association, stated that:

Montreal is on the verge of its greatest crisis in social service as a result of the discontinuance of relief to about 8,000 women affecting 28,000 relief recipients . . . He could not understand why relief was being discontinued to women unless it was merely because they were women. He gave a brief description of what would happen when these 8,000 persons were all off relief lists. He could not understand why widowers with children to support would continue to receive relief while widows would be compelled to take care of themselves; deserted women would be obliged to find their husbands; unmarried mothers would have to resort to parental assistance.

Mr. Clarke emphasized that the Dominion Government had described as unemployed a person without a job but seeking work. Whether this person was moral or immoral had no bearing on the question.

1 "Executive Committee Bows to Duplessis", The Montreal Star, June 4, 1937, p. 3.

2 "Women to Be Left to Own Devices", The Montreal Star, June 14, 1937, p. 3.

As to the often-heard phrase that assisted persons prefer to remain on relief lists and avoid work, this the speaker thought, was absolutely false, with the possible exception of very large families.

Present allowances represent 13 cents per day for each person. This is half starvation. Many would contend that work could easily be obtained. Without necessary influence, an unemployed man or woman stands little chance of obtaining decent remunerative work in Montreal . . . 1

It might be thought that cutting off so many women and children from the relief rolls would strike a spark in that half of the community which was female. Every day the Montreal Star published three pages of news and social affairs slanted to women yet only one censure of the government's action appeared on these pages which were crammed with the latest fashions, food hints, and social chit-chat. Under the column heading WOMEN'S WORK AND INTERESTS, it was noted that the Montreal Women's Club had sent the following protest to the Executive Committee at City Hall,

At a recent meeting of the Board of Management of the Montreal Women's Club great concern was expressed at the striking off from the relief lists of those unfortunate members of our sex--classified in the City Relief Lists belonging to various "categories" and we, as women and persons, wish to register our protest against this inhuman and callous treatment--as many of these women, desperate, through hunger and want, are thus literally "thrown to the wolves."²

Just how desperate these women were the City Council was soon to find out. Seventy-five women, who had been cut off the dole, accompanied by Candide Rochefort, MLA for St. Mary's, went to City Hall. At first orderly, the women later became hysterical when the mayor pointed out

1 "City Relief Crisis Expected Soon", The Montreal Star, June 10, 1937, p. 3.

2 "Women's Work and Interests", The Montreal Star, June 15, 1937, p. 4.

that:

. . . Both he and the Executive Committee had the fullest sympathy with the women and their case.

"Sympathy! We don't want sympathy. What good's that?" screamed one of the delegation. "We want food for our families." Bedlam broke out all over the chamber while the Mayor, with little success, pleaded for a hearing.

"The proof of our sympathy," shouted the Mayor, "is that we have voted to pay the dole to those who have been struck off." This was greeted with cheers.¹

It seems inconceivable that a civilized community could contemplate leaving women with young children to starve. But Montreal was not the only community to have attempted to enforce these kinds of regulations. Quebec City too had struck these "categories" of women from the rolls.² However, on July 6 City Council voted to return these women to the rolls and to ask for legal advice on their action.³ Nevertheless, the thought that simple starvation had driven these women to protest against city authorities was not an idea that could be easily entertained by the mayor of Montreal. In fact, Mayor Raynault suspected a far more sinister design in the demonstration. He told reporters that he thought political influences were behind the protest at City Hall. "If there were nothing behind it why do they continue to demonstrate after they got their relief back." He had interviewed five of the women demonstrators who were held by the police. They admitted nothing. But one of five was known to have addressed meetings held under Communist auspices

1 "Starving Women's Assault on City Hall Successful", The Montreal Star, June 18, 1937, p. 3.

2 "Quebec Women Ask Relief from City Hall", The Montreal Star, July 7, 1937, p. 4.

3 "Women Returned to Relief Rolls", The Montreal Star, July 6, 1937, p. 11

and it had also been learned that bail had been furnished by the Canadian Labor Defence League.¹ Naturally, this was seen as suspicious, particularly as the women had admitted nothing!

In spite of Council's decision to return these women to the relief rolls, legal counsel advised the Council that, under the City Charter, Montreal could not continue to vote these sums in defiance of Quebec. The City had continued to pay these women for July and August entirely at the City's expense as neither Quebec nor Ottawa would share in the cost which amounted to approximately \$75,000 per month.² At last, "Early in September an understanding was arrived at whereby the City undertook with Quebec to take care of these women under the Quebec Charity Act, which is separate from relief."³ But until the protest, it almost seems as though the community was prepared to allow these women and their children to starve to death, providing they would do it quietly and without any fuss!

At the other end of the spectrum of the unemployed was the aged. These too had been excluded from unemployment relief. Although federal legislation for Old Age pensions had been passed in 1927, Quebec still had not taken advantage of it when the depression struck. Therefore, prior to 1936 jobless old men had not only been ineligible for relief but also for pensions. Their old age did not accord them the dignity

1 "Mayor Sees Plot in Demonstration", The Montreal Star, June 22, 1937, p. 3.

2 "Executive Given Ruling on Relief", The Montreal Star, August 30, 1937, p. 3.

3 "Relief Appropriation for October Much Reduced", The Montreal Star, September 27, 1937, p. 3.

and respect that they might have found in other societies in other times.

In fact it did not even assure them the right to survive.

A problem which has faced the various relief organizations in the city for some time and which threatens to become more acute in the near future is that of the applicant for relief who is too old to work.

Under the federal relief law he is not entitled to obtain unemployment relief. Private charities have their hands full already and no special institution exists for the care of destitute old men. There are according to officers of the relief agencies over 700 men in the city, too old to work, destitute and friendless. The Unemployment Commission refuses to grant them direct relief because the relief law specifically states that relief is only available for those who are able to work but cannot find work.

Many of them have for some time been given food and shelter in the various refuges. But with the tightening up of the control of these institutions, and the application of control by the Unemployment Commission, the latter having the right to grant or refuse cards of admission to a refuge, there is every possibility that these old men will soon have to leave the refuges too.

These refuges are administered under the federal relief law also, the governments contributing a share to the cost of operating them. And therefore the federal law applies there, namely that only men able to work are entitled to its benefits. The old men have got by so far in the refuges because the law was not strictly applied, but it is felt that when strict control by a body which is obliged to abide by the law comes into operation the old men will have to be turned out from the refuges.

What will become of them then it is hard to prophesy. Possibly they may have to resign themselves to a bath every night and going to bed at 8 p.m. and find accommodation at the Meurling Refuge. But that carries with it only a cup of coffee and a piece of bread in the morning so these aged poor men will have to manage on a very light diet if they are to live at the Meurling Refuge.¹

At last Quebec too opted into the pension plan on August 1, 1936, and if one qualified, one was entitled to a pension.

Under the Old Age Pensions Act a pension is payable to any British subject of 70 years and over who is not in

¹ "Jobless Old Men Problem", The Montreal Star, July 7, 1934, p. 3.

receipt of an income of as much as \$365 a year and who has resided in Canada for 20 years, and in the province in which the application is made for the five years immediately preceding the date of the proposed commencement of the pension . . .

The maximum amount of pension payable under the Act is \$240 yearly. In cases where pensioners have a private income the amount of their old age pension is subject to reduction by the amount, if any, that their private income exceeds \$125 a year.¹

The federal government paid 75% of the sum paid by the provincial authority. As of December 31, 1937, after the pension scheme had been operating in Quebec for a year and a half, there were 45,752 old age pensioners in Quebec who were not in receipt of an income of \$365 per year and who obviously had not made or had not been able to make provision for the years when they would no longer be able to work. This amounted to almost half of the population over 70 in Quebec.

FINANCIAL AND STATISTICAL SUMMARY OF OLD AGE PENSIONS IN CANADA²
AS AT DECEMBER 31, 1937

	<u>Quebec Act</u> <u>Effective Aug. 1, 1936</u>
Total number pensioners	45,752
Av. monthly pension	17.79
Percentage of pensioners to total population	1.48
Percentage of persons over 70 years of age to total population	3.07
Percentage of pensioners to population over 70 years of age	48.16

From the time the Act went into effect until the City stopped recording the applications at the end of November 1936, over 10,000 people had applied for benefits in Montreal.³

1 Labor Gazette, March 1938, p. 289.
2 Ibid.
3 Annual Report of the Montreal Board of Health, 1936, pp. 173-174.

Not all septuagenarians were ecstatic over the provisions made by the government for pensions. In the case of those who had wives dependent upon them the financial loss was great indeed and it would certainly have been better, if not possible, to remain on relief until their wives were also of pensionable age as noted in the following letter printed in the Star:

It would also seem, the letter reads, as though aldermen and their satellites, the ward secretaries, are in total ignorance of the rules applying to relief. I was assured that a person drawing the old age pension draws it for his or her own personal benefit. I was naturally dropped from the relief rolls but was given to understand that my wife would continue to draw relief for herself.

After answering all sorts of questions and wasting time and energy reporting to various civic departments, my wife was finally advised to get herself a job.

"If one person drawing the old age pension automatically cuts other members of the family off relief, why do the city solons not tell the public the truth and save needless travel, false hope and worry on the part of those whose votes have put these same aldermen where the gravy is the thickest?"

The rule in regard to unemployment relief is, that if the head of the family is earning or receiving an income, the family goes off relief.

In this case, the couple get \$20 a month pension. They lose \$1.80 per week each, or \$3.60 together, relief money equal to \$14.40 a month; 85 cents a month free electricity, making \$15.25; \$10 a month free rent, making \$25.25; free medical care and free water.

In a word, the couple lose \$5.25 a month cash, plus free water, doctor and medicine, through the man's applying for and obtaining an old age pension.¹

Thus, while Old Age Pensions removed the burden of caring for the over 70's from the shoulders of the municipality and left it to the federal government which paid 75% of the cost, and the provincial

¹ "Couple Find Relief Grant Better Than Old Age Pension", The Montreal Star, July 20, 1937, p. 3.

government which paid 25%, it was, like unemployment relief, a niggardly sum which would allow the aged to starve at a slower rate.

In the 30s all of these assistance programs smacked of the giving of 'something for nothing' and went against the grain of the laissez-faire style of government that had preceded this era. One idea, however, which was acceptable and not at variance with the philosophy of an individual providing for himself, was unemployment insurance—money which would be set aside by the employee and administered by the government for that 'rainy day' when the worker would find himself unemployed. Unfortunately, this scheme would do nothing for those who were currently unemployed.

Part of Prime Minister Bennett's 'New Deal' legislation of 1935 was the Employment and Social Insurance Act but this was declared beyond the constitutional powers of the federal government. After the change of government it was left to Mackenzie King to pursue this idea.

The National Employment Commission was established in 1936. The interim report of July 1937, recommended a national registration and classification of the number of unemployed on relief, the adoption of farm placement and alternative plans to provide winter employment in the primary products industries for physically fit single homeless adults; training schemes for unemployed youth; promotion of a nationwide home improvement campaign; and a pre-audit by the Dominion of all provincial expenditures in connection with the Dominion grants-in-aid for relief purposes. The final report in 1938 recommended that the federal government should not merely give money but should also exercise control over the administration of the money. It also recommended that "financial

and constitutional considerations permitting, the coordination of a nationally administered system of unemployment aid would have decisive advantages over the present system in coping with problems of employment and unemployment."¹

In attempting to implement the recommendation of the Final Report, the federal government again ran into constitutional difficulties. King's attempt to introduce an unemployment insurance scheme met with an almost flat rejection from Quebec. Premier Duplessis took a firm stand for the maintenance of autonomous rights of the provinces.² In January 1938 there is constant reference in the Montreal Star to King's intentions to bring in unemployment insurance and to Duplessis' opposition. By March 11, the paper reported that "Gossips go so far as to hint that if the King Government submits to the Federal House his plan for unemployment insurance before Easter, Premier Duplessis will dissolve the legislature and go before the people with, as the principal plank of his program, the autonomy of the province . . ."³ Eventually, a statement by the Hon. Norman McL. Rogers, Minister of Labor, put the situation into perspective:

Among the matters which will be left for the report of the Rowell Commission are the recommendation for the assumption by the Dominion of the complete burden of maintaining unemployables; and the manner of dealing financially with the provinces.⁴

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- 1 Final Report of the National Employment Commission, pp. 92-93.
 - 2 "King's Insurance Project Imperilled", The Montreal Star, November 25, 1937, p. 1.
 - 3 "Quebec Election Rumored Near", The Montreal Star, March 11, 1938, p. 1.
 - 4 "Ottawa to Implement Report of Fuyvis Board", The Montreal Star, April 5, 1938, p. 4.

As it was national unemployment insurance legislation was not passed until 1940 and only came into effect on August 1, 1941. By that time unemployment was no longer the problem it had been. According to the Census of 1941, as of June 2 in Montreal, there was a total of 321,830 wage earners, 14 years of age and over, out of a total population of 907,000, or approximately 29% of the population of the City, who had worked an average of 40.89 weeks in the preceding twelve months.¹ In 1931, when the population of Montreal was 818,577, the Census reported 296,979 wage earners, 10 years of age or over, or approximately 24% of the population who had worked an average of 41.21 weeks in the preceding year.² Thus the legislation inaugurated in 1941 was designed to benefit only those who had worked and contributed part of their earnings to the scheme at a time when unemployment had dropped to the pre-depression level.

So it was with most of the programs designed to aid the unemployed combat the worst effects of the depression--they were too little and too late.

¹ Census of Canada, 1941, Vol. VI, p. 284


² Census of Canada, 1931, Vol. V, p. 21

APPENDIX

ADVERTISEMENT FROM THE MONTREAL STAR, SEPTEMBER 3, 1937, p. 39

"Back to School"

Youths' Forsyth Shirts
1/2 USUAL PRICE



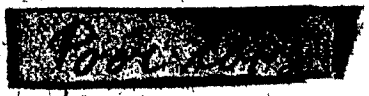
SHOES **SHOES**

2.49 **1.89**

75c to 1.25

EATON'S for School Books and Supplies

<p>50c 60c 70c 75c 80c 85c 90c 95c 1.00 1.05 1.10 1.15 1.20 1.25 1.30 1.35 1.40 1.45 1.50 1.55 1.60 1.65 1.70 1.75 1.80 1.85 1.90 1.95 2.00</p> <p>EATON'S FAMOUS SCHOOL BAG</p> <p>98c</p>	<p>EATON'S FAMOUS 100 SCHOOL PACKAGE</p> <p>1.00</p>	<p>60c 65c 70c 75c 80c 85c 90c 95c 1.00 1.05 1.10 1.15 1.20 1.25 1.30 1.35 1.40 1.45 1.50 1.55 1.60 1.65 1.70 1.75 1.80 1.85 1.90 1.95 2.00</p> <p>69c</p>
<p>50c</p>	<p>50c</p>	<p>49c</p>



ADVERTISEMENT FROM THE MONTREAL STAR, SEPTEMBER 2, 1937, P. 36

BACK TO SCHOOL BY WAY OF EATON'S

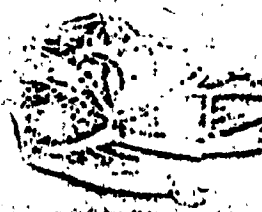





<p>Youths Suits</p>  <p>18.00</p>	<p>Little White Blouses</p>  <p>65c</p>	<p>Boys' Reliance School Shoes</p>  <p>1.00</p>	<p>Boys' Reliance School Shoes</p>  <p>1.00</p>
<p>Boys' Reliance School Shoes</p>  <p>1.00</p>		<p>Boys' Reliance School Shoes</p>  <p>1.00</p>	

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