

CHILDREN OF THE INDUSTRIAL AGE:
CHILDREN, WORK, AND WELFARE IN
LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY ONTARIO

John Bullen

Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and
Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Ph.D. degree in History



University of Ottawa



John Bullen, Ottawa, Canada, 1989

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Abstract

In late nineteenth-century Ontario, a combination of philosophical principle and material need defined a culture of work that encompassed the lives of almost all children. This holds especially true for working-class children whose social station in life projected a natural image of physical labour and for whom material want was the greatest. Dependent youngsters who spent part of their formative years as wards of private and public welfare agencies in particular encountered a culture of work at almost every level of their existence. The experiences of children from the latter group revealed the underlying social objectives that followed from an application of work. At home, on the street, in workplaces, schools, and specialized institutions, children's relationship to work proved to be the dominant feature of growing up in late nineteenth-century Ontario.

This study describes and analyzes the extent to which work, as a philosophical concept and as an economic reality, influenced the lives of working-class children in late nineteenth-century urban Ontario. Chapter I examines the impact of industrialization and urbanization on the working-class family and describes

how the concepts of work and social control intersected to feed the development of welfare programmes based on middle-class objectives. Chapter II examines the conditions and experiences of children in the paid labour force, focussing particularly on the family economy, labour legislation, and the response of reformers and trade unionists. In addition, chapter II discusses the link between a child's economic responsibilities and his or her opportunities for personal development and social mobility. Chapter III applies the themes of chapter II to youngsters who worked in the home and on the street. Chapter IV describes the work experiences of children who spent part of their early lives in orphanages or foster homes and analyzes the reform impulse behind this style of welfare. Chapter V applies the themes of chapter IV to youngsters committed to reformatories, refuges, and industrial schools. Chapter VI examines the treatment, work experiences, and social development of needy British children who filled the roles of agricultural labourers and domestic servants in Canadian homes and discusses the motivations behind this programme. Chapter VII examines the connection between youngsters' work responsibilities and school attendance and analyzes the education system's approach to the issue of children and work.

Throughout the text, the thesis argues that child labour composed a critical element of a complex social culture, deeply rooted in a capitalist economy, that defined work in both a material and philosophical sense. At the material level, working children made essential contributions to families that could not survive in the city on parental wages alone. Simultaneously,

children provided cheap labour for self-serving employers in industrial, commercial, and domestic settings. At the philosophical level, most members of nineteenth-century society believed that hard, honest work held the key to life-long success and happiness. This view prevailed among middle-class reformers who additionally believed that child labour under proper supervision would preserve social order and avoid future welfare costs by creating a class of efficient and compliant workers. The failure of this culture of work to balance its social and economic motivations, however, led to suffering and exploitation for youngsters more often than it created personal opportunity and social harmony. As the poorest, most powerless, and least secure members of industrial society, children of the working class most visibly bore the scars inflicted by a social system designed to serve middle- and upper-class interests.

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My opening paragraph is by no means intended to belittle the crucial role that academic colleagues play in projects of this nature. First and foremost, I am indebted to Dr. Michael Piva of

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Joseph Joubert has written: "To teach is to learn twice." During my teaching career, I have had the honour of working closely with scores of dedicated individuals in the pursuit of knowledge. I wish to express gratitude to my students and

colleagues from the University of Ottawa, Carleton University's School of Social Work, McGill University, the Labour College of Canada, and Erindale College, University of Toronto, for countless inspiring memories.

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John Bullen
McGill University
Montreal
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FOR CATHERINE AND DONOVAN

INTRODUCTION

CHILDREN AND A CULTURE OF WORK

Work, and thou wilt bless the
day
Ere the toil be done...
God is living, working still.

John Sullivan Dwight¹

"Labor Conquers All Things" -- these were the words that greeted children every morning as they passed through the doors of the Phoebe Street School in downtown Toronto.² Thus, even before placing foot inside a classroom, the young scholars of Phoebe Street came face to face with the widely-held nineteenth-century dictum that hard, honest work held the key to life-long success and happiness. Most of these youngsters, of course, would have experienced some form of work long before landing on the steps of the local school. Children of school age and younger routinely performed minor but important chores around their homes. Many older children worked in the paid labour force

¹ Cited in Michael S. Cross, "The Canadian Worker in the Early Industrial Age," in W.J.C. Cherwinski and G.S. Kealey, eds, Lectures in Canadian Labour and Working-Class History (St. John's 1985), 37.

² Toronto Board of Education, W.C. Wilkinson Diaries, Vol. 4, 20 June 1873.

in addition to, or in place of, attending school. In the latter case, youngsters' wages often constituted an essential component of the family economy. The colourful banner that adorned the entrance to the Phoebe Street School simply affirmed the philosophical dimension of what many children had already experienced, or would soon experience, as a matter of material necessity.

This combination of philosophical principle and material need defined a culture of work that encompassed the lives of almost all children in late nineteenth-century Ontario. This holds especially true for working-class children whose social station in life projected a natural image of physical labour and for whom material want was the greatest. Dependent youngsters who spent part of their formative years as wards of private or public welfare agencies in particular encountered a culture of work at almost every level of their existence. The experiences of children from the latter group revealed the underlying social objectives that followed from an application of work. At home, on the street, in workplaces, schools, and specialized institutions, children's relationship to work proved to be the dominant feature of growing up in late nineteenth-century Ontario.

The popular perception of work as a personal and social virtue surfaced in a variety of forms. Books and articles praised it, clergymen preached about it, journalists, politicians, and teachers worshipped its value. Although all classes, to varying degrees, honoured the worthiness of honest

labour, the God-fearing, rising middle class of the industrial age particularly embraced the power of work and adopted the medieval motto "laborare est orare" -- to work is to worship.³ Extending this slogan to its logical end, middle-class reformers constructed a social philosophy that identified idleness with sin and economic hardship with personal failure. Reformers did not hesitate to impose their version of the work ethic onto others. Opposing a motion favouring the reduction of the work day to nine hours in 1896, for example, Julia Drummond of the National Council of Women of Canada proclaimed: "Hardship comes oftener [sic] from slack work than from overwork."⁴ Despite her observations of the brutal conditions of industrial establishments, factory inspector Margaret Carlyle shared this belief. In 1895, she wrote:

It is very evident that work in moderation is healthy as well as agreeable to the human body. It is well that human nature should not have the road of life too easy. Better the necessity of working and enjoying the fruits of our labor than having all our wishes gratified without effort, as it leaves no object for our hopes and desires.⁵

³ M.J. Tucker, "The Child as Beginning and End: Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century English Childhood," in Lloyd de Mause, ed, The History of Childhood (New York 1974), 249.

⁴ National Council of Women of Canada, Report (1896), 196. Cited in Veronica Jane Strong-Boag, The Parliament of Women: The National Council of Women of Canada, 1893-1929 (Ottawa 1976), 359.

⁵ "Eighth Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1896, Vol. XXVIII, Part VI, No. 29, 26.

Jailkeeper John Cameron of Woodstock viewed work as the means of keeping young men on the straight and narrow path: "To my mind there is no better way of keeping men's passions under subjection than by work. It does more than anything else to promote proper feelings -- proper ideas of life. Work generally keeps men all right. It is the greatest blessing that the Deity ever bestowed upon man to compel him to work for his living."⁶ Reformers' activities in this area also revealed the injustice that occurred when middle-class objectives imposed themselves onto working-class conditions.

Middle-class reformers, especially those who composed the group known as "child-savers," drew a special connection between work and children. These men and women vigorously promoted the idea that youngsters who were inculcated with industrious habits at an early age would develop into upstanding and self-supporting citizens. Applying this strategy especially to working-class children, reformers hoped that this process would provide industrial capitalism with an efficient and compliant work force, maintain order and stability within and between classes, and reduce the costs of public welfare. Canadian Boy magazine commented in 1901: "Every boy who is allowed to grow up without moral training or habits of industry is not only a direct loss, but is likely to become a burden and a tax on the community."⁷

⁶ "Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Prison and Reformatory System of Ontario," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1891, Vol. XXIII, Part IV, No. 18, 529.

⁷ Canadian Boy, June 1901.

Reformers' commitment to a child welfare policy based upon the inculcation of industrious habits, however, deflected a meaningful material analysis of structural inequality and poverty. Consequently, reform programmes that linked a proper upbringing with labour frequently exploited youngsters as workers while offering them few opportunities for personal development or social mobility.

The existence of child labour in nineteenth-century Canada is a well-established and undisputed fact. Previous studies have described the conditions and experiences of children in both the paid and non-paid labour force.⁸ Historians also acknowledge the

⁸ See for example, Bettina Bradbury, "The Family Economy and Work in an Industrializing City: Montreal in the 1870s," Canadian Historical Association, Historical Papers, 1979; Bettina Bradbury, "The Fragmented Family: Family Strategies in the Face of Death, Illness, and Poverty, Montreal, 1860-1885," in Joy Parr, ed, Childhood and Family in Canadian History (Toronto 1982); John Bullen, "Hidden Workers: Child Labour and the Household Economy in Late Nineteenth-Century Urban Ontario," Labour/Le Travail, Vol. 18, Fall 1986; Terry Copp, The Anatomy of Poverty: The Condition of the Working-Class in Montreal, 1897-1929 (Toronto 1974); Ian E. Davey, "The Rhythm of Work and the Rhythm of School," in Neil McDonald and Alf Chaiton, eds, Egerton Ryerson and His Times (Toronto 1978); David Gagan, Hopeful Travellers: Families, Land, and Social Change in Mid-Victorian Peel County, Canada West (Toronto 1981); Fernand Harvey, "Children of the Industrial Revolution in Quebec," in J. Drufresne et al., eds, The Professions: Their Growth or Decline? (Montreal 1979), reprinted in R. Douglas Francis and Donald B. Smith, eds, Readings in Canadian History: Post-Confederation (Toronto 1982); Lorna F. Hurl, "Overcoming the Inevitable: Restricting Child Factory Labour in Late Nineteenth Century Ontario," Labour/Le Travail, Vol. 21, Spring 1988; Michael B. Katz, The People of Hamilton, Canada West: Family and Class in a Mid-Nineteenth-Century City (Cambridge 1975); Michael B. Katz, Michael J. Doucet, and Mark J. Stern, The Social Organization of Early Industrial Capitalism (Cambridge 1982); Gregory S. Kealey, Hogtown: Working-Class Toronto at the Turn of the Century (Toronto 1974), reprinted in Francis and Smith, Readings in Canadian History; Gregory S. Kealey, ed, Canada Investigates

importance of youngsters' contributions to the family economy. But no examination to date has probed the full social, economic, and cultural implications of child labour within a framework that links social philosophy to material reality. This study fills that gap. If late nineteenth-century society had regarded children simply as miniature adults, there would be no point to this thesis. But this was not the case. On the contrary, the importance of childhood as a formative stage in the life cycle constituted one of the leading social issues of the day. Therefore, the treatment and experiences of youngsters at home, on the street, in workplaces, and in various social institutions engender numerous questions of historical and sociological significance.

This study describes and analyzes the extent to which work, as a philosophical concept and as an economic reality, influenced the lives of working-class children in late nineteenth-century urban Ontario. Chapter I examines the impact of industrialization and urbanization on the working and living conditions of working-class families and describes how the concepts of work and social control intersected to feed the development of welfare programmes based on middle-class objectives. Chapter II examines

Industrialism (Toronto 1973); Peter N. Moogk, "Les Petits Sauvages: The Children of Eighteenth-Century New France," in Parr, Childhood and Family in Canadian History; Bryan D. Palmer, A Culture in Conflict: Skilled Workers and Industrial Capitalism in Hamilton, Ontario, 1860-1914 (Montreal 1979); Joy Parr, Labouring Children: British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada, 1869-1924 (Montreal 1980); and Michael J. Piva, The Condition of the Working Class in Toronto, 1900-1921 (Ottawa 1979).

the conditions and experiences of children in the paid labour force, focussing particularly on the family economy, labour legislation, and the response of reformers and trade unionists. In addition, Chapter II discusses the link between a child's economic responsibilities and his or her opportunities for personal development and social mobility. Chapter III applies the themes of chapter II to youngsters who worked in the home and on the street. Chapter IV describes the work experiences of children who spent part of their early lives in orphanages or foster homes and analyzes the reform impulse behind this style of welfare. Chapter V applies the themes of chapter IV to youngsters committed to reformatories, refuges, and industrial schools. Chapter VI examines the treatment, work experiences, and social development of needy British children who filled the roles of agricultural labourers and domestic servants in Canadian homes and discusses the motivations behind this programme. Chapter VII examines the connection between youngsters' work responsibilities and school attendance and analyzes the education system's approach to the issue of children and work.

Social historians and students of social history will recognize many of the primary sources that inform this study. The particular approach and themes of the thesis, however, demanded fresh questions and created the need to dissect data largely passed over by earlier studies.⁹ Unfortunately, children have

⁹ For an informative commentary on this style of history, see Tamara K. Hareven, "The History of the Family as an Interdisciplinary Field," Journal of Interdisciplinary History,

left few useful primary sources. Even autobiographies, usually composed relatively late in life, express an adult perspective. The thesis therefore takes special care in its attempt to reconstruct a world described by those beyond its immediate borders. Most importantly, the study strives to ground its analysis in the actual day-to-day experiences of working children. In this matter, the thesis takes instruction from the influential British social historian E.P. Thompson who, on a related subject, wrote:

The notion of class entails the notion of historical relationship. Like any other relationship, it is a fluency which evades analysis if we attempt to stop it dead at any given moment and anatomise its structure. The finest-meshed sociological net cannot give us a pure specimen of class, any more than it can give us one of deference or of love. The relationship must always be embodied in real people and in a real context.¹⁰

Methodological difficulties aside, social historians have only recently begun to explore the place of children in past time. Pointing out what they perceived as some of the deficiencies of social history, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese wrote in 1976: "Preoccupation with the most active segments of the working class and oppressed classes at any given moment has led to the slighting of women and children and to the neglect of important cultural forces, including religion, folk

Vol. 2, 1971.

¹⁰ E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (London 1964), 9.

customs, and family life."¹¹ Two years later, T. R. Morrison underscored the need for children's history: "If what is done to children affects, in some way, the development of a society, then the historical study of childhood is an integral feature of the reconstruction of societal formation and change."¹² In 1982, R.L. Schnell described children as "the conspicuous mutes of history."¹³

Happily, the last decade has witnessed the growth of interest in this area. In Canada, Joy Parr has made seminal contributions to our understanding of children and history. Locating youngsters within the context of time, place, and culture, Parr writes:

Childhood and family are shaped by historical rather than biological processes; they are social rather than natural relationships; they form and are transformed by their economic and cultural context....Thus children's lives and their experience in families are entwined in the political, social, and economic relations of which family relations are a part. The private sphere is not separate from or determined by the public sphere. The two are imbedded in the same set of historical processes. In Canada the changing role of the state, the rhythms of migration, and reappraisals of the

¹¹ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, "The Political Crisis of Social History," Journal of Social History, Vol. 10, No. 2, Winter 1976, 210.

¹² T.R. Morrison, "Ways of Seeing Children: Hidden Agendas in Education and Child Welfare Reform," in S. James Albert, ed, Children and the State (Ottawa 1978), 23.

¹³ R.L. Schnell, "Childhood Rescued and Restrained in English Canada," in Patricia T. Rooke and R.L. Schnell, eds, Studies in Childhood History: A Canadian Perspective (Calgary 1982), 204.

economic usefulness of children consistently have been part of the reworking of family and life cycle.¹⁴

Following the pattern set by Parr and others, this thesis attempts to capture the experiences of working-class children within the context of the massive social and economic transformation that characterized urban-industrial life in late nineteenth-century Ontario. Focussing on both philosophical beliefs and material conditions, the study identifies a culture of work as the most significant factor defining childhood in this period. On a different, but equally important level, the thesis strives to give voice to "the conspicuous mutes of history."

¹⁴ Joy Parr, Introduction to Parr, Childhood and Family in Canadian History, 8-10. See also Joy Parr, "Nature and Hierarchy: Reflections on Writing the History of Women and Children," Atlantis, Vol. 11, No. 1, Fall 1985; John Bullen, "Orphans, Idiots, Lunatics, and Historians: Recent Approaches to the History of Child Welfare in Canada," Histoire sociale/Social History, Vol. 18, No. 35, May 1985; Neil Sutherland, "Towards a History of English-Canadian Youngsters," in Michael B. Katz and Paul H. Mattingly, eds, Education and Social Change: Themes From Ontario's Past (New York 1975); and the special issue of the Material History Bulletin, Vol. 21, 1985.

CHAPTER I

WORK, WELFARE, AND THE FAMILY IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY CITY

It is neither poverty nor disease but work itself which casts the blackest shadow over the years of the Industrial Revolution.

E.P. Thompson¹

The emergence of industrial capitalism and the corresponding increase in the size and complexity of urban centres set nineteenth-century society twirling on a new set of axes the likes of which few Canadians had anticipated or experienced. The twin forces of industrialization and urbanization dramatically redefined living arrangements, working conditions, social welfare, and class relations as a predominantly rural economy based on agricultural production, the export of staples, and small commercial enterprises gradually receded in the face of rising industrial and capitalist power concentrated in cities. This reconstitution of society engendered many new conditions and responses. Waged labour formed the principal basis of the family economy as most male workers sought employment away from their

¹ E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (London 1964), 446.

homes. Food, clothing, fuel, and other household items that farm families routinely produced themselves could now be purchased at the marketplace. The unequal distribution of wealth and power and the paucity of social planning characteristic of industrial capitalism generated widespread poverty, unemployment, disease, and other urban disorders primarily borne by the working class. These social afflictions in turn gave rise to institutions and welfare schemes initiated by the State and private philanthropists in an attempt to impose order and control on the new society.

At the centre of this social maelstrom lay the working-class family which reacted both passively and actively to its new surroundings. On the one hand, most workers and their families resigned themselves to the struggle to survive as forces largely beyond their control determined the political economy of urban-industrial life. On the other hand, working-class families applied their own ingenuity, including reaching back to the productive traditions of rural society, to soften the blows of urban living. Within this context, the work of women and children played a critical role. Together, these factors defined working-class family life in late nineteenth-century urban Ontario.

In 1871, The People's Journal described the 1860s as a decade that "set agoing an industrial revolution."² The achievement of Confederation in 1867, ongoing railway construction, and the introduction of protective tariffs after 1879 as part of Prime Minister John A. Macdonald's National Policy all stimulated industrial growth in the young Dominion. The increase in the number and size of manufacturing establishments provided one indicator of the extent of industrialism. A federal inquiry undertaken in the early 1880s calculated that almost one hundred new factories appeared in central Canada and the Maritime provinces between March 1879 and March 1882.³ Between 1871 and 1891, the number of workers employed by manufacturing firms in Ontario increased from 87,000 to 166,000.⁴

Building on the natural advantages that had led to its commercial hegemony, Toronto soon emerged as Ontario's leading industrial centre. Guided by aggressive entrepreneurs such as industrialist Hart Massey, railway magnate Casimir Gzowski, and retail king Timothy Eaton, the Queen City posted an impressive record of growth and expansion. In 1871, fifty-seven per cent of

² Cited in Bryan D. Palmer, Working-Class Experience: The Rise and Reconstitution of Canadian Labour, 1800-1980 (Toronto 1983), 62.

³ "Factories, Commissioners Return," Canada, Sessional Papers, 1882, Vol. XV, No. 83, 1. See also "Report of A.H. Blackeby on the State of the Manufacturing Industries of Ontario and Quebec," Canada, Sessional Papers, 1885, Vol. XVIII, No. 37.

⁴ Palmer, Working-Class Experience, 97.

Toronto's industrial labour force worked for companies that employed fifty or more people and thirty-eight per cent laboured in factories with over 100 employees. Between 1881 and 1891, the total number of manufacturing establishments in Toronto more than tripled and the number of workers doubled. Clothing, furniture, distilling, brewing, and meat-packing counted among Toronto's largest industries. Heavy industry centred primarily on foundries and machine shops. Tobacco and footwear operations prospered in the 1860s and 1870s but declined in the latter years of the century.⁵

Toronto's industrial revolution affected the pattern of female and child labour as well as that of men. In the early 1870s, women and children composed 74.6 per cent of workers in the city's clothing industry. In firms with more than fifty employees, the number of female and child workers registered as high as 81.6 per cent. The clothing sector employed sixty-three per cent of all female industrial workers and seventeen per cent

⁵ Ibid., 63 and 97; and Gregory S. Kealey, Toronto Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism, 1867-1892 (Toronto 1980), 3-4. For additional statistics on industrial growth in Toronto, see J.M.S. Careless, "Some Aspects of Urbanization in Nineteenth-Century Ontario," in F.H. Armstrong, H.A. Stevenson, and J.D. Wilson, eds, Aspects of Nineteenth-Century Ontario (Toronto 1974), 72; J.M.S. Careless, Toronto to 1918: An Illustrated History (Toronto 1983); Conyngham Crawford Taylor, Toronto "Called Back" From 1888 to 1847, and the Queen's Jubilee (Toronto 1888), 249-50; Peter G. Goheen, "Currents of Change in Toronto, 1850-1900," in Gilbert A. Stelter and Alan F.J. Artibise, eds, The Canadian City: Essays in Urban History (Toronto 1977), 62 and 88; Gregory S. Kealey and Bryan D. Palmer, Dreaming of What Might Be: The Knights of Labor in Ontario, 1880-1900 (Toronto 1982), 27-56; and Gregory S. Kealey and Linda Kealey, "Poverty and the Working Class in Toronto, 1880-1914," Canada's Visual History, Vol. 33.

of all child workers in Toronto. Despite industrialization's impact on child and female work patterns, the traditional occupation of domestic servant continued to supply employment to the largest single group of female workers.⁶

Other Ontario cities experienced industrial revolutions of their own. Originally developed as a centre of milling and transportation, Hamilton soon established mercantile houses and manufacturing establishments to serve the surrounding area. In 1851, twenty-four per cent of Hamilton's industrial workers toiled in shops employing ten or more people. That number rose to eighty-three per cent by 1871. Machinists alone increased in number by 800 per cent between 1850 and 1870. By 1871, firms with fifty or more workers employed almost fifty-three per cent of Hamilton's industrial labour force. Metal industries dominated in Hamilton, including three sewing machine factories, several foundries, a metal rolling mill, one large farm implement firm, and the yards of the Great Western Railway. Hamilton also contained clothing, hat, and footwear factories of various sizes, most of which employed high numbers of female workers.⁷

⁶ Kealey, Toronto Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism, 28; and "Female Labour in Toronto: Its Nature -- Its Extent-- Its Reward," The Globe, 28 October 1868.

⁷ Palmer, Working-Class Experience, 63; and Michael B. Katz, Michael J. Doucet, and Mark J. Stern, The Social Organization of Early Industrial Capitalism (Cambridge 1982), 5. See also Bryan D. Palmer, A Culture in Conflict: Skilled Workers and Industrial Capitalism in Hamilton, Ontario, 1860-1914 (Montreal 1979); and John C. Weaver, Hamilton: An Illustrated History (Toronto 1982).

Smaller Ontario centres also exhibited significant industrial growth. By the 1860s, in addition to its traditional square timber industries, Ottawa contained one of the world's largest milling operations. In 1861, approximately forty-eight per cent of Ottawa's workers laboured in industrial settings, most of them associated with saw milling. In the 1890s, Ottawa's natural water power provided hydroelectricity to expanding pulp and paper factories.⁸ Despite dramatic industrial growth in cities like Toronto, Hamilton, and Ottawa, over fifty per cent of Ontario's manufacturing in the 1880s took place in centres with populations under 10,000.⁹ In 1888, Ontario's factory inspectors submitted the following factory count for some of the province's smaller cities: Belleville -- 10; Berlin -- 14; Brantford -- 15; Guelph -- 13; Kingston -- 14; London -- 36.¹⁰

The rise of industrial capitalism also altered patterns of geographic mobility. In the latter decades of the nineteenth century, Canada's urban population increased at roughly three times the rate of the general population, a development that struck stalwarts of agricultural society with worry and despair. The Globe acknowledged the trend in 1894, but conceded: "The complaint about the continual movement of population from country to city is a good deal like a protest against the law of gravi-

⁸ John H. Taylor, Ottawa: An Illustrated History (Toronto 1986), 75-81.

⁹ Palmer, Working-Class Experience, 98.

¹⁰ "First Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1889, Vol. XXI, Part V, No. 39, 13.

tation."¹¹ In 1850, fourteen per cent of Ontario's population resided in cities. By the turn of the century, this number had increased to forty per cent.¹² In absolute figures, Ontario's rural population rose from 818,541 in 1851 to 1,351,074 in 1881 and then fell to 1,246,969 by 1901. Urban population, on the other hand, grew steadily from 133,463 in 1851 to 935,978 by 1901.¹³ In 1861, Toronto's population stood at 44,821. This number swelled to 208,040 by 1901.¹⁴ Between 1881 and 1891, Hamilton's population increased from 35,960 to 48,980. During the same period, the number of residents in Ottawa grew from 31,307 to 44,154.¹⁵

Urbanization could take several forms. Many sons and daughters of Ontario farmers, victims of exclusionary inheritance customs, recognized the diminishing promise of rural life and fled to the cities in search of work and spouses with whom to begin their own families.¹⁶ In other instances, immigrant families, primarily from the cities and countryside of Great Britain, settled in Canadian centres in the hope of escaping

¹¹ The Globe, 1 April 1894.

¹² Palmer, Working-Class Experience, 64.

¹³ Canada, Bureau of the Census, Report on Population, Vol. 1, 1901.

¹⁴ Goheen, "Currents of Change in Toronto," 60.

¹⁵ Canada, Census, 1891.

¹⁶ See David Gagan, "The Indivisibility of Land: A Micro-analysis of the System of Inheritance in Nineteenth-Century Ontario," Journal of Economic History, Vol. 36, No. 1, March 1976.

poverty and oppression. In the latter case, fathers and older sons often emigrated first and sent for remaining family members once employment and residence had been established.

As people flowed into cities, a social and physical landscape emerged that bore little resemblance to the surrounding countryside. By the 1880s, Toronto supported a wide variety of churches, schools, retail shops, theatres, and sporting facilities. Grandiose structures such as the Legislative Buildings, Union Station, St. Lawrence Hall, the Grand Opera House, and numerous cathedrals and banks cast long shadows on to freshly macadamized streets. Horse-drawn streetcars, telegraph poles, gas lamps, and water hydrants adorned major thoroughfares. A contemporary observer described Toronto's Yonge Street in 1886: "Splendid wholesale warehouses, banks and public offices, with stores of every description, stretch away far beyond the reach of vision, giving the impression of a thorough business city, the traffic at this point being very great."¹⁷

In cities such as Toronto, the imposing physical environment served as a backdrop to a lively and sometimes boisterous street life. A Toronto reporter referred to Union Station "as a great theatre in which are enacted some of the strangest scenes in life in this city."¹⁸ Toronto cab drivers regularly carried visitors

¹⁷ Taylor, Toronto "Called Back", 219. See also Andrew Jones and Leonard Rutman, In the Children's Aid: J.J. Kelso and Child Welfare in Ontario (Toronto 1981), 5.

¹⁸ Toronto Daily News, Toronto by Gaslight: Thrilling Sketches of the Nighthawks of a Great City (Toronto 1885), 37.

to the nearest bordello. Other youthful street walkers preferred to do their flirting around the fashionable area of King and Yonge Streets. An observant journalist commented on the behaviour of young women: "I believe that the great majority keep themselves personally free from gross immorality, yet in their pursuit of what they think to be fun, combined with pieces of cloth, silk hose, high-heeled boots and bright ribbons, they go as near the fires of sin as it is possible to go and not get scorched."¹⁹ It is not difficult to imagine the thoughts running through the minds of the Salvation Army choir as it sang out songs of redemption on a busy street corner.

Poor city-dwellers took to the street in their leisure time to escape the discomfort of their homes. In 1884, Toronto's Chief Health Officer, Dr. William Canniff, reported that over 500 working-class homes had access to neither city wells nor cistern water, the latter of which he described as "unfit for consumption." Canniff claimed that years of waste seepage from outdoor privies had contaminated much of the city's water supply, thus increasing the chances of typhoid and other fevers.²⁰ Typical among middle-class reformers, Canniff hoped that corrective legislation would improve the quality of life for workers and simultaneously guard against social disorder and future public welfare costs: "By the application of sanitary laws there

¹⁹ Ibid., 20.

²⁰ A major typhoid epidemic struck Toronto in 1881. See The Globe, 29 October 1881.

will be a great saving to the public in preserving the health, giving comfort, saving expenses incident to sickness; and by keeping the bread-winner in health, saving the family from want, or perhaps from becoming a public burden, or its members lapsing into a life of intemperance and crime." Exhibiting the common tendency of reformers to lay blame with the victims of social problems, Canniff recommended the enactment of a law forbidding people to drink contaminated water.²¹

In the late 1880s, the Royal Commission on the Relations of Capital and Labor delved further into the living conditions of urban workers. Archibald Blue, Assistant Commissioner of Agriculture and Secretary of Ontario's Bureau of Industry, testified that workers' homes were "crowded and stuffy."²² Dr. William Oldright, former chairman of the provincial Board of Health, pointed out the dangers created by the filth and stench of outdoor privies, many of which were located close to houses and schools.²³ These conditions were especially prevalent in downtown working-class neighbourhoods, such as Toronto's St.

²¹ City of Toronto Archives (CTA), Records of the Department of Public Health, RG 11; C. Pelham Mulvany, Toronto: Past and Present. A Handbook of the City (Toronto 1884), 248-49; and C.S. Clark, Of Toronto the Good. A Social Study. The Queen City of Canada As it Is (Montreal 1898), 3.

²² Canada, Royal Commission on the Relations of Capital and Labor in Canada (Royal Labor Commission) (Ottawa 1889), Ontario evidence, 86. See also testimony of William Bell, Relief and Health Inspector, London, 591-94; "The Fight Against Poverty," The Christian Guardian, 6 July 1887; and "Toronto's Slums," Canadian Advance, 7 November 1888.

²³ Royal Labor Commission, Ontario evidence, 91-92.

John's ward, bordered by College Street, Yonge Street, Queen Street, and University Avenue. St. John's ward contained seventy-one persons per acre, as compared to twenty-one persons per acre for the rest of Toronto.²⁴

Unskilled workers fared no better at their places of employment where long hours, dangerous conditions, and low wages constituted the norm. In 1891, a survey of eighty factories in Toronto revealed that ten operated sixty hours per week, fourteen ran between fifty-five and sixty hours, thirty operated between fifty and fifty-five hours, and the remainder ran between forty-four and fifty hours.²⁵ Unguarded machinery, loose belts, and open elevator shafts led to many debilitating accidents. In addition to subjecting employees to long hours, unsafe conditions, and low wages, industrial work created an atmosphere of oppression and control.²⁶ Frederick Philip Grove described this effect in his novel The Master of the Mill:

Suppose a new hand starts work with us. He's an ordinary human being; he laughs and jokes as he goes to work. But within less than a year something comes over

²⁴ Kealey and Kealey, "Poverty and the Working Class," 4. See also Terrence Morrison, "The Child and Urban Social Reform in Late Nineteenth-Century Ontario, 1875-1900," (Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1971), 51-52.

²⁵ Jean Thomson Scott, The Conditions of Female Labour in Ontario (Toronto 1891), 13.

²⁶ Skilled, unionized workers fared substantially better in these departments. See Gregory Kealey, "The Honest Workingman and Workers' Control: The Experience of Toronto Skilled Workers, 1860-1892," Labour/Le Travailleur, Vol. 1, 1976; and Bryan D. Palmer, "The Culture of Control," in Michael Cross and Gregory S. Kealey, eds, Readings in Canadian Social History, Vol. 3: Canada's Age of Industry, 1849-1896 (Toronto 1982).

him. Whatever he does, he seems to do automatically; in reality, the pace forces him to be constantly on the watch; it isn't that he becomes a machine; that would be tolerable if undesirable. What he becomes is the slave of a machine which punishes him when he is at fault; the machine seems to watch for the chance. All the time. The men are tempted to yell and to curse at it. And then he is spoiled for anything else.... Meanwhile, he gets up and lies down. Between the two things time disappears. It is nothing but a nightmare. It's always time to get up; it's always time to lie down.²⁷

Factory inspector John Argue used no less dramatic terms in his evaluation of industrial life:

We live in an age of wondrous industrial activities, an age of hustle and bustle, of greed and speed, of complicated and ever changing machinery, often worked to its utmost capacity, and that sometimes by unskilled hands; an age, therefore, of unusual danger to life and limb, on a continent more noted for material enterprise and progress than for its belief in the sacredness of human life.²⁸

Unlike Grove and Argue, few urban workers found time to reflect on the philosophical aspects of industrialism. Most of them encountered difficulty simply trying to make ends meet. According to a federal inquiry conducted in 1881, the average male factory worker in Toronto commanded \$8.00 per week. Women and children could not hope to do as well. Female factory hands collected \$3.50 per week on average while child workers took home only \$2.00.²⁹ Five years later, a newspaper-conducted survey of

²⁷ Frederick Philip Grove, The Master of the Mill (Toronto 1944), 193.

²⁸ "Eighteenth Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1906, Vol. XXXVIII, Part II, No. 8, 38.

²⁹ "Factories, Commissioners Return," 6.

1,605 working-class families in Toronto revealed that the average family generated \$447.60 in income over one year. The cost of bare necessities for an average family -- defined as 5.25 persons -- amounted to \$417.75.³⁰ Figures such as these led economists W.L. Marr and D.G. Paterson to conclude that "most families whose members depended on earned income, found that saving was impossible and that all of their income was spent on the most rudimentary basic requirements."³¹ Furthermore, the high price of major household items and the lack of a regular cash flow forced many workers to buy on credit, an extremely risky practice in view of the irregular and seasonal nature of employment in urban centres.

The conditions created by industrial capitalism struck foremost at the heart of civilization's oldest social unit -- the family. To many nineteenth-century observers, the twin evils of industrialization and urbanization threatened the sanctity of the family and undermined its traditional role as the provider and protector of its members. Social activist and future leader of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, J.S. Woodsworth, expressed the sentiments of many reformers when he wrote in 1911:

The economic development of the last one hundred years has destroyed [the family] and left in its stead a mere shadow of what once was the source of all things essential in the world. The mills, factories, abat-

³⁰ Kealey and Kealey, "Poverty and the Working Class in Toronto," 4. See also Royal Labor Commission, Ontario evidence, 1131.

³¹ W.L. Marr and D.G. Paterson, Canada: An Economic History (Toronto 1980), 200.

toirs, breweries and bakeries took from the home the various trades, the state supplied the defence, and the city the water supply; the sanatorium, the surgeon, and the alienist took precaution against disease and replaced home remedies by skilled practice and medical science; the sick have hospital care, the schools undertake the instruction of the child, and the factory, etc., the technical training. The home is now a few rooms in a crowded tenement or apartment house....Little or nothing has replaced the social losses of the home.³²

Since Woodsworth's time, historical views of the impact of industrialization on the family have undergone transformations of their own. In the late 1950s, Neil Smelser asserted that "almost as a matter of definition we associate the factory system with the decline of the family and the onset of anonymity."³³ Smelser was referring primarily to the earlier work of functionalist theorists such as Talcott Parsons and R.F. Bales who had argued that the sudden separation of home and work precipitated by industrialization undermined the productive capacity of the family and drastically reduced its responsibility as an agent of general welfare.³⁴ John Demos summarized the functionalist position in 1970: "The history of the family has been the history of contraction and withdrawal; its central theme is the gradual

³² J.S. Woodsworth, My Neighbour (Toronto 1911), 75.

³³ Neil Smelser, Social Change in the Industrial Revolution (Chicago 1959). Cited in Herbert G. Gutman, "Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America, 1815-1919," American Historical Review, Vol. 78, No. 3, June 1973, 561.

³⁴ See for example, Talcott Parsons and R.F. Bales, Family Socialization and Interaction Process (Glencoe, Illinois 1955).

surrender to other institutions of functions that once lay very much within the realm of family responsibility."³⁵

Despite its important contributions to intellectual discourse, functionalist theory provides an inadequate explanation of the impact of industrialization on the family. Functionalism's primary flaw centres on its tendency to identify work almost exclusively with waged labour and commodity production. This precept emerged naturally enough as a result of functionalists' belief that the factory, not the home, constituted the principal manifestation of industrialization. Having divided work and home into separate spheres, functionalists concluded that the urban-industrial family exercised far fewer social responsibilities than had its pre-industrial counterpart. This view under-estimated the value of home-centred production and service industries, domestic labour, and other social responsibilities that remained within the realm of the family, such as nurturing, socialization, and general welfare. An analysis that chooses the home, rather than the factory, as the focus of important decisions pertaining to the family economy demonstrates that the worlds of work and home continued to intersect to a much greater degree than professed by the theorists of functionalism.

In the last decade and a half, several important historical works have offered revisionist views of the family and in-

³⁵ John Demos, A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony (New York 1970), 183.

dustrialization. In 1976, Elizabeth Pleck argued that the notion that industrialization separated home and work rested on a middle-class bias which failed to recognize that many workers' families continued to rely on home-centred production well past the point of initial industrialization. Pleck turned functionalism on its head by suggesting that certain advances in technology, such as the invention of the sewing machine, actually increased the productive capacity of the home. Her advice to future researchers included a commentary on the approaches of earlier analysts:

To understand the history of work and family, historians must begin by rejecting theories based on "the myth of separate worlds," the separation of home and work under industrialization....Functionalist analysis must be replaced by perspectives which examine how people reconciled the two worlds....It will be necessary not only to follow the worker home from the job but also to observe activity within the home and to study the influence of the family on the worker's participation in and involvement with work. If work and family form a larger whole, the social historian must specify how people move between the domains and demands of both worlds.³⁶

Focussing on the community of Manchester, New Hampshire, Tamara Hareven found that "the basic traditional assumptions that guided family work roles" survived the transition to industrialization. According to Hareven, the family did not react

³⁶ Elizabeth H. Pleck, "Two Worlds in One: Work and Family," Journal of Social History, Vol. 10, No. 2, Winter 1976, 180-81, and 188-89. See also Hans Medick, "The Proto-Industrial Family Economy: The Structural Function of Household and Family During the Transition from Peasant Society to Industrial Capitalism," Social History, Vol. 3, October 1976; and Jane Humphries, "Class Struggle and the Persistence of the Working Class Family," Cambridge Journal of Economics, Vol. 1, 1977.

passively to social and economic change. On the contrary, the family acted as a catalyst in effecting changes within and beyond the home: "It is clear now that the family was a flexible institution, and that given the historical circumstances or the opportunity structure, it was a dependent agent at certain times and an independent agent at other times."³⁷ With John Modell, Hareven offered the following assessment of the urban-industrial family:

The family was not fragile, but malleable. That so many misunderstood this distinction is itself symptomatic, for reformers who bewailed the imminent breakup of the family had displaced their concern from the hardness of life inherent in the industrial system to an institution that not only was a sensible response to industrialization but, in cushioning the shock of urban life for newcomers, was decidedly humane.³⁸

In the Canadian context, Michael Katz employed quantitative methods to explore the nature of family life in nineteenth-century Hamilton. Katz observed that between 1851 and 1871, Hamilton's wealthier families produced a decreasing number of children while poorer families increased in size. Katz speculated that wealthy couples bore fewer children to allow each family member to enjoy the benefits of education and consumption

³⁷ Tamara K. Hareven, "Family Time and Industrial Time: Family and Work in a Planned Corporation Town, 1900-1924," in Tamara Hareven, ed, Family and Kin in Urban Communities, 1700-1930 (New York 1977), 188, 192, and 202. See also Tamara Hareven, "Themes in the History of the Family," in Tamara Hareven, ed, Themes in the History of the Family (Worcester 1978).

³⁸ Tamara K. Hareven and John Modell, "Urbanization and the Malleable Household: An Examination of Boarding and Lodging in American Families," in Hareven, Family and Kin in Urban Communities, 182.

to the greatest degree possible while poor families increased their offspring to reap the full benefit of their wage-earning power. Katz also discovered that industrialization prolonged the period of time young men resided with their families. These and other findings led him to write:

Folk wisdom and even academic writing often teach that industrialization eroded the stability and importance of the family. But that may well turn out to be a simplistic view, for it is possible that the family did not weaken as much as change. If this should be the case, then the modern family is no less important than its counterpart, the happy scene of work and residence admired by preindustrial romantics. It is simply different.³⁹

Drawing on the work of Katz and other Canadian social historians, Joy Parr described the experience of city children: "Most first generation urban children grew up in households that sheltered distant kin, fetched and carried between their own homes and those of relatives living nearby, and knew periods in which they were more materially dependent upon aunts, uncles, and cousins than upon fathers and mothers."⁴⁰

Decades before inquisitive historians began to peek into the homes of nineteenth-century workers, a largely middle-class reform movement, encompassing clergymen, businessmen, politicians, and temperance advocates, took an interest in the lives

³⁹ Michael B. Katz, The People of Hamilton, Canada West: Family and Class in a Mid-Nineteenth-Century City (Cambridge 1975), 213.

⁴⁰ Joy Parr, Introduction to Joy Parr, ed, Childhood and Family in Canadian History (Toronto 1982), 14. See also Bettina Bradbury, "The Working-Class Family Economy, Montreal, 1861-1881," (Ph.D thesis, Concordia University, 1984).

of the working class. Women's organizations concerned with the preservation of feminine qualities and the traditional family played a particularly important role in the reform movement. In 1893, a number of women's organizations from across Canada united under the umbrella of the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC). The NCWC would eventually include groups such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). Drawing its inspiration from the beliefs that "the home is but the microcosm of the state" and that "the high ideal of a pure and holy family life was the nation's chief strength,"⁴¹ the NCWC pledged to protect Canadian families from the harmful effects of industrialization and urbanization. The NCWC's standing committee on child and female labour lobbied continually for an improvement in the working conditions of women and children and helped to secure the appointment of a female factory inspector. Concern for working women and girls, however, focussed more on "moral and religious welfare" than it did on wages and employment opportunities. This committee also fought to stop the spread of pernicious literature among children.⁴²

⁴¹ Lady Aberdeen, "Presidential Address," National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC), Report (1894), 12.

⁴² National Archives of Canada (NAC), Records of the National Council of Women of Canada, MG28 I25. See also Veronica Jane Strong-Boag, The Parliament of Women: The National Council of Women of Canada, 1893-1929 (Ottawa 1976); Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, "One Hundred and Two Muffled Voices: Canada's Industrial Women in the 1880s," Atlantis, Vol. 3, No. 1, Fall 1977; T.R. Morrison, "'Their Proper Sphere': Feminism, the Family, and Child-Centred Social Reform in Ontario, 1875-1900,"

From their own perspective, reformers considered their work to be one aspect of enlightened Christian charity. Toronto's reform mayor W.H. Howland, for example, worked among the poor "as a matter of love."⁴³ One journalist referred to reformers as "the advance agents of the irresistible will of Almighty God."⁴⁴ Divinely-inspired concern for the working-class, however, did not carry with it a genuine understanding of the sources of workers' woes nor did it exclude a healthy measure of self-interest.

Almost without exception, reformers believed that troubled lives resulted from the individual failings and character flaws of workers themselves. Testifying before the Royal Labor Commission, W.H. Howland blamed poverty in Toronto on workers' drinking habits and the unsuitability of certain immigrants. Specifically, Howland criticized Canada's practice of accepting "great numbers of people who have got the poor-house taint, and who never will work or do any good anywhere."⁴⁵ Toronto relief officer Edward Taylor identified "idleness and drink" as the chief causes of destitution.⁴⁶ According to Chief Inspector

Two Parts, Ontario History, Vol. 68, No. 1, March 1976, and Vol. 68, No. 2, June 1976; and Alice Klein and Wayne Roberts, "Besieged Innocence: The 'Problem' and the Problems of Working Women -- Toronto, 1896-1914," in J. Acton et al., eds, Women at Work: Ontario, 1850-1930 (Toronto 1974).

43 Royal Labor Commission, Ontario evidence, 159.

44 Unidentified newspaper clipping, NAC, J.J. Kelso Papers, MG30 C97, Vol. 4.

45 Royal Labor Commission, Ontario evidence, 159.

46 Ibid.

David Archibald of the Toronto Police Force, three-quarters of all dependent children resulted from drunken fathers.⁴⁷ Beliefs such as these severely limited the philosophical scope of social welfare in the nineteenth century, as bluntly expressed by author Thomas Conant: "Is it wise to foster the growth of a class of persons whose filth and foul disease are the result of laziness and their own vices?"⁴⁸

What troubled reformers the most was the fear that widespread pauperism and degeneracy would provoke social disorder and increase the cost of maintaining public welfare institutions, such as prisons and asylums. This concern, along with the tendency to link destitution with personal failings, led reformers to concentrate their efforts on the group they termed the "deserving poor," individuals who had fallen on hard times through no fault of their own or those who suffered as a direct result of others' dereliction, such as deserted wives and neglected children. Despite this distinction, reformers still faced the dilemma of wanting to assist the most desperate and deserving of the urban poor while preventing the creation of a permanent class of paupers and degenerates. J.J. Kelso warned of this situation and underlined welfare's real aim: "In these days of advanced humanitarian sentiment there is much danger of a charity that pauperizes and degrades, rather than inculcates the

⁴⁷ Chief Inspector David Archibald, Toronto Police Force, Report on the Treatment of Neglected Children in Toronto (Toronto 1907), 4.

⁴⁸ Thomas Conant, Upper Canada Sketches (Toronto 1898), 195.

spirit of sturdy independence and thrift."⁴⁹ According to The Globe, "it would be better that a few individuals should die of starvation than that a pauper class should be raised up with thousands devoted to crime and the victims of misery."⁵⁰

Many reformers assisted the poor through charitable societies associated with their Churches.⁵¹ Others operated private welfare institutions with some municipal support, such as Toronto's House of Industry. Founded in 1837, the House of Industry supplied outdoor relief in the form of food and fuel to needy families and provided temporary room and board to transients in return for their efforts at crushing stone or chopping wood. Among its objectives, the House listed: "To provide for the destitute of the city and to encourage habits of industry in the young who have sought its protection." The institution's by-laws defined five categories of destitute individuals who qualified for long-term care and residence: orphans; deserted children; children whose parents could not provide for them as a result of poverty or sickness; the dependent aged and infirm; and incurably ill individuals discharged from the General Hospital. The House required able-bodied men to cut wood and expected women

⁴⁹ "Third Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1896, Vol. XXVIII, Part III, No. 17, 3.

⁵⁰ The Globe, 27 February 1874. Cited in Richard B. Splane, Social Welfare in Ontario, 1791-1893: A Study of Public Welfare Administration (Toronto 1965), 16. See also, The Globe, 26 January 1877.

⁵¹ For a partial list of charitable societies in Ontario, see NCWC, Women of Canada: Their Life and Work (1900), 385-89.

to knit stockings and woolen goods. The work required of clients symbolized the managers' determination to withhold relief from anyone who made no effort to support themselves.⁵²

In its first year of operation, Toronto's House of Industry relieved 857 individuals, 638 of whom were children. In the same year, the House counted twenty-six youngsters among its forty-six residents. Between 1837 and 1875, the institution provided food and shelter for 842 children. Between January 1879 and December 1882, the House received 3,567 applications for relief, the vast majority from families with more than one child. In the winter of 1890-91, the institution aided 1,824 families. Most families in receipt of relief were headed by unemployed or ill men, widows, or deserted wives.⁵³

The managers of the House of Industry believed that proper industrial training would allow needy children to lift themselves out of poverty. In 1837, the House apprenticed fifty-four destitute youngsters to local tradesmen or farmers. Between 1837 and 1875, the institution hired out 552 children. After 1851, the House compelled regular recipients of relief to grant it complete custody over children eleven years of age and over. On

⁵² CTA, Records of the House of Industry, SC 35; "The Relief of the Poor," The Mail, 22 January 1877; "The House of Industry," The Globe, 27 and 29 January 1877; "The House of Industry," The Mail, 16 and 19 February 1877; and "Our Poor," The Mail, 22 March 1877, and 19 and 25 May 1877.

⁵³ Ibid.

occasion, the institution arranged work placements in Canada for needy British boys.⁵⁴

Organized in 1875 under the auspices of the YWCA, the Toronto Relief Society provides another example of a privately-managed welfare agency. This organization assigned a superintendent to each of four sections of the city. Superintendents delivered material relief to the needy and collected donations. To ensure that prospective clients met the standards of behaviour set by the agency, only homes that submitted to an inspection qualified for relief. Like the House of Industry, and almost every other reform organization concerned with welfare, the Toronto Relief Society encouraged the poor to achieve self-sufficiency by developing industrious habits. Each district sponsored an industrial room where all recipients of relief participated in supervised work and skill-training. In 1892, the society founded a special institution to instruct young girls in cooking, domestic service, and nursing.⁵⁵ The Toronto Industrial Room Society also fell into this category. This organization strived "to provide sewing, knitting and other industrial oc-

⁵⁴ Ibid. See also Susan E. Houston, "The Impetus to Reform: Urban Crime, Poverty, and Ignorance, 1850-1875," (Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1974), 247-286; CTA, James Pitsula, "The House of Industry and the Poor of Late Nineteenth Century Toronto," unpublished paper; James Pitsula, "The Relief of Poverty in Toronto, 1880-1930," (Ph.D. thesis, York University, 1979); C. Owen Spettigue, An Historical Review of Ontario Legislation on Child Welfare (Toronto 1957), 28; and Kealey and Kealey, "Poverty and the Working Class," 5.

⁵⁵ Morrison, "'Their Proper Sphere'," Part I, 62. See also Joey Noble, "'Class-ifying' the Poor: Toronto Charities, 1850-1880," Studies in Political Economy, No. 2, Autumn 1979.

cupations for women and girls requiring assistance, and generally to keep such women and girls in the way of making them industrious instead of pauperizing them by affording gratuitous relief."⁵⁶

Irrespective of their wider social goals and philosophies, private welfare agencies undeniably met the material needs of at least a portion of the urban poor. In the winter of 1884-85, two Toronto relief agencies responded to the requests of more than 1,800 families.⁵⁷ William Bell, Relief and Health Inspector for London, told the Royal Labor Commission that he had received 140 requests for assistance in October 1886, the majority of them from widows and orphans.⁵⁸ Alex McKay, Member of Parliament and former mayor of Hamilton, counted large numbers of elderly citizens, recently arrived immigrants, and widows with children among his city's relief recipients.⁵⁹ In 1890, Goldwin Smith estimated that four per cent of Toronto's population depended on relief.⁶⁰ During the winter of 1892-93, one in twenty Toronto families received some form of charitable aid.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Local Council of Women of Toronto, Seventh Annual Report (Toronto 1901), 18.

⁵⁷ Jones and Rutman, In the Children's Aid, 16.

⁵⁸ Royal Labor Commission, Ontario evidence, 591-94.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 803-807.

⁶⁰ Jones and Rutman, In the Children's Aid, 16.

⁶¹ B.E. Bull, "City Mission Work," The Methodist Magazine, Vol. XXXVII, June 1893, 578.

Despite the material aid extended to needy families, reform welfare remained locked into a social philosophy that ultimately sustained rather than challenged a political economy based on competition and inequality. Many historians have commented on the shortcomings and limitations of the reform movement. Describing reformers in England, Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewitt offered an assessment with international application:

The social reformers of the nineteenth century were predominantly middle-class men and women who judged working-class conditions by their own middle-class standards. The reforms they devised were a cautious attempt within the limits of their political outlook--rarely egalitarian -- to make it possible for the working-class family to adopt a pattern, though not a standard, of life not so offensively different from their own.⁶²

Terrence Morrison constructed a concise critique of the Canadian reform movement, drawing special attention to reformers' obsession with the family and children:

The values underpinning reform methods and goals were at variance. Although reformers heralded the natural reformative influence of the family, they urged artificial methods to obtain this goal....The reformers' trust in the formative influence of a natural family, along with their romantic image of childhood, proved to be an impediment to a more realistic analysis of those impoverished material conditions which affected many urban children....A continued emphasis by reformers on the character defects of the pauper, rather than the objective reality of poverty, indicated their major concern to be social control rather than the removal of social and economic inequality.⁶³

⁶² Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewitt, Children in English Society, Vol. II: From the Eighteenth Century to the Children Act, 1948 (London 1973), 653.

⁶³ Morrison, "The Child and Urban Social Reform," 112 and 147. See also Strong-Boag, The Parliament of Women, vii and 6; Paul Rutherford, "Tomorrow's Metropolis: The Urban Reform

In many ways, reform is an ironic title for a movement that contributed so profoundly to the longevity of a society divided by wealth, power, and prestige.

Although most reformers believed that charity properly belonged in the voluntary sphere, where it could avoid the taint of officialism and the status of a State-sanctioned right, the extent of social disruption caused by industrialization and urbanization made it impossible for governments to remain outside the welfare circle totally. As early as 1859, the Canadian government appointed inspectors to investigate the conditions of public asylums, hospitals, and prisons.⁶⁴ In 1874, the Ontario Legislature passed "An Act to Regulate Public Aid to Charitable Institutions"⁶⁵ which provided limited funding for private organizations and empowered government officials to regulate and inspect welfare agencies. According to figures compiled by Andrew Jones and Leonard Rutman, within twenty years of the passage of the Charity Aid Act, the number of government-aided hospitals increased from ten to thirty-two, orphanages doubled from fourteen to twenty-eight, and houses of refuge expanded from

Movement in Canada, 1880-1920," in Stelter and Artibise, The Canadian City: Essays in Urban History (Toronto 1977), 370-71; and John C. Weaver, "'Tomorrow's Metropolis' Revisited: A Critical Assessment of Urban Reform in Canada, 1890-1920," in Stelter and Artibise, The Canadian City, 393-94.

⁶⁴ See "An Act Respecting Inspectors of Public Asylums, Hospitals, the Provincial Penitentiary of Canada and of all Common Gaols and Other Prisons," Canada, Statutes, 1859.

⁶⁵ Ontario, Statutes, 1874.

less than five to thirty-two.⁶⁶ In 1900, new legislation superseded the act of 1874 and increased the amount of funding.⁶⁷

Government legislation also covered specific areas of concern and created institutions to serve particular clientele. By 1880, Ontario supported four hospitals for the insane, one asylum for "idiots", one institution for the education of the deaf and dumb, one for the education of the blind, a central prison for male offenders, a reformatory for boys, a reformatory for women, and an industrial refuge for girls.⁶⁸ In 1882, the Ontario government established a provincial Board of Health to combat the spread of contagious diseases caused by unsanitary living conditions and contaminated food, milk, and water. Two years later, the Legislature passed a Public Health Act that compelled municipalities to establish local boards of health and impose sanitary regulations.⁶⁹ Between 1887 and 1893, the Ontario Legislature passed no fewer than thirteen laws concerning the welfare of children.

Despite increased government involvement in welfare activities during the last third of the nineteenth century, all the hallmarks of inequality and suffering that characterized the rise of industrial capitalism continued to define the social

⁶⁶ Jones and Rutman, In the Children's Aid, 18.

⁶⁷ Ontario, Statutes, 1900, Chapter 58.

⁶⁸ Harvey G. Simmons, From Asylum to Welfare (Downsview 1982), 88.

⁶⁹ Ontario, Statutes, 1884.

fabric. This comes as no surprise when it is realized that most mainstream politicians shared the middle-class roots and objectives of the reform movement. It is equally important to point out, however, that industrialization and urbanization were not government policies that unfolded in carefully planned and even measures. Both marched to their own rhythm and generated their own momentum. Even well-intentioned legislation dealing with social problems was therefore reactive in nature. Circumstances that had already established themselves as part of everyday life left governments far behind in the race to regulate social forces. Legislation followed; it did not lead. This was the legacy of industrial capitalism wherever it planted its roots.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the twin forces of industrialization and urbanization, set in motion by the driving wheel of a capitalist economy, reconstructed the social landscape of Ontario. Of greatest significance, these changes gave birth to an urban working class which, through its labour and purchasing power, constituted an essential element of the new capitalist order while sharing little in the wealth it toiled to produce. Public and private relief allowed many poor families to survive the worst of times, but the middle-class reform movement that sponsored these programmes aimed at imposing social control and avoiding future welfare costs, not erasing the fundamental abuses and inequalities of industrial capitalism.

Reformers were especially concerned that children develop industrious habits at a young age to guarantee their proper behaviour as future workers and citizens. Concerned more with immediate needs than the future structure of society, workers instinctively looked to their families for support. Although early historians announced the decline of the urban-industrial family, more recent views portray the family as a durable and malleable unit. Within this context, children played a critical role.

CHAPTER II

FROM THE ARTISAN'S SHOP TO THE SWEAT SHOP: CHILDREN IN THE PAID LABOUR FORCE

I am of the opinion that the question of the employment of children has never been a serious one in this country.

William Lyon Mackenzie King¹

Every morning of every working day across Ontario, thousands of children under the age of sixteen arose somewhere between 5:00 and 6:00 a.m. and prepared to put in a full day's labour at the local factory or mill. Leaving their homes on foot, these youngsters, along with the other working people of the province, faced all elements of the Canadian climate before reaching their destination and taking up their duties as factory operatives or mill hands. For the next ten to twelve hours, the noise of machinery rang in their ears, dust invaded their eyes and their throats, and lordly foremen barked orders at them as their still developing bodies and minds staggered under the pressures of demanding, monotonous labour. At the end of the week, a working

¹ Department of Labour, "Correspondence Received by Deputy Minister of Labour, W.L. Mackenzie King, Concerning Wage-Earning Children, 1902." King to Miss N. Adler, Honorary Secretary, Committee on Wage-Earning Children, London, England, 13 August 1902.

child arrived home with perhaps a dollar or two in his or her pocket, the bulk of which went directly towards paying the family's bills. Following one day of religion, rest, and recreation, the dreary routine began again on Monday morning. These were the children of the industrial age. Neither school nor play, but work, constituted the primary focus of their lives.

Mackenzie King's view notwithstanding, few contemporary observers of nineteenth-century society denied that child labour was a common element of urban-industrial life. Although a variety of vantage points produced conflicting views of the social value and impact of such a practice, workers, employers, reformers, politicians, and other commentators all shared at least one belief: the widespread employment of children in factories and mills had been made possible by the introduction of labour-saving and wage-reducing machinery that required little skill or training to operate. According to a report published by Ontario's Bureau of Industry in 1888, mechanization had increased child labour "because a boy can tend a machine that will do many men's work and his wages would not average one third what a man would get."² This perception survived into the twentieth century and remained a central tenet of any discussion of child labour. While there is no question that mechanization facilitated the growth of the child and female labour force, this explanation alone overlooks critical changes in the practice of child labour

² Ontario, Bureau of Industry Report (Toronto 1888), 98. For the views of organized labour, see William Howard, "Child Labor," The Palladium of Labor, 24 May 1884.

that pre-date the Industrial Revolution. The employment of children in factories and mills owes its existence in part to a long-established pattern of child labour that finds its roots in pre-industrial capitalism. The artisan's shop, not the factory, holds the key to the explanation.

I. The Decline of Apprenticeship

In pre-industrial Canada, the predominant method of acquiring a recognized skill was the centuries-old system of apprenticeship.³ Although the colony's frontier conditions and the accompanying demand for versatility prohibited strict observance of the regulations and procedures practised by the European Guilds, a notarized indenture or verbal agreement between master and apprentice, or a contract arranged on behalf of the apprentice by his parents or legal guardians, remained the most commonly travelled path leading to skilled craftsmanship. As a result of early Canada's small population, it was not uncommon for master and apprentice to belong to the same family. Irrespective of relationship, the apprenticeship agreement defined rights and obligations on both sides. Under a typical

³ For a description of apprenticeship as a social tradition, see Philippe Ariès, Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life (New York 1962), 411. See also Peter Moogk, "Apprenticeship Indentures: A Key to Artisan Life in New France," Canadian Historical Association, Historical Papers, 1971.

indenture, the master craftsman promised to teach his student the "secrets of the trade" in addition to providing food, clothing, shelter, and a small annual salary, paid either in cash or material. In return, the apprentice, almost always a male, offered his teacher obedience, labour, and an honest effort to learn and master the intricacies of the trade. A boy usually began apprenticing in his early teens and graduated to journeyman by the age of twenty-one. Apprentices commonly worked a six-day week of twelve to fourteen hours per day. A small workshop owned and controlled by the master typically served as the classroom of apprenticeship. Professionals, such as lawyers, doctors, and notaries, also trained as apprentices, although these students usually came from wealthy families, had received some prior education, worked fewer hours, and did not perform domestic chores.⁴ Masters and apprentices who reneged on their commitments could be brought before the courts by the aggrieved party. In almost every case, however, the law and the judges favoured the master.⁵

Early in the nineteenth century, apprenticeship began to undergo a profound transformation that stretched over the next several decades. The first sign of a new direction appeared in the master's workshop. Awakened to new opportunities presented

⁴ Jean-Pierre Hardy and David Thiery Ruddel, "Apprenticeship in Early Canada," The Canadian Encyclopedia, Second Edition (Edmonton 1988), 87-88; and C. Owen Spettigue, An Historical Review of Ontario Legislation on Child Welfare (Toronto 1957), 18.

⁵ Paul Craven, "The Law of Master and Servant in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Ontario," in David H. Flaherty, ed, Essays in the History of Canadian Law, Vol. I (Toronto 1981).

by an expanding commercial market, and threatened by the competition of imported products, many former craftsmen abandoned their small-scale independent production and crossed the threshold of entrepreneurship into the beckoning world of manufacturing and merchandizing. Mass production, machine tools, the division of labour, and a greater use of unskilled workers became commonplace as the relentless demands of a burgeoning capitalist economy transformed the pre-industrial artisan's workshop into the commercially-driven manufactory. Few players in this changing scenario felt the shock of progress more than the apprentice. Once the hand-chosen heir of the secrets of ancient crafts, the apprentice watched helplessly as his status slowly declined to the level of unskilled worker. Masters engaged apprentices at increasingly younger ages and kept them longer to receive the full benefit of their low-paid labour. In many cases, cash payment totally replaced the valued transference of skill. Although the pace and intensity of capitalist development could be slow and uneven, as indicated by the co-existence of workshops and manufactories over several decades, these changes heralded the end of an economic era in Canada, as they had in all other industrial nations.⁶

By mid-century, the advent of industrialization pushed apprenticeship deeper into a state of crisis. Now, even adult journeymen began to experience the encroachment of capitalist

⁶ Bryan D. Palmer, Working-Class Experience: The Rise and Reconstitution of Canadian Labour, 1800-1980 (Toronto 1983), 26-29.

development. As mechanization created new positions for unskilled labour, employers lured young boys away from their apprenticeships with the offer of independence and wages. Sensing the diminishing promise of formal skill-training, many boys took the bait and abandoned their indentures. This development threatened the status of skilled workers and undercut previous wage levels. T.V. Powderly, American leader of the Knights of Labor, concisely described the "crisis of the craftsman" during a visit to Toronto in 1884:

With the introduction of labor-saving machinery the trade of machinist was all cut up, so that a man who had served an apprenticeship of five years might be brought in competition with a machine run by a boy, and the boy would do the most and the best. I saw that labor-saving machinery was bringing the machinist down to the level of a day laborer, and soon they would be on a level.⁷

Displaying even greater economy of language, the authors of the First Report of the Royal Commission on the Relations of Capital and Labor in Canada expressed a similar view in 1889: "The apprentice system is almost a thing of the past. The factory system, the introduction of machinery and the division of labor has nearly put an end to it."⁸

⁷ New York Sun, 29 March 1886. Cited in Gregory S. Kealey, Toronto Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism 1867-1892 (Toronto 1980), 178.

⁸ Canada, First Report of the Royal Commission on the Relations of Capital and Labor in Canada (First Report, Royal Labor Commission) (Ottawa 1889), 12. See also Ontario, Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1899 (Toronto 1900), xxxii.

Local trade unionists also added their voices to the discussion of the changing nature of apprenticeship and child labour. This did not represent a totally new concern for skilled workers who had always attempted to control the number and requirements of apprentices in their trade to avoid a flooded labour market and maintain a respectable level of wages and workers' control.⁹ In 1844, George Brown, editor of The Banner, unveiled Upper Canada's first cylinder press, a new printing machine that required far less skill to operate than previous versions. This innovation led the Toronto Typographical Union to accuse Brown of "nearly filling his office with boys (some two or three of whom were Apprentices who had absconded from offices at a distance, and four who had left different offices in this city)."¹⁰ In 1861, a representative of the International Molders' Union in Kingston noted that there were now "boys without number" in the trade and admitted that the apprenticeship problem "has given us more trouble than all others combined."¹¹ A decade later, Toronto shoe manufacturers Damer and King faced

⁹ Gregory S. Kealey, "'The Honest Workingman' and Workers' Control: The Experience of Toronto Skilled Workers, 1860-1892," Labour/Le Travailleur, Vol. 1, 1976; and Bryan D. Palmer, "The Culture of Control," in Michael Cross and Gregory S. Kealey, eds, Readings in Canadian Social History, Vol. 3: Canada's Age of Industry, 1849-1896 (Toronto 1982).

¹⁰ Toronto Typographical Union, Plain Statement of Facts (Toronto 1844). Cited in Eugene Forsey, Trade Unions in Canada 1812-1902 (Toronto 1982), 22. See also Sally F. Zerker, The Rise and Fall of the Toronto Typographical Union, 1832-1972: A Case Study of Foreign Domination (Toronto 1982), 30-49.

¹¹ Cited in Steven Langdon, The Emergence of the Canadian Working Class Movement 1845-1875 (Toronto 1975), 9.

striking workers who demanded that the company discharge a number of boys whom it had hired without permission of their union.¹²

In response to these and numerous other abuses of apprenticeship and child labour, trade unions formulated policies designed to restore order to the workplace and the labour force. Unionists' specific objections to the employment of children rested on four main premises: child labour stole jobs from adult workers; child labour depressed wages; careless and untrained children working on dangerous machinery threatened the safety of all workers; and many working environments jeopardized the health, safety, and future of children who would be better off indentured as apprentices or attending school. Almost all early union policies dealing with child labour yearned for a return to a strictly regulated system of apprenticeship. At its founding convention in 1873, Canada's first national labour federation, the Canadian Labour Union (CLU), called for a more stringent application of apprenticeship and the prohibition of the employment of children under ten years of age "in factories, mills, and other manufacturing establishments where machinery is used."¹³ From the mid-1880s, the CLU's successor, the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada (TLC), continually passed resolutions calling for legislation to revive and regulate the old apprenticeship

¹² Forsey, Trade Unions in Canada, 35.

¹³ Leslie Wismer, Proceedings of the Canadian Labour Union Congresses, 1873-1877 (Montreal 1951). See also "About Apprentices," Trades Union Advocate, 24 August 1882.

system.¹⁴ The unionists' action represents a natural response to a grave situation; but their attempt to breathe life into a tradition perched on the edge of extinction indicates their inability to grasp fully the long-term significance of an economic revolution that added entirely new dimensions to workplace relations.

Although it is commonly held that mechanization created the widespread practice of employing children as cheap, unskilled labour, the roots of the problem reach back to pre-industrial times. It was the drive for increased production and profit as fueled by commercial capitalism that led to the exploitation of young workers. The breakdown in the traditional system of apprenticeship signalled the new use of children in the work force. Mechanization undeniably created a greater number of positions for young, unskilled workers, but in doing so it was carrying forward a tradition of exploitation that had established itself in an earlier era. Trade unionists' efforts to correct the injustice by restoring apprenticeship exposed both the seriousness of the situation and the hopelessness of attempting to reverse the capitalist steamroller. As Michael Katz, Michael Doucet, and Mark Stern observed:

No shortage of labor made it necessary to press boys into unskilled work, and formally structured, long-term apprenticeships had ceased to exist by the mid-nineteenth century....Thus it was not industrialization that undermined apprenticeship but capitalism. Appren-

¹⁴ See for example, Canadian Labour Congress (Trades and Labour Congress of Canada), Proceedings, 1886, 26-27; 1887, 40; and 1888, 15.

ticeship was incompatible with a system of wage labor that stressed the manipulation of mobile resources in order to maximize profit.¹⁵

With apprenticeship in decline, and industrial capitalism looming on the horizon, it comes as no surprise that substantial numbers of children swelled the ranks of unskilled workers in Ontario's manufacturing establishments.

II. Factories and Mills

Census data collected between 1871 and 1901 indicate that thousands of Ontario children under the age of sixteen held down full-time jobs in factories and mills. Tables 2-1 and 2-2 provide a detailed breakdown. Between 1871 and 1891, the number of children in the industrial work force increased from 7,170 to 10,354. By the turn of the century, however, this figure had fallen dramatically to 5,065. Proportionally, children accounted for 8.1 per cent of industrial workers in 1871, 6.2 per cent in 1891, and 3.6 per cent in 1901. In absolute figures, boot- and shoe-making, brick, tile and pottery, clothing, foundries and machine works, and saw mills registered high numbers of young

¹⁵ Michael B. Katz, Michael J. Doucet, and Mark J. Stern, The Social Organization of Early Industrial Capitalism (Cambridge 1982), 255. See also Michael B. Katz and Ian E. Davey, "Youth and Early Industrialization in a Canadian City," in John Demos and Sarane Spence Boocock, eds, Turning Points: Historical and Sociological Essays on the Family (Chicago and London 1978), S96.

Table 2-1

Children Under Sixteen in Ontario Industry

	1871	1881	1891	1901
Children	7,170	9,018	10,354	5,065
All Workers	87,281	118,308	166,326	142,330
Percentage	8.1	7.6	6.2	3.6

Source: Census of Canada
 Adapted from Lorna F. Hurl, "Overcoming the Inevitable:
 Restricting Child Factory Labour in Late Nineteenth
 Century Ontario," Labour/Le Travail, Vol. 21, Spring
 1988, 99.

Table 2-2

Children Under Sixteen in Selected Ontario Industries

	1871		1881		1891		1901	
	child	total	child	total	child	total	child	total
Basket-making	13 (37.1%)	48	36 (36.4%)	99	76 (20.0%)	380	62 (19.7%)	315
Brewing and Distilling	18 (1.9%)	957	28 (2.3%)	1,195	32 (2.2%)	1,425	30 (1.9%)	1,591
Brick, Tile and Pottery	279 (12.4%)	2,246	386 (12.7%)	3,033	529 (13.3%)	3,970	356 (9.4%)	3,768
Broom- and Brush-making	44 (12.3%)	332	55 (10.0%)	552	28 (5.4%)	514	58 (10.4%)	556
Carriage-making	162 (3.4%)	4,780	132 (2.4%)	5,391	154 (3.0%)	5,096	22 (0.7%)	3,133
Clothing	492 (5.9%)	8,374	804 (6.1%)	13,230	1,307 (5.6%)	23,480	218 (2.0%)	10,954
Cotton Mills	212 (42.8%)	495	622 (37.0%)	1,683	397 (15.9%)	2,495	284 (12.1%)	2,350
Flour and Grist Mills	105 (3.8%)	2,795	100 (2.8%)	3,556	78 (2.3%)	3,453	5 (0.2%)	2,217
Footwear	382 (6.0%)	6,354	291 (5.0%)	5,827	102 (2.3%)	4,410	65 (3.0%)	6,563
Foundry and Machine Works	296 (6.3%)	4,682	200 (4.0%)	5,021	130 (2.1%)	6,198	125 (1.7%)	7,328
Printing and Binding	413 (19.2%)	2,149	768 (19.7%)	3,893	512 (9.3%)	5,489	371 (6.3%)	5,851
Saw Mills	754 (5.4%)	13,851	1,012 (6.0%)	16,846	1,343 (5.6%)	23,851	489 (1.8%)	26,655

Table 2-2 (Continued)

	1871		1881		1891		1901	
	child	total	child	total	child	total	child	total
Tobacco	245	707	253	1,164	232	1,528	103	1,977
	(34.7%)		(21.7%)		(15.2%)		(5.2%)	
Woodworking	12	120	8	133	9	251	33	611
	(10.0%)		(6.0%)		(3.6%)		(5.4%)	
Woolen Mills	736	3,696	699	5,221	679	5,217	386	4,076
	(19.9%)		(13.4%)		(13.0%)		(9.5%)	

Source: Census of Canada
 Adapted from Lorna F. Hurl, "Overcoming the Inevitable:
 Restricting Child Factory Labour in Late Nineteenth
 Century Ontario," Labour/Le Travail, Vol. 21, Spring
 1988, 100-101.

employees. In percentages, basket-making, cotton mills, printing and binding, tobacco, and woolen mills employed a high proportion of children.

Although these figures provide a helpful overview, census data are of limited use in determining the extent of child labour in industry. Some historians have pointed out that the less than professional methods employed in taking the census call into question the reliability of the figures. Furthermore, by compiling data at ten-year intervals, the census overlooks cyclical aberrations that occurred in other years.¹⁶ More importantly, the census does not account for part-time or seasonal employment or children who were privately engaged by adult workers as personal helpers, a common practice in the many industries that operated by piece-work. Lastly, it is highly probable that many children, parents, and employers failed to provide census-takers with complete information out of fear of attracting the attention of local school officials. A comparison of the census and school attendance figures reveals a huge number of children listed neither at school nor at work.¹⁷ Since it is unlikely that all those unaccounted for were running wild on the street, it becomes even more plausible to suggest that the census data represent a low estimate of working children.

¹⁶ Bryan D. Palmer, "Modernizing History," Bulletin of the Committee on Canadian Labour History, Vol. 2, Autumn 1976; and Bryan D. Palmer, "Emperor Katz's New Clothes; or with the Wizard in Oz," Labour/Le Travail, Vol. 13, Spring 1984.

¹⁷ See Chapter VII.

In the early years of industrialization, the proportion of working children in major urban centres such as Toronto registered above the provincial average, as Table 2-3 indicates. The census of 1871 and 1881 placed approximately eleven per cent of Toronto's work force under the age of sixteen. By 1891, however, this number had dropped to around five per cent, slightly below the figure for the entire province. This pattern suggests that while major industrial centres were the first locations to create new jobs for children they also led in generating the social and economic conditions that allowed youngsters to withdraw from the labour force.

Toronto's tobacco industry provides an interesting case study of young girls at work. The introduction of moulds in the early 1860s had led to an influx of female and child labour in this industry.¹⁸ In 1868, The Globe estimated that seventy-five girls participated in this trade out of a total female work force of 300. Despite their lack of training, and wages as low as \$1.50 per week, The Globe found the girls to be steady and efficient workers, their "tender delicate" fingers being particularly well-suited to rolling the tobacco into shape. Moreover, the newspaper claimed that girls "are generally faster workers than men, and finish their work equally well." Despite this complimentary assessment, the article followed the middle-class practice of blaming delinquent parents, not selfish employers, for creating child labour:

¹⁸ Palmer, Working-Class Experience, 82.

Table 2-3

Children Under Sixteen in Selected Toronto Industries

	1871			1881			1891		
	child male	child female	total	child male	child female	total	child male	child female	total
Bakeries	36	--	151	27	27	324	35	7	708
Book- binding	5	25	220	16	22	325	8	1	479
Dress- making	3	26	164	7	76	400	15	85	1,577
Footwear	87	84	1,393	91	34	1,107	13	1	728
Hosiery	3	3	71	9	3	75	13	29	85
Printing	72	--	431	223	24	978	147	6	2,231
Paper Bag	--	--	--	14	28	122	1	7	257
Straw	19	30	282	3	2	48	--	--	--
Tailoring	22	47	1,230	16	23	1,464	28	17	2,609
Tobacco	84	40	240	63	9	317	8	--	129

Source: Census of Canada
 Adapted from Gregory S. Kealey, Hogtown: Working-Class
 Toronto at the Turn of the Century (Toronto 1974), 3.

In the majority of instances, the females engaged are of tender years, children of parents who, unfortunately for both, have no distinct inclination for anything save to consume their own and the earnings of their offspring in liquor. The manufacture of tobacco furnishes them with a congenial occupation; not requiring any certificate of responsibility it is open to all classes, consequently some who are employed in these establishments are without the restraint of a healthy home influence and its beneficial results.¹⁹

Several kilometres west of Toronto, the city of Hamilton contained its share of child workers. Drawing on the census of 1871, Ian Davey discovered 661 workers under the age of seventeen scattered through 142 establishments representing more than fifty major industries, including metals, wood, leather, food, drink, tobacco, clothing, and footwear. Of the total number, 543, or over eighty-two per cent were boys. Female workers were concentrated in specific sectors, eighty-two of them, or almost seventy per cent, holding down jobs as dressmakers, milliners, seamstresses, or tailoresses, a clear indication of the growth of the ready-made clothing industry in the 1860s. Despite the greater number of jobs for young people that resulted from industrialization, the new economic order created few opportunities for social mobility. Davey concluded: "The central fact is that the expansion of employment among adolescents, especially boys, that accompanied the growth of industry in Hamilton in the 1860's did not result in large-scale inter-generational occupational mobility. Most sons found jobs in similar occupations to

¹⁹ "Female Labour in Toronto: Its Nature -- Its Extent-- Its Reward," The Globe, 28 October 1868.

their parents and work opportunities remained scarce for their sisters."²⁰

Large urban centres such as Toronto and Hamilton naturally exhibited the most visible signs of the impact of industrial capitalism on local economies, but the tentacles of industrialization reached into many small towns as well. Chad Gaffield has shown that growth in the sawmill industry in the village of Hawkesbury between 1861 and 1881 dramatically altered the employment patterns of young males. In 1861, few boys worked outside the home. Twenty years later, more than fifty per cent of boys fifteen and sixteen years old were employed. Sixty-five per cent of male workers between the ages of ten and twenty-one were listed in the census as either mill hands or labourers. In contrast to Toronto and Hamilton, however, Hawkesbury's dependence on a single industry offered few females new opportunities. Female employment in Hawkesbury changed little between 1861 and 1881. The majority of employed girls continued to work as domestic servants. Only two girls worked in the sawmills in 1881.²¹

²⁰ Ian E. Davey, "Educational Reform and the Working Class: School Attendance in Hamilton, Ontario, 1851-1891," (Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1975), 165-79.

²¹ Chad Gaffield, "Schooling, the Economy, and Rural Society in Nineteenth-Century Ontario," in Joy Parr, ed, Childhood and Family in Canadian History (Toronto 1982), 76-77. For an analysis of child labour in Oshawa, see John Beirness, "Compulsory Schooling and Child Labour: Related Opposites, 1871-1910," (M.A. thesis, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1986).

Throughout the 1870s, the decline in both apprenticeship and the skilled trades, coupled with capitalist demands for lower production costs and the introduction of labour-saving machinery, created an increasing number of unskilled jobs for children. Although it is impossible to arrive at an exact count, it is likely that the actual number of child workers exceeded official figures. Children's positions always paid poorly, ranging roughly from one-third to one-half the wages of adult males, even in sectors such as the tobacco industry where youngsters proved to be reliable and skilful workers. In most cases, boys found work in a variety of trades while girls remained locked into female job ghettos. Large centres such as Toronto and Hamilton offered the greatest number of possibilities, while small towns such as Hawkesbury relied on a single dominant industry. In almost all cases, child labour was a question of economic necessity for the family economy. There is no evidence to suggest that such labour provided children with greater opportunities for social mobility.

Prior to the 1880s, only trade unionists and a handful of journalists displayed much interest in the growing problem of child labour in industry. An exception to the rule was Dr. Darby Bergin, the Conservative Member of Parliament for Cornwall. In 1880, Bergin introduced a private member's bill outlining a number of steps leading to improved working conditions for women and children. The bill received first reading, without debate, and quickly faded away. Bergin retreated, composed a more compre-

hensive bill, and tried again in 1881. Among other stipulations, this bill restricted the hours of labour of children between the ages of thirteen and eighteen and all female workers to between 6:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. and prohibited overtime employment of females and male workers under eighteen.

In January 1881, The Globe devoted an editorial to Dr. Bergin's bill. The article described the document as a "well-meant endeavour to protect children and young persons from the mental, moral, and physical deterioration consequent upon too early and arduous application to labour." Some details of the bill, however, served the interests of neither employer nor worker. On the subject of overtime, for example, The Globe could not agree that "a strong girl or lad of sixteen or seventeen would receive any injury from an additional hour or so of well-paid work occasionally." However, the newspaper supported "the absolute prohibition of the employment in factories of very young children; and the regulation of the employment of such children and young persons who are employed, the regulation being directed to securing that education shall proceed along with the work." Despite this interest in young workers, the editorial's underlying concern revealed itself in a single phrase: "The less the state interferes between the employers of labour and those of the work people who have attained full growth and intelligence the better."²² Undoubtedly, most Canadian businessmen agreed.

²² The Globe, 6 January 1881. For indications of the generally favourable reaction of trade unionists to Bergin's efforts, see National Archives of Canada (NAC), Records of the

In the House of Commons, Bergin received the same ambivalent support from his colleagues as he had from The Globe. The House discussed the second bill briefly and then withdrew it following a promise by Sir Hector Langevin that the government would appoint a Royal Commission "so as to be able next Session to meet Parliament, either with a Bill, or at all events to co-operate with the honourable gentleman when he brings this or a modified measure before Parliament."²³ Thus, Canadian workers did not receive a Factory Act in 1881; instead, they were handed the country's first official investigation of working conditions.

The government's two commissioners, William Lukes and A.H. Blackeby, clearly revealed the impetus behind their assignment: "The primary question giving rise to this enquiry is understood to be the employment of young children in mills and factories to such an extent as to warrant the Government in issuing a Commission in relation to the subject."²⁴ Lukes and Blackeby gathered testimony relating to the working conditions in 465 industrial establishments in Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island. Together, these places em-

Toronto Trades and Labour Council, MG28 I44, Minutes, 17 September 1881; 29 October 1881; and 18 November 1881; Microfilm Reel No. 305.

²³ Cited in Eugene Forsey, "A Note on the Dominion Factory Bills of the Eighteen-Eighties," The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, Vol. 13, No. 4, November 1947, 580-81.

²⁴ "Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Working of Mills and Factories of the Dominion, and the Labor Employed Therein," Canada, Sessional Papers, 1882, Vol. XV, No. 42, 8.

ployed 43,511 workers, among whom the commissioners counted 104 boys and sixty-nine girls under the age of ten, and 1,263 boys and 823 girls between the ages of ten and fourteen. Table 2-4 contains a more detailed breakdown of employment statistics.

Lukes and Blackeby uncovered working conditions that lent more than literary credibility to Blake's description of factories as "dark Satanic mills." The majority of establishments operated between forty-eight and seventy-five hours over a six-day week. At least eleven factories ran both day and night. Unguarded, crude machinery and open hoists and elevators posed an ever-present danger to workers' health and safety. Some young girls told stories of catching their hair in machinery. Safety devices were practically non-existent. Three-hundred-and-twenty-four factories had no means of extinguishing fire. Two-hundred-and ninety-seven establishments had only one stairwell. Many others had doors that opened inward only and were kept locked during working hours. Factories suffered from dampness, inadequate ventilation, a lack of proper sanitary facilities, and cramped conditions. "The rule, apparently, which is observed by employers," wrote the commissioners, "is, not how many hands should occupy a certain room or building, but how many can be got into it."²⁵ Workers foolish enough to raise issues of health and safety with their employers generally encountered indifference or the threat of dismissal.

²⁵ Ibid., 7.

Table 2-4

Children in Canadian Industry, 1882

	Children under 10		Children 10 to 14		All Workers
	male	female	male	female	
Clothing	--	--	--	23	4,579
Confectionery and Biscuits	--	--	27	--	989
Cotton Mills	49	40	193	204	4,021
Footwear	9	--	123	21	5,690
Foundries	--	--	31	--	3,740
Furniture	--	--	22	--	1,794
Glass and Pottery	--	--	103	1	1,241
Iron Items	4	--	204	18	4,541
Knitting	--	--	35	28	1,280
Paper Items	--	--	10	32	1,224
Pianos and Organs	--	--	2	--	592
Pulp and Paper	--	--	11	--	339
Rope, Flax, and Brushes	--	--	22	6	631
Sugar Refineries	--	--	--	--	885
Tobacco and Cigars	14	9	147	99	3,205

Table 2-4 (Continued)

	Children under 10		Children 10 to 14		All Workers
	male	female	male	female	
Wooden Items	10	18	118	254	2,992
Woolen Mills	--	--	94	52	2,771
Miscellaneous	18	2	121	85	2,997
	—	—	—	—	—
Total	104	69	1,263	823	43,511

Source: "Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Working of Mills and Factories of the Dominion, and the Labor Employed Therein," Canada, Sessional Papers, 1882, Vol. XV, No. 42, 10-13.

The most striking evidence compiled by Lukes and Blackeby concerned the employment of children, a practice the commissioners claimed to be on the increase, the supply being unequal to the demand. Youngsters commonly worked the same hours as adults, including overtime, although they received a fraction of the adult male wage. Many children worked directly for other employees who wanted to increase their production, and therefore their pay, under the piece-work system. In some such instances, youngsters worked free of charge for their own parents. As a cost-saving measure, employers frequently placed untrained boys in charge of dangerous steam engines and boilers. Many lads came to these positions through advertisements placed in local newspapers. The investigators frequently found it difficult to determine the ages of child workers. Employers kept no records and showed little interest in the matter. Some children claimed not to know their age. Others apparently lied to the commissioners out of fear of losing their jobs. When they asked the children why they worked, the investigators heard answers such as: "Having no father, had to help mother get a living," and "Would rather work than go to school."²⁶ Lukes and Blackeby expressed their opinion that some of these youngsters shielded greedy parents who wanted extra income, or idle parents who lived off the earnings of their children.

Many factory owners viewed the Lukes-Blackeby commission as an unwarranted intrusion into the world of laissez-faire

²⁶ Ibid., 2.

capitalism. "In some instances," the investigators reported, "we were met with the reply, 'That they knew their own business, and that Governments should not dictate whom they should employ, or interfere in matters of trade.'"²⁷ Factory owners defended the practice of employing children on the grounds that youngsters performed light duties that adults could not practicably carry out and that it would be unfair for some employers to cease using children while others continued to take advantage of their cheap labour. The latter excuse, of course, cuts closer to the economic truth and brings into question the validity of the first explanation. At the heart of the employers' position lay their fundamental objection to government intervention. Lukes and Blackeby recorded: "Most of the employers of labor under fourteen years of age have stated to your Commissioners that they would rather discontinue the employment of such labor than submit to the obligations imposed by [Bergin's bill]. If education be not enforced the question arises whether the children are not better cared for by spending a portion at least of their time at work, rather than wasting it on the public streets."²⁸ The latter statement reflected some employers' offer to abandon child labour if they could be certain that the children would attend school. In this area, however, the owners' interest lay in improving the capabilities, not the conditions, of their young workers. Lukes

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid., 3.

and Blackeby observed: "A demand is gaining for intelligent and educated labor in our mills and factories."²⁹

The commissioners also heard from the Legislative Committee of the Toronto Trades and Labour Council. This body submitted a list of seven recommendations for improved working conditions, two of which dealt specifically with children. One clause resolved that "the hours of labour for women and children be limited to nine per day, and not under any circumstances to exceed that amount." The other one called for the "total prohibition of children under twelve years of age from being employed in factories."³⁰ Although part of the unionists' concern rose out of a humanitarian urge to secure for their children better conditions and more promising futures, economic factors played a major role in determining their stand. By the 1880s, adult workers were well aware of the threat to job security and wages posed by child labour.

Labour newspapers of the day also expressed the views of trade unionists. Toronto's Trades Union Advocate referred to child labour as slavery and objected to the pernicious physical, mental, and social influences industrial work imposed on youngsters. Child workers "become prematurely old and useless," the paper bewailed.³¹ The editors knew where to lay the blame: "The greedy, selfish employers, who do not give parents enough wages

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 16.

³¹ Trades Union Advocate, 11 May 1882.

to live upon, and consequently the child has to supplement the income that should be given the parent....What does it matter to them how many find premature graves, so long as their bank account grows larger and their businesses more profitable?"³²

On one occasion the paper of the Knights of Labor, The Palladium of Labor, asserted: "The labor of young children is the greatest enemy that working men ought to fear. If a man puts his child to work when the child is of school age he puts his child's labor in direct competition with his own."³³

Confirming what many trade unionists already recognized, the Lukes-Blackeby Commission unequivocally demonstrated that the employment of children in factories and mills constituted a central feature of Canada's industrial economy. Although youngsters did not compose an overwhelming portion of the work force, they exerted a significant influence on the labour market, the family economy, and the operation of industry. In most instances, children toiled under the same dangerous and demanding conditions as adult workers, although they earned only one-third to one-half the wages. Nonetheless, children's earnings represented important and sometimes essential contributions to families that could not meet the costs of urban-industrial life on the wages of their adult members alone. On occasion, the commission identified avaricious parents and an unappealing public school system as other forces behind child labour. Guided by the spirit of

³² Ibid., 17 August 1882.

³³ Palladium of Labor, 16 May 1885.

free enterprise, employers hired youngsters primarily because of the savings they represented in the form of low wages. This last point reduces the issue to one major conclusion: child labour was the natural and logical result of an unregulated economic system that promised the greatest return to the entrepreneur who could produce the most at the lowest possible cost to himself.

On the heels of the Lukes-Blackeby report, and facing mounting pressure from organized labour, the Conservative government introduced a Factory Bill in the Senate. This document limited working hours to ten per day or sixty per week for employees between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. The bill also prohibited the employment of children under ten years of age and restricted youngsters between ten and thirteen to a maximum thirty hours of work per week.³⁴ Before members could discuss the merits of this bill, however, a vigorous constitutional debate erupted. Some politicians argued that the bill fell under provincial jurisdiction as a matter of property and civil rights; others maintained that the federal government's responsibility for peace, order, and good government took precedence.³⁵ Jurisdictional disputes aside, Canadian businessmen knew where they stood on the question and flooded the government

³⁴ Canada, Senate, Debates, 18 April 1882, 352-53.

³⁵ Ibid., 353, 367, and 368. See also The Globe, 20 March 1883; and 9 April 1883.

with "a very considerable amount of correspondence" resulting in the withdrawal of the bill.³⁶

Signalling a second round of discussions on this matter, Sir Leonard Tilley introduced a revised bill in the House of Commons in April 1883, but shortly withdrew it for amendment.³⁷ Another version surfaced during 1884 only to be withdrawn without debate. Once again, representations by Canadian businessmen appear to be behind the bill's disappearance. In 1885, the persistent and probably exasperated Dr. Bergin introduced another private member's bill, pleading that "it may not be said of Canada as it was of England, that wheels of her industry are driven by the heart throbs of her little children."³⁸ Bergin withdrew the bill after second reading when some members complained that it conflicted with provincial jurisdiction in the area of education. A revised version reached second reading but lost its priority and faded away. Bergin tried once again in 1886 but failed at first reading.³⁹ Thus, after one royal commission, three government bills, and four private member's bills, Canada still lacked a national Factory Act.

Ontario workers, however, could look elsewhere for help. In March 1884, the Ontario government, under the leadership of

³⁶ Forsey, "A Note on the Dominion Factory Bills," 582. See also The Globe, 28 April 1883; 30 April 1883; and 23 May 1883.

³⁷ Canada, House of Commons, Debates, 26 April 1883.

³⁸ Canada, House of Commons, Debates, 1 April 1885, 873.

³⁹ Forsey, "A Note on the Dominion Factory Bills," 583.

Liberal Premier Oliver Mowat, passed "An Act for the Protection of Persons Employed in Factories."⁴⁰ Mowat's act drew on both British legislation and the previous federal bills, although it did not adopt the strongest available clauses in all cases. Ontario's Lieutenant-Governor immediately questioned the validity of the act and referred it to the Supreme Court for a ruling. Mowat waited as the debate dragged on, but no final answer appeared. Finally, in 1886, under pressure from the TLC, Mowat introduced the act into law on the eve of a provincial election.⁴¹ Its validity went unchallenged.

The Ontario Factories' Act of 1884 contained forty-one clauses devoted to the "safety, health and well-being of operatives employed in and about factories and like places within Ontario." The act applied only to establishments that employed more than twenty workers and specifically exempted work performed by family members in their home. The legislation provided general guidelines dealing with the health, comfort, and safety of all workers, but concentrated primarily on the conditions of women and children. The act forbade the employment of boys under the age of twelve and girls younger than fourteen. No male under fourteen or female of any age was allowed to work more than ten hours per day or sixty hours per week, unless a half-holiday on Saturday compensated for longer hours on week days. Children

⁴⁰ Ontario, Statutes, 1884, Chapter 39.

⁴¹ Toronto Trades and Labour Council, Minutes, 1 October 1886. See also The Palladium of Labor, 20 March 1886; 2 October 1886; and 6 November 1886.

and women were not allowed to clean machinery while in motion. Employers of boys between the ages of twelve and fourteen were required to obtain from parents or guardians signed certificates declaring the lad's age. The legislation also instructed employers to keep records of their child and female workers and to report all deaths due to accidents and injuries that kept employees off the job more than six days.

Enforcement of the act fell into the hands of three government-appointed inspectors. An employer found guilty of violating the clauses referring to women and children could be imprisoned up to six months or fined a maximum of \$100.00. The period of imprisonment could be lengthened to twelve months and the fine increased to \$500.00 for employers found in general violation of matters affecting the health and safety of any worker. Workers who violated the act were also subject to punishment. Parents who allowed their children to work illegally could be imprisoned up to three months or fined a maximum of \$50.00. One significant clause in the act allowed inspectors to waive most of the general regulations, including the hours of work of children and women, when factories encountered problems due to mechanical failure or when the "customs or exigencies of certain trades" made it difficult for employers to abide by the law.

It was not long before certain employers began to argue that the "customs and exigencies" of their trade would not allow easy compliance with the act. Responding to appeals from representatives of the canning industry, and acting on the advice of the

inspectors, the government signalled its first retreat in April 1887 with the passage of the following amendment to the Factories' Act: "Notwithstanding anything in this Act contained, boys under twelve years of age, and girls under fourteen years of age may be employed during the months of July, August and September in any year in such gathering in and other preparation of fruits or vegetables for canning purposes as may be required to be done prior to the operation of cooking or other process of that nature requisite in connection with the canning of fruits or vegetables."⁴² The logic of the amendment rested on the premise that the canning industry operated under unusually strict seasonal restraints which, if disregarded, would result in the spoilage of produce.

In one of the first reports filed under the act, one inspector observed that "in smaller establishments there was generally greater need of inspection than in the larger ones as regards health, safety, employment of children and hours of labour."⁴³ Another inspector reported coming across approximately twenty children in one saw mill, some as young as nine years old, all of whom were personally employed by other workers.⁴⁴ In the latter situation, both employers and workers attempted to circumvent the law by claiming that these children

⁴² Ontario, Statutes, 1887, Chapter 35.

⁴³ "Second Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1889, Vol. XXII, Part 6, No. 35, 5.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 26-27.

were not in the direct employ of the factory. In response to these early returns, and some pressure from trade unionists, the Ontario Legislature passed a second set of amendments to the Factories' Act in March 1889.⁴⁵ The revised act covered establishments employing more than five workers and took special care to include personal helpers under its jurisdiction. Although this change more than tripled the number of establishments coming under the act, there was no corresponding increase in the number of inspectors. The amendment also extended the special exemption granted to the canning industry to include the month of October and the process of desiccating. The growing tentacles of government bureaucracy stretched through this amendment with the inclusion of several model forms for recording employment statistics, hours of labour, power capacity of factories, and accidents.

The Ontario Factories' Act revealed both the strengths and weaknesses of early attempts by government to regulate workplace relations. On the positive side, the act called attention to the harsh conditions under which most workers toiled and treated severe mistreatment of employees as a punishable offense. The legislation also recognized the need for some government intervention in the workplace and provided for the compilation of valuable employment data. On the negative side, the act was riddled with loopholes, omissions, and lack of enforcement capability. The canning industry demonstrated how easy it was to

⁴⁵ Ontario, Statutes, 1889, Chapter 43.

gain exemption from certain specifications of the act. The government appointed only three inspectors to enforce the law, a ludicrously small number especially in view of the amendment of 1889 that drastically increased their jurisdiction. Although the legislation made special provisions for the protection of children and women, an employer could continue to exploit male adult workers mercilessly without contravening the act. The law's greatest weakness, however, lay in its failure to come to grips with the social and economic forces responsible for the circumstances of workers and their families. The act made no reference to wages or standards of living and made no attempt to tie restrictions on child labour to education or skill-training. Although the act aimed at reducing child labour, it failed to analyze the forces that compelled children to join the work force.

Predictably, trade unionists reacted with mixed emotions to the legislation. While all agreed that Mowat's act was better than none, union spokesmen regretted its many shortcomings. The Toronto Trades and Labour Council, for example, wanted to see the minimum working age set at fourteen, age certificates required for workers fourteen to seventeen, children under fifteen compelled to attend school at least twenty weeks per year, and the working hours of children and women reduced to nine per day, fifty-four per week.⁴⁶ In 1889, the TLC called on the Ontario government to appoint female factory inspectors. Part of the

⁴⁶ The Globe, 25 March 1884, 4.

TLC's reasoning rested on the belief that "in Toronto at any rate there were a large number of children employed under age, and this was specially a case where the services of a woman would be of the utmost value."⁴⁷ In 1898, the TLC would publish a sixteen-point "Platform of Principles." Point eleven called for the abolition of "all child labour by children under fourteen years of age, and of female labour in all branches of industrial life such as mines, factories, workshops, etc."⁴⁸

Despite their misgivings, trade-union leaders in Ontario praised Mowat and the Liberal Party for having passed the Factories' Act into law. Conservative Prime Minister John A. Macdonald looked on with concern. But Macdonald was not one to stand still as the political ground shifted beneath his feet. Facing a general election in 1887, and conscious of the increased number of working-class voters that had resulted from suffrage acts passed at both the federal and provincial levels in the mid-1880s, Macdonald announced his government's intention "to issue a Royal Commission on which the working classes shall be fully represented as commissioners, for the purpose of enquiring into and reporting on all questions arising out of the conflict of labor and capital."⁴⁹ Sceptics of Macdonald's true intentions could be

⁴⁷ Forsey, Trade Unions in Canada, 445.

⁴⁸ Cited in Desmond Morton with Terry Copp, Working People: An Illustrated History of the Canadian Labour Movement (Ottawa 1984), 61.

⁴⁹ Cited in Greg Kealey, ed, Canada Investigates Industrialism: The Royal Commission on the Relations of Labor and Capital, 1889 (Toronto 1973), ix.

forgiven their laughter when the Prime Minister almost appointed a dead man to the commission, but the final selection for the thirteen-member enquiry did include a number of trade-union representatives, although all had well-established Conservative leanings. Despite these apparently safe choices, all did not run smoothly for the commission. After visits to thirty-six towns and cities in Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, seven months of hearings involving approximately 1,800 witnesses, and a great deal of internal bickering, the investigators broke into two groups. Five members whose basic sympathies lay with the business class submitted a minority report in February 1889. The remaining eight members, displaying a greater affinity for labour, turned in their report in April of the same year.

The minority report contended that the conditions of workers had greatly improved over the last ten years, especially for those circumspect individuals who had shown the ability to "exercise reasonable prudence and economy."⁵⁰ Despite this optimistic outlook, the authors admitted that many workers continued to toil long hours for low pay under dangerous and impersonal conditions over which they exercised virtually no control. On the subject of child labour, the commissioners wrote: "The darkest pages in the testimony which follows are those recording the beating and imprisonment of children employed in factories."⁵¹ This statement referred specifically to the

⁵⁰ First Report, Royal Labor Commission, 8.

⁵¹ Ibid., 10.

Fortier cigar factory in Montreal where a brutal foreman had beaten child workers and incarcerated them in a coal cellar, known to the children as "the black hole." But in numerous other cases the investigators discovered children of "tender years" performing back-breaking labour up to fifteen hours a day in return for a few pennies. The commissioners found children as young as eight working in cotton, glass, and tobacco factories. Some boys as young as ten, unqualified to tend the machinery under their control, daily faced the risk of permanent injury. The commissioners drew special attention to the conditions of young girls: "Medical testimony proves that girls, when approaching womanhood cannot be employed at severe or long-continued work without serious danger to their health, and the evil effects may follow them throughout their lives."⁵² Referring to the "considerable numbers" of children around ten years old found working in the tobacco industry, the investigators commented: "The evil in these instances was accentuated by the evident fact that the tobacco had stunted the growth of the witnesses and poisoned their blood. They were undersized, sallow and listless, wholly without the bright vivacity and rosy hue of health which should animate and adorn children."⁵³ True to the reform tradition, the commissioners' final comments on these children exhibited concern for their personal welfare all the while keeping one eye firmly focussed on

52 Ibid., 36.

53 Ibid.

the future of society: "This injures the health, stunts the growth and prevents the proper education of such children, so that they cannot become healthy men and women or intelligent citizens."⁵⁴

In the concluding pages of the First Report, commissioner J. Alfred Clark wrote: "The employment of children is one of the most important subjects which can commend themselves to the attention of legislative bodies."⁵⁵ Accordingly, the five authors recommended that the government take the following steps: limit the working hours of children and women to ten per day and fifty-four per week; forbid factories, mills, and mines to employ children under fourteen years of age; disallow child labour at night, or prior to 7:00 a.m. from 1 December to 31 March; punish employers who beat or imprison child workers; allow only skilled workers to operate dangerous machinery; introduce female factory inspectors; and allow child and female workers to be supervised by women if possible.

The Second Report of the Royal Commission, composed primarily by leading trade unionists, painted an even bleaker picture of workers' experiences at work and at home. This report pointed out the high cost of living, especially in regard to accommodation, and stressed the insecurity that plagued all working-class families as a result of sickness, death, and the threat of unemployment. Existing legislation, these com-

⁵⁴ Ibid., 10.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 36.

missioners found, offered little protection to workers. Drawing special attention to the conditions of child and female workers, the report pointed out that children and women commonly worked in industries with the longest hours and earned a fraction of the adult male wage. A Cornwall cotton mill paid boys fifteen cents a day. Boys in a Hamilton broom-making firm earned thirty-two cents a day. A brass-finishing factory in Windsor paid boys \$2.50 per week, equivalent to the daily earnings of its adult male workers. The authors strongly condemned employers who fined child and female workers for lateness or poor workmanship, a practice more easily resisted by male workers. "Of all the mean pitiless exactions which labor has to suffer from, this is the vilest," fumed the commissioners.⁵⁶ The authors unambiguously spelled out what they saw as the motive behind the hiring practices of these firms: "To arrive at the greatest results for the smallest expenditure the mills and factories are filled with women and children, to the practical exclusion of adult males. The reason for this is obvious. Females and children may be counted upon to work for small wages, to submit to petty and exasperating exactions, and to work uncomplainingly for long hours."⁵⁷

The second report placed a high priority on the education of young workers. The commissioners admitted that Canada had an

⁵⁶ Canada, Second Report of the Royal Commission on the Relations of Capital and Labor in Canada (Ottawa 1889), 90.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 87.

"excellent system of education" but regretted that economic responsibilities to their families and lack of funds for school supplies prevented many working-class children from attending school regularly. The commissioners also argued that the school system should offer more technical courses to allow future workers to keep pace with changing technology. Education should train a student "to use his hand, his mind, and his eye together, and so fit him in after life to adapt himself to any mechanical calling he may adopt."⁵⁸ In view of the defunct apprenticeship system, the report recommended the opening of technical schools offering both day and night courses of a mechanical nature, such as wood-working for boys and sewing for girls. Despite their differences with the authors of the First Report, the second group also adhered to the reform belief that public education held the key to the creation of an upstanding citizenship: "So long as [child labour] is allowed to continue," wrote the commissioners, "the amount of education necessary to fit these children to become useful members of society cannot possibly be acquired."⁵⁹

In other areas of concern to children and women, the second report put forward recommendations very similar to the minority group, including: the prohibition of employment of children under fourteen; the restriction of the hours of labour of children and women to ten per day and fifty-four per week, with no child or

⁵⁸ Ibid., 84.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 79.

woman required to start work prior to 7:00 a.m.; the prohibition of night work for anyone under sixteen; an end to the employers' practice of fining employees; and the use of only qualified workers on dangerous machinery.

In addition to two reports, the royal commission produced five thick volumes of testimony of workers, employers, trade unionists, reformers, and other observers of labour and capital. For the first time in Canadian history, workers were invited to add their voices to the public record, although many did so anonymously fearing disciplinary action at the hands of their employers. Above all, the testimony provides an interior view of the nineteenth-century workplace available from few other sources. Comments on child labour occupy a substantial amount of space in the transcript and provide the commission with its most dramatic and moving testimony.

Workers had a great deal to say about the children with whom they shared the workplace. Printer Stewart J. Dunlop testified that large numbers of boys worked in his office. Lads between the age of ten and twelve ran messages while those thirteen and fourteen worked directly in printing, sometimes on dangerous machinery. None of these boys had signed a contract or indenture with the employer.⁶⁰ George S. Hope, a woodworker from Chatham, complained that the introduction of machinery had deskilled his trade to the point that "boys take the place of men." Hope added

⁶⁰ Canada, Royal Commission on the Relations of Capital and Labor in Canada (Royal Labor Commission) (Ottawa 1889), Ontario evidence, 36-51.

that untrained boys posed a hazard to others when they operated dangerous machinery and developed few skills in the process.⁶¹ Knight of Labor John Wilkins described the desperate situation of young girls from the country who worked in knitting mills for twenty-five cents per day, a large portion of which went towards their board.⁶² John H. Lumsden, a printer, knew of girls nine years of age who worked on piece work in box factories and earned as little as three dollars for a week of ten-hour days plus Saturday morning.⁶³ Printer W.A. Clarke from London registered his opinion that employers hired young girls instead of boys or adults because they worked for lower wages, were too timid to ask for raises, could be easily replaced by other girls, and marriage usually swept them away before they developed enough confidence to become a problem.⁶⁴

An overwhelming number of workers linked the problem of child labour to the decline of apprenticeship. Ottawa printer Alexander Short explained:

We are injured a great deal in this city by boys. It is one of the greatest injuries to the printing business that I know of. Boys are taken into the city printing offices without any regard to fitness to learn the trade....We find boys come into a printing office who can not do so much as to spell simple words correctly. They are first employed in sweeping out the offices and running of errands. They receive what education they get in the printing office, and at the

61 Ibid., 461-65.

62 Ibid., 1038-41.

63 Ibid., 108-13.

64 Ibid., 594-600.

end of their five years' apprenticeship we find them to be incompetent workmen.⁶⁵

John Falconer, a Toronto carpenter, reported that young boys were abandoning their apprenticeships in large numbers and taking up waged labour.⁶⁶ Thomas Crowley, a journeyman shoemaker from Windsor, stated that no young boys were learning his trade. When confronted with the commissioner's question, "I suppose in a short time shoemaking will die out?," the cobbler sagely replied: "Well, the present race of shoemakers will die out."⁶⁷ Ottawa printer David Tassé revealed that some parents who wanted, or needed, the extra income provided by working children also encouraged their offspring to forgo apprenticeship and accept waged labour immediately. "Neither the bosses nor the parents wish to indenture them in our trade," claimed Tassé.⁶⁸

All of the above workers, and scores of others, expressed a desire to return to the traditional apprenticeship system. Many skilled workers believed that this was the only way to restore quality workmanship, control the size of the labour force, and guarantee young workers a secure future. Most of the speakers, however, were astute enough to realize that employers would be reluctant to surrender the cheap labour force they had discovered. Barring a return to apprenticeship, many workers called

65 Ibid., 1157.

66 Ibid., 5.

67 Ibid., 430-34.

68 Ibid., 1157-58.

for the introduction of technical education to provide proper skill-training and employment opportunities for youngsters.

Employers also provided insights into the practice of child labour. George Tuckett, a tobacco manufacturer from Hamilton, employed between 120 and 150 boys and girls out of a total work force of 450. When asked if it was necessary to use children in this trade, he replied: "Yes; in order to strip the tobacco; the older hands would not be so nimble." Tuckett also stated that he was often approached by widows seeking employment for their children because they would not attend school and would be better off at work than roaming the street.⁶⁹ William Birkett, secretary-treasurer of the Dundas Cotton Mills in Hamilton, testified that he, too, was frequently accosted by parents anxious to find employment for their children. Birkett elaborated: "It would be a great grievance to some parents if we refused to employ their children. Their work is a great assistance to them." Belabouring the point even further, Birkett maintained that these youngsters were better off working in his warm mill in winter than freezing in their homes.⁷⁰ William Willson, manager of the Kingston Cotton Company, employed forty-eight girls and thirty-four boys out of a predominantly female work force of 208. Willson believed that the low wages he paid his girls were

⁶⁹ Ibid., 743-46.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 895-99.

justified on the grounds that most of them belonged to families that could depend on other members to earn more.⁷¹

On occasion, the commissioners provided working children with the opportunity to tell their own story, although only a few entered their names on the roll. Fourteen-year-old James Sharkey of Hamilton, the son of a labourer, began work as a tailor's messenger at the age of ten or eleven before becoming a tobacco-stemmer at Tuckett & Sons. Sharkey put in ten hours a day and took home \$3.50 at the end of the week, which he dutifully handed over to his parents.⁷² A thirteen-year-old Ottawa lad told of earning forty-five cents per day working 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on weekdays and 6:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays in a match factory. Prior to this, the boy had driven horses and worked in Booth's sawmill where he had maimed his hand by grabbing onto an unguarded saw as he plunged into a hole.⁷³ Another young Ottawa lad, who claimed not to know his age, carried and loaded planks at a box factory. The boy was not certain how much he earned, explaining that he had never been told. When the commissioners asked, "Wouldn't you like better to go to school?," the lad responded: "It's all the same to me."⁷⁴

One recurring theme that winds its way through the testimony warrants special attention: the astoundingly dangerous conditions

71 Ibid., 971-74.

72 Ibid., 807-08.

73 Ibid., 1149-50.

74 Ibid., 1150.

faced by many working children. Eighteen-year-old Joseph Lefebvre of Ottawa described how at the age of twelve he had lost an arm and a leg under the axle of a wheel while working in a mill. Lefebvre had started his career at the mill at the age of nine. But this lad was a survivor, and continued to carry his stepfather's meal to the mill at the dinner hour.⁷⁵ Another Ottawa boy, John Gale, told of losing his arm in a sawmill accident at the age of eleven or twelve while working for a subcontractor. Along with a number of other boys his age, Gale had been paid twenty-five cents a day to remove blocks of wood as they fell from the circular saw.⁷⁶ Employers, of course, put forward their own explanations for the high number of accidents in their establishments. Following the death of a young boy in his factory, Joseph Firstbrook, a Toronto box manufacturer, offered a typical reply: "All the accidents in our factory have been due either to carelessness or to parties interfering with machines who have no business to do so."⁷⁷ St. Catharines printer W.R. James presented a more insightful explanation for the high incidence of accidents among young workers. Children, James expounded, "are compelled to work to support a family. The first job which turns up they are obliged to take it. After they

⁷⁵ Ibid., 1135-37.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 1134-35.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 313.

have run a machine for a little while they think they are masters of it, but after a while the machine masters them."⁷⁸

The two reports of the Royal Commission, along with the testimony of witnesses, paint a vivid picture of the nature and extent of child labour in nineteenth-century industrial Ontario. Significant numbers of children ranging in age from eight to fifteen toiled long hours under dangerous conditions for wages well below the adult male level. Moreover, young workers were frequently subjected to discipline and fines which exacting employers would only hesitatingly apply to adult male workers. Existing legislation provided little relief. Children's labour ranged from their vital roles as cigar makers to their secondary positions as part-time workers and personal helpers. In return for their labour, children could expect little in the form of skill-training or opportunities for social mobility. In addition to everything else, working girls suffered under the same sexist division of labour that had oppressed their older sisters and mothers for generations.

A vast majority of children who worked full or part time did so because present or threatening poverty forced their families to draw on the wage-earning capacity of several members to meet the material demands of urban life. Secondary reasons included children's own preference to earn a few dollars rather than sit in a boring classroom and their parents' desire to have them do something more useful and restraining than running wild on the

⁷⁸ Ibid., 930-34.

street. Employers' reasons for hiring children were clear and simple: youngsters provided a cheap and docile labour force and represented a wise investment according to the questionable but logical principles of a free-market economy. The extent to which this practice depressed general wages thus placing even greater stress on the family economy bothered employers little, if at all.

Skilled workers offered the most telling insights into the significance of child labour in industry, even though they added to the problem themselves by occasionally hiring youngsters as personal helpers. Literally hundreds of craftsmen viewed the increasing number of young workers in their midst as a direct threat to their wages, status, and job security. Skilled workers also complained of the decline in craftsmanship that had resulted from the increased employment of young workers and the dangerous conditions created by unqualified machine-tenders. The youngest, least-skilled members of the work force came to symbolize the devastating effect of industrial capitalism on traditional crafts. Most workers recognized that it was their employers' shady manipulation of the apprenticeship system, not the children or their families, that had created the current crisis in the workplace. Unfortunately, the impulsive desire to return to the world of masters and apprentices was as outdated as the artisan's shop. Consequently, many workers began to share the general reform view that only public education could ensure society's individual and collective welfare.

Aside from the declaration of Labour Day as a legal holiday in 1894, and a brief scandal surrounding the treatment of children at the Fortier cigar factory, the Royal Commission on the Relations of Capital and Labor registered faint impact. Adults and children continued to labour in factories and mills under dangerous and demanding conditions. The Ontario government observed the operation of industry through the eyes of three male factory inspectors. Armed with copies of the Ontario Factories' Act and a fistful of government forms, Robert Barber, James R. Brown, and O.A. Rocque began their preliminary rounds in 1887-88. In 1895, under pressure from trade unionists and reform groups such as the NCWC, which claimed that many girls and women were reluctant to speak with the male inspectors,⁷⁹ the government appointed Margaret Carlyle female factory inspector. In 1904, a second woman, Annie Brown, joined the team. By 1907, following a few personnel changes and additions, the inspectorate consisted of seven men and two women. Throughout the entire period under study, the number of factory inspectors proved woefully inadequate for a proper application of the Factories' Act.

Despite their small number, the factory inspectors annually filed detailed reports on the state of industry in Ontario. All the major problems of the workplace that had been identified by earlier investigations continued to plague the province's factories and mills. Persistent coaxing by inspectors occasionally

⁷⁹ Local Council of Women of Toronto, First Annual Report (Toronto 1894), 5.

resulted in improved conditions in a particular factory, but this occurred in only a small number of cases. Almost every report the inspectors filed contained a special section that dealt exclusively with the problem of child labour. Every inspector discovered some under-age children and numerous more barely old enough to work legally in almost all major industrial sectors. Cotton mills, woolen mills, cigar factories, knitting works, and mica factories counted among the worst offenders. Employers continued to subject child workers to harsh discipline. In one case, a young girl at the end of her first two weeks of work owed her employer fifty cents above her wages as a result of fines.⁸⁰ The inspectors uncovered literally hundreds of violations of the Factories' Act.

The factory inspectors' reports also leave the impression that industrial work for children remained as dangerous in the 1890s and early 1900s as it had been in the previous two decades. Year after year, youngsters accounted for a small but significant share of accidents on the job. Circular saws and shapers, power presses, open shafts, and unguarded pulleys created particularly hazardous situations. In most cases, employers continued to claim that workers' carelessness, not dangerous machinery, caused accidents. In 1890, eleven-year-old G. Stevenson, an employee of the Toronto Terra Cotta Company outside of Milton, died instantly

⁸⁰ "Fifth Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1893, Vol. XXV, Part VII, No. 25, 13.

when he fell into a mixer.⁸¹ In Marmora, in 1893, a metal bolt thrown from a lathe bolting machine knocked the life out of thirteen-year-old Willie Suthworth. The unlucky lad had been hired privately by another worker.⁸² Thomas Peats of Wallaceburg, a young worker whose age was not known, was operating a horse-drawn lorry when the driving lines caught onto a revolving shaft. "He was entangled in the lines and was instantly killed and literally torn to pieces," wrote the inspector, who had learned of the accident only after reading about it in the local newspaper.⁸³ The accident reports filed by the inspectors take on even greater importance when it is realized that employers reported only a minority of cases. In 1888, Robert Barber stated that he had learned of fifty accidents in his area, although only five had been reported to him.⁸⁴ In another report, Barber estimated that the number of accidents reported would triple if the law required employers to report injuries that kept employees

81 "Third Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1891, Vol. XXIII, Part VII, No. 60, 27.

82 "Sixth Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1894, Vol. XXVI, Part VIII, No. 42, 22.

83 "Eleventh Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1898-99, Vol. XXXI, Part VII, No. 30, 8.

84 "First Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1889, Vol. XXI, Part V, No. 39, 7.

off work more than two days, rather than six, as stipulated by the Factories' Act.⁸⁵

Although it was not the most dangerous industry in which children worked, the fruit and vegetable desiccating and canning business attracted the close attention of the inspectors because of the special exemptions it enjoyed under the Factories' Act. Workers in this industry earned between six and twelve dollars on piece work over a sixty-hour week. Inspector Arthur Holmes reported that employers routinely hired entire families during the busy season, including many ethnic groups that had been enticed to travel to Canada from the United States. Accommodation provided for out-of-town families usually consisted of unfurnished storage sheds located next to the workplace. Holmes contended that the special section of the Factories' Act referring to this industry was "rather broad, and...very much abused." He elaborated: "I have seen them as young as two years of age, sitting all day on a stool, so as to give the mother a chance to earn a day's wages....In all cases a purely financial reason exists. If the child of five years of age can make fifteen cents a day, then the mother is satisfied for them to remain ten hours a day or longer if required."⁸⁶ Inspector Margaret

⁸⁵ "Ninth Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1897, Vol. XXIX, Part VII, No. 28, 9.

⁸⁶ "Seventeenth Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1905, Vol. XXXVII, Part II, No. 8, 41.

Carlyle provided a striking description of this trade and added a perceptive comment on the employers and the law:

The overcrowded, unventilated, and in many cases unsanitary state of the work-places, the puddles of dirty water on the floor, the clouds of steam in the boiling room, the long hours of standing in boots and clothes made wringing wet by the paltry arrangement of the tubs and water supplies, also the very fact that the employers are legally free to make their employees work without limit, to crowd any number of them into one room make them disinclined to put thought and capital into improving the arrangements.⁸⁷

When the factory inspectors directly confronted employers over the issue of child labour, they heard as wide a variety of responses as there were types of factories in Ontario. One thing that most owners had in common, however, was that they were, in the words of inspector Barber, almost "entirely ignorant of the requirements of the Factories' Act."⁸⁸ As late as 1904, for example, some factory owners believed that it was legal to hire under-age children during the summer months or with a special release certificate signed by a teacher.⁸⁹ A small number of employers openly defied the inspectors, usually on the grounds that government had no right to interfere in the affairs of business. In one instance, one determined owner hid his under-age workers in a packing case while inspector Brown made the rounds of the factory. In a scene reminiscent of the Keystone Cops, when Brown walked up to the second level of the factory,

⁸⁷ Ibid., 36

⁸⁸ "First Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," 6.

⁸⁹ "Seventeenth Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," 34.

the youngsters descended on the hoist.⁹⁰ Other employers admitted that child labour represented a good investment for their companies but promised to observe the act if their competitors were forced to comply. Although a majority of factory owners assured the inspectors that they would adhere to the regulations, return visits frequently exposed the emptiness of these promises.

Inspectors consistently had trouble establishing the true ages of young workers. Many working-class parents neglected to register the birth of their children, thus making it difficult for the inspectors to document their ages. In one instance, James Brown investigated 100 child workers and discovered that only twenty-five had been legally registered at birth.⁹¹ In 1900, Brown discovered that only eight of fifty-three age certificates matched with the records of the Registrar-General.⁹² This problem proved especially troublesome in the case of immigrant families. The inspectors also expressed their belief that parents regularly falsified age certificates and prompted children to lie to employers. Sensing a way of passing the buck, few employers objected. Inspector Carlyle worried about the effects of such a practice: "Much of the most serious

⁹⁰ Royal Labor Commission, Ontario evidence, testimony of James Brown, 319.

⁹¹ "First Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," 91.

⁹² "Thirteenth Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1901, Vol. XXXIII, Part II, No. 8, 12.

opposition to the carrying out of the laws has come from the working people themselves. They force their children into the workshops or mills, and will even bear false witness as to their age, thus giving them their first lesson in deceit and falsehood."⁹³ Some employers did not request age certificates at all, or hired children on the promise that the document would eventually be supplied. In one such latter case, a young boy by the name of Wellington Lawrence falsely claimed to be the proper age for employment and was allowed to start work at the Canada Cycle-Motor Company in Toronto on the promise that he would later have his parents fill out an age certificate. It mattered little in the long-run that the lad's parents had not even granted him permission to seek work, for within a few hours young Wellington Lawrence's head was crushed by an elevator.⁹⁴ The inspector did not bring charges against the employer despite the flagrant violation of the law.

When children did work with the permission of their parents, it was almost always because the financial circumstances of their families demanded extra income. Desperate parents frequently approached factory inspectors and asked for special permission to allow their under-age children to accept employment. Apparently

⁹³ "Tenth Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1897-98, Vol. XXX, Part VI, No. 27, 19.

⁹⁴ "Fifteenth Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1903, Vol. XXXV, Part II, No. 8, 19. See also Michael J. Piva, The Condition of the Working Class in Toronto, 1900-1921 (Ottawa 1979), 105.

moved by such requests, and probably aware that a negative answer would only create hardships for families that were making honest efforts to survive, inspectors occasionally submitted, especially when illness or death had recently touched a family. In his report for 1891, Robert Barber cited a number of letters written to factory owners requesting employment for under-age children whose families desperately needed the additional income. One such letter was written on behalf of a family by the mayor of an unnamed city. Another came from the hand of a fatherless twelve-year-old girl whose mother's health was failing.⁹⁵ In other cases, some parents claimed that their children refused to attend school, and therefore it was preferable and more productive to see them at work rather than on the street. On occasion, factory inspectors accused some parents of sending their children to work to boost an already adequate family income, or to allow themselves to remain idle.

Despite uncovering an overwhelming number of violations of the Factories' Act year after year, the inspectors' rarely pursued prosecution, favouring friendly persuasion to the force of law. Moreover, the inspectors frequently found it impossible to accommodate the idealistic guidelines of the act with the realistic demands of the working world. Robert Barber maintained that at best the Factories' Act could be expected to prevent bad situations from spreading but that it would be impossible to

⁹⁵ "Fourth Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1892, Vol. XXIV, Part V. No. 25, 8.

attend to every minor infringement. Cognizant of many workers' dependence on overtime wages, Barber wrote: "The strict application of factory law to workshops as regards working hours, would in many cases be a hardship to both employers and operatives." During the busy season, in particular, when many children temporarily joined the work force, Barber advised that "the Inspector should not be too sharp in bringing [the employer] up, but only in cases where it amounts to an evil."⁹⁶ The other inspectors followed Barber's lead. They routinely authorized overtime work in almost every circumstance, usually claiming that it was necessary to allow companies to fill back orders. Occasionally, the inspectors levied a fine of a few dollars against employers for violating the regulations pertaining to the age and hours of working children, although this was almost always in the case of repeat offenders. Fines against owners exceeded a few dollars only in cases of serious accidents to under-age workers. Moreover, the inspectors penalized recalcitrant parents at least as often as employers.⁹⁷

Although the inspectors found it difficult to enforce the original regulations of the Factories' Act, this did not stop them from suggesting improvements to the legislation. Upon the

⁹⁶ "Second Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1890, Vol. XXII, Part VI, No. 35, 8-9.

⁹⁷ For an informative analysis of the reluctance of factory inspectors to bring charges against employers, see Eric Tucker, "Making the Workplace 'Safe' in Capitalism: The Enforcement of Factory Legislation in Nineteenth-Century Ontario," Labour/Le Travail, Vol. 21, Spring 1988; and Piva, The Condition of the Working Class in Toronto, 96-106.

repeated recommendations of the inspectors, the Ontario Legislature in 1895 passed "An Act to Make Further Provision Respecting Factories."⁹⁸ This act raised the minimum age of factory work to fourteen for both girls and boys and introduced tougher regulations pertaining to safety, sanitary conditions, and the reporting of accidents. "An Act to Further Improve The Factories Act,"⁹⁹ passed in 1901, strengthened the health and safety features of the previous acts. In 1904, another amendment¹⁰⁰ toughened regulations regarding sanitation and ventilation and outlined specific procedures for girls and women to avoid catching their hair in machinery. Although these minor improvements to the Factories' Act indicate that the inspectors exercised some influence over the law-makers, other recommendations pertaining to literacy requirements, removing exemptions from the canning industry, the introduction of basic family welfare measures, and the further restriction of the types of jobs children could perform went unheeded.

Between 1889 and 1908, the inspectors submitted over seventy individual reports describing the conditions of work in factories and mills across Ontario. Collectively, the reports represent a striking testimony to Alphonse Karr's famous phrase, Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose. Year after year, inspectors noted improvements in certain areas yet continued to describe

⁹⁸ Ontario, Statutes, 1895, Chapter 50.

⁹⁹ Ontario, Statutes, 1910, Chapter 35.

¹⁰⁰ Ontario, Statutes, 1904.

precisely the same problems that filled the pages of earlier reports. The issue of child labour figured prominently in every submission. Economic reasons primarily determined why children sought work and why employers provided it. Legislation proved inadequate and unenforceable. In almost every case, inspectors' comments on child labour combined a humanitarian interest in the immediate conditions of young workers with a reformer's concern for the future of society. According to O.A. Rocque, children's work was "generally disastrous [sic] to them both as to their physical and intellectual development as well as to their morals....Their constitutions and minds have been dwarfed and dulled by the constant employment at work of a dangerous character, often above their strength."¹⁰¹ Looking to the future, Rocque submitted on another occasion that working children were "condemned to become...inferior and useless citizens, unfit to discharge their duties towards the State in an intelligent manner."¹⁰² Margaret Carlyle summarized the concerns of many female reformers: "While children are employed grown people will be idle, and so the support of the family will fall on its weaker members. Thus the employment of children tends to the lowering of wages, the fixing of idle habits, and the

¹⁰¹ "Eleventh Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," 24.

¹⁰² "Fourth Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," 18.

breaking up of proper family relations."¹⁰³ The one area where the later factory inspectors' reports differed noticeably from earlier versions was in their greater recognition of the need for some level of State-sponsored welfare assistance to allow impoverished families to send their children to school rather than to work.

Although the number of children in industry declined significantly in the 1890s,¹⁰⁴ there is no evidence to suggest that legislation played a critical role in this development. According to Lorna Hurl, the explanation lies primarily in the changing nature of industrial capitalism:

[The] process of modernization, characterized by increasing specialization into highly skilled and well paid industries, combined with the tendency toward enlarged and highly mechanized production units, restricted job opportunities for children. In addition, mergers, cartels and combinations, clearly evident by the late 1880s and early 1890s in such fields as cottons, farm implements, stove and foundry wares, oatmeal millers, and coffin and undertakers supplies, served to stabilize market prices, thereby reducing the need to limit wages through the hiring of children. Thus, by the mid 1890s, as Canada entered the age of modern industry, the circumstances which had been conducive to the employment of large numbers of children in factory labour had undergone significant change. Child workers were ceasing to be of practical advantage in many industrial settings.¹⁰⁵

103 "Ninth Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," 21.

104 See Tables 2-1 and 2-2, 51-53.

105 Lorna F. Hurl, "Overcoming the Inevitable: Restricting Child Factory Labour in Late Nineteenth Century Ontario," Labour/Le Travail, Vol. 21, Spring 1988, 113. See also, "Fifth Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," 8; and John Beirness, "Compulsory Schooling and Child Labour," 40-41.

This decline in child labour, however, did not prevent Augusta Stowe-Gullen of the NCWC from commenting in 1906: "The employment of children in factories, stores and workshops is nothing short of a social and national crime."¹⁰⁶ Two years later, factory inspector Annie Brown described the situation in terms that resounded with ringing familiarity: "The unsolved problem of child labor is still in evidence. Notwithstanding the high state of civilization which has been attained, it appears to be still necessary to employ children to aid in production, because child labor is cheaper and greater profit can be obtained from the employment of child labor than from that of adults."¹⁰⁷

Child labour in factories and mills thus constituted a stable feature of industry across late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Ontario. A slow but powerful economic transition swept working children from their highly respected positions as apprentices and delivered them into the hands of industry as cheap, unskilled labour. The demands of a capitalist economy coupled with the first stages of mechanization created an environment ripe for the exploitation of young workers; employers' desire for profits and poor families' search for sustenance guaranteed its continuation. Most children's jobs paid well below the adult level despite long hours and dangerous and

¹⁰⁶ Local Council of Women of Toronto, Twelfth Annual Report (Toronto 1906), 29.

¹⁰⁷ "Twenty-first Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1909, Vol. XLI, Part VII, No. 29, 58.

unhealthy conditions. Although boys filled more positions than girls, children of neither sex could look forward to meaningful advancement. The reluctance of factory inspectors to enforce even the weak legislation that existed added to the longevity of child labour. In addition to factories and mills, children worked in a number of other industrial and commercial sectors. Two of these areas -- retail stores and sweat shops -- warrant brief examination.

III. Retail Stores and Sweat Shops

The sweat shop is the nursery of child labor.

Ontario factory inspector,
1904¹⁰⁸

As city-dwellers became increasingly more dependent on manufactured goods, the retail sales industry expanded rapidly. This development, in turn, created numerous full-time and part-time jobs for children. Within family businesses, store-owners almost always depended on the free or cheap labour of their own offspring to help run the shop.¹⁰⁹ Witnesses who appeared before the Royal Labor Commission provided insights into the conditions

¹⁰⁸ Cited in Ontario, Report of Committee on Child Labor (Toronto 1907), 5.

¹⁰⁹ Toronto Board of Education, W.C. Wilkinson Diaries, Vols. 3 and 4, 1873.

of other youngsters employed in retail stores. Toronto dry-goods merchant R. Irving Walker started twelve-year-old male clerks at \$2.00 per week. After five years of faithful service, a young employee could earn up to \$6.00 per week. Walker claimed that he hired very young boys to help out their impoverished families.¹¹⁰ Timothy Eaton, Canada's retailer extraordinaire, placed twelve-year-old messenger boys on probation at \$2.00 per week. Young girls who performed the same duties were only worth \$1.50 in Eaton's eyes. Eaton revealed that he was occasionally approached by women seeking employment for their children to help offset problems at home, such as an alcoholic husband.¹¹¹ Toronto dry-goods salesman Richard Wilkins described the conditions of one twelve-year-old male employee and bluntly exposed the priorities of some employers: "He works a full day, and then has to carry parcels after that, because it is too tiring on the horse."¹¹²

Reformers who appeared before the commission expressed a deep concern over the stressful conditions under which youngsters laboured in retail stores. Toronto's mayor, W.H. Howland, claimed that young girls who worked on their feet all day -- up to fifteen hours on Saturdays -- sometimes fainted on the job. Having only recently arrived from the countryside, some of these girls were unfamiliar with the customs of urban life. "They are

¹¹⁰ Royal Labor Commission, Ontario evidence, 289-91.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 291-94.

¹¹² Ibid., 349-50.

a helpless class," moaned Howland.¹¹³ Dr. William Oldright, former chairman of the Ontario Board of Health, shared Howland's concern and recommended that arrangements be made to allow girls to sit for part of the day.¹¹⁴ Many reformers feared that long hours of standing would damage a girl's reproductive organs. Archibald Blue, secretary of Ontario's Bureau of Industry, complained that it was difficult to compile data on the conditions of girls in retail stores because many employees refused to speak with inspectors out of fear of losing their jobs.¹¹⁵

Under pressure from reformers and trade unionists to extend protection to children and women who worked in retail stores, the Ontario Legislature passed "The Ontario Shops Regulation Act"¹¹⁶ in 1888. This law, which applied primarily to retail stores, granted municipal councils the power to designate a closing hour for shops anytime after 7:00 p.m. The act also forbade boys under fourteen and girls under sixteen to work in excess of seventy-four hours per week, with no more than fourteen hours on Saturdays and twelve hours on weekdays unless longer hours were given back in the form of a short day. Young employees were entitled to one hour for lunch and forty-five minutes for an evening meal. Child workers could not exceed the time limitations by combining work in a retail store with factory work on

113 Ibid., 167.

114 Ibid., 91-98.

115 Ibid., 70-88.

116 Ontario, Statutes, 1888, Chapter 33.

the same day. The law allowed female employees to sit when not directly engaged in their duties. Employers and parents who violated the clauses pertaining to young workers could be fined up to \$20.00 or imprisoned up to one month. Like the Factories' Act before it, the Shops' Act did not apply to work performed in the home. An amendment to the Shops' Act,¹¹⁷ passed in 1889, extended jurisdiction to unincorporated villages and empowered municipal councils to order stores to remain closed anytime between 7:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m.

Not surprisingly, the extremely mild stipulations of the Shops' Act exerted little impact on the conditions of youngsters in retail stores. In 1891, an independent investigation into the conditions of female labour in Ontario undertaken by Jean Thomson Scott uncovered large numbers of children in this trade. Many youngsters earned between \$1.50 and \$2.50 per week as cash and parcel handlers. Some children worked without wages for several weeks while they allegedly learned the business. Scott reported that many employers objected to the Shops' Act clause that entitled female employees to sit part of the day on the grounds that such a practice projected an unbusinesslike image. Consequently, these employers created extra work for their female staff to keep them busy at all times. Scott's report suggested that any reduction of work for youngsters in this sector was due not to legislation but to the introduction of machinery that transported cash and merchandise between different points within

¹¹⁷ Ontario, Statutes, 1889, Chapter 44.

a store.¹¹⁸ This premise was supported by Reverend Thomas Geoghegan of Hamilton who complained in 1894 that modern inventions such as the telephone, telegraph, conveyer belt, and "cash railway" robbed young boys of opportunities for honest work. The good father feared that such enforced idleness would inevitably lead vulnerable boys down the path of evil.¹¹⁹

In 1897, once again under pressure from trade unionists and reform groups such as the NCWC, the Ontario Legislature attempted to strengthen its hand with the passage of "An Act Respecting Shops and Places Other than Factories."¹²⁰ This law covered most retail stores and small manufacturing establishments. The act prohibited the employment of any person under the age of ten. Boys under fourteen and all females were forbidden to work prior to 7:00 a.m. or past 6:00 p.m., with the exception of one night per week or the day before a holiday when working hours could be extended to 10:00 p.m. This left the possibility of a seventy-hour week. Limitations on hours of work did not apply from 14 December to 24 December. The act strengthened the law pertaining to seats for females and included personal helpers under its authority. Employers were required to maintain a register of young male and all female employees. Persons found in violation

¹¹⁸ Jean Thomson Scott, The Conditions of Female Labour in Ontario (Toronto 1891), 10-22.

¹¹⁹ "Proceedings of the First Ontario Conference on Child-Saving," Toronto, 18-19 October 1894. Reproduced in "Second Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1895, Vol. XXVII, Part VI, No. 29., 20.

¹²⁰ Ontario, Statutes, 1897, Chapter 51.

of the act could be fined between \$10.00 and \$25.00 or imprisoned for one to three months. Individuals providing false information to inspectors could be fined between \$20.00 and \$50.00 or imprisoned for one to six months. The act also outlined a number of regulations pertaining to sanitation, ventilation, and workers' health and safety. Another amendment, passed in 1901,¹²¹ stiffened the penalties for failure to provide acceptable sanitary facilities.

Despite these minor improvements, the employment of children in retail stores continued to arouse the concerns of sympathetic observers. Factory inspector Margaret Carlyle found that young workers in retail stores often laboured under "a more wearisome strain than those employed in factories and work-shops. There is a double exaction from employer and customer, more cramped and confined position, less freedom of movement."¹²² On another occasion, Carlyle wrote: "The children employed as cash boys and cash girls in some of the stores have duties fully as arduous as if they were employed in mills and factories, and their hours are just as long, and in the busy seasons longer." Carlyle also revealed that many factory owners resented the more lenient regulations regarding the employment of children in retail

¹²¹ Ontario, Statutes, 1901, Chapter 36.

¹²² "Twelfth Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1900, Vol. XXXII, Part II, No. 8, 25.

stores.¹²³ Inspector Keilty indicated that the Shops' Act provided an unfair advantage to employers who hired their own offspring: "I point this out as an injustice to the man employing outside labor, where the competition is so keen that men and women will not hesitate to ask and even compel their own children to do that which they could not lawfully engage their neighbor's children to do."¹²⁴

Retail stores provided an important secondary source of employment for young people in urban centres. Although the physical environment of a commercial shop differed from that of a factory or mill, child workers in retail stores encountered many of the same problems as their counterparts in manufacturing establishments. Children worked extremely long hours for low wages under the command of employers who exercised almost complete control over their shops. Labour could be as physically demanding as it was in factories and mills and was often more mentally stressful. Although retail stores created employment opportunities for both sexes, boys usually earned more than girls. Despite low wages and strenuous conditions, children sought work in commercial shops primarily to ease their family's economic burdens. Legislation governing retail stores lagged behind the Factories' Act in terms of minimum age and maximum

123 "Fifteenth Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1903, Vol. XXXV, Part II, No. 8, 28.

124 "Seventeenth Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," 24.

hours of work. Not until 1897 was a minimum age for work in retail stores set at ten, still four years under the Factories' Act. It is instructive to note that legislation allowing children to work up to seventy hours per week appeared a quarter of a century after Canadian trade unionists launched the movement for the nine-hour day.

Children in retail stores could justifiably complain about their working conditions. But most of them probably realized that they were better off than their friends who worked in the notorious "sweat shop" industry. The term sweat shop usually described a tiny workplace, sometimes attached to a residence, where a predominantly female and child labour force toiled long hours for pitifully low wages under contract, or sub-contract, producing saleable materials for large retail or wholesale outlets. The ready-made clothing industry, in particular, depended on sweated labour. In simplest terms, this work extended and exploited the traditional role of women and girls as sewers for their own families.

In 1871, The Globe estimated that girls across the province earned as little as thirty cents per day sewing in unhealthy and poorly ventilated workrooms.¹²⁵ During their investigation into factories and mills in 1882, William Lukes and A.H. Blackeby found sweat shops "sometimes being in the attic of a four-storey building, at others in a low, damp basement where artificial light has to be used during the entire day, whole-sale clothing

¹²⁵ The Globe, 23 September 1871.

establishments employing from one hundred to one thousand hands in this way."¹²⁶ A few years later, testifying before the Royal Labor Commission, Toronto dry-goods salesman Richard Wilkins revealed that girls in his store worked six months without pay in the millinery shop and then took up duties behind the counter. Wilkins explained that by replacing beginners in the millinery shop every six months the employers escaped the payment of wages altogether.¹²⁷ Toronto dressmaker Helen Gurnett told the commissioners that she, too, paid no wages to girls for the first six months while she taught them how to sew.¹²⁸

In her independent survey of female labour in Ontario, Jean Thomson Scott confirmed that non-payment of young sewers during their first six months of service was the conventional practice. Scott elaborated: "At the end of that time they receive some small remuneration as improvers and assistants. Much depends on the special talent and adaptability of the worker. As improvers and assistants they may receive \$1 or \$2 a week." Scott also reported that hours of work in the sewing trade fluctuated greatly, often being tied to demand. In the busy season, therefore, workers toiled longer and took fewer breaks, often forgoing their dinner to fill an order on time. Part of the blame for

¹²⁶ "Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Workings of Mills and Factories," 4.

¹²⁷ Royal Labor Commission, Ontario evidence, 349-50.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 347-48.

this situation, Scott contended, rested with insensitive customers who placed their orders on very short notice.¹²⁹

In 1892, partially in response to the descriptions of sweat shops submitted by the factory inspectors, the Ontario Legislature passed "An Act for the Protection of Persons Employed in Places of Business other than Factories."¹³⁰ This act applied to manufacturing and retail outlets that did not come under the jurisdiction of the Factories' Act. But it did not extend to workplaces occupied only by family members, establishments with fewer than six workers, or places that did not employ female labour. The act provided guidelines for proper ventilation and sanitation and empowered municipal councils to appoint inspectors. Penalties for violation of the act were similar to those described in the Factories' Act. "An Act for the Further Protection of Persons Employed in Places of Business other than Factories,"¹³¹ passed in 1895, granted power to the Lieutenant-Governor to appoint inspectors in situations where municipalities had failed to do so. This act also stipulated that at least one inspector in each area should be female.

The two acts barely scratched the surface of all the problems facing workers in sweat shops and other small industries. Year after year, factory inspector Margaret Carlyle unearthed

¹²⁹ Jean Thomson Scott, The Conditions of Female Labour in Ontario, 10-22.

¹³⁰ Ontario, Statutes, 1892, Chapter 54.

¹³¹ Ontario, Statutes, 1895, Chapter 51.

literally hundreds of tiny, crowded clothing workshops located "as best they can be in old buildings or in private houses, in narrow streets, in lanes, back yards, sometimes basements," where girls and women laboured long hours for minimal wages.¹³² Carlyle estimated that seventy-five per cent of all the clothing in the country was manufactured in this manner.¹³³ Sanitary conditions in the shops were "dirty and neglected" and gas stoves used for heating pressing irons emitted noxious fumes. Carlyle found it difficult to force employers to improve working conditions because some shops operated only a short time while others switched locations frequently without informing the inspector. Carlyle was astute enough to realize that the whole rickety structure of the sweating system sprang from a single undeniable source -- contractors' search for lower production costs. In her report for 1896, she wrote: "The contractor began by reducing the profits of ordinary tradesmen and by lowering the price of labor, and their number increases every year. One contractor makes war upon the others, and the demand for cheapness is not satisfied."¹³⁴ Two years later, she added: "The most of those garment workers in the struggle for existence feel obliged to accept wages that are little above starvation. The

¹³² "Eleventh Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," 26-27.

¹³³ "Eighth Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1896, Vol. XXVIII, Part VI, No. 29, 24.

¹³⁴ "Ninth Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," 23.

expenses for lighting, heating, help and rent must be the lowest possible in order that some slight profit may be made."¹³⁵

An anonymous member of the Knights of Labor, writing in Walsh's Magazine in the mid 1890s, offered a trade unionist's view of sweat shops. Like many previous commentators, this writer decried how fierce competition among contractors drove wages down and intensified working conditions. Young girls, in particular, suffered under this system. Describing a sweat shop in downtown Toronto, the noble Knight wrote: "The girls are paid by the piecework system; and how they worked! The machines could scarce move fast enough, as with stooped shoulders, heads bent forward, the rapid movement of hands and feet, with furtive and momentary glances in the direction where employer and stranger stood talking, the work was rushed along, as though life depended on every stitch made by the whirring machines." Many young workers declined to speak to the author out of fear of losing their jobs, but one girl declared: "Sometimes my head gets so dizzy I can scarcely see what I am doing." Employers commonly exploited novice workers for weeks without pay while they allegedly learned the trade and then replaced them with new beginners once they were in a position to demand wages. Because of the rules of the piece-work system, workers earned nothing during periods of mechanical breakdown or while waiting for new

¹³⁵ "Eleventh Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," 26-27.

material to arrive. Employees thus worked even harder and longer to compensate for these losses.¹³⁶

In 1896, a petition from the TLC moved the federal government to appoint Alexander Whyte Wright to undertake an investigation of the sweating system in Canada. Wright visited factories, workshops, and private homes in Halifax, Quebec, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, and Hamilton. He found appalling conditions and paltry wages to be the rule in almost all locations. The contract system, Wright declared, reduced wages "to the lowest point at which the employees can afford to work." Under these circumstances, it came as no surprise to find "children of very tender years" among sweat shop employees. Neither legislation nor unionization provided relief for workers, particularly in the smaller shops.¹³⁷

Wright was especially appalled by contractors who forced children to work without wages for the first several months of employment. Some youngsters were deceived into thinking that they would eventually learn a useful trade through this system. Others reluctantly bowed to the abuse realizing that it was the only route leading to paid employment. But even in this case, children enjoyed no guarantee that the end of the "learning"

¹³⁶ Knight of Labor, "Where Labor is Not Prayer," Walsh's Magazine, 1895-96, 111-16. Cited in Irving Abella and David Millar, eds, The Canadian Worker in the Twentieth Century (Toronto 1978), 153-58.

¹³⁷ Alexander Whyte Wright, "Report Upon the Sweating System in Canada," Canada, Sessional Papers, 1896, Vol. XXIX, Part II, No. 61, 6-8.

period would not coincide with dismissal. Wright expounded: "There cannot be said to be an apprenticeship system in the ready-made clothing trade. 'Learners' are employed -- usually young girls and boys -- but the employer is under no obligation to teach them a trade or any part of one. Evidently such a system is capable of gross abuse and there are not wanting instances of such abuse by unscrupulous employers."¹³⁸

Four years after Wright filed his report, a young Mackenzie King undertook a similar investigation on behalf of the Postmaster General. Visiting sites in Montreal, Toronto, and Hamilton, King found sweat shop conditions to be the norm in the carrying out of government clothing contracts. King uncovered shops operating sixty hours a week where "the ordinary rules of health and comfort are disregarded" and "a maximum amount of work...is performed for a minimum wage."¹³⁹ Like Wright before him, King discovered young children who worked several months without wages under the guise of apprenticeship and then moved on to earn a few pennies a day. Others were discharged from their duties once their so-called apprenticeship expired.

In 1900, the Ontario Legislature passed "An Act to Amend the Ontario Shops' Regulation Act"¹⁴⁰ in an attempt to bring some order to the sweat shop industry. This act required contractors

¹³⁸ Ibid., 10.

¹³⁹ William Lyon Mackenzie King, Report to the Honourable The Postmaster General of the Methods Adopted in Canada in the Carrying Out of Government Clothing Contracts (Ottawa 1900), 8.

¹⁴⁰ Ontario, Statutes, 1900, Chapter 43.

in the ready-made clothing trade to maintain a register of the names and addresses of their employees. All items manufactured under contract were to bear labels indicating where they had been produced and by whom. Such clothing would not be released for sale until an inspector approved the premises where it had been produced. Inspectors could impound unsanitary clothing and turn it over to the Board of Health.

Hidden from public view, and largely untouched by unionization and legislation that concerned itself more with public health than with working conditions, thousands of children across urban Ontario worked under oppressive conditions for next to no wages in the sweat shop industry. Irregular hours and seasonal fluctuations added to the insecurity and instability of this trade. Young workers danced to the demands of an impulsive consumer market while competing contractors systematically drove wages down. Middlemen turned the sweat shop industry into a chain of command that featured lower wages and harder working conditions with each successive downward link. Naturally, children occupied the bottom position in the work hierarchy. This observation exposes the cruel paradox of child workers in a competitive labour market: the more the sweating system exploited the free or cheap labour of children, the less of a chance adults faced of ever receiving a fair wage for their own work. This system was especially harsh on young girls who found themselves locked into a female job ghetto.

Unquestionably, the most insidious aspect of the sweating system was the non-payment of child workers during their first several months of service. Employers obtained free labour under the pretence of teaching children the essential tools of the trade. In fact, youngsters gained no marketable skills. Employers succeeded at this sham by recalling the tradition of apprenticeship that had once graced the artisan's shop. The practice of children working without wages under the guise of apprenticeship stands out as a stunning example of the power of industrial capitalism to pervert and manipulate the formerly respectable traditions of workplace culture. Despite these oppressive conditions, children sought work in sweat shops for the same reason that brought their friends into factories, mills, and retail stores: to help their families meet the material costs of urban living.

CHAPTER III

HIDDEN WORKERS: CHILD LABOUR IN THE HOME AND ON THE STREET

Their life is a wonder from day to day -- their breakfast a marvel, their dinner a miracle, their bed an intervention of Providence.

View of Street Children¹

The secret of a successful farm, wrote Canniff Haight in 1885, lay in "the economy, industry and moderate wants of every member of the household."² Haight was simply repeating the conventional wisdom of the age in his recognition that all members of a farm family, including children, contributed to the successful functioning of the household economy. Haight and many of his contemporaries, however, would not have applied the same description to families in urban-industrial centres. The movement of the focus of production from farm to factory, many social analysts believed, decreased the interdependency of the family and offered individual members a greater number of occu-

¹ City of Toronto Archives (CTA), Records of the House of Industry, SC 35.

² Canniff Haight, Country Life in Canada Fifty Years Ago (Toronto 1885). Cited in Michael S. Cross, ed, The Workingman in the Nineteenth Century (Toronto 1974), 34.

pational choices.³ According to this interpretation, a typical urban family relied solely on the wages of a working father and the home management of a mother for its day-to-day survival. This notion of the difference between rural and urban families survived into the twentieth century and surfaced in a number of standard historical works. As late as 1972, for example, Blair Neatby wrote: "The urban family...bears little resemblance to a rural family. On a family farm children can make a direct economic contribution by doing chores and helping in many of the farm activities....In the city only the wage-earner brings in money; children...become a financial burden who add nothing to the family income."⁴ In addition to exhibiting a strong middle-

³ Late nineteenth-century writers commonly saw their society in transition from a rural-agricultural setting to an urban-industrial one. This simple dichotomy facilitated discussion of new social developments and emphasized the threat to tradition posed by emergent urban-industrial life. Modern historians, taking into account the growth of capitalism and waged labour, have offered a more complex and sophisticated analysis of social change. Michael Katz, Michael Doucet, and Mark Stern, for example, construct a three-stage paradigm which claims that "North America shifted from a peculiar variety of mercantile-peasant economy to an economy dominated by commercial capitalism to one dominated by industrial capitalism." The Social Organization of Industrial Capitalism (Cambridge 1982), 364. Despite these more complex undercurrents of social transition, most late nineteenth-century workers identified with the rural-urban model. Historians develop comprehensive theories of social change over time; workers deal with the realities of life from day to day.

⁴ Blair Neatby, The Politics of Chaos: Canada in the Thirties (Toronto 1972), 45. E.P. Thompson writes: "Each stage in industrial differentiation and specialisation struck also at the family economy, disturbing customary relations between man and wife, parents and children, and differentiating more sharply between 'work' and 'life.'...Meanwhile the family was roughly torn apart each morning by the factory bell." The Making of the English Working Class (New York 1963), 416.

class bias, these perceptions of the urban family rested primarily on outward appearances and vague unfounded suppositions.

In the past decade and a half, social historians have uncovered patterns of urban survival which indicate that many working-class families, like their counterparts on the farm, depended on "the economy, industry and moderate wants of every member of the household," including children, to meet the demands of city life. Chapter II describes the onerous trials of youngsters as wage-earners in manufacturing and commercial establishments. But child labour was by no means limited to factories, mills, retail stores, and sweat shops. Children also performed important economic duties in their homes and on city streets as a regular part of their contribution to the family economy. This chapter concentrates on youngsters who worked outside of the industrial and commercial mainstream, often for no wages, but who still contributed in important ways to the day-to-day survival of their families.

In most working-class homes, children assumed domestic responsibilities as soon as their physical and mental faculties allowed them to attend to minor chores.⁵ First duties usually

⁵ The following examples are drawn from Toronto Board of Education (TBE), W.C. Wilkinson Diaries, six volumes, 1872-74; TBE, Management Committee Minutes, 1899-1901; "Annual Reports of the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1894-1909; National Archives of Canada (NAC), Grace Clara Craig Papers, Autobiographical Reminiscences, MG30 C197; and Hamilton Public Library, Hamilton Children's Aid Society, Scrapbook of Clippings, Vol. 1, 1894-1961, Special Collections.

took the form of assisting in the general upkeep of the home. In neighbourhoods where dirt roads, animals, wood stoves, coal furnaces, and industrial pollution were common features, keeping a home even relatively clean and liveable could require several hands and many hours of labour. On any given day, youngsters could be found sweeping steps, washing windows, and scrubbing floors. In the absence of fathers whose work kept them away from home ten to fifteen hours per day, six days a week, busy mothers frequently called upon their sons to make minor repairs to poorly constructed houses. Young girls did the family's laundry relying on a simple washboard, wringer, and basin, and pressed clothes with a flat iron heated on the stove. Even children who attended school regularly were expected to help out around the house. Grace Clara Craig of North Gower recalled her eager son Anthony who "was always ready for the evening work after School and could change from his School clothes so quickly and into the working ones almost in a second."⁶

Other common children's chores contributed more directly to the day-to-day survival and economic status of the family. To supplement the family's food supply, youngsters helped cultivate small garden plots. Inside the home, girls regularly worked alongside their mothers in the kitchen. Robert Barratt estimates that only eight per cent of Canadian housewives bought bakery-made bread at the turn of the century, indicating that home

⁶ Grace Clara Craig Papers, File 3, 22.

baking remained a central feature of family life even in cities.⁷ Children also added to the family's source of nourishment by raising and slaughtering animals. In May 1872 Toronto truant officer W.C. Wilkinson tracked two ten-year-old schoolboys to a field near Palace Street. One of the boy's parents had sent them out to search for a runaway cow.⁸ What home-produced food the family did not consume itself, children could sell to neighbours or at the market for a small profit.

In an age when sickness could spell disaster, children provided care for ill family members and sometimes offered themselves as substitute workers. Checking on the absence from school of ten-year-old William Burroughs, W.C. Wilkinson reported: "I saw the mother who said that the father had not been sufficiently well to attend to his duties as fireman at the Parliament House and he had taken the boy to assist him for a short time."⁹ As well, older children commonly assumed the duties of a deceased parent, girls frequently taking up mother's responsibilities and boys stepping into father's shoes. On occasion, parents lent their children's services to neighbours in return for nominal remuneration or future favours.

Children filled useful roles at home in at least one other crucial area -- babysitting. In the face of widespread urban

⁷ Robert F. Barratt, "Baking Industry," The Canadian Encyclopedia, Second Edition (Edmonton 1988), 165.

⁸ Wilkinson Diaries, Vol.1, 20 May 1872.

⁹ Ibid., Vol. 3, 26 February 1873.

poverty, many working-class families found it necessary to depend on second and third wage-earners. In a few cases, especially in families where children were too young for formal employment, economic need forced mothers to set aside their daytime domestic duties and take up employment outside the home. The introduction of machinery in sectors such as food processing and the textile industry created jobs for unskilled female labour, although it also depressed the general wage level and guaranteed that female earnings in particular would remain pitifully low. Such industries, along with retail stores, welcomed this cheap labour force with open arms. Wage-earning mothers, consequently, placed even greater domestic responsibilities onto the shoulders of their children. Most importantly, mothers enlisted older children to baby-sit younger siblings in their absence. Mothers who did not work outside the home still required this service to allow them to attend to normal domestic chores, such as shopping. In cities where day nurseries were available, even the smallest cost proved prohibitive for many working-class families.¹⁰ These duties took on particular importance in households headed by single parents, male and female.

Reaching beyond the perimeters of the home, children routinely gathered coal and wood for fuel from rail and factory yards, and fetched water from community wells for cooking and washing. Although youngsters who performed these tasks did not

¹⁰ "Annals of the Poor (The Creche)," The Globe, 4 January 1897.

usually encounter the dangers associated with industrial life, in one case a young Ottawa lad who was gathering wood chips outside of a lumber mill succumbed to his youthful curiosity and wandered into the plant only to meet his death on an unguarded mechanical saw.¹¹ In another instance, fifteen-year-old John Harvey of Pembroke entered a sash and door factory to collect wood shavings and died instantly when his coat became entangled in a saw.¹²

In most cases, children's duties in and around the home were divided according to sex. Girls cooked, cleaned, laundered, and baby-sat within the confines of the home while boys performed out-door tasks. This practice was consistent with both rural traditions and the sexual discrimination characteristic of urban life. A typical example can be found in the diary of Toronto truant officer W.C. Wilkinson. Paying a call on the Stone family in 1872, Wilkinson discovered thirteen-year-old Elizabeth cleaning house with her mother while her eleven-year-old brother Thomas was busy helping their father in the garden.¹³ Sexual categorization, however, was not impenetrable. Families that lacked children of both sexes simply handed chores over to the most capable and available member. In these instances, domestic

¹¹ Canada, Royal Commission on the Relations of Capital and Labor in Canada (Royal Labor Commission) (Ottawa 1889), Ontario evidence, testimony of John Henderson, manager of J. McLaren & Company Lumber Merchants, Ottawa, 1137-39.

¹² "Eighth Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1896, Vol. XXVIII, Part VI, No. 29, 22.

¹³ Wilkinson Diaries, Vol. 2, 7 October 1872.

necessity conquered sexual stereotyping. Grace Clara Craig, a mother of nine who could choose from either sex to help her with household chores, emphasized the value of her daughters' contributions: "It took 6 sons to be equal to the 3 daughters."¹⁴

The frequency and regularity with which working-class families called on their younger members to assist in a wide variety of domestic duties highlights the continuing importance of children as active contributors to the family economy. This practice also reveals that working-class families could not rely on industrial earnings alone to provide all the goods and services demanded by urban life. Although most families adhered to the strict traditional division of labour when possible, children were frequently called upon to assume the responsibilities of older members when circumstances demanded it. The entrance of mothers into the wage-earning work force, for example, undoubtedly disrupted traditional family relations. But the family responded rationally by shifting responsibilities to other members. Single-parent families and those with ill members adjusted in the same manner. Children's chores usually corresponded with a sexual division of labour, except in cases where this was impractical or impossible. Although children performed vital tasks in the day-to-day operation of their households, their labour lacked the status that similar work in a pre-industrial setting had claimed. Genevieve Leslie explains: "Industrialization...changed work done within the home, by transforming it into

¹⁴ Grace Clara Craig Papers, File 3, 13.

service labour. Domestic work became less and less satisfying as its productive aspect was reduced; it became a never-ending round of maintenance chores -- necessary for life to continue, but easy to ignore."¹⁵ A comment from a contemporary observer reinforces this perception. In 1873, truant officer Wilkinson complained that "in many instances children were kept at home for the most frivolous reasons by their parents, such as to run messages, assist in domestic duties, cut wood, and many such reasons that I am compelled to accept, although reluctantly, as the law at present only requires the[ir] attendance four months in the year."¹⁶

Working-class parents had more pressing concerns than truancy on their minds when they kept children at home to perform important economic duties. In some cases, children's domestic responsibilities included participation in home-centred industries that formed a branch of the "sweat shop" system. Workers discovered that they could earn a few extra dollars through this nefarious trade by fulfilling ready-made clothing contracts in their own homes, or by bringing home after a regular shift unfinished material produced in a factory or workshop located elsewhere. In both cases, children accounted for a substantial portion of the work force. Robert E. Johnson defined

¹⁵ Genevieve Leslie, "Domestic Service in Canada, 1880-1920," in Janice Acton, Penny Goldsmith, and Bonnie Shepard, eds, Women at Work: Ontario 1850-1930 (Toronto 1974), 73.

¹⁶ TBE, Annual Report of the Local Superintendent of the Public Schools (Toronto 1874), 45.

the role of home work within the over-all industrial structure and pointed out the weak position of the workers:

Like their counterparts in the weaving industry a century earlier, the home-workers of the garment industry were closely tied to factory production. Many employers relied on a combination of inside (that is, factory) and outside labour, using the latter as a "reserve army" that could be called upon in seasons of peak demand. Homework enabled the factory owners to adjust production to rising and falling consumer demand without maintaining idle facilities. Factory buildings and equipment could be kept going through the year, while homeworkers were hired or laid off -- at no cost to the owners -- to meet the changing needs of the seasons....Separate from one another, with no reliable means of gathering information or collectively presenting grievances, homeworkers were rarely able to resist the employers' tactics.¹⁷

The Globe found that many working-class families in Toronto participated in this type of work as early as the 1860s. The following passage emphasizes the central role of females in home sewing but indicates that males participated when their help was needed and they were not preoccupied with other, more masculine duties:

Frequently the industrious efforts of a whole family are employed to fill the orders of the employers. Often, in such instances, the child of eight or nine summers is made a source of material help in the construction of the coarser descriptions of men's garments that are now prepared for the ready-made clothing market. In the same way the female head of the house, a group of daughters, and, perhaps, the male members of the family if no better occupation is available, turn in to assist the father in adding to their means of support.

¹⁷ Robert E. Johnson, "The Origins of Industrial Homework," in Laura C. Johnson with Robert E. Johnson, The Seam Allowance: Industrial Home Sewing in Canada (Toronto 1982), 43-44.

The same article described one family that worked on clothing contracts sixteen to eighteen hours per day, six days a week.¹⁸

More than a decade later, in 1882, a federal government inquiry conducted by William Lukes and A.H. Blackeby studied the conditions of 324 married female workers. The investigation revealed that 272 women performed most of their work in their own homes. The women explained that in this way they could elicit the assistance of older children and watch over infants at the same time. Of the original 324 women, 255 worked in the clothing industry.¹⁹ Three years later, in a supplementary report, Blackeby stated that he encountered difficulty amassing information on the wool industry specifically because so much of the work was done in private homes.²⁰

In 1896, Alexander Whyte Wright undertook an investigation of the sweating system in Canada on behalf of the federal government. Wright uncovered appalling conditions in factories and shops but discovered that workers toiled longer, earned less, and suffered more when they fulfilled contracts in their own homes: "When a comparison is made...between the condition of the people who work in contractors' shops and the conditions which attend

¹⁸ "Female Labour in Toronto: Its Nature -- Its Extent-- Its Reward," The Globe, 28 October 1868.

¹⁹ "Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Working of Mills and Factories of the Dominion, and the Labor Employed Therein," Canada, Sessional Papers, 1882, Vol. XV, No. 42, 10-11.

²⁰ "Report of A.H. Blackeby on the State of the Manufacturing Industries of Ontario and Quebec," Canada, Sessional Papers, 1885, Vol. XVIII, No. 37, 31.

the making of garments in private homes, the advantage is, in a marked degree, in favour of the former system."²¹ Wright encountered scores of children working in excess of sixty hours per week in converted bedrooms, kitchens, and living rooms. Home labourers competed with contractors for available work thus driving wages down. Furthermore, most contracts paid by the piece, a practice that encouraged longer hours and a faster pace of work, and discouraged regular rest periods. Wright's report also revealed that home workers occasionally needed to carry damaged materials to the employers for repair or replacement, "frequently losing half a day because of having to make an alteration which in actual work only requires a few minutes of time. To avoid this they are often willing to submit to a fine or reduction of wages far in excess of what the making of the alteration would be worth to them."²² Even in unionized shops where hours of labour were restricted, Wright discovered workers anxious to bring material home to accumulate some precious overtime. "The advantage of having the assistance of their families," he pointed out, "is a further inducement."²³

While politicians, trade unionists, and reformers debated the findings of Wright's report, The Daily Mail and Empire launched its own investigation into the sweating system in

²¹ Alexander Whyte Wright, "Report Upon the Sweating System in Canada," Canada, Sessional Papers, 1896, Vol. XXIX (II), No. 61, 8.

²² Ibid., 11.

²³ Ibid., 8.

Toronto. The newspaper defined sweating as "a condition of labour in which a maximum amount of work in a given time is performed for a minimum wage, and in which the ordinary rules of health and comfort are disregarded." It was common for ready-made clothing to be produced partly in a factory or workshop and partly in a private home: "The 'felling' and button-hole making are usually done by women at their homes, and very often by the whole family. Under such an arrangement it is easily seen that, aided by competition, prices and wages must continue to fall and the work-day be lengthened until the limit of human endurance is reached." Visiting a private home late at night, the reporter came across a husband, wife, two children, and a hired woman working on clothing in an unhealthy and poorly lit environment. These workers earned one cent for each two-inch button hole they made and between fifty and seventy-five cents per 100 for others, depending on the size. The article disclosed that competition in the clothing industry was so fierce that home workers often submitted to under-the-table concessions to gain a contract. Furthermore, many agreements obliged home workers to buy their supplies from the contractor, although they were usually obtainable elsewhere at lower prices.²⁴

Displaying an early interest in labour matters that would soon catapult him into politics, Mackenzie King contributed to

²⁴ "Toronto and the Sweating System," The Daily Mail and Empire, Part Two, 9 October 1897, 10. H.C. Ferns and B. Ostry claim that Mackenzie King wrote this article. See Ferns and Ostry, The Age of Mackenzie King: The Rise of a Leader (London 1955), 39-40.

the public debate over sweat shop conditions through his investigation into government clothing contracts undertaken at the request of the Postmaster General in 1900. King discovered that "by far the greatest part of the Government clothing was made by women and girls in their homes or in the shops as the hired hands of sub-contractors....In some cases the different members of the family assisted in the sewing, and in a great many cases, one, two, three or more strangers, usually young women or girls, were brought from the neighbourhood and paid a small sum for their services by the week or piece."²⁵ Like Wright before him, King discovered that private homes, not factories or workshops, exhibited the harshest working conditions. Children routinely assisted in the sewing process and worked as carters carrying material between home and supply houses. King also reported that home workers were required to supply their own thread, a cost that he claimed composed "a substantial fraction of the gross earnings received."²⁶ Many shop workers brought unfinished material home at night and completed their work with the help of their families. King concluded: "It was pretty generally conceded that, except by thus working overtime, or by the profits made by the aid of hired help, there was very little to be earned by a week's work."²⁷ These workers found no relief in labour

²⁵ William Lyon Mackenzie King, Report to the Honourable The Postmaster General of the Methods Adopted in Canada in the Carrying Out of Government Clothing Contracts (Ottawa 1900), 10.

²⁶ Ibid., 19.

²⁷ Ibid.

legislation. All versions of the Factories' Act and the Shops' Act specifically exempted family work in the home from any type of regulation. King observed: "When clothing has been let out to individuals to be made up in their homes, with the assistance only of the members of the household, there was absolutely no restriction as to the conditions under which the work of manufacturer had to be carried on."²⁸

Both public and private inquiries into residential sweat shops revealed that the rural tradition of family work in the home survived in the city. But new circumstances forced this old custom to undergo a severe transformation. In one sense, the image of parents and children working together invites a comparison to the shared family responsibilities characteristic of rural society. But the home sweat shop was a long way from the country quilting-bee. Clothing contracts violated the privacy of working-class homes and subjected adults and children, primarily females, to strenuous conditions over which they exercised little influence. Families confined themselves to small rooms ill-equipped for work while other domestic responsibilities went unattended or fell into the hands of younger children. Long hours of tedious labour brought a minimal return. Despite their usual low status in the hierarchy of work, children indisputably proved to be the decisive factor in the economic feasibility of many contracts. Without the cheap or free labour of children, families would have gained virtually nothing for their efforts.

²⁸ Ibid., 28.

But these conditions were not created by cruel parents who enjoyed subjecting their children to long hours of mind-numbing work. The iniquity lay in the callousness of a competitive economic system that mercilessly squeezed workers for the last drop of their labour power while building private fortunes for retail outlet owners, such as the renowned Canadian businessman Timothy Eaton. Business practice, not family practice, underlay this widespread suffering.

In other areas, working-class families used their homes as bases for personal service industries. Young children carried laundry to and from their home while older siblings assisted in washing and ironing. In cities where single young men and women from the countryside, and immigrant husbands and fathers temporarily separated from their families, composed a significant proportion of the population, the services of room and board were always in wide demand. Family-run boarding houses daily called on children to change sheets, clean rooms, serve meals, and wash dishes. Some homes took in extra customers, or "mealers," at the dinner hour, often resulting in several sittings a day. In other instances, children prepared and carried home-made lunches to parents and other workers at their place of employment. One Hamilton woman who as a child helped her aunt and uncle operate a boarding house reminisced about her youth with telling detail: "Others were a family. We were a business....I couldn't take friends home....I always seemed to be so busy working that I

never had time to really make friends."²⁹ Although these home-centred businesses rose above the conditions of residential sweat shops, child workers still made significant contributions, and sacrifices, on a regular basis. Boarding house operators also encountered the interference of reformers. Michael Katz, Michael Doucet, and Mark Stern explain: "Once boarding acquired its association with poverty, middle-class reformers, increasingly refracting social reality through the new ideal of the private family, began a campaign of denunciation. Boarding emerged in respectable eyes as a cause and symptom of family pathology, a lower-class disease to be cleansed with domesticity."³⁰ Reformers were particularly horrified at the thought of innocent young girls and virile young men residing, and perhaps participating in other friendly acts, under the same roof.

Girls who did not work in their own homes could often be found filling the role of resident or day servant in middle- and upper-class households. In 1868, The Globe reported that domestic service accounted for the largest number of female workers in Toronto and paid wages ranging from four to eight dollars a month with board.³¹ Drawing on census data for 1871,

²⁹ Interview conducted by Jane Synge. Cited in Irving Abella and David Millar, eds, The Canadian Worker in the Twentieth Century (Toronto 1978), 98. See also C.S. Clark, Of Toronto the Good. A Social Study. The Queen City of Canada As it Is (Montreal 1898), 62.

³⁰ Katz, Doucet, and Stern, The Social Organization of Early Industrial Capitalism, 251.

³¹ "Female Labour in Toronto: Its Nature -- Its Extent-- Its Reward," The Globe, 28 October 1868.

Ian Davey found that this occupation was also the largest employer of girls in Hamilton, where approximately ten per cent of households employed servants.³² Large numbers of foreign-born girls, in particular, worked as domestic servants. Michael Katz, Michael Doucet, and Mark Stern calculated that forty per cent of Irish-born Catholic girls between fifteen and seventeen provided service in Hamilton homes in 1871, compared to eighteen per cent of Catholic girls of Irish heritage born in Canada.³³

Unlike Great Britain, where wealthy households frequently employed a group of highly specialized servants, few Canadian homes engaged more than one domestic. Most Canadian girls therefore filled the role of "general servant," performing a host of household tasks, although younger girls often served exclusively as nursemaids for infants and little children. Full-time servants commonly worked seven days a week as well as evenings, enjoying at most two nights off and part of Sunday. City-based domestics usually wore uniforms designating their subservient position and ate and slept in separate quarters. Few employers allowed servants to receive guests. For the most part, domestic service operated well beyond the reach of legislation

³² Ian E. Davey, "Educational Reform and the Working Class: School Attendance in Hamilton, Ontario, 1851-1891," (Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1975), 167.

³³ Katz, Doucet, and Stern, The Social Organization of Early Industrial Capitalism, 261.

and unionization. An observer of female labour, Jean Thomson Scott commented: "Each household seems to be a law to itself."³⁴

By the 1890s, domestic service accounted for over forty per cent of the female work force in Canada, and the typical general servant in Ontario earned between \$8.00 and \$14.00 a month.³⁵ Despite the demand for domestics, the occupation held little appeal. Genevieve Leslie explains:

Domestic service, like domestic labour in general, declined in status with the progress of industrialization. It was not considered an integral part of the economy, and to a large extent was excluded from economic and political discussion. It was "non-productive" service labour; it took place in the home and depended upon a personal relationship between employer and employee; it involved no significant outlay of capital and produced no direct profit. In a society based upon the production of commodities for sale and profit, domestic labour was progressively devalued as production was removed from the home.³⁶

By the turn of the century, a growing number of young girls were turning their backs on the long hours, multiple chores, loneliness, and paternalism of domestic service in favour of greater freedom and independence associated with work in manufacturing and commercial establishments. The resulting shortage of domestics, referred to as the "servant girl problem,"

³⁴ Jean Thomson Scott, The Conditions of Female Labour in Ontario (Toronto 1891), 20. See also Marilyn Barber, "The Women Ontario Welcomed: Immigrant Domestic Workers for Ontario Homes, 1870-1930," in Alison Prentice and Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, eds, The Neglected Majority: Essays in Canadian Women's History, Vol. 2, (Toronto 1985), 102-104.

³⁵ Genevieve Leslie, "Domestic Service in Canada, 1880-1920," 71, and Scott, Female Labour in Ontario, 19.

³⁶ Leslie, "Domestic Service in Canada," 73.

generated considerable disconcertion among middle- and upper-class women, a sentiment succinctly captured by Sara Jeannette Duncan in her novel The Imperialist:

Mrs. Murchison remains the central figure...with her family radiating from her, gathered to help or to hinder in one of those domestic crises which arose when the Murchisons were temporarily deprived of a 'girl'. Everybody was subject to them in Elgin, everybody had to acknowledge and face them. Let a new mill be opened, and it didn't matter what you paid her or how comfortable you made her, off she would go, and you might think yourself lucky if she gave a week's warning. Hard times shut down the mills and brought her back again; but periods of prosperity were very apt to find the ladies of Elgin where I am compelled to introduce Mrs. Murchison -- in the kitchen.³⁷

Outside of home, school, and factory, many children spent part of their days and nights working, playing, or loitering on city streets. One of the striking by-products of industrialization and urbanization was a vibrant and colourful street culture that occasionally exhibited elements of ritual and hierarchy. Testifying before the Royal Labor Commission in the late 1880s, Toronto's mayor W.H. Howland reported that male street gangs went through "a regular process of electing a leader."³⁸ Prior to the creation of formal areas of recreation, public streets and laneways served as natural playgrounds. Working-class children, in particular, most of whom lived close to the downtown core, treated city streets as a beckoning universe to be explored and

³⁷ Sara Jeannette Duncan, The Imperialist (Toronto 1971), 15. See also Helen Lenskyj, "A 'Servant Problem' or a 'Servant-Mistress Problem'?: Domestic Service in Canada, 1890-1930," Atlantis, Vol. 7, No. 1, Fall 1981.

³⁸ Royal Labor Commission, Ontario evidence, 164.

conquered. "You can scarcely walk a block without your attention being drawn to one or more of the class called street boys," wrote Toronto author C.S. Clark in 1898.³⁹ In some instances, the streets represented prize turf fought over by rival gangs of boys. Toronto truant officer W.C. Wilkinson occasionally broke up fights between Catholic and Protestant schoolboys.⁴⁰ Other times, the streets provided a training ground for petty thieves. Describing the 1890s, novelist Jack London wrote: "Drunken men are the especial prey of the road-kids. Robbing a drunk man they call 'rolling a stiff'; and wherever they are, they are on the constant lookout for drunks."⁴¹

The streets also served as home for hundreds of children who had either run away from or been abandoned by their families or charitable institutions. These were the infamous "waifs and strays" who traipsed city streets by day and huddled in doorways and abandoned buildings at night seeking warmth and shelter. Beginning in the 1880s, charitable societies such as Toronto's Jarvis Street Mission provided some of these youngsters with temporary accommodation.⁴² In 1889, 539 waifs spent some of

³⁹ C.S. Clark, Of Toronto the Good, 81.

⁴⁰ Wilkinson Diaries.

⁴¹ Jack London, The Road (London 1967). Cited in Abella and Millar, The Canadian Worker in the Twentieth Century, 11.

⁴² B.E. Bull, "City Mission Work," The Methodist Magazine, Vol. XXXVII, June 1893, 580. See also "The Arabs of the Street," The Globe, 4 and 10 January 1866; "Oliver Twist Again," The Toronto World, 16 July 1881; "Waifs in the Streets," Canadian Advance, 3 June 1888; and A.M. Belding, "A Child of the Street," The Week, January 1892.

their nights in Toronto police stations.⁴³ These children usually begged for money around restaurants and coffee houses, appealing to the charitable impulses of sympathetic customers. According to one Toronto journalist, these pitiful little creatures were "the sport of chance and the children of misfortune. They find themselves in the midst of the stern battle of life, fighting for an existence, years before the children of well-to-do parents have taken the first step towards preparing themselves for the fray."⁴⁴

Waifs and strays were not the only children who turned to the streets to raise a little money. Many youngsters, some under instruction from their parents, begged for loose change from passers-by, spinning tales of hardship to extract pity as well as cash from sympathetic pedestrians.⁴⁵ Other children sought more formal means of making a living on public streets. A police survey of 1887 uncovered approximately 700 youngsters, the vast majority of them boys, who regularly played music, sang and danced, polished shoes, or sold newspapers, pencils, shoelaces,

⁴³ "Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Prison and Reformatory System of Ontario" ("Prison Reform Commission"), Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1891, Vol. XXIII, Part IV, No. 18, 25.

⁴⁴ Toronto Daily News, Toronto by Gaslight: Thrilling Sketches of the Nighthawks of a Great City (Toronto 1885), 48.

⁴⁵ NAC, J.J. Kelso Papers, MG30 C97, Vol. 4; "Annual Reports of the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1894-1909; NAC, Records of the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa, MG28 I84, Minutes, 1893-1906; and "Industrial Schools," The Globe, 4 November 1878.

fruit, or other small wares on the streets of Toronto.⁴⁶ W. McVitty, Chief Constable of Ottawa, reported in 1890 that the streets of the capital city supported approximately 175 newsboys.⁴⁷ Many children earned money as scavengers, gathering or stealing material from the street and selling to second-hand merchants and junk dealers. Lead pipes, brass taps, and door locks found in vacant buildings were favourite targets of this activity. In an attempt to reduce traffic in this trade, the Ontario Legislature in 1900 passed an amendment to the Municipal Act allowing local councils and police commissions to enact a by-law forbidding merchants to buy material from individuals under eighteen.⁴⁸

A more visible street occupation pursued by young boys was shining shoes. Writer C.S. Clark provided a detailed description of Toronto's "bootblacks" in 1898:

A boy provides himself with a box with a sliding lid, and a rest for the feet of his customer, a box of blacking and a pair of good brushes. All these articles are kept in the box, when not in use, and the owner carries this receptacle by means of a leather strap fastened to it, which he slings across his shoulder and trudges on with his box on his back. They are generally sharp, shrewd lads with any number of bad habits and little or no principles, and are averse to giving much information with respect to themselves; when asked how much they earn, they give evasive answers, but one dollar is supposed to be the average daily earnings of an industrious boy. The price of a new outfit or kit is perhaps worth a dollar, but second hand outfits can be bought at the junk dealers for much

⁴⁶ Kelso Papers, Vol. 4.

⁴⁷ "Prison Reform Commission," 372-73.

⁴⁸ Ontario, Statutes, 1900, Chapter 33, Section 20.

less. Some of the larger boys spend a considerable portion of their earnings for tobacco and drink.⁴⁹

Of all the young street vendors, one group stood out -- the newsboys.⁵⁰ Newsboys even surfaced as central characters in many popular children's stories.⁵¹ More than the other street traders, newsboys were serious businessmen, not simply charity cases trying to scrape together a few pennies. A small percentage of boys delivered door to door, but the greater number worked late into the evenings selling on the street. The boys usually picked up and paid for their papers at the newspaper office and then rode the street car to various locations. Most lads worked alone, but more experienced boys bought their papers in bulk and distributed them among a network of younger sellers. Newsboys knew how to embellish a headline, especially those dealing with murder and scandal, to attract the attention of potential customers. Another common newsboy's trick was to approach a customer with a single paper claiming that it was the

⁴⁹ C.S. Clark, Of Toronto the Good, 82-83.

⁵⁰ The following descriptions of newsboys are drawn from Kelso Papers; "Prison Reform Commission," testimony of J.J. Kelso, 723-29, and George Alfred Barnett, Superintendent of the Newsboys' Home, Toronto, 729-30; Ontario, Report of Committee on Child Labor (Toronto 1907); Clark, Of Toronto the Good; J.J. Kelso, Protection of Children: Early History of the Humane and Children's Aid Movement in Ontario 1886-1893 (Toronto 1911); Karl Baedeker, The Dominion of Canada (London 1900); "The Industrial School," The Telegram, 18 April 1878; "The Tag System Abortive," The Toronto World, 22 November 1890; "The Waifs of the Street," The Globe, 18 April 1891; and "Around Town," Saturday Night, Vol. 10, No. 1, 21 November 1896.

⁵¹ TBE, Second Reading Book: Royal Canadian Series (Toronto 1883); and Kelso Papers, Vol. 4.

last one he had to sell before heading home. If the unwary citizen fell for the con, the newsboy then returned to his hidden pile of papers and repeated the trick. Newsboys stationed themselves near the entrance of hotels, where they undersold the stands inside, and always stood out prominently, along with other young street traders, around the train station. A passive visitor to Toronto, unable to resist the persistent overtures of the newsboys, bootblacks, and fruit vendors, would at least leave Union Station well-informed, well-polished, and well-fed.

Undoubtedly, some newsboys pursued their profession as a matter of personal choice, preferring the small income and independence of the street to the demands and discipline of the school system. In most cases, however, newsboys made vital contributions to the family economy. In some instances, the earnings of a newsboy shielded a poor family from utter destitution. When W.C. Wilkinson inquired into the absence from school of fourteen-year-old William Laughlin, the lad's mother told him: "The boy was the principal support to the house, the father having been ill for a long time. The boy carried out papers morning and evening."⁵² This entry from Wilkinson's diary also indicates the importance of children as substitute wage-earners. In his notebooks, newspaper reporter and reformer J.J. Kelso expressed his belief that some newsboys fully supported their parents on earnings of between sixty cents and \$1.00 per day. Kelso added: "Most of the children sent out at a tender age

⁵² Wilkinson Diaries, Vol. 5, 9 December 1873.

to sell papers are of foreign birth. These children earn so much that their parents continue them at it and in some cases the fathers cease work and live on their children's earnings."⁵³ Testifying before the Prison Reform Commission in 1891, Kelso stated that "a large number of mothers are dependent on children for support" and added that the extra income earned by youngsters on the street helped compensate for winter unemployment which plagued many working-class families.⁵⁴

Despite their importance as wage-earners, the vast majority of newsboys, bootblacks, and other street vendors occupied dead-end jobs that promised no viable future employment. Although some useful skills could be learned on the street, only a tiny percentage of street traders broke into the world of formal business. Lacking education and a recognized trade, the majority of them would never rise above the station of unskilled labourer. Moreover, the "privation, exposure and irregular life" that characterized the street traders' existence, as one observer put it, frequently led to petty crime and permanent vagrancy.⁵⁵

Although a majority of newsboys lived with their parents and pounded the streets daily to augment the family coffers, a significant number of lads answered only to themselves. In 1891, J.J. Kelso estimated that 200 newsboys in Toronto had no parents

⁵³ Kelso Papers, Vol. 8.

⁵⁴ "Prison Reform Commission," 727; and Kelso Papers, Vol. 5.

⁵⁵ Report of Committee on Child Labor, 11.

or responsible guardians. Kelso contended that economic deprivation drove these children to sell newspapers beginning at ages as young as five and six.⁵⁶ A few of these homeless lads sought nightly shelter in newspaper offices while others turned to charitable boarding houses, some of which catered especially to their needs. Catholic newsboys in Toronto could seek shelter at the St. Nicholas Home. The largest and best known of these institutions, however, was the Newsboys' Lodging and Industrial Home in Toronto, established in 1867 by philanthropist Daniel Wilson. Originally located on Frederick Street, this privately-funded institution sheltered homeless boys between the ages of nine and seventeen in return for their promise to maintain personal cleanliness and abstain from using profane language. In its early years, the home encouraged boys to sell newspapers or perform other small jobs such as shovelling snow in an attempt to have the lads achieve independence and self-reliance. In the early 1890s, the home moved to Oakham House at the corner of Church and Gould and brought its policies into line with the new ideas of the growing child welfare movement. The home now frowned on newspaper-selling and encouraged its residents to pursue a skilled trade or seek employment with a family in the countryside. It is instructive to note that the home had only shifted its position on the type of work children should perform; the idea of work itself remained a central tenet of proper childhood training.

⁵⁶ "Prison Reform Commission," 724.

In its second location, the Newsboys' Home charged ten cents per day for supper, bed, and breakfast, and \$1.30 per week for full room and board. Many free-spirited boys, however, bristled at the home's regular curfew of 7:00 p.m., and extended curfew of 9:00 p.m. two nights a week, and sought its services only during the most desperate of the winter months. On the other hand, some lads resided in the home over a period of seven years. In 1891, superintendent George Alfred Barnett reported that the home sheltered twenty-five to thirty-five boys per night although it had space for fifty. Barnett also revealed that many lads abandoned their rural placements, especially during summer. By the turn of the century, the institution, now known as the Working Boys' Home of Toronto, charged its residents in proportion to their earnings and featured night classes taught by university students, a gymnasium, and a marching band with uniforms. In 1905, the home averaged forty-eight boys per night. Throughout its existence, the institution depended primarily on private funds, drawing only occasionally on government grants.⁵⁷

Despite the efforts of the Working Boys' Home to appeal to its special clientele, many street boys rejected its regulations and moral overtones and took their business to cheap commercial boarding houses. Mike's Place on Front Street in Toronto, for

⁵⁷ The Newsboys' Lodging and Industrial Home (The Working Boys' Home), Annual Reports; Kelso Papers, Vol. 4; Royal Labor Commission, Ontario evidence; "Prison Reform Commission," testimony of J.J. Kelso, 723-29, and George Alfred Barnett, 729-30; "The Tag System Abortive," Toronto World, 22 November 1890; The Evangelical Churchman, Prison Reform Number, Vol. XXII, No. 8, 25 February 1897; and J.J. Kelso, Protection of Children.

example, charged five cents for space on the floor and ten cents for the luxury of a bunk.⁵⁸ J.J. Kelso reported that it was common for five or six newsboys to share a room.⁵⁹ Another Toronto reformer expressed horror at the physical and moral atmosphere of one such lodging:

In a small cellar with low ceilings, dimly lighted, the air reeking with the fumes of tobacco and whiskey, we would find 100 or 125 men and boys; some playing cards, others drinking and smoking, while the coarse jest, ribald song, and blasphemous utterances continually shocked the ear and heart. Around the sides of this den was a shelf on which the men slept, heads to the wall, feet outward, with no pillow or clothing to cover them other than the rags they wore. So crowded were they that many had to sleep on the floor. For this they were charged five cents by the proprietor, who made money by the business.⁶⁰

Although boys dominated the street trades, girls commanded the business in at least one area -- prostitution. In 1887, J.J. Kelso estimated that the streets of Toronto supported approximately 100 female vendors between the ages of nine and fifteen, "practically all immoral and who used the selling as an excuse for accosting men; with a few pencils or shoelaces as a pretext they roamed through office buildings, warehouses and saloons." According to Kelso, "the traffic was so widespread that the Police and benevolent citizens confessed their inability to cope with it." Kelso also described "vile women who collected groups of five or six girls and arranged appointments for them with men

⁵⁸ Kelso Papers, Vol. 8.

⁵⁹ Kelso Papers, Vol. 4.

⁶⁰ Bull, "City Mission Work," 580.

at offices, hotels and summer resorts."⁶¹ Testifying before the Royal Labor Commission, Toronto's reform mayor W.H. Howland contended that some girls became prostitutes as a result of their lazy disposition. Reflecting the reformer's concern for the development of industrious habits in young people, Howland postulated: "Their laziness becomes a matter of education and training; they have led a lazy life for such a time that they become unfitted for industry." Howland admitted, however, that other girls turned to prostitution because of the paucity of well-paying jobs for females.⁶² In 1890, Howland shocked the members of the Prison Reform Commission with tales of an eleven-year-old prostitute.⁶³ The same inquiry heard David Archibald, Staff-Inspector of the Toronto Police Force, express his belief that the social contamination of street life led approximately three-quarters of newsgirls and other female street vendors into prostitution.⁶⁴ Author C.S. Clark, who claimed that he had once been approached by a twelve-year-old girl who offered him her services for twenty-five cents in a laneway, maintained that poverty was the main impetus behind prostitution. Clark added his belief that many prostitutes began as domestic servants who had been seduced by their male employers.⁶⁵ Although prostitu-

⁶¹ Kelso Papers, Vol. 1.

⁶² Royal Labor Commission, Ontario evidence, 167.

⁶³ "Prison Reform Commission," 689.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 701.

⁶⁵ CLark, Of Toronto the Good, 89.

tion was most visible in large urban centres, it was not unknown to small towns. In 1894, J.J. Kelso, now the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children of Ontario, uncovered a brothel in Orillia operated by a woman and her fifteen-year-old daughter.⁶⁶

Waifs, newsboys, prostitutes, and other children of the street consistently attracted the attention of middle-class reformers, especially the group known as "child-savers." These individuals objected to the presence of so many roughly hewn youngsters on public streets and feared that extensive exposure to the harsher elements of city life would turn vulnerable children into vile and irresponsible adults. Specifically, reformers believed that life on the street created a distaste for regular employment, permanently locked youngsters into a class of unskilled, casual workers, and engendered a dangerous disrespect for law, order, and authority. In more personal terms, many reformers were authentically disturbed by the long hours, excessive fatigue, inclement weather, irregular sleeping and eating habits, widespread use of stimulants such as tobacco, coffee, and liquor, and exposure to sexual and other diseases that characterized the street children's existence. Genuine elements of humanitarian concern, however, did not distract reformers from their central argument that an uncontrolled street

⁶⁶ "Second Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1895, Vol. XXVII, Part VI, No. 29.

culture would place greater burden on the public purse through the maintenance of jails and houses of refuge.

Reformers contemplated this problem as early as 1860. Addressing a grand jury in that year, Judge John H. Hagerty warned: "The streets of Toronto, like those of too many other towns, still present the miserable spectacle of idle, untaught children, male and female -- a crop too rapidly ripening for the dram-shop, the brothel and the prison."⁶⁷ More than thirty years later, J.J. Kelso complained that "immorality among these children was exceedingly common and apart from a few church missions very little was done of a constructive character." Referring to street boys in Toronto, Kelso wrote: "Their pinched faces were prematurely developed in vice, cunning and deceit."⁶⁸ Testifying before the Prison Reform Commission, both W.H. Howland, the former mayor of Toronto, and Lieutenant-Colonel H. J. Grasett, Chief of Police, claimed that gangs of boys were responsible for a large degree of petty crime. According to Grasset, Toronto suffered from a "preponderance of cases of this kind."⁶⁹

Because of their large numbers and high visibility, newsboys and bootblacks most frequently came under the scrutiny of re-

⁶⁷ Journal of Education, April 1860, 56. Cited in Michael B. Katz, "Who Went to School?," in Michael B. Katz and Paul H. Mattingly, eds, Education and Social Change: Themes From Ontario's Past (New York, 1975), 272.

⁶⁸ Kelso Papers, Vol. 1.

⁶⁹ "Prison Reform Commission," 700.

formers who believed that such occupations developed undesirable habits and led to trouble-filled futures. Author C.S. Clark summarized the reformers' main concerns: "The course of life which they pursue leads to miserable results, as when a newsboy gets to be seventeen years of age he finds that his avocation is at an end, it does not produce money enough and he has acquired lazy, listless habits, which totally unfit him for any kind of work. He becomes a vagrant and perhaps worse, and a wanderer all over the country."⁷⁰ In the estimation of W.H. Howland, "it was ruinous to a boy to become a newsboy, in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand."⁷¹ J.J. Kelso believed that some newsboys "lived with debased and drunken parents and guardians who cared nothing for their innocence or morality, but used them solely for ill-gotten gain."⁷² Kelso questioned the role of newsboys' homes, pointed out the harmful side effects of life on the street, and put forward a curious solution to the problem of newspaper-selling which revealed that, in Kelso's mind at least, the welfare state was still many years in the future:

Instead of establishing fancy clubs for newsboys, with reading rooms, brass band, etc., would it not be much better to take the boy out of the business altogether and put him in the way of learning a useful trade. Newspaper-selling is not a desirable occupation for young lads, as it usually unfits them for a life of steady, plodding industry and leads them into habits that too often end in the police court. Selling newspapers on the street is a business that could be

⁷⁰ Clark, Of Toronto the Good, 83.

⁷¹ Royal Labor Commission, Ontario evidence, 161.

⁷² Kelso Papers, Vol. 5.

very well relegated to old men, cripples, etc., many of whom could be happy and self-supporting in a business of this kind.⁷³

Fearful of the social consequences of an uncontrolled street culture among other problems, Mayor W.H. Howland of Toronto created the Department of Morality in 1886 to attend to "all matters relating to the protection of women, children and animals, and the enforcement of laws against gambling, immorality, etc."⁷⁴ In the same year, J.J. Kelso, with the assistance of City Clerk John Blevins, lobbied successfully for an amendment to the Ontario Municipal Act that would allow local Police Boards to pass by-laws regulating child street vendors. The following year, Kelso and other leading members of the Toronto Humane Society approached the Police Commission with specific recommendations to control "the hordes of children that thronged the down-town streets selling papers, peddling, begging and stealing."⁷⁵ By 1890, the commission enacted a law that required street vendors under the age of sixteen to apply for a licence, and forbade boys under eight and girls of any age to participate in the street trades at all. To qualify for a badge, a boy had to remain free of trouble with the police and the courts, avoid associating with thieves, and attend school at

⁷³ "Fourteenth Report -- Neglected and Dependent Children," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1907, Vol. XXXIX, Part VII, No. 35, 42. See also Kelso Papers, Vol. 14.

⁷⁴ Kelso Papers, Vol. 1. See also Desmond Morton, Mayor Howland: The Citizens' Candidate (Toronto 1973).

⁷⁵ Kelso Papers, Vol. 1.

least two hours per day. Violators, in addition to having their privileges revoked, could be fined or sentenced to jail or the industrial school.

Newspaper publishers, many of whom frequently devoted eloquent editorials to reform causes, changed their tune dramatically when the issue landed on their own doorsteps. Newspaper owners glanced sideways at their cash boxes, sensed that the regulation of newsboys would seriously curtail their street sales, and stripped away the thin veneer of their own reform impulses by launching an outright attack on Kelso's law. Editorials portrayed Kelso as "the enemy and persecutor of well-intentioned, industrious children who were laudably assisting in the support of their homes."⁷⁶ The Toronto World ridiculed Kelso as a "Humanitarian Pooh-Bah" with "a fondness for spouting from platforms, of having a lot of old ladies dancing about him, and still fonder of his own good looks."⁷⁷ Other newspapers claimed that children who were driven from the street would end up in worse trouble. Some editors contended that Kelso's law would encourage vile parents to send unwanted children out to the street in the hope that the industrial school would assume responsibility for them. In an ingenious attempt to show that Kelso did not speak for all reformers, The Toronto World reported that even the Salvation Army, which commonly enlisted children to sell its newspaper The War Cry on city streets, objected to

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ The Toronto World, 18 April 1890.

Kelso's law. The Sally Ann claimed that this practice provided good training for their young members.⁷⁸ One paper expressed its objection in a piece of doggerel entitled "Tag Town:"

This is the town where everybody must be tagged.
 The Dogs are tagged.
 The Letter Carriers are tagged.
 The Waterworks Inspectors are tagged.
 The Policemen are tagged.
 The Street Car Conductors and Drivers are tagged.
 The Firemen have tags.
 And now Tagger Kelso wants to put a tag on the Newsboys
 and on the Cab Drivers, the Medical Students and the
 Book Clerks.
 The Tagger is thinking of a law to tag school children.
 Tag! Tag!! Tag!!!⁷⁹

Although over 500 boys applied for licences in the first year, the police failed to enforce the regulations rigorously and the law quickly fell into disuse. With the exception of the elimination of girls from the trade, most observers generally considered the scheme to be a failure.⁸⁰ As late as 1910, the problem was still so prevalent that the Toronto Children's Aid Society launched a campaign to draw attention to boys under eight who sold newspapers and other small wares on the street late at night.⁸¹ The major flaw in the regulation was its failure to recognize the enormous distance between controlled orderliness as prescribed by law and the burden of poverty. Irrespective of the

⁷⁸ Kelso Papers, Vol. 31.

⁷⁹ Kelso Papers, Vol. 1.

⁸⁰ "Annual Report of the Newsboys' Lodging Home," Toronto World, 22 November 1890.

⁸¹ Neil Sutherland, Children in English-Canadian Society: Framing the Twentieth Century Consensus (Toronto 1976), 114.

intentions of social legislation, many working-class families depended on the extra income their children generated on the street. For some homeless youngsters, street work constituted their sole means of support. Furthermore, the arguments reformers put forward in favour of regulation revealed a deeper concern with public morality and social values than with the economic circumstances of street vendors and their families. This attitude is especially evident in the extra restrictions placed on girls, the future wives and mothers of the nation. Susan Houston's comment on child beggars is equally applicable to young street traders: "It was their habits rather than their conditions that roused the ire of reformers."⁸²

Some of these habits, reformers claimed, resulted from the influences of new forms of entertainment and recreation that characterized a major part of street culture. "The billiard halls of this city are not supported by men, but by lads," wrote a Toronto reporter in 1885. The author went on to describe the customs of a large class of under-age pool hustlers, many of whom dressed fashionably and sported gold and silver watches. If the pool tables were occupied, a boy could always locate a poker game, but he would need to be wary of the professional sharks who commonly lurked around card tables hoping to bilk novice players of their cash.⁸³ In 1907, Chief Constable H.J. Grasett wrote:

⁸² Susan E. Houston, "Victorian Origins of Juvenile Delinquency: A Canadian Experience," in Katz and Mattingly, Education and Social Change, 86.

⁸³ Toronto Daily News, Toronto by Gaslight, 7.

"The Police report an increasing number of young boys frequenting pool rooms, and as the moral atmosphere of these places is none of the best, I would recommend a change of the age limit from 16 to 18."⁸⁴

Cheap theatres also incited the wrath of reformers. J.J. Kelso claimed that in Toronto hundreds of boys between seven and fifteen regularly attended shows that commonly portrayed characters of questionable morals as heroes. Kelso believed that some boys resorted to theft to gain the five- or ten-cent admission price to these shows.⁸⁵ This style of popular theatre, Kelso warned, was "almost invariably injurious to character" and, in addition to theft, led to idleness, cigarette-smoking, and the keeping of late hours.⁸⁶ Some of these shows also featured children as performers, counting on their youthful exuberance to appeal to audiences.⁸⁷ As late as 1907, the Ottawa Free Press argued that "these places of amusement make the young people unsettled and unfit for school and work."⁸⁸ The following year the Ottawa Children's Aid Society issued a public indictment against "theatres, cigarettes and pool rooms for leading young people astray" and established a committee to investigate cheap

⁸⁴ Annual Report of the Chief Constable of the City of Toronto for the Year 1907 (Toronto 1908), 8.

⁸⁵ "Prison Reform Commission," 726.

⁸⁶ "Fourteenth Report -- Neglected and Dependent Children," 17.

⁸⁷ Kelso Papers, Vol. 15.

⁸⁸ Ottawa Free Press, 23 November 1907.

theatres and propose recommendations to regulate them.⁸⁹ Reporting on behalf of the National Council of Women of Canada in 1905, Mrs. Gardiner provided an extreme example of the undesirable influence of popular entertainment on youngsters: "Could stronger evidence of the necessity of our work be given than the voluntary confession of a thirteen-year-old girl, now under arrest in Toronto for an awful murder, that it was seeing and reading the posters of a play that suggested to her the idea of her crime?"⁹⁰ In 1908, Chief Constable Grasett recommended banning children under sixteen from all theatres unless accompanied by their parents or guardians.⁹¹

If reformers could not remove the street from children, perhaps they could remove children from the street, at least part of the time. In 1893, the Ontario Legislature passed "An Act for the Prevention of Cruelty to, and Better Protection of Children," the final clause of which granted municipal councils the right to declare a public curfew for youngsters unaccompanied by an adult. Parents whose children habitually violated the curfew could be fined between \$1.00 and \$5.00.⁹² The Women's Christian

⁸⁹ "Sixteenth Report -- Neglected and Dependent Children," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1909, Vol. XLI, Part VIII, No. 35, 46.

⁹⁰ Mrs. Gardiner, "Report of the Committee on Objectionable Printed Material," National Council of Women of Canada, Report (1905). Cited in Veronica Jane Strong-Boag, The Parliament of Women: The National Council of Women of Canada 1893-1929 (Ottawa 1976), 102.

⁹¹ Annual Report of the Chief Constable of the City of Toronto for the Year 1908 (Toronto 1909), 6.

⁹² Ontario, Statutes, 1893, Chapter 45, Section 31.

Temperance Union (WCTU) joined with local Children's Aid Societies in encouraging municipalities to enact the law.⁹³ Over forty towns and cities in Ontario eventually proclaimed a curfew, but in 1897 J.J. Kelso wrote: "In several towns the law has been brought into ridicule owing to the utter indifference of officials."⁹⁴ Kelso repeated his assessment in 1906: "Not one of these towns today makes any attempt to enforce the regulation and even the WCTU has grown weary of its advocacy."⁹⁵

Realizing that it would be impossible to remove children completely from the clutches of street life, reformers pursued a second option -- the creation of playgrounds. In a reformer's mind, the ideal playground would be supervised, sexually segregated, and equipped with exercise equipment and game facilities. In addition to relieving the streets of large numbers of mischievous children, this type of recreational area would indoctrinate youngsters with acceptable social values. Among these virtues, a positive attitude toward honest, productive labour figured prominently. Toronto School Inspector James L. Hughes explained the connection between play and work: "Play is the work of childhood. It is the greatest agent in co-ordinating the different energies of the brain. It develops a

⁹³ "Second Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1895, Vol. XXVII, Part VI, No. 29.

⁹⁴ "Fourth Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1897, Vol. XXIX, Part V, No. 16, XX.

⁹⁵ Kelso Papers, Vol. 35.

tendency to work, and cultivates in the energetic player the physical force and the characteristic aggressive spirit that enjoys work and accomplishes mighty deeds."⁹⁶ J.J. Kelso agreed: "Children like to be usefully employed, and boys can readily be taught carpentering, plumbing and other industries as part of their play life....Every city should provide its young people with free grounds for football, baseball, cricket, bowling and tennis. Reward comes back in a citizenship possessed of better health and greater efficiency."⁹⁷ Kelso and other reformers also regarded organized play as a guide to proper feminine development. Reformers enjoyed only limited success in this area in the late nineteenth century and it was not until 1908 that Kelso founded the Toronto Playgrounds Association to put more of these ideas into action.

In private homes and on public streets, working-class children in late nineteenth-century Ontario routinely performed a variety of important economic duties that directly contributed to the successful functioning of the family economy. Youngsters not only assisted their families in this way, but in many cases provided valuable services to a demanding urban clientele. The widespread practice of child labour exposed the poverty and

⁹⁶ James L. Hughes, Inspector's Report to the Public School Board for 1893 (Toronto 1894), 30. See also Bruce Curtis, "The Playground in Nineteenth-Century Ontario: Theory and Practice," Material History Bulletin, Vol. 22, Fall 1985.

⁹⁷ J.J. Kelso, "Value of Play," Kelso Papers, Vol. 1.

insecurity that plagued many families which could not rely on industrial wages alone to meet the demands of urban life. At the same time, the use of youngsters as regular or auxiliary workers denoted a family strategy that was both rational and flexible in its response to new and challenging circumstances. In the short term, working-class families could depend on children to add the last necessary ingredient to their formula for survival. In the long term, youngsters paid the price.

Children who worked at home or on the street instead of attending school received little compensation in the form of job training. Although contractors often relied on the ruse of apprenticeship to encourage home workers to exploit their own children, the only opportunities associated with such labour were missed opportunities. The sweat shop industries and street trades in particular exposed youngsters to elements that were both socially and physically harmful while offering no promise of occupational advancement. Home-centred enterprises also disrupted normal family relations and deprived working-class children of the solace, privacy, and security that most middle- and upper-class youngsters enjoyed as a matter of natural right. Young girls who worked as domestic servants in the homes of others toiled long hours in almost complete isolation for very little pay.

Social legislation and various reform measures, which usually aimed at controlling children's behaviour rather than improving their conditions, registered little immediate impact.

In their attempt to make society safe for middle-class values, reformers concentrated more on the symptoms of social maladies than on their causes. Always at the centre of reformers' concerns was the desire to avoid future costs of social welfare. Furthermore, reformers' devotion to the work ethic clouded the distinction between social idealism and economic reality. Legislation set standards for proper social conduct, but it did little to eliminate poverty and exploitation. Most reformers, of course, did not view the unequal distribution of wealth and power as the root cause of social problems. In most cases, they preferred to blame the poor for their own conditions. W.C. Wilkinson and the Toronto Public School Board, for example, believed that "lack of proper control by parents" was the source of irregular school attendance among working-class children.⁹⁸ Yet Wilkinson himself had recorded numerous instances of school-aged children performing important economic duties at home. Wilkinson and his cohorts might have arrived nearer to the truth had they set their sights on business élites whose hold over economic power forced many working-class families to stretch their resources to the limit simply to survive. Even trade unions exercised little influence over the conditions of many working-class families. Indeed, evidence shows that union time restrictions in clothing workshops that paid by the piece forced

⁹⁸ Archives of Ontario, Responses to G.W. Ross's inquiry of July 1895 regarding revisions of the Truancy Act, RG22 Acc.9631, Printed Circular No. 47, W.C. Wilkinson, secretary-treasurer, Toronto Public School Board, to G.W. Ross, Minister of Education, 8 October 1895.

employees to continue their work at home with the assistance of their families.

One group of historians has argued that "the family is an institution which industrialization shaped by removing the home from the site of the workplace."⁹⁹ Most others would agree in principle. Once free from the production-oriented nature of farm life, the family could devote more time to social development and material consumption. Yet for many children from poor families, work and home remained one, and the greater social and economic opportunities that allegedly accompanied urban life never materialized. Urban poverty forced many working-class households to apply the rural tradition of shared family responsibilities to meet the challenge of city life. But the transposition was not an easy one. Urban-industrial life provided less insular protection than the farmstead and presented workers with a greater number of competing forces. Consequently, old customs were forced to adapt to new and demanding circumstances. Despite the different pattern of social and economic relations forged by urban life, country and city still shared one common feature: in many poor neighbourhoods at least, work in and around the home remained a family affair.

⁹⁹ Russell G. Hann, Gregory S. Kealey, Linda Kealey, and Peter Warrian, "Introduction," Primary Sources in Canadian Working Class History 1860-1930 (Kitchener 1973), 18.

CHAPTER IV

CHILD-SAVING: THE CARE OF NEGLECTED AND DEPENDENT CHILDREN

It is wiser and less expensive
to save children than to pun-
ish criminals

Children's Aid Society slogan

On a cold November evening in 1887, two ragged children, brother and sister, huddled in the shadows of a doorway on Toronto's Yonge Street and pleaded for loose change from passersby. Shortly after 11:00 p.m., a young reporter stumbled across the two pitiful, shivering waifs. The youngsters told the concerned journalist that they would be beaten by their drunken father if they returned home empty-handed. The sympathetic reporter took the children under his wing and set off across the city in search of an orphans' home where they could spend the night in warmth and safety. Much to the good Samaritan's surprise and despair, none of the institutions he approached would take the youngsters off the street. Sometime after midnight, exhausted and despondent, the reporter found the children a tiny room in a cheap men's lodging. The following day, the journalist recounted his nocturnal adventure for the benefit of his readers and beseeched civic authorities to open a children's temporary

shelter to deal with emergency cases such as the one he had encountered.¹

J.J. Kelso's experience that night in Toronto depicted but one facet of a leading social issue in late Victorian Ontario--the care of neglected and dependent children, or, in the more dramatic language of the times, "child-saving." Like most Canadians of his generation, Kelso believed that children's needs were best served by the nuclear family. For centuries, the family had nurtured and protected its young, provided the necessities of life, and served as the primary agent of socialization. But not all children enjoyed the benefits of an ideal or even adequate family environment. Premature death of a parent, prolonged illness, neglect, poverty, and a host of other possible disruptions threatened the stability of the nuclear family and forced thousands of homeless youngsters to fend for themselves or turn to relatives, friends, private charities, or public support systems for assistance. The provisions made for neglected and dependent children thus reveal a society's valuation of childhood as well as its commitment to collective responsibility, public welfare, and social equality.

In the nineteenth century, the treatment of needy children passed through three distinct phases. In the early years of the century, civic officials usually dealt with the problem of parentless and other dependent youngsters by arranging guardian-

¹ National Archives of Canada (NAC), J.J. Kelso Papers, MG30 C97, Vol. 4.

ships or apprenticeships for them.² Neither method required significant funding or intervention from the State and the latter option reflected an almost universal belief in the social and economic value of child labour. During the middle decades of the century, private philanthropists, mindful of the unique nature of childhood as a formative stage in the life cycle, instituted orphans' homes to shelter parentless youngsters and those whose families had fallen on hard times due to poverty, illness, death, or other temporary or prolonged crisis. Orphanages provided their residents with industrial and religious training before returning them to their families or arranging placements for them as agricultural workers or domestic servants. Nearing the end of the 1800s, a new breed of child-savers, among whom J.J. Kelso would figure prominently, widened the definition of needy children to include those who suffered from parental neglect or cruelty. This group promoted the idea of foster homes as the most efficient, humane, and economical approach to child welfare.

These separate approaches to the treatment of neglected and dependent children demonstrate both change and continuity in the structure and ideology of child welfare in nineteenth-century Ontario. Most late-century child-savers, and many later historians, emphasized the positive aspects of the changes: a greater recognition of the special needs and malleability of

² C. Owen Spettigue, An Historical Review of Ontario Legislation on Child Welfare (Toronto 1957), 10-12.

children as individuals and as a social group; the establishment of agencies and procedures designed specifically for children; an emphasis on environment over heredity as a factor in determining human behaviour; the weakening of absolute parental discretion in favour of a code of moral behaviour defined and enforced by the State; the transition from unsystematic philanthropic voluntarism to uniform State regulation; and the onset of professionalism, including the eventual introduction of trained, paid social workers.³ Although these developments unquestionably led to significant changes in the treatment of neglected and dependent children, other aspects of child welfare remained constant: the overwhelming dominance of middle-class reformers and objectives

³ A wide range of views of the changing nature of child welfare in nineteenth-century Ontario can be found in the following secondary sources: Ian Bain, "The Role of J.J. Kelso in the Launching of the Child Welfare Movement in Ontario," (MSW thesis, University of Toronto, 1955); Walter Baker, "The Place of the Private Agency in the Administration of Government Policies: The Ontario Children's Aid System, 1893-1965," (Ph.D. thesis, Queen's University, 1966); Jane-Alice K. Dawe, "An Historical Study of the Transition from Institutional to Foster Care for Children in Ontario, 1891-1921," (MSW thesis, University of Toronto, 1966); Russell Jolliffe, "The History of the Children's Aid Society of Toronto, 1891-1947," (MSW thesis, University of Toronto, 1952); Andrew Jones and Leonard Rutman, In the Children's Aid: J.J. Kelso and Child Welfare in Ontario (Toronto 1981); Terrence Morrison, "The Child and Urban Social Reform in Late Nineteenth Century Ontario 1875-1900," (Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1971); Dean Ramsey, "The Development of Child Welfare Legislation in Ontario," (MSW thesis, University of Toronto, 1949); Patricia T. Rooke and R.L. Schnell, Discarding the Asylum: From Child Rescue to the Welfare State in English-Canada, 1800-1950 (Lanham 1983); C. Owen Spettigue, An Historical Review of Ontario Legislation on Child Welfare (Toronto 1957); Richard B. Splane, Social Welfare in Ontario 1791-1893: A Study of Public Welfare Administration (Toronto 1965); Margaret Kirkpatrick Strong, Public Welfare Administration in Canada (Chicago 1930); and Neil Sutherland, Children in English-Canadian Society: Framing the Twentieth Century Consensus (Toronto 1976).

in the development and administration of welfare programmes; the desire to minimize current and future welfare costs and avoid social strife by steering troublesome youngsters away from a life of crime and destitution; a continuing belief in work as an essential component of proper childhood training; and the desire to preserve the class structure of society and feed the demands of industrial capitalism by transforming dependent children into industrious and compliant workers.

An analysis that takes into account the continuities, as well as the changes, in the treatment of needy children in nineteenth-century Ontario reveals that child welfare policies, even when they appeared to be breakthroughs, conformed to the dominant social and political views of the times. Such an approach also exposes the class bias of reform measures and challenges the perception that each stage in the evolution of the welfare state represented one more step towards social harmony and equality. This chapter provides evidence to substantiate these contentions by examining the origins and the operations of the two dominant child welfare agencies of the late nineteenth century -- the Protestant Orphans' Home and the Children's Aid Society. On the positive side, these organizations undeniably rescued thousands of needy children from the clutches of poverty and neglect. On the negative side, they placed many children in situations of exploitation and severely restricted their opportunities for personal development and social mobility. Under Ontario's child welfare system, many disadvantaged children were 'saved' from a

life of utter destitution. None was 'saved' from the class inequality that characterized urban-industrial society.

In the early years of the nineteenth century, civic authorities approached the problem of orphans and other dependent children in a relatively uncomplicated fashion. In the case of infants and very young children, judges usually appointed guardians, frequently relatives of the child, who assumed parental responsibilities. Apprenticeship provided the answer for almost all other cases of parentless and needy children.

Under the provisions of "An Act to Provide for the Education and Support of Orphaned Children,"⁴ passed in 1779, two Justices of the Peace could bind an orphan to an apprenticeship until he or she reached the age of twenty-one. Twenty years later, "An Act for the Education and Support of Orphans or Children Deserted by their Parents"⁵ dropped the upper age limit of apprenticeship to eighteen for girls and granted youngsters over fourteen the right to decline an indenture. "The Guardian Act"⁶ of 1827 reinforced the apprenticeship provisions. In 1851, "An Act to Amend the Law Relating to Apprentices and Minors"⁷ allowed civic officials to arrange an apprenticeship for any child under twenty-one "who may be an orphan, or who may be deserted by his

4 Canada, Statutes, 1779.

5 Canada, Statutes, 1799.

6 Canada, Statutes, 1827.

7 Canada, Statutes, 1851, Chapter 11.

or her parents or guardian, or whose parents or guardian may for the time be committed to any common gaol or house of correction, or any Minor who may be dependent upon any public charity for support" with the consent of the child. The act also allowed a child over the age of sixteen to arrange an apprenticeship on his or her own volition. The legislation provided protection for both parties to an agreement but heavily favoured the master.

In 1872, "An Act to Amend the Act Respecting Apprentices and Minors"⁸ reaffirmed the power of mayors, judges, and police magistrates to arrange apprenticeships for homeless and destitute youngsters. More significantly, the act stated that no parent or guardian could reclaim a child from an apprenticeship or from a charitable institution without the approval of a mayor, judge, or magistrate. The official could deny a parent's request if he believed that reuniting the family would not "tend to the benefit and advantage" of the child.

In 1874, "An Act Respecting Apprentices and Minors"⁹ clarified the rights and responsibilities of parents, guardians, apprentices, masters, and charitable societies. Guardianship now required the consent of boys over fourteen and girls over twelve. The act also outlined a procedure for the investigation of complaints by one party to an apprenticeship against the other.

⁸ Ontario, Statutes, 1871-72, Chapter 17.

⁹ Ontario, Statutes, 1874, Chapter 19. For further description and analyses of these acts, see Spettigue, An Historical Review of Ontario Legislation on Child Welfare; Splane, Social Welfare in Ontario; and Ramsey, "The Development of Child Welfare Legislation in Ontario."

This amendment strengthened the position of the apprentice slightly. Of equal importance, the legislation acknowledged the role charitable institutions played in the apprenticeship of dependent children but simultaneously ensured that the provincial government exercised final control over the activities of the private societies in these matters.

In theory, apprenticeship provided a logical and appealing answer to the problem of dependent children. Unfortunately, many State-arranged indentures failed to deliver their full promise to the apprentice.¹⁰ State-sponsored apprentices also started work at a younger age than regular apprentices and remained under contract longer.¹¹ Moreover, the policy contained three critical internal flaws. First, this practice did not represent child welfare in the true sense because it concentrated on the development of a stable and secure adulthood for its participants rather than the restoration of a normal childhood. A successful apprentice might look forward to a fruitful future, but he or she still lacked the benefits of a protected childhood within a normal family environment. Second, troubled families who had little choice but to surrender their children to this program could be prevented from reclaiming their offspring when better times arrived, especially following the legislation of 1872. The fate of some poor families now rested in the hands of civic

¹⁰ Splane, Social Welfare in Ontario, 221.

¹¹ Ramsey, "The Development of Child Welfare Legislation in Ontario," 5.

authorities imbued with middle-class views and biases. Third, the effectiveness of the programme declined dramatically as apprenticeship lost its value in the industrial age. Instead of reaping the benefits of skilled craftsmanship, the apprentice fell victim to the demands of a capitalistic labour market that reduced journeymen to the level of unskilled workers.¹²

Before industrialization reached high gear, however, an alternative approach to child welfare materialized. By the midpoint of the nineteenth century, many reformers had reached the conclusion that dependent children required separate training in institutions of their own before they could be returned to society as law-abiding and useful members. This move towards institutions specifically designed for needy children expressed itself most forcefully in the form of Protestant Orphans' Homes. Table 4-1 provides the founding dates of Protestant Orphans' Homes and other children's institutions. Table 4-2 lists statistics from the Toronto Protestant Orphans' Home, the largest of the institutions.

Allowing for regional peculiarities and minor variations in operation, Protestant Orphans' Homes across Ontario largely fit

¹² See Chapter II, 43-50.

Table 4-1

Founding Dates of Major Children's Institutions

1836	Kingston Orphanage (Catholic)
1848	Hamilton Ladies Benevolent Society and Orphan Asylum
1851	Toronto Orphans' Home and Female Aid Society (Toronto Protestant Orphans' Home after 1888)
1851	Sacred Heart Orphan Asylum, Toronto (Catholic)
1851	St. Mary's Orphan Asylum, Hamilton (Catholic)
1856	Toronto Girls' Home and Public Nursery
1857	Kingston Orphans' Home and Widows' Friend Society
1859-60	Toronto Boys' Home
1862	Hamilton Girls' Home
1864	Ottawa Protestant Orphans' Home
1865	St. Joseph's Orphanage, Ottawa (French-Catholic)
1865	St. Patrick's Orphan Asylum, Ottawa (Irish-Catholic)
1867	The Newsboys' Lodging and Industrial Home, Toronto (The Working Boys' Home after 1895)
1868	Roman Catholic Orphans' Home, London
1869	St. Nicholas Institute for Boys, Toronto (Catholic)
1870	Hamilton Boys' Home
1874	St. Catharines Protestant Orphans' Home
1874-76	Women's Refuge and Children's Home, London Home for Orphans, Aged and Friendless, London
1875	Toronto Infants' Home

Table 4-1 (Continued)

1879	The Bethlehem Asylum for Foundlings, Ottawa (Catholic)
1892	The Creche, Toronto
1894	Kingston Infants' Home and Home for Friendless Women

Table 4-2

Statistics of the Toronto Protestant Orphans' Home, 1873-1907
Selected Years Based on Available Data

Year	Average Number in Home	Admitted		Adopted	Apprenticed		Reclaimed by Family
		boys	girls		boys	girls	
1873	90	34		3	6		18
1874	100	40		-	6		24
1875	88	30	14	-	13	8	22
1876	94	22	18	-	6	4	45
1877	97	43	16	1	6	2	27
1878	100	23	11	2	2	2	5
1879	106	12	9	2	5	2	19
1880	100	29	14	2	7		28
1881	107	16	14	1	7		13
1882	104	28	22	3	7		33
1883	112	19	15	3	11		15
1884	117	41	29	4	19		25
1885	148	82		1	6		34
1887	175	46	35	2	6		56
1891	167	94		2	10	6	73
1893	195	37	43	5	20		56
1894	194	51	48	-	8	6	60
1895	205	50	28	5	8	1	64
1896	194	66	33	5	15	9	73

Table 4-2 (Continued)

Year	Average Number in Home	Admitted		Adopted	Apprenticed		Reclaimed by Family
		boys	girls		boys	girls	
1897	195	71	45	9	19	12	62
1898	200	59	47	6	7	10	59
1899	189	43	30	2	10	8	60
1900	189	41	44	-	14		43
1903	166	49	28	-	4	1	86
1904	156	32	28	1	3		46
1905	142	39	25	-	1		72
1907	165	52	42	-	2		68

Source: Records of the Toronto Protestant Orphans' Home

the same mould.¹³ In almost every case, the orphanages were founded and managed by middle-class female philanthropists whose visitations to public refuges and houses of industry had convinced them of the need for separate institutions to care for dependent children.¹⁴ The homes provided food, clothing, shelter, elementary education, and religious instruction for orphans and other youngsters whose families could not care for them adequately. Some of the homes also sheltered a small number of elderly destitute women and, less often, an entire impoverished family. Consistent with the highly moralistic and conservative nature of their Protestant philosophy, the

¹³ Except where otherwise noted, general information on Protestant Orphans' Homes is drawn from the following: "Report of the Board of Inspectors of Asylums, Prisons, Etc., for the Year 1861," (Separate Report of Mr. E.A. Meredith), Canada, Sessional Papers, 1862, Vol. XX, No. 4, No. 19; "Annual Reports of the Inspector of Prisons, Asylums and Public Charities," Ontario, Sessional Papers; Metropolitan Toronto Library (MTL), Baldwin Room, Records of the Toronto Protestant Orphans' Home, Girls' Home, and Boys' Home, L30; Hamilton Public Library (HPL), Special Collections, Records of the Hamilton Orphan Asylum, Girls' Home, and Boys' Home; NAC, Records of the Ottawa Protestant Orphans' Home, MG28 I37; and "Proceedings of the First Ontario Conference on Child-Saving," Toronto, 18-19 October 1894, contained in "Second Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1895, Vol. XXVII, Part VI, No. 29. Among secondary sources, see Isabel McComb Brighty, The Diamond Jubilee History of the Protestant Home of St. Catharines 1874 to 1934 (St. Catharines 1934); Susan E. Houston, "The Impetus to Reform: Urban Crime, Poverty and Ignorance, 1850-1875," (Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1974); Rooke and Schnell, Discarding the Asylum; Splane, Social Welfare in Ontario; and Toronto Boys' Home, 125 Years of Caring: The Boys' Home 1859-1984 (Toronto 1984).

¹⁴ Patricia T. Rooke and R.L. Schnell, "The Rise and Decline of British North American Protestant Orphans' Homes as Woman's Domain, 1850-1930," Atlantis, Vol. 7, No. 2, Spring 1982, 23.

institutions offered their services only to those considered to be part of the "worthy poor" and refused to accept children of unmarried parents. Significantly, the majority of youngsters to pass through the homes were not orphans in the true sense. Most of the residents were needy children whose families or single parent voluntarily placed them in the orphanage until better times arrived. The homes referred to these youngsters as "ins and outs." In many cases, recently-arrived immigrant families sent their youngest children to a home until they adjusted to their new surroundings. Parents paid a nominal fee for the orphanage's services if they were in a position to do so, but in most cases this was impossible. Most institutions received small government grants but maintained themselves primarily through cash and material donations, public drives, and bequests.

In addition to providing material relief for needy children, the homes viewed themselves as guardians against the growing problem of juvenile delinquency and vagrancy. The Toronto Boys' Home stated as its primary objective: "the prevention of juvenile crime, by training these poor outcasts in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."¹⁵ The Hamilton Orphan Asylum pledged to "put these deserted ones, who might otherwise become the pests of society, into a position to lead useful and respectable lives."¹⁶

¹⁵ Second Annual Report of the Committee of Management of the Boys' Home for the Training and Maintenance of Destitute Boys not Convicted of Crime (Toronto 1861), 12.

¹⁶ Hamilton Orphan Asylum, Twenty-first Annual Report (Hamilton 1867), 5.

The Ottawa Protestant Orphans' Home promised to train children "in habits of order and industry -- thus acting as an economical agent of great value."¹⁷ Referring specifically to their female residents, the managers of the Toronto home explained their philosophy:

Prevention is better than cure, for there is little doubt that poverty and destitution are the precursors of immorality and crime -- Numbers of young and innocent Females are annually driven from the path of uprightness and purity, into the vortex of iniquity and irrecoverable degradation, in consequence of being unable to procure immediate employment either as seamstresses or servants.¹⁸

To help rectify this situation, the Toronto home maintained a registry of its female residents from which local citizens could choose girls as domestic servants.

Once past the threshold, a child fell under the almost complete authority of the institution. According to the directors of the Toronto home, "discipline shall be strictly parental in its character, and the order and decorum of a well-regulated family shall be carefully observed."¹⁹ The homes' regulations forbade the interference of family members and friends in the care of the child and allowed visits only in the presence of the matron. The Ottawa home restricted visits to one day per month for three hours.²⁰ Some institutions required parents to sign a

¹⁷ Records of the Ottawa Protestant Orphans' Home.

¹⁸ Toronto Protestant Orphans' Home, Minutes, 1851-53, Vol. I.

¹⁹ Records of the Toronto Protestant Orphans' Home.

²⁰ Records of the Ottawa Protestant Orphans' Home.

document completely relinquishing control over their own children. The orphanages used their economic advantage to make non-paying parents the prime targets of this policy. Measles, whooping cough, chicken pox, and scarlet fever were regular visitors to the homes, but the close daily attention of volunteer physicians probably kept most children in better health than would have been the case in their own homes.

Initially, most homes relied on their own staff and facilities to teach children the fundamentals of reading, writing, and arithmetic. After 1876, acting on the encouragement of the provincial Inspector of Prisons, Asylums and Public Charities, J.W. Langmuir, most of the institutions co-ordinated their education programmes with local school boards to ensure that their children received the same quality of instruction as other youngsters.²¹ In some cases, children attended the local public school. Despite this apparent commitment to educational equality, the orphanages consistently emphasized the development of practical skills in the belief that this would lead to quick and stable employment. Some institutions offered boys classes in manual arts, or arranged to have them take this training elsewhere. In 1901-02, for example, ten boys from the Ottawa home attended manual training classes at a nearby school.²² The homes

²¹ "Report of the Inspector of Prisons, Asylums and Public Charities," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1877, Vol. IX, No. 2, 195. See also Sessional Papers, 1878, Vol. X, No. 4, 222; and Sessional Papers, 1879, Vol. XI, No. 8, 234.

²² Ottawa Protestant Orphans' Home, Thirty-eighth Annual Report (Ottawa 1902), 8.

taught girls sewing, knitting, cooking, and all the other elements of domestic science. Boys also learned these skills, an indication of the strong feminine influence of the homes' managers.

In addition to formal instruction, all of which aimed at turning the children into productive and useful members of society, the boys and girls developed industrious habits through the work they performed in and around the homes. Children of both sexes routinely produced and repaired much of their own clothing and the homes' linen. Items produced in the orphanages included boys' suits, girls' dresses, flannel shirts, braces, stockings and socks, under garments, tickings for beds, pillow cases, sheets, and quilts. In 1895, the children of the Toronto home produced or mended 1,426 articles of clothing.²³ The institutions also put their boys to work maintaining the buildings and grounds, including gardening. Older lads from the Ottawa home worked in Bronson's Mill. The home received half of the lads' wages; the other half went into a trust fund for the boys.²⁴ The orphanages claimed that this type of work complemented the children's regular education. All too often, however, the practical side of the youngsters' training overshadowed their academic instruction. During a routine visit to the London home in 1886, for example, provincial Inspector Dr.

²³ Toronto Protestant Orphans' Home, Forty-fourth Annual Report (Toronto 1895), 10.

²⁴ Records of the Ottawa Protestant Orphans' Home.

O'Reilly discovered that "children who ought to have been at school were employed during school hours at work about the building and grounds." "This, of course, should not be," huffed the doctor.²⁵

The homes did not keep children indefinitely. The majority of youngsters returned to their families when conditions at home improved. Many single parents reclaimed their offspring upon remarrying. The orphanages thus provided an important social service by contributing to the long-term survival of these families. Other children were not as fortunate. Genuine orphans between the ages of three and seven were placed in private homes under an informal adoption arrangement. Older unclaimed youngsters, those whose families either could not or would not accept responsibility for them, were hired out under contract to interested citizens. Financial supporters of the homes received the first opportunity to engage young workers. Children usually started working between the ages of twelve and fourteen, after having spent a minimum of one year in residence. The demand for child workers almost always exceeded the supply. The Toronto Girls' Home, for example, repeatedly received requests for girls as young as nine and ten to fill the roles of domestic servants and nursemaids. Although the home's managers believed that girls this age were a little too young to be placed out, they conceded: "It is desirable these children should be made useful and cease

²⁵ "Report of the Inspector of Prisons, Asylums and Public Charities," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1886, Vol. XVIII, No. 14, 61.

to be a burden upon the funds as soon as possible."²⁶ In 1894, one of the home's managers, Mrs. Fletcher, reported that the institution received twenty times the number of requests for girls ten to thirteen years old as it did for girls around five or six.²⁷

Protestant Orphans' Homes made earnest attempts to find the best possible placements for their wards. The homes preferred to place children in the countryside, in the belief that rural society offered a wholesome and stable environment, but many children, especially girls, filled the roles of domestic servants and nursemaids in middle-class urban homes. The orphanages' managers inspected the circumstances of prospective employers and requested letters of reference from a local Protestant clergyman or another respected member of the community. Once an agreement was signed, however, the only form of monitoring that occurred consisted of an annual written report submitted to the home by the employer. To guard against potentially immoral situations, the orphanages refused to bind a child to any person who operated a tavern or a boarding house and denied unmarried men the services of girls. Some institutions took steps to conceal a child's location from his or her natural parents. In fact, some of the homes had been a force behind the legislation of 1872 that obstructed parents from reclaiming their children from appren-

²⁶ Toronto Girls' Home, Tenth Annual Report (Toronto 1866), 3-4.

²⁷ "Proceedings of the First Ontario Conference on Child-Saving," 59.

ticeships.²⁸ In the minds of the managers of the Toronto Girls' Home, "the future good of the child is of more consequence than the desire of relatives to keep themselves informed of their condition and circumstances."²⁹

Signed contracts stipulated that child workers should serve their employers faithfully and "in all things demean as a good and faithful apprentice ought to do."³⁰ In return for labour and obedience, a child was entitled to receive food, clothing, shelter, a proper Protestant upbringing, elementary instruction, and a nominal annual wage. Contracts sometimes included specific skill-training in situations where this was possible. In the 1890s, on average, child workers earned between four and six dollars in their first year and received a raise of two dollars per year. By the turn of the century, some youngsters started at between eight and twelve dollars and earned larger annual increases. Mrs. E. Langton, secretary of the Toronto home, explained the reason behind the increase in wages and revealed the impact of regular market forces on children's placements: "Too many cases have occurred lately of boys leaving their places just when they were big enough to be useful because they could get

²⁸ Toronto Girls' Home, Ninth Annual Report (Toronto 1865), 3.

²⁹ Toronto Girls' Home, Fourteenth Annual Report (Toronto 1870), 5.

³⁰ Records of the Toronto Protestant Orphans' Home.

better pay."³¹ Other children were enticed to leave their placements by parents who wanted them back. At the age of sixteen or seventeen, successful workers collected the money with interest. In some cases, part of a child's earnings went towards maintaining his or her sponsoring institution. A youngster who violated the terms of an agreement or abandoned a placement forfeited his or her wages. Occasionally, employers presented children with a bonus payment upon the expiry of the contract or kept them on at regular wages. The home retained the right to withdraw a child upon a violation of the agreement or the death of the employer.

In principle, a signed contract protected the rights of both parties. Employers almost always held the upper hand, however, and many children suffered mistreatment. Dissatisfied employers frequently withheld wages or simply returned youngsters to the orphanage. In 1875, the managers of the Toronto Girls' Home discovered that in many country homes "the assistance required of [children] as members of the family, was too great, to render their lot a desirable one." In future, the managers agreed to send children only to "those who will be able to give the advantages of education, and provide a happy home whether in city or country."³² In November 1893, thirteen-year-old Percy Nicholls abandoned a placement arranged by the Toronto home claiming that

³¹ Toronto Protestant Orphans' Home, Correspondence, Mrs. E. Langton, secretary, 6 April 1903.

³² Toronto Girls' Home, Nineteenth Annual Report (Toronto 1875), 6.

he had been beaten and improperly clothed. Rather than coming to the defence of the lad, the home encouraged the employer to press charges against Nicholls and his father, who had harboured him, and even offered its assistance. The boy eventually stood trial and was ordered to return to his placement upon threat of a jail sentence.³³ In 1899, apprentice Gordon Kylie, also from the Toronto home, drowned. The home's minutes for that year reveal that the lad's employer, Mr. Scott of Pickering, "expressed regret at losing Gordon as he was becoming a good and useful boy, but he refused to bear any of the funeral expenses which came to \$17.00 as he was only an apprentice."³⁴ In 1902, the Toronto home's secretary, Mrs. E. Langton, admitted that most apprenticeship arrangements violated mandatory school attendance laws, but she was willing to consider changes only in the case of boys. In explaining her reasoning, the secretary affirmed the orphanage's strict belief in the development of industrious habits and revealed an ingrained sexual bias: "In the case of the girls I did not propose any change as I think their time will be better employed in learning to perform domestic duties. But the boys in many instances are also occupied in domestic tasks during the winter, sweeping, preparing vegetables for table, even minding a

³³ Toronto Protestant Orphans' Home, Minutes, 28 November 1893.

³⁴ Ibid., 29 August 1899.

baby -- and I could not but think that they ought rather to be at school."³⁵

The Protestant Orphans' Home represented a significant but limited improvement in the care of dependent children as compared to the older system of straight apprenticeship. By temporarily sheltering needy children in an institution specifically designed for them, the homes were the first charitable agencies to acknowledge the unique and vulnerable nature of childhood. The homes most notable achievement was their contribution towards reuniting poor families following a period of hard times.³⁶ In other cases, the institutions provided their wards with a limited security which, despite severe restrictions, offered a positive alternative to life on the street. Unfortunately, tallies on the negative side of the ledger outweigh these accomplishments.

The managers of the homes routinely imposed middle-class views onto their wards but never provided middle-class opportunities. The institutions aimed at integrating children into an idealized working-class mainstream characterized by industry, obedience, thrift, and sobriety. This policy suggests that the homes exhibited greater concern for the creation of a crime-free, self-supporting, politically quiescent society than they did for

³⁵ Toronto Protestant Orphans' Home, Correspondence, Mrs. E. Langton, secretary, 3 April 1902.

³⁶ Bettina Bradbury draws a similar conclusion for the St. Alexis Orphanage in Montreal. See Bradbury, "The Fragmented Family: Family Strategies in the Face of Death, Illness, and Poverty, Montreal, 1860-1885," in Joy Parr, ed, Childhood and Family in Canadian History (Toronto 1982).

the individual welfare and social equality of their wards. The homes displayed signs of authoritarianism and routinely trampled the rights of parents who did not meet their standards. Despite their belief in the sanctity of the family, the homes never simulated an authentic family environment. Although children received some elementary education, emphasis always rested on the development of basic work habits which the managers believed would lead youngsters to simple jobs. Girls, in particular, received few opportunities to pursue careers beyond the traditional female work ghettos of homemaking and domestic service. Susan Houston described life in an orphans' home: "A distorted and truncated version of family life was complemented by a poor approximation of the training and instruction which working class children received in the city's common schools."³⁷ Unquestionably, citizens who took children into their homes wanted them primarily for the cheap labour they provided. Children earned low wages for unskilled work and rarely received the opportunity to learn a recognized trade. The absence of a proper inspection system allowed employers to abuse their young workers in many areas. Youngsters for whom placements could not be arranged passed their formative years within the artificial world of an institution.

Some other disadvantaged Ontario children attended institutions specifically designed to meet their needs. Founded in 1870, the Ontario Institute for the Deaf and Dumb, in Belleville,

³⁷ Susan E. Houston, "The Impetus to Reform," 309.

offered boys and girls a seven-year programme including courses in articulation, lip-reading, domestic science, tailoring, and dress-making. In 1900, 168 boys and 116 girls attended the school.³⁸ In the same year, seventy-four boys and seventy-three girls afflicted with blindness studied at the Ontario Institution for the Blind in Brantford. Founded in 1872, this organization offered its students elementary instruction in addition to chair- and basket-making for boys and sewing and knitting for girls. Students could also study piano-tuning. These latter courses were designed to allow students to earn their own living. Both institutions received funding from the provincial government.³⁹

In 1875, charitable institutions in Ontario provided care for 1,593 needy children.⁴⁰ By 1894, this number had grown to 4,406.⁴¹ A decade later, despite an increase in the general population, the total number of institutionalized youngsters had fallen to 4,116.⁴² A major reason for the slight decline was the development of a new approach to child welfare that reached fruition in Ontario in the 1890s. Commenting on the nature of the change, Patricia T. Rooke and R.L. Schnell assert: "A growing

³⁸ National Council of Women of Canada, Women of Canada: Their Life and Work (1900), 148.

³⁹ Ibid., 147-48.

⁴⁰ Houston, "The Impetus to Reform," 314.

⁴¹ "Twelfth Report of the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1905, Vol. XXXVII, Part X, No. 43, 1.

⁴² Ibid.

emphasis on keeping families together when possible or on the boarding out of placeable children, and the 'classification' of children transformed previously accepted assumptions about the needs of children into anachronisms."⁴³ Influenced by the ideas and activities of child welfare workers such as Charles Loring Brace in New York and England's Mrs. Nassau Senior and Miss Florence Hill, many reformers now agreed that a stable family provided the best environment for the development of proper social and moral values. Parentless youngsters and those whose natural family settings were deemed to be unwholesome or inadequate were now to be placed in foster homes where they would be treated as regular members of another family. In Ontario, the development and application of these ideas are inseparable from the life and career of one man in particular -- John Joseph Kelso.

Born in Dundalk, Ireland, on 31 March 1864, J.J. Kelso enjoyed an active and comfortable childhood until the collapse of his father's business forced the family into sudden poverty.⁴⁴ This misfortune precipitated the family's emigration to Toronto in 1874. At the age of ten, Kelso sought employment to help relieve his family's financial burdens and quickly moved through a series of low-paying, unskilled jobs. In his personal papers,

⁴³ Rooke and Schnell, "The Rise and Decline of British North American Protestant Orphans' Homes," 30. See also "Save the Children," Presbyterian Record, January 1892; and "Child-Saving," The Week, 21 September and 26 October 1894.

⁴⁴ Except where otherwise noted, all biographical information on Kelso is drawn from Kelso Papers, 37 Volumes.

Kelso recorded that his interest in child welfare surfaced in these years as the result of his observations of the harsh treatment some of his fellow young workers received at the hands of the law after being convicted of petty theft.⁴⁵

As a teenager, Kelso trained as a printer and attended Jarvis Collegiate. Following his graduation in 1885, he went to work in the compositing room of The Toronto World. Shortly thereafter, he entered the world of journalism, first as the police reporter for The World, and later The Globe. Caught up in the whirlwind of social reform that embraced late Victorian Toronto, and moved by the injustice and suffering he witnessed daily in the court room and at the police station, the young reporter soon developed an interest in public issues, particularly those relating to the treatment of children. Focussing on this subject, Kelso used his position as a journalist to transform himself from a social reporter into a social reformer.

Kelso's brush with poverty as a young boy might have made him more sensitive than many reformers to the plight of disadvantaged members of society, but his general social philosophy contained all the usual elements of middle-class cant. Kelso fervidly believed that society's more affluent members were duty-bound to extend a helping hand to their less fortunate brethren. This conviction, however, unmistakably distinguished between the "worthy" or "deserving" poor, those who had fallen on hard times due to circumstances beyond their control, and the dregs of

⁴⁵ Kelso Papers, Vol.31.

society who occupied civilization's bottom rung due to their own ignorance, laziness, and vice. Kelso was willing to extend charity to those in need on the condition that they make earnest efforts to abide by the principles of industry, sobriety, and thrift. In 1895, Kelso wrote: "The keynote of our work is prevention. We believe it is not poverty but vice and drunkenness that send children out to beg and steal and that are responsible for much of the child abuse ending in a ruined life and a heritage of misery. In the suppression of these evils lies the greatest hope of future success."⁴⁶ Kelso's biographers, Andrew Jones and Leonard Rutman, portray him as a somewhat self-centred individual occasionally preoccupied with thoughts of wealth, success, and his own leadership abilities. Jones and Rutman write: "Kelso accepted prevailing notions relating to poverty and its causes" and "left unquestioned existing patterns of social stratification....Self-assurance and readiness to impose and enforce his own standards on other members of the community...characterized Kelso's approach to social and moral reform."⁴⁷

Kelso considered proper childhood training to be the panacea for many of society's ills. In April 1891, he wrote in The Globe: "If we wish to counteract in any measure the suffering and

⁴⁶ J.J. Kelso, Laws Affecting Children (Toronto 1895), 1. See also Kelso's testimony before Canada, Evidence Before the Royal Commission on the Liquor Traffic (Ottawa 1895), 719.

⁴⁷ Jones and Rutman, In the Children's Aid, 35, 42-43, and 123.

injury wrought upon humanity by the criminal and outcast portion of the population we must begin with the child."⁴⁸ At the heart of this policy lay a belief in the social value of honest, hard work. "All children should learn to work," affirmed Kelso. "Child labour should be educational and vocational in its aim and purpose....technical training for young people in schools, factories and other industries would make for progress, success, happiness."⁴⁹ On one occasion, Kelso recorded: "I believe the old apprenticeship system should be revived, and every boy compelled to learn some proper trade."⁵⁰ Another time, he suggested that children from the city be sent to pick fruit in the countryside: "There have been seasons when fruit in the Niagara District was allowed to dry up on the tree for lack of workers and if young people under proper leadership volunteered for this service they would not only earn some money but would have a most delightful and beneficial vacation."⁵¹

On 19 February 1887, Kelso received the opportunity to present some of his ideas to a group of Toronto's leading citizens at the Canadian Institute. As a reporter, Kelso had frequently covered meetings of this body. On this occasion, the meeting's organizers asked Kelso to fill in for a guest speaker who had been forced to cancel. Inspired by a letter that

48 The Globe, 18 April 1891, 1.

49 Kelso Papers, Vol. 6.

50 Ibid., Vol. 18.

51 Ibid., Vol. 5.

appeared in The Toronto World complaining that the city lacked a Humane Society, Kelso spoke on the subject of a Society to Prevent Cruelty to Women, Children, and Animals. A decidedly favourable response from his audience prompted Kelso to make immediate arrangements to organize a Toronto Humane Society. This body came into existence the evening of 24 February 1887 in Shaftesbury Hall.⁵² The meeting named the twenty-three-year-old Kelso honorary secretary.

The Toronto Humane Society dedicated itself to the protection of women, children, and animals -- those considered to be society's most innocent and defenceless members. Among its many objectives, the society sought to: protect children of drunken, cruel, and dissolute parents or guardians; punish child-beaters and heartless parents or guardians; license and regulate newsboys, bootblacks, and other young street vendors; establish a girls' industrial school; erect a temporary refuge for destitute youngsters; and appoint a special officer to attend to these matters.⁵³ Acting on the last item, the society persuaded City

⁵² This meeting did not represent the first appearance of a Humane Society in Canada. In 1864, a group of citizens led by D'Arcy McGee incorporated under the name Humane Society of Canada "for the purpose of rewarding acts of bravery in successful or unsuccessful attempts to preserve human life, and of bringing to punishment acts of cruelty to animals." See "An Act to Incorporate the Humane Society of Canada" Canada, Statutes, 1864, Chapter 146. In 1873, Daniel Wilson, G.W. Allan, and Goldwin Smith founded the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. See Bain, "The Role of J.J. Kelso in the Launching of the Child Welfare Movement in Ontario," 16; and Kelso Papers, Vol. 27. Lack of interest and funds apparently led to the demise of these organizations.

⁵³ Kelso Papers, Vol. 27.

Council in December 1887 to appoint Constable John Willis of the Toronto Police Force as a full-time investigator of these concerns. Between 1887 and 1891, Willis received over 1,900 complaints of cruelty to children and arranged for 250 youngsters to be committed to industrial schools or other institutions. Despite this large number of incidents, Willis obtained few prosecutions against cruel parents. On the other hand, he established a better than eighty per cent success rate against those accused of cruelty to animals.⁵⁴

Kelso's experiences with the Toronto Humane Society and his observations of the treatment of children by the judicial system convinced him that Ontario needed stronger child welfare legislation. In conjunction with Toronto lawyer and reformer Beverley Jones, Kelso drafted a model law and submitted it to Ontario's Premier and Attorney-General Olivar Mowat for his consideration. Mowat concurred with the views of Kelso and Jones and promised to turn the recommendations into law. In March 1888, the Ontario Legislature passed "An Act for the Protection and Reformation of Neglected Children."⁵⁵

The legislation empowered judges to commit to an industrial school, children's refuge, or other recognized charitable institution any child under the age of fourteen who lacked a proper moral environment due to the "neglect, crime, drunkenness, or other vices of its parent...or any other cause." The same policy

⁵⁴ Jones and Rutman, In the Children's Aid, 43.

⁵⁵ Ontario, Statutes, 1888, Chapter 40.

applied to orphans found begging in public. The child could be compelled to remain in the institution up to the age of eighteen. Children apparently under the age of sixteen found in the company of reputed thieves or prostitutes could also be committed to an institution. No Protestant or Roman Catholic child could be assigned to an institution of the opposite faith. Municipalities within which a committed child resided were liable for his or her maintenance costs up to two dollars per week. Upon the request of a municipal council, the Lieutenant-Governor could appoint one or more commissioners to conduct trials of juvenile offenders apparently under the age of sixteen. All defendants under the age of twenty-one were to be tried apart from other offenders, "as far as practicable."

The 1888 act signalled the State's intention to place the general well being of society as a whole ahead of the rights and privileges of individual citizens. By passing judgement on immoral behaviour, the legislation trod on ground previously considered to be the private domain of individuals and families. Aiming to protect as well as to reform neglected children, the act drew special attention to undesirable influences that could potentially lure youngsters off the straight and narrow path. In so doing, the legislation hoped to prevent needy children from growing into more serious and costly social problems. As Kelso asserted: "Self-protection should induce the State to interfere - even if no higher motive were considered."⁵⁶ By charging

⁵⁶ Kelso Papers, Vol. 1.

municipalities maintenance costs, the act acknowledged that some welfare programmes would require public funding. Lastly, the legislation recognized that institutions and procedures designed with adults in mind posed potential harm to children and could not adequately meet their special needs.

The reform community unhesitatingly indicated its support for the new legislation, but a few detractors condemned the law and mocked the young man chiefly responsible for its passage. Some individuals opposed special treatment for children and referred to the act's supporters as "coddlers and nincompoops."⁵⁷ The journal Life accused Kelso of having "an appetite for the society of old ladies" and placed him in the "goody goody class." The same article identified the ambitious reformer as the "secretary of the Humane Society, the General Reformation Society, the Interfere with Everybody's Business Society."⁵⁸

Insults did not detract Kelso from his mission to improve the conditions of needy children. In 1888, moved by the plight of youngsters who regularly loitered around the offices of The Globe, Kelso launched a charitable society known as the Fresh Air Fund with the aim of providing poor city children with summer excursions. Kelso also hoped that this programme would inject some moral influence into private homes through the children. In its first year, the immensely popular project treated approximately

⁵⁷ Kelso Papers, Vol. 4.

⁵⁸ Life, 26 May 1888.

1,600 children to one-day trips at a cost of only \$234.55.⁵⁹ In 1891, the fund sponsored thirty-four excursions involving 8,256 children and mothers at a cost of approximately \$1,300.00.⁶⁰ Kelso proudly pointed out the low cost of this activity as compared to its immediate and potential benefits -- an observation that perfectly complemented reformers' hopes for social programmes.

The Fresh Air Fund brightened up the summers of many working-class children in Toronto. Winters, however, could be dreary. To rectify this, Kelso launched the Santa Claus Fund in November 1888. This organization sponsored an annual Christmas party for poor children complete with games, food, hymns, and presents. The Santa Claus Fund's first effort in 1888 attracted approximately 600 noisy but orderly youngsters to a Christmas Eve party held in the schoolhouse attached to St. James Cathedral. The following year, over 1,800 children trudged through rain and slush to attend a party at Shaftesbury Hall. The Toronto Star eventually took over operation of both the Fresh Air Fund and the Santa Claus Fund.⁶¹

The Fresh Air Fund and the Santa Claus Fund injected temporary pleasure into the lives of poor city children. Both programmes also attempted to imbue children and their families with Protestant morality. The short-term nature of these

⁵⁹ Kelso Papers, Vol. 1.

⁶⁰ Ibid., Vol. 18.

⁶¹ Ibid., Vol. 1.

activities, however, prohibited the achievement of long-term change. Kelso and other child-savers began to search for more permanent solutions. In November 1889, a group of influential citizens organized as the Prisoners' Aid Association petitioned the Ontario government to appoint a commission to investigate the causes of crime, especially among juveniles, and to propose new methods of dealing with criminals. The government considered asking Kelso to chair the commission, but eventually decided that he was too young and inexperienced to handle such a responsibility. Instead, Oliver Mowat appointed the province's former Inspector of Prisons, Asylums and Public Charities, J.W. Langmuir, to head the investigation. After six months of collecting facts and testimony, the commission published its findings and recommendations.⁶²

In Kelso's words, the Prison Reform Commission "brought in a report almost entirely directed to the better care and protection of children as the real preventive of crime in adult years."⁶³ The reflections of the commission's chairman strongly complemented Kelso's observation. J.W. Langmuir recorded:

The recent investigations of the Prison Reform Commission have convinced me beyond all doubt that until some measures are generally adopted in large cities for looking closely after neglected children we can never hope to stem the ever-increasing volume of vice and criminality in the community; moreover, no

⁶² "Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Prison and Reformatory System of Ontario" ("Prison Reform Commission"), Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1891, Vol. XXIII, Part IV, No. 18.

⁶³ Kelso Papers, Vol. 1.

time should be lost in organizing the work, as the increase which is going on in all city populations will render the initial proceedings, if long delayed, all the more difficult.⁶⁴

T. W. Anglin, secretary of commission, added: "Sound economy, as well as Christian charity, should persuade the community to commence the work of child-saving at once and earnestly. It is by this means that the volume of crime has been so marvellously reduced in Great Britain and Ireland. It is by this means only that the volume of crime can be reduced in Canada."⁶⁵ Referring specifically to the commission, Andrew Jones and Leonard Rutman asserted that 1890 was a "turning-point in the history of child welfare in Ontario."⁶⁶

One of the most important themes to emerge from the Prison Reform Commission was the idea that both individual youngsters and society would be better served if neglected and dependent children were raised within a natural family setting in foster homes rather than confined to institutions during their formative years. Testifying before the commission, E.A. Meredith, former chairman of the Board of Inspectors of Asylums and Prisons in Canada, cited the example of Massachusetts which had been placing dependent children in foster homes since the 1870s. Meredith claimed that this approach had proven to be more effective and less expensive than institutionalization and recommended that

⁶⁴ Ibid., Vol. 36.

⁶⁵ Kelso Papers, Vol. 36.

⁶⁶ Jones and Rutman, In the Children's Aid, 48.

Ontario follow the Bay State's lead.⁶⁷ J.J. Kelso also expressed his preference for the foster home model. Referring to orphans' homes, Kelso declared: "I don't think that their system of dealing with children is the right one. These places are conducted in a rather namby-pamby style." In Kelso's opinion, dependent children in Ontario spent far too many years in confinement and thus had "no idea of life when they enter the world."⁶⁸

More than any other child-saver, Kelso quickly developed a reputation as the leading opponent of institutionalization. According to Kelso, children in orphans' homes "were moved about all day like pieces of machinery and their education consisted chiefly of scolding, fault-finding, and lectures on behaviour, humility and respect for the good ladies who were doing so much for them." Kelso also contended that institutionalized youngsters daily faced the risk of contacting contagious diseases.⁶⁹ Addressing a meeting of the American Humane Association in Chicago in 1893, Kelso put forward the concerns of the 'new' child-savers. "The training given [an institutionalized] child for its future life work is...in nearly every case defective, thus placing the boy or girl at a decided disadvantage in comparison with other children," Kelso told his audience. Kelso estimated that youngsters from orphans' homes lagged behind other

⁶⁷ "Prison Reform Commission," Appendix F.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 726.

⁶⁹ Kelso Papers, Vol. 1.

children in skills by about two years. In the case of young girls, Kelso argued, the domestic skills they developed in a large institution did not suit the needs of a small household, and therefore they appeared to be very stupid when placed out. In addition to being uneconomical, institutions dulled creativity and sapped initiative. Kelso concluded that institutions were simply incapable of preparing children for the real world because they were so far removed from it. In Kelso's mind, the obvious alternative was the foster home model.⁷⁰

Kelso first looked towards the Toronto Humane Society as the appropriate agency to carry out the task of placing dependent children in foster homes. But on 10 January 1890, he wrote in his diary: "The difficulty is cropping up of keeping the animals and children from clashing, the two having their separate and distinct friends."⁷¹ Accordingly, Kelso recognized the need for a new society exclusively devoted to children. Fortunately, some models existed. In 1854, Charles Loring Brace had founded a Children's Aid Society in New York City. Among other functions, this agency sent homeless boys to live with families in the American West.⁷² The State of Massachusetts had begun placing needy youngsters in foster homes in the 1870s and the

⁷⁰ Ibid., Vol. 4. See also Kelso's articles in The Telegram, 7 December 1893; The Citizen and Home Guard, 12 February 1894; and Saturday Night, 21 April 1894.

⁷¹ Kelso Papers, Vol. 1.

⁷² Sutherland, Children in English-Canadian Society, 5.

Pennsylvania Children's Aid Society followed in the 1880s.⁷³ With the American experience in mind, Kelso, still a reporter for The Globe, arranged an organizing meeting for a Toronto Children's Aid Society (CAS) on 3 July 1891 in the lecture hall of the YMCA on Yonge Street.⁷⁴

The meeting attracted many of Toronto's leading philanthropists, including the city's reform mayor, W.H. Howland. On 21 July 1891, a second meeting officially launched the Toronto CAS and elected Kelso to the voluntary position of president. Putting forward the official founding motion, Henry O'Brien revealed a primary motive of the child-savers by asserting that "the society would save the community thousands of dollars, as it would rescue from criminal careers many who would otherwise grow up to be a curse and a danger to themselves and all around." The meeting also discussed matters relating to public education, school attendance and truancy, the treatment of juvenile offenders, probation, newsboys, and public playgrounds. The society's original constitution declared:

Its object shall be to care for and protect neglected children; to secure the enactment and enforcement of laws relating to neglected children or juvenile offenders; to provide free summer excursions, temporary residence in the country, and other means for benefiting neglected children; and generally to

⁷³ Dawe, "An Historical Study of the Transition from Institutional to Foster Care," 103.

⁷⁴ Except where otherwise noted, all information and quotations pertaining to the founding of the Toronto CAS are drawn from Kelso Papers, Vol. 1; and City of Toronto Archives, Records of the Toronto Children's Aid Society, SC 1.

advocate their claims upon public sympathy and support.

On 29 October 1891, the society officially incorporated under "An Act Respecting Benevolent, Provident and Other Societies."

The Toronto CAS sought public support by promoting itself as a wise social and economic investment. In the fall of 1891, the CAS produced and circulated a pamphlet entitled "Reasons Why Business Men and All Lovers of Children Should Liberally Support the Toronto Children's Aid Society." H.M. Parsons presented the CAS's case: "Another feature of your work commends itself to those who love good order, in protection for their property from the ever-increasing class of idle and vicious boys and girls...Honest tradesmen and business men of the city should be more than willing to give all the means needed for your work, as the cheapest way of saving their goods and properties, and providing for them honest and capable employees."⁷⁵ In another text, James Massie, warden of the Central Prison, asserted: "Business men, upon whom the greater burden of taxation falls, by supporting the society, will, from an economic point, be benefited, while in the higher sense they will be recompensed in helping to save from ruin many who would otherwise fall into it."⁷⁶

In March 1892, the Toronto CAS opened a children's shelter at 18 Centre Avenue to provide temporary room and board for

⁷⁵ Kelso Papers, Vol. 4.

⁷⁶ Ibid., Vol. 36.

destitute and neglected youngsters. Reflecting the society's inherent lack of faith in institutions, the CAS attempted to limit a child's stay to ten days, but many extremely troubled youngsters, having nowhere else to turn, remained in the home much longer. A matron conducted the day-to-day affairs of the home and answered to a shelter committee. The matron could assign children any type of work that she thought they were capable of performing. Children attended religious services morning and evening. The CAS returned most youngsters to their families when conditions at home improved. Extremely mistreated and homeless children, however, posed a serious problem. Lacking official state approval to implement the foster home model, the CAS reluctantly handed its long-term cases over to an orphans' home, the very institution it had hoped to replace. Wards under four years of age requiring long-term care were sent to the Infants' Home.⁷⁷

The CAS's inability to provide long-term care for its most desperate wards convinced Kelso and his colleagues that without increased State support and specific legislation sanctioning the foster home model the society could only achieve limited success. Shortly after the foundation of the Toronto CAS, Kelso began to lobby the provincial government for such legislation. In this pursuit, Kelso was joined by Lady Ritchie, widow of former Chief Justice of Canada Sir William Johnstone Ritchie and president of

⁷⁷ Kelso Papers, Vol. 14. See also Jolliffe, "The History of the Children's Aid Society of Toronto," 17-18.

the Women's Humane Society, and a number of other female child-savers from Ottawa who had been influenced by Australian experiments with foster homes.⁷⁸ Premier Oliver Mowat, conscious of his public image as a reform legislator, responded positively to Kelso and Ritchie and instructed Provincial Secretary J.M. Gibson to draft an appropriate act for Ontario. Relying heavily on Australia's Children's Protection Act of 1872, England's Protection Act of 1889, and the findings of the Prison Reform Commission, Gibson composed "An Act for the Prevention of Cruelty to, and Better Protection of Children"⁷⁹ and introduced it in the Legislature early in 1893. Following relatively little debate, the Legislative Assembly assented to the act in May 1893.⁸⁰

The Children's Act, as it came to be known, consisted of thirty-one detailed clauses outlining Ontario's new approach to child welfare. The legislation declared that any person over the age of sixteen convicted of mistreating, neglecting, or abandoning a child in their care, defined as boys under fourteen and girls under sixteen, could be fined up to \$100.00 and/or imprisoned up to three months. The same penalty applied to persons

⁷⁸ "First Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1893, Vol. XXVI, Part IX, No. 47, 18. See also Phyllis Harrison, Never Enough: 75 Years with the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa (Ottawa 1968), 4.

⁷⁹ Ontario, Statutes, 1893, Chapter 45.

⁸⁰ J.M. Gibson, "The Children's Act," The Methodist Magazine, January 1894. See also The Globe, 26 April 1893; Bain, "The Role of J.J. Kelso in the Launching of the Child Welfare Movement in Ontario," 97; and Dawe, "An Historical Study of the Transition from Institutional to Foster Care," 103.

found guilty of causing or procuring a child to beg, perform, or sell goods in public. Special exemption could be obtained for child entertainers over the age of seven. The courts could increase the fine to \$250.00 and the prison sentence to nine months in the cases of individuals who expected to gain financially from the death of a child.

Local authorities could empower the officers of a duly incorporated Children's Aid Society to take into custody suspected violators of the act and to apprehend without warrant and bring before a judge any child apparently under the age of fourteen who lacked a proper home environment or was found destitute in a public place or in the company of thieves, drunkards, vagrants, or prostitutes. Any child judged to be "dependent or neglected...so as to be in a state of habitual vagrancy or mendicancy, or ill-treated so as to be in peril of life, health or morality by continued personal injury or by grave misconduct or habitual intemperance of the parents or guardian" could be placed in the custody of responsible individuals, a Children's Aid Society, an industrial school, or some other recognized children's institution. Youngsters committed to a Children's Aid Society were to be placed in private homes

on a written contract during minority, or until 18 years of age, in the discretion of such society, providing for their education in the public schools (or in the case of Roman Catholic children in the separate schools) where they may reside, for teaching them some useful occupation, for kind and proper treatment as members of the family where placed, and for payment on the termination of such contract to the said society for the use of the child of any sum of money that may be provided for in said instrument.

Judges could order negligent parents to pay all or part of the cost of keeping their children in the care of others. If the parent of a Children's Aid Society ward demonstrated that "the child has not been maintained by the society, or was not deserted by such parent, or that it is for the benefit of the child," judges could instruct the agency to return the child to his or her original home.

The law required all cities and towns with a population over 10,000 to provide a temporary shelter for the exclusive use of neglected children between the ages of three and fourteen while they awaited placement in foster homes. Existing orphan asylums could be used as shelters. Municipalities were compelled to pay at least \$1.00 per week towards the maintenance of boys under fourteen and girls under twelve in shelters and "in foster homes where such children are not cared for without compensation." The municipality could recover this sum from the child's parents.

Within each electoral district of the province, a voluntary "Children's Visiting Committee" was to be struck composed of six persons, at least three of whom were to be women. The importance of these committees was highlighted by the automatic inclusion of the local Member of the Legislative Assembly. This committee would visit and oversee the operation of children's temporary shelters and aid in the selection and regulation of foster homes. Committee members could remove a child from an unsatisfactory foster home, "at their discretion, subject to any rules or

regulations in that behalf to be approved by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council."

An extremely important section of the act granted power to the Lieutenant-Governor in Council to appoint a Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children. Among other duties, the law instructed the superintendent to encourage and assist in the organization and establishment of Children's Aid Societies across the province, inspect industrial schools and other children's institutions, oversee children's visiting committees, maintain a record of all youngsters committed to Children's Aid Societies and placed in foster homes, and submit an annual report of his activities under the act.

The legislation forbade police to place children under sixteen years of age in a cell with adult prisoners. In cities and towns with populations over 10,000, children under sixteen awaiting trial could not be held in the common jail. These youngsters were to be tried in a place other than the ordinary police court, "where practicable," or in the regular courtroom a minimum of two hours following the completion of other trials. The Children's Aid Society could intervene on behalf of boys under twelve and girls under thirteen awaiting trial and make alternative arrangements. The legislation granted municipal councils the right to declare a public curfew for children, the hour of which was to be signalled by the ringing of a "curfew bell." Parents whose children violated the curfew law habitually could be fined between \$1.00 and \$5.00.

The Children's Act both reinforced and significantly extended previous child welfare legislation. Once again, the State, in the interest of the community as a whole, superseded parents as the ultimate protector of children. The law forcefully reasserted the State's right to remove youngsters from an environment that did not meet a government-imposed standard and, for the first time, prescribed serious penalties for parents and guardians who neglected or mistreated their children. By creating the office of the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children, the act elevated child-saving to the level of a public service and sowed the seeds of a future child welfare bureaucracy. The legislation recognized the special contribution women made to child-saving by guaranteeing them representation on visiting committees.

The act acknowledged the role environment played in shaping behaviour by advancing the foster home model as the preferred method of dealing with dependent children. Foster children were to attend school and enjoy regular family treatment, but they were also expected to develop industrious habits and provide labour as part of their placement. This clause indicated that belief in work as a basic tenet of human development continued to inform the practice of child welfare. It also revealed the act's ultimate objective: to integrate dependent children into the mainstream of the working class and thus avoid future expenditures on welfare and the treatment of criminals. Despite the emphasis on the foster home model, the legislation recognized the

continuing need for institutions and court procedures designed specifically for youngsters.

Although the Children's Act significantly enhanced the role of the State in the development and administration of child welfare, elements of voluntarism pervaded the legislation. Responsibility for implementing much of the act rested with volunteer organizations such as Children's Aid Societies and Visiting Committees. J.J. Kelso aptly described the nature of this combined public and private effort. In a letter to federal Minister of Justice John Thompson, Kelso declared that the "rescue and wise training of...neglected children should be recognized as constituting one of the most sacred and pressing duties of the State."⁸¹ In his private papers, Kelso counterpoised this statement by writing: "It is not the function of Government to engage in social activities but to provide equitable laws and give expert supervision."⁸² Furthermore, the government committed a minimum of public money to administer the act. The legislation relied primarily on the Christian benevolence of concerned citizens to provide free foster homes for dependent children. Foster homes were to receive financial assistance only under special circumstances. The act reduced municipal liability for dependent children from a weekly per capita of \$2.00, as designated by previous legislation, to \$1.00.

⁸¹ J.J. Kelso to Sir John S. Thompson, 29 March 1892. Cited in Bain, "The Role of J.J. Kelso in the Launching of the Child Welfare Movement in Ontario," 73.

⁸² Kelso Papers, Vol. 1.

When possible, authorities could extract all or part of the cost of caring for dependent children from negligent parents.

The Children's Act engendered minimal opposition. Its main author, J.M. Gibson, claimed that only the curfew bell clause generated genuine debate.⁸³ One opposition MLA objected to the appointment of a superintendent on the grounds that such a move would stamp child welfare with a bureaucratic officialism and discourage private philanthropy.⁸⁴ A few editorial writers bemoaned the infringement on parents' rights. Others argued that the act would discourage parental responsibility and create an unhealthy dependence on state aid.⁸⁵ On 10 June 1893, The Globe reasoned: "In dealing with neglected children care must be exercised not to over-burden the community with the support of children who ought to be maintained by the parents, while at the same time the interests of the child must be given due consideration."⁸⁶ The legislation's supporters easily overwhelmed its opponents, however, and within a few years other provinces followed Ontario's example.⁸⁷

83 Gibson, "The Children's Act."

84 Kelso Papers, Vol. 18.

85 The Globe, 11 April 1893; and unidentified newspaper clippings in Kelso Papers, Vol. 24.

86 The Globe, 10 June 1893.

87 Early in 1898, J.J. Kelso visited Manitoba to speak with provincial officials on the topic of child welfare. Later that year, the Manitoba Legislature passed "An Act for the Better Protection of Neglected and Dependent Children." See Manitoba, Statutes, 1898, Chapter 6; and Winnipeg Free Press, 1 April 1898.

More than any other social agency, the Toronto CAS had reason to celebrate the passage of the Children's Act. Now with legal backing for its activities, the society re-examined its founding principles and issued an expanded statement of purpose:

Its object shall be to protect children from cruelty, to care for and protect neglected, abandoned or orphaned children; to provide such children as may be lawfully committed or entrusted to the Society with suitable homes in private families, and to watch over and guard their interests and promote their happiness and well being; to secure the enforcement of laws relating to neglected and dependent children or juvenile offenders; and to take the part of a friend towards any child accused of offences against the laws of the Province or the Dominion; to provide free summer excursions, temporary residence in the country, or other means for benefiting poor children; and, generally, to advocate the claims of neglected, abandoned or orphaned children upon the sympathy and support of the public.⁸⁸

CAS members also cheered when Premier Mowat appointed J.J. Kelso the province's first Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children,⁸⁹ a position that he would occupy for forty-one years under eight government administrations. Although Kelso had been passed over earlier for the position of chairman of the Prison Reform Commission, his appointment as superintendent surprised few observers and met with widespread approval. Kelso perhaps cheered loudest, to himself, but the twenty-nine-year-old reformer soon discovered that he could not depend on the govern-

⁸⁸ Kelso Papers, Vol. 1.

⁸⁹ This office first fell under the jurisdiction of the Provincial Secretary. In 1899, the Department of the Attorney-General assumed responsibility. In 1904, it returned to the Provincial Secretary's jurisdiction.

ment for extensive assistance or resources. The entire first year's budget for his office amounted to four thousand dollars, of which twelve hundred dollars comprised his salary, a decrease of more than three hundred dollars from his earnings at The Globe. Moreover, Kelso received no clerical assistance until his third year as superintendent.⁹⁰ As Andrew Jones and Leonard Rutman observed: "The government's commitment to its child welfare policy was tentative, wavering, and uncertain."⁹¹

Despite these internal obstacles, Kelso devoted himself to his office and quickly laid the foundations for a province-wide child welfare system. In April 1894, he distributed approximately 10,000 leaflets across Ontario advertising children for adoption. In October of the same year, he organized a two-day provincial conference on child-saving in Toronto that attracted almost 100 participants. Out of this meeting grew the Children's Protective Association of Ontario, a federation of child-saving agencies from across the province. The superintendent also participated in the creation of local CAS's. In conjunction with local philanthropists and reformers, some of whom had previously been involved with child welfare associations, Kelso oversaw the foundation of CAS's in Ottawa and Peterborough in 1893, and Hamilton in 1894.⁹² This early organizational work did not

⁹⁰ Kelso Papers, Vol. 3.

⁹¹ Jones and Rutman, In the Children's Aid, 67.

⁹² Kelso Papers, Vol.'s 1, 3, and 18; NAC, W.L. Scott Papers, MG30 C27; NAC, Ottawa Children's Aid Society, Minutes, MG28 I84; and HPL, Special Collections, Records of the Hamilton

prevent Kelso from participating directly in the CAS's primary function -- the placement of needy children in foster homes. Of 141 youngsters placed in foster homes in Ontario in 1895, seventy-five found their placements through Kelso's office.⁹³

Although Kelso received little material assistance from the Ontario government, he succeeded in having the Legislature enhance the Children's Act. In April 1895, the Legislative Assembly passed "An Act for the Further Protection of Children."⁹⁴ The supplementary legislation provided another boost to the foster home model but simultaneously strengthened the powers of the institutions. Orphanages, industrial schools, and other children's shelters could now transfer youngsters in their care to a local CAS or to the superintendent's office which in turn would place them in foster homes.⁹⁵ At the same time, the law forbade any individual to induce a child to leave a recognized institution to which he or she had been committed, or

Children's Aid Society. On 13 January 1892, reformers in Peterborough founded a local branch of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. With Kelso's help, this organization transformed itself into the Peterborough Children's Aid Society on 8 December 1893.

⁹³ "Third Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1895, Vol. XXVIII, Part III, No. 17, 25.

⁹⁴ Ontario, Statutes, 1895, Chapter 52.

⁹⁵ "The Infants' Protection Act," passed in 1897, stipulated that infants' homes could not place their wards in foster homes without the approval of the CAS. This ruling created some conflict between infants' homes and the CAS. See Ontario, Statutes, 1897; and E.A. Latimer, "Methods of Child Care as Reflected in the Infants' Home of Toronto," (MSW thesis, University of Toronto, 1953), 42-43.

to abandon a placement arranged by the institution. Transgressors could be fined up to \$20.00 or imprisoned up to thirty days. Parents and guardians who in writing surrendered their children to the custody of a child-saving agency totally relinquished control over their offspring, but they could register a complaint with a judge or the superintendent if they believed their children had been mistreated or improperly detained by the agency. The investigating officer could correct the situation upon uncovering an injustice.

The act reaffirmed the importance of providing separate facilities for needy children, even in situations where this resulted in breaking up families. The legislation removed the age restrictions that the original act had imposed on children's temporary shelters and prohibited adult refuges from receiving youngsters between the ages of two and sixteen. The latter clause was designed to end the practice of committing entire poor families to adult institutions. The law also conferred on the superintendent the right to assume the regular duties and responsibilities of a CAS in municipalities where one did not exist, a practice that Kelso had already undertaken, especially in rural areas. This clause took one more step towards establishing a centralized child welfare bureaucracy in Ontario.

Although the new act recognized a continuing role for orphans' homes in the administration of child welfare, Kelso unquestionably viewed the legislation as another triumph for the foster home model over institutionalization. In his early years

as superintendent, he renewed the attack on orphanages that he had launched during the days of the Prison Reform Commission. In 1895, he pointed out the shortcomings of institutions in a statement that appealed to both the heart and the pocketbook and underlined the role that work should play in the redemption of dependent children, sentiments that typified the middle-class reform movement:

For many children the institution should be merely a door through which they may pass from the haunts of squalor and vice to the clean and well-ordered Christian home. Institutional training does not supply their need, and not only is it often a hardship to detain children for a lengthened period, but it is an injustice to the municipality that is called upon to pay for those who if encouraged to do so, could easily earn their own living.⁹⁶

Kelso also complained that the orphanages' lack of proper visitation systems resulted in the exploitation of the children they placed in the community.⁹⁷ On occasion, Kelso's criticisms of the orphans' homes extended to those who supported them. In 1898, he recorded: "Charity, especially that branch of charity which deals with children, has come in these days to be a fashion, and people of wealth and leisure often identify themselves with the management of these institutions who would never

⁹⁶ "Second Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1895, Vol. XXVII, Part VI, No. 29, 12.

⁹⁷ "Fifth Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1897-98, Vol. XXX, Part IV, No. 16.

dream of kissing one of these little faces or taking a deep personal interest in any one of these little lives."⁹⁸

Kelso's harsh judgement of other child-savers lost some of its shine when it became apparent that some of the newly-formed CAS's in Ontario erred on the side of enthusiasm by prematurely removing children from their natural homes. The superintendent reminded the local agencies that the objectives of child-saving could sometimes be achieved without tearing children from their parents. "The aim of the Society through all its work should be to elevate home life and strengthen and ennoble family ties," Kelso wrote in 1896.⁹⁹ Kelso suggested that local CAS's could use the threat of removing a child permanently as a means to compel degenerate parents to adhere to standards prescribed by the child-savers. The Toronto CAS recognized the value of this tactic:

The Management and officers are keenly alive to the fact that parents are the natural guardians of their children, though it is sometimes difficult to make them realize their true responsibility. Warnings, threats of taking children from their custody, is generally a powerful argument, even with debased parents. Sometimes following repeated warnings without amendment, it has been found both necessary and wise to remove the children to the Shelter for a time. This has been found to have a desired effect.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Ibid., 25.

⁹⁹ "Third Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," 33.

¹⁰⁰ Toronto Children's Aid Society, Fifth Annual Report (Toronto 1896), 15.

If parents failed to respond satisfactorily to the warning, the CAS could then apply for custody of the child under the terms of the Children's Act.

Upon assuming responsibility for a child, the CAS placed the boy or girl in a temporary shelter while arrangements were made to secure a foster home. Although a youngster's stay in the shelter was to be of minimum duration, the society viewed this time as an opportunity to introduce children to industrious habits. According to Kelso, a children's shelter should have a workshop for boys, a sewing room for girls, a vegetable garden, a chicken house, and a yard, all under the direction of a married couple, preferably with farm experience.¹⁰¹ A general lack of resources among the various societies prevented most shelters from meeting Kelso's standards. Many smaller centres had to settle for the use of already existing structures, such as orphans' homes.¹⁰² Even in larger cities, shelters posed problems for local CAS's. In 1895, one member of the Toronto CAS recommended that the agency fortify its Adelaide Street shelter to prevent escapes. Six years later, the Medical Health Officer and the Staff Inspector of the Police filed a joint complaint against the crowded and unsanitary conditions of the Toronto shelter.¹⁰³ Despite their unpreparedness for long-term care,

¹⁰¹ Kelso Papers, Vol. 36.

¹⁰² "Fifth Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act, 1897," 14.

¹⁰³ Jolliffe, "The History of the Children's Aid Society of Toronto," 33.

some shelters served as home for many hard-to-place youngsters, especially those with physical or mental impairments. In some instances, the CAS paid foster homes to care for children with special needs.¹⁰⁴

The CAS stressed the importance of finding suitable homes for its charges. Visiting committees reached out to prospective foster parents through advertisements placed in religious and philanthropic newspapers. Occasionally, these announcements used photographs of neglected children to tug on the heartstrings of readers. The CAS preferred to place children with close, responsible relatives. Barring this possibility, the agency sought, in order of preference, a childless home, a home where a child had died, or a home where children had grown and left. To guarantee that a CAS ward would receive full attention from foster parents, Kelso advised the societies to avoid homes with children of their own. Kelso also feared that these homes might not fully integrate foster children into the family. Revealing a desire for strong maternal influence on foster children, the CAS usually made initial arrangements with wives, while treating husbands as consenting parties. Like the orphanages, the society believed that rural homes provided the optimum social and moral environment. Kelso also hoped that the practice of placing youngsters in the countryside would pose an effective counter-balance to the steady flow of young people towards cities -- a

¹⁰⁴ Baker, "The Place of the Private Agency in the Administration of Government Policies," 65.

pattern that he believed threatened rural stability.¹⁰⁵ If an initial placement did not work out successfully, the CAS usually tried to find another foster home for the child.¹⁰⁶ In 1900, the Ottawa CAS reported that some of its wards had passed through as many as five different foster homes.¹⁰⁷

Kelso maintained that the best time to place children in foster homes was when they were between the ages of five and seven. Youngsters older than this, he argued, had developed too many of their own opinions and were more likely to be treated as servants by their foster parents. The superintendent also displayed a clear sense of the danger of crossing class lines. In 1894, he wrote: "As these children are taken in nearly every case from the poorer classes, they will be more at home and more likely to thrive among working people of modest pretensions....With [stable] conditions, and a genuine love for the child, the lack of a book account is of small importance."¹⁰⁸ On another occasion, Kelso revealed his fear that children placed in wealthy homes would face too easy a life and thus fail to develop proper work habits.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ First Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," 33.

¹⁰⁶ "Third Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," 12.

¹⁰⁷ Harrison, Never Enough, 12.

¹⁰⁸ "First Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," 26. See also "Second Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," 14.

¹⁰⁹ Kelso Papers, Vol. 3.

Most CAS wards under the age of twelve were placed in foster homes under a system of informal adoption.¹¹⁰ Contracts drawn up in Kelso's office obliged parents to treat their foster child like a regular member of the family, show him or her "kindness and consideration," and supply food, clothing, and other necessities. Parents also pledged to teach the child habits of industry, truthfulness, and personal cleanliness. The agreement encouraged the youngster's attendance at Church and Sunday School. Each contract included a separate stipulation pertaining to school attendance. Dissatisfied foster parents could return the child to the CAS upon two weeks' notice and payment of transportation. The society reserved the right to visit the home, remove the child at any time, and negotiate for wages as the youngster became useful around the house.¹¹¹

Kelso devised a separate contract for children twelve years of age and over who were required for service. This agreement specified starting and finishing dates and the type of work to be performed. The contract instructed employers to provide "board, lodging, washing, clothing and necessaries" and pay a small wage to the CAS to be held in trust for the child. The employer

¹¹⁰ The term 'adoption' lacked a clear legal definition until the Ontario government passed "An Act Respecting the Adoption of Children" in 1921. Early CAS workers commonly used words such as adoption, foster care, and placement interchangeably. This practice led to considerable confusion and ambiguity in the area of family privileges, such as inheritance rights. See Ontario, Statutes, 1921, Chapter 55.

¹¹¹ "Form of Application for A Foster Child," Kelso Papers, Vol. 4.

agreed to send the child to school at least four months per year and encourage him or her to attend Church and Sunday School. The agreement also required employers to allow visitations and to send an annual progress report to the CAS. The society reserved the right to remove the child at any time. Either party could terminate the contract upon one month's written notice.¹¹²

Despite their air of officialism, these contracts fell short of legal requirements in at least one crucial area -- education. Neither agreement guaranteed the provisions of the Ontario government's School Act of 1891 which stipulated that all children between the ages of eight and fourteen should attend school full time under normal circumstances.¹¹³ This issue proved to be a recurring problem for the CAS. Assessing the work of the society in 1896, Kelso wrote: "The chief difficulty experienced has been in securing regular attendance at school for these children."¹¹⁴ The Ottawa CAS expressed the same concern on a number of occasions.¹¹⁵

In a circular letter to CAS's across the province, Kelso referred to the contracts as guidelines and conceded that local agents might need to alter the terms slightly to fit particular

¹¹² "Application for a Girl or Boy for Service," Kelso Papers, Vol. 4.

¹¹³ "An Act Respecting Truancy and Compulsory School Attendance," Ontario, Statutes, 1891, Chapter 56.

¹¹⁴ "Third Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," 11.

¹¹⁵ See Ottawa Children's Aid Society, Minutes, 1 March 1901; 12 April 1901; and 30 October 1903.

circumstances.¹¹⁶ In their eagerness to secure a placement, some agencies used this latitude to lighten the commitment of foster parents and employers.¹¹⁷ Kelso admitted that on occasion local societies might find it prudent to lower their wage demands for working children: "While it is desirable to secure for growing boys and girls adequate wages for services rendered it should be borne in mind that a good home, clothing, and the teaching of industrious habits are worth more than money, and these advantages should be taken into consideration."¹¹⁸ W.L. Scott, president of the Ottawa CAS, reported that competition from child-saving agencies that specialized in the placement of British youngsters in Canada forced his society to modify its demands. In 1904, Scott wrote: "We have to be careful lest we appear too exacting...in view of the fact so many immigrant children are being brought out by other societies and placed with people under less onerous conditions."¹¹⁹ Although official CAS policy stated a preference for free foster homes, local societies occasionally agreed to pay parents a modest sum to offset a child's living expenses rather than risk losing the placement. Conversely, some CAS's believed that they possessed the right to charge foster parents a small fee for a youngster. Kelso discouraged this practice on the grounds that it might tempt

¹¹⁶ Circular letter, 22 April 1894, Kelso Papers, Vol. 4.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Circular letter, 22 April 1894, Kelso Papers, Vol. 4.

¹¹⁹ Cited in Harrison, Never Enough, 14.

parents to compensate for the payment by forcing the child to perform an unreasonable amount of work.¹²⁰

Despite the efforts of Kelso and local CAS's to locate kind and loving homes for their charges, hundreds of foster parents and employers welcomed children primarily for the free or cheap labour they provided around the farm or house. The scarcity and expense of adult labour, especially in rural areas, severely aggravated this situation.¹²¹ In a circular letter addressed to visiting committees across the province, Kelso instructed: "Care must...be taken by the committee to see that [children] are not used or treated as servants -- a practice altogether too common among those who apply for the care of dependent children."¹²² A second letter warned about parents with young children of their own who used CAS wards as live-in nursemaids.¹²³ W.L. Scott regretfully admitted that "large proportions" of foster parents did not want "a child to love and care for and bring up as one of their own, but a slave from whom they may enforce work without being obliged to pay wages."¹²⁴ John Armstrong, president of the

¹²⁰ "Second Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," 3.

¹²¹ "First Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," 33.

¹²² Circular letter, 15 September 1893, Kelso Papers, Vol. 4. See also Kelso Papers, Vol. 5; "First Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," 26; and "Second Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," 12.

¹²³ Circular letter, 22 April 1894, Kelso Papers, Vol. 4.

¹²⁴ Ottawa Evening Journal, 6 February 1899.

Owen Sound CAS, called for stricter supervision of foster homes and suggested expanding visiting committees to guard against foster parents who used youngsters for what he described as "business purposes."¹²⁵ Despite this evidence of child labour, Kelso invoked the authority of his office to remove children from their placements only when foster parents or employers extremely over-worked them or reneged on wages agreed upon in the contract.¹²⁶

The demand for child workers was especially prevalent in the case of girls wanted as domestic servants and nursemaids. "The great majority of persons wishing to adopt a child insist on having a girl," wrote Kelso in 1899. The superintendent estimated that his office received approximately four times the number of requests for girls that year as it did for boys.¹²⁷ Six years later, Kelso recorded that his department was still swamped with demands for girls twelve years of age and over.¹²⁸ In an attempt to establish a standard range of wages, Kelso

¹²⁵ "Proceedings of the First Ontario Conference on Child-Saving," 62.

¹²⁶ "Third Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," 10; and "Ninth Report of the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1902, Vol. XXXIV, Part IX, No. 43, 13.

¹²⁷ "Seventh Report of the Department of Neglected and Dependent Children," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1900, Vol. XXXII, Part X, No. 39, 43. See also "First Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," 27; and "Third Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," 5.

¹²⁸ "Thirteenth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1906, Vol. XXXVIII, Part IX, No. 43, 29.

recommended that girls over the compulsory school age of fourteen who worked as domestic servants should earn between two and six dollars per month,¹²⁹ rates well below an independent maid's average monthly earnings of eleven dollars.¹³⁰

Despite their efforts to obtain fair treatment for their wards, Kelso and the local CAS's must shoulder partial blame for the numerous times that children ended up as under-paid agricultural labourers or domestic servants. Although its members unquestionably exhibited genuine concern for the welfare of disadvantaged youngsters, the CAS, like the orphans' homes before it, earnestly believed that children who were exposed to work and discipline at an early age would grow into upstanding, industrious, and content adults. On this matter, Kelso wrote: "Of course many [children] are adopted for the purpose of getting a return in work from them. We do not object to this, knowing that it is for the child's good so long as the strain is not made severe."¹³¹ Citing the case of young Howland Brown, who had been charged with theft, Kelso laid the blame with the lad's foster parents who "never expected him to do any work and...too easily supplied...all his wants."¹³² In addition to their other duties,

¹²⁹ Circular letter, 22 April 1894, Kelso Papers, Vol. 4.

¹³⁰ Jean Thomson Scott, The Conditions of Female Labour in Ontario (Toronto 1891), 19.

¹³¹ Kelso Papers, Vol. 24. For a discussion of the CAS's views on the merits of work, see Ottawa Children's Aid Society, Minutes, 3 November 1905.

¹³² Kelso Papers, Vol. 1, 23 May 1902.

Kelso instructed visiting committees to assist foster parents "in obtaining suitable employment for the children, and arranging such agreements as will ensure the training of the boys and girls in congenial occupations."¹³³ Moreover, CAS literature unambiguously stated that "girls at twelve years of age, and boys at fourteen, should become self-supporting."¹³⁴ This unbending adherence to the work ethic, combined with the child-savers' insistence on linking personal labour with social responsibility, created a hazy atmosphere that clouded the distinction between healthy work habits and exploitation. Many foster parents and employers abused this belief and took more from children in the way of work than they returned in the form of affection, education, opportunity, and material rewards.

The CAS's preference for free foster homes also contributed to the problem of child labour. In Kelso's mind, good Christian citizens who truly cared about neglected children would neither need nor expect payment in return for their services. On the contrary, Kelso feared that if the CAS offered financial support to foster homes, selfish individuals would line up just to receive the money.¹³⁵ Kelso's perception marked a critical weakness in the early CAS strategy. Far from giving freely and generously to their foster children, pragmatic parents extracted

¹³³ Kelso Papers, Vol. 4.

¹³⁴ "First Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," 27.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 26.

labour from youngsters for their own purposes. Furthermore, unable to use the threat of withholding payments as leverage to enforce the terms of an agreement, CAS inspectors frequently exempted foster parents from certain responsibilities rather than risk losing the placement. On the other hand, the minority of homes that received financial support were far more inclined to provide conscientious and salutary care for their foster children -- the exact opposite of what Kelso had envisioned. Payments to foster homes would become standard practice early in the twentieth century as the CAS moved to professionalize its service.¹³⁶

The Ontario government had hoped to avoid situations of abuse by appointing voluntary visiting committees to inspect and regulate foster homes. Evidence shows, however, that the committee system failed miserably. In 1894, Kelso reported that Ontario's twenty-five to thirty visiting committees represented well less than half the needed number.¹³⁷ The following year, he noted that the committees "have not yet been of much service in the advancement of this movement."¹³⁸ In 1900, The Peterborough Times complained that the local visiting committee had done

136 "Sixteenth Report -- Neglected and Dependent Children," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1909, Vol. XLI, Part VIII, No. 35, 10.

137 "Proceedings of the First Ontario Conference on Child-Saving," 46.

138 "Third Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," 2.

nothing to stop extreme cruelty in some foster homes.¹³⁹ In many instances, confusion reigned as visiting committees and local CAS's fought over their respective jurisdictions and responsibilities.¹⁴⁰ In areas where committees did not exist, the CAS formed its opinion of foster homes based solely on correspondence with parents. The failure of the committee system eventually led a few of the more solvent CAS's to hire their own visitors.¹⁴¹ In an attempt to revive the committees, the Ontario Legislature passed "An Act to Amend the Children's Protection Act of Ontario"¹⁴² in 1903. This legislation clarified the duties of visiting committees and set a member's period of appointment at three years.

By the time this act appeared, Kelso, like some of the local societies, had already taken steps of his own to improve the visitation system. Disturbed by the failure of the voluntary committees, Kelso created a paid position within his department in 1896 to increase the quantity and quality of visitations. Kelso's first appointment was Mrs. J.L. Harvie, a former member of the Board of Management of the Hospital for Sick Children in

¹³⁹ The Peterborough Times, 1 May 1900. Cited in Dean Ramsey, "The Development of Child Welfare Legislation in Ontario," 29.

¹⁴⁰ Dawe, "An Historical Study of the Transition from Institutional to Foster Care," 117.

¹⁴¹ Baker, "The Place of the Private Agency in the Administration of Government Policies," 70; and Bain, "The Role of J.J. Kelso in the Launching of the Child Welfare Movement," 31.

¹⁴² Ontario, Statutes, 1903, Chapter 106.

Toronto. The creation of paid positions resulted in a higher number of visitations to foster homes, but the immediate benefit of this work remains in doubt. In 1904 alone, Mrs. Harvie visited 881 homes within a period of twenty-eight weeks covering a distance of approximately 10,000 miles.¹⁴³ This averages out to more than five visits per day. Furthermore, Harvie's reports exposed the CAS's continuing belief in the social value of child labour and frequently exhibited a tendency to accept parents' testimony at face value. In July 1900, for example, Harvie scribbled the following notes after visiting the foster home of a fourteen-year-old boy:

Boy not at home when called, away picking berries. Grave complaints by foster-parents that the boy was lazy, disobedient and took no interest in matters about the home. Boy treated kindly; got new clothes, attended mass regularly. Wrote a letter to boy saying that if no amendment was made we would have to take him away.¹⁴⁴

There is no evidence in this case to suggest that Harvie attempted to elicit the boy's opinions.

In other instances, paid visitors demonstrated a reluctance to press foster parents to extend their ward's benefits even in situations where CAS literature suggested that children of certain ages were entitled to such consideration. In 1904, for

¹⁴³ "Twelfth Report of the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1905, Vol. XXXVII, Part X, No. 43, 3.

¹⁴⁴ Report of Mrs. Harvie, Provincial Visitor, July 1900. Cited in Harrison, Never Enough, 15.

example, a visitor with the Ottawa CAS filed the following report after inspecting the foster home of a fifteen-year-old girl:

This girl has grown tall and strong. She appears to be quite contented and happy. No doubt she has a great deal of work to do...Mr. and Mrs. _____ are very kind to her, and she is treated in a great measure as one of the family....She might now receive wages, but Inspector did not care to press the point lest it might disturb their friendly relationship.¹⁴⁵

A significant number of children placed out by the CAS did not wait to hear from official visitors before passing judgement on their own situation. Some youngsters abandoned their placements because of low wages or an oppressive work load; others left to work for neighbours on the enticement of higher pay.¹⁴⁶ In some instances, children assigned to country homes rebelled against rural life and bolted for the city.¹⁴⁷ Occasionally, a foster child returned to his or her original home, suggesting that the emotional ties between CAS wards and their natural parents were not as tenuous as some child-savers contended.¹⁴⁸

The CAS exercised considerable caution before returning foster children to their natural homes. Kelso frequently expressed his fear that children might return to lazy and immoral

¹⁴⁵ Eleventh Annual Report of the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa, 1903-04 (Ottawa 1905), 10.

¹⁴⁶ Kelso Papers, Vol. 25; and "Eighth Report on Work for Neglected and Dependent Children," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1901, Vol. XXXIII, Part VII, No. 40, 47.

¹⁴⁷ "First Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," 33.

¹⁴⁸ Ottawa Children's Aid Society, Minutes, 3 November 1905.

habits once reunited with their families.¹⁴⁹ In these instances, the CAS exerted its legal and moral influence to prevent youngsters from suffering a relapse. The Ottawa CAS, for example, agreed to return Clara Hansen to her natural parents on the condition that they pledge "to live a peaceable, quiet and orderly life, that the daughter shall not be allowed to go out and beg they might have her as foster parents on signing the necessary papers with the Secretary."¹⁵⁰ The CAS thus retained custody over the young girl even though she was living with her natural parents. In this manner, the CAS used children as bargaining chips in an attempt to control the behaviour of adults.

Although the work of the CAS drew accolades from most of the reform community, the agency continually encountered a few sceptics. In 1894, some members of Toronto city council portrayed the CAS as a faddish social vehicle designed to enhance the public careers of ambitious reformers.¹⁵¹ Other CAS critics accused Kelso of abducting children from their natural families. In 1900, The Toronto World, Kelso's old employer, designated him the "Honourable Provincial Kidnapper" and for good measure added that his activities "would bring the era of socialism so much nearer."¹⁵² Kelso, however, had little trouble matching the

149 Kelso Papers, Vol. 1.

150 Children's Aid Society of Ottawa, Minutes, 11 October 1904.

151 "Proceedings of the First Ontario Conference on Child-Saving," 12.

152 The Toronto World, 22 March 1900.

hyperbole of his adversaries. In 1905, he reviewed the record of the CAS with obvious exaggeration:

There is an entire absence of begging on the part of children; there are no more of the ragged and bare-footed children who used to excite the sympathy of good people and cause money to be generously given for soup kitchens and Christmas dinners; no more homeless news-boys sleeping in odd corners and exciting the curious interest and sympathy of benevolent ladies; no more children carrying beer cans, and finding amusement in the drunken antics of the saloon loafer.¹⁵³

Although Kelso occasionally stretched the truth pertaining to the over-all social impact of the CAS, he stood on solid ground when he pointed out the substantial increase in the size and activities of the various local societies during his years as superintendent. By 1896, twenty-nine CAS's across Ontario had placed 277 children in foster homes. Kelso had found placements for an additional 111 youngsters through the auspices of his own office.¹⁵⁴ By 1900, Kelso's office and thirty local CAS's had placed 1,318 foster children.¹⁵⁵ By 1908, 5,200 children had experienced foster homes.¹⁵⁶ In the same year, the Ontario Legislature passed "An Act for the Protection and Reformation of

153 "Thirteenth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children," 15.

154 "Fourth Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1897, Vol. XXIX, Part V, No. 16, xxi.

155 "Eighth Report on Work for Neglected and Dependent Children," 11.

156 "Sixteenth Report -- Neglected and Dependent Children," 10.

Neglected Children."¹⁵⁷ This legislation repeated all the major clauses of the acts of 1893, 1895, and 1903. In addition, the law permitted the superintendent to assume the work of a local CAS that had disbanded and granted him the authority to transfer a foster child to an industrial school or other recognized children's institution if the foster placement proved unsuccessful. This new version of the Children's Act also symbolized J.J. Kelso's triumphant efforts to turn the foster home method of child welfare into a major public policy.

During the nineteenth century, the treatment of neglected and dependent children in Ontario passed through three distinct stages as reformers revised their view of children and child-rearing and recognized the long-term social gain proper childhood training promised. In the early years of the century, civic authorities relied on guardianships and apprenticeships to solve the problem of dependent children. The most common of these options -- apprenticeship -- emphasized the development of industrious habits leading to self-sufficiency while posing no cost to the public. Many apprenticeships failed to deliver on their full promise, however, and the policy paid little attention to the special and unique nature of childhood.

By the mid-point of the 1800s, many reformers recognized the need for separate children's institutions and devoted their efforts to the establishment and management of orphans' homes. The

¹⁵⁷ Ontario, Statutes, 1908, Chapter 59.

homes acknowledged the special status of childhood, but their training programmes stressed the development of work habits at the expense of general education. The children best served by orphanages were those who returned to their families when material and social conditions at home improved. Many others were forced to sever their family ties permanently and often served as low-paid workers to demanding employers.

Nearing the end of the century, a new approach to child welfare, personified by J.J. Kelso and embodied by the Children's Aid Society, opposed the institutionalization of needy youngsters and promoted the foster home model as a progressive and economical alternative. Kelso and the 'new' child-savers generated a number of fresh ideas pertaining to child welfare: the duty of the State to protect neglected as well as dependent children; an emphasis on the home environment rather than institutions as the proper training ground for children; an increased level of State involvement in the regulation of social behaviour; and the introduction of a systematic, professional approach to the administration of welfare services. An examination of the similarities between the CAS and earlier forms of child rescue, however, provides a more complete understanding of the nature and objectives of child welfare in nineteenth-century Ontario. Despite the advancement of new ideas and procedures, the ultimate goal of the CAS remained unchanged from that of earlier generations of middle-class child-savers: to avoid present and future expenditures on public welfare and to guarantee social

peace and stability by transforming dependent children into industrious, law-abiding workers. Like all of its predecessors, the CAS believed that this objective could be achieved by introducing children to work and discipline at an early age. Expressed in simplest possible terms, the new child-savers hoped that the foster home model would prove to be a more effective and less expensive method of dealing with a perennial social problem.

Judged on its own merits, the CAS system of child placement exhibits a number of internal weaknesses. Although the agency rescued many children from destitution and institutional confinement, life in a foster home often resembled that of an un-paid or under-paid servant. Despite the emphasis placed on a family setting, few foster children fully harmonized with their new surroundings and fewer still shared in normal family privileges, such as inheritance rights. CAS negotiators frequently acquiesced in the face of demanding foster parents and employers and neither voluntary nor paid visitors succeeded in correcting many obvious situations of injustice. In particular, the CAS failed to guarantee its wards the education rights to which they were entitled by law. Despite Kelso's promise that youngsters would enjoy the chance to make "the best of what talents they possess,"¹⁵⁸ foster children were condemned to a working-class world that offered few opportunities for personal development and social mobility. Like the orphanages, the CAS preferred to place

¹⁵⁸ "Fourteenth Report -- Neglected and Dependent Children," 18.

its wards in rural homes. This policy indiscriminately banished many ill-prepared city-bred children to a foreign environment at a time when country-raised youths were moving in the opposite direction. All of these elements constituted a part of a middle-class vision of society which child-savers paternalistically imposed upon children whose only crime was their kinship to poor, troubled families -- families that in late nineteenth-century Ontario attracted a tremendous amount of attention, but exercised little power.

CHILDREN OF THE INDUSTRIAL AGE:
CHILDREN, WORK, AND WELFARE IN
LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY ONTARIO

John Bullen

Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and
Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Ph.D. degree in History



University of Ottawa



John Bullen, Ottawa, Canada, 1989

CHAPTER V

"THE INCULCATION OF INDUSTRIOUS HABITS:" THE TREATMENT OF JUVENILE OFFENDERS AND INCORRIGIBLE CHILDREN

The jails have been our normal schools, and the penitentiary our university.

E.A. Meredith, 1861¹

In 1870, 319 boys and 108 girls under the age of sixteen experienced the inside of Ontario jails.² A decade later, Ontario jails detained 549 boys and 59 girls who had not yet celebrated their sixteenth birthday.³ In the late 1880s, Toronto mayor W.H. Howland informed the Royal Commission on the Relations of Capital and Labor that the Toronto Police Force had uncovered highly-organized gangs of young boys that accounted for a substantial amount of the city's petty crime.⁴ Writing in The

¹ "Report of the Board of Inspectors of Asylums, Prisons, Etc.," (Separate Report of Mr. E.A. Meredith), Canada, Sessional Papers, 1862, Vol. XX, Part IV, No. 19.

² "Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Prison and Reformatory System of Ontario" ("Prison Reform Commission"), Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1891, Vol. XXIII, Part IV, No. 18, 19.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Canada, Royal Commission on the Relations of Capital and Labor in Canada (Royal Labor Commission) (Ottawa 1889). Ontario evidence, 162.

Globe in 1891, reporter J.J. Kelso revealed that in the previous year 1,624 children between the ages of ten and twenty had appeared in the Toronto police court.⁵ In 1896, the Toronto Police laid criminal charges against 506 youngsters under the age of sixteen. Of this number, 234 had been arrested for larceny, seventy for trespassing, fifty-seven for vagrancy and incorrigibility, thirty-six for injury to property, twenty for house-breaking, and seventeen for disorderly conduct.⁶ These were the crimes that most frequently appeared on the records of juvenile offenders. The law, however, detailed numerous transgressions of varying seriousness. In 1898, for example, a Toronto judge levied a penalty of \$2.00 or ten days in jail against a luckless eleven-year-old lad who had been caught red-handed playing with a ball on Sumach Street.⁷

With the possible exception of the last unusual example, these statistics alarmed nineteenth-century reformers who feared both the immediate and long-term social and economic consequences of juvenile delinquency. Part of the reformers' concern emerged from their realization that neither the adult-oriented criminal justice system nor child-saving agencies such as Protestant

⁵ J.J. Kelso, "The Waifs of the Street," The Globe, 18 April 1891, 1. See also J.J. Kelso, "Children in the Police Court," The Mail, 10 July 1893; The Evening News, 7 July 1893; and The Mail, 5 August 1893.

⁶ "Fourth Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1897, Vol. XXIX, Part V, No. 16, 2.

⁷ C.S. Clark, Of Toronto the Good. A Social Study. The Queen City of Canada As It Is (Montreal, 1898), 3.

Orphans' Homes and Children's Aid Societies could adequately deal with the problem of juvenile offenders and incorrigible children. These cases required special treatment and separate institutions. This chapter describes and evaluates the efforts of reformers and governments to counter the problem of juvenile delinquency and incorrigibility through the use of reformatories, refuges, and industrial schools. Similar to the agencies that cared for neglected and dependent children, these institutions aimed at turning their inmates into industrious and obedient workers in the hope that this would ensure a middle-class view of social peace and stability, reduce the incidence of crime and deviance, and prevent future public expenditures on welfare. In most cases, however, reformatories, refuges, and industrial schools failed to provide their inmates with marketable skills but instead branded them with a lasting stigma and locked them into a social and economic ghetto from which escape proved nearly impossible.

Although it does not constitute the first expression of public concern with juvenile crime and incorrigibility, the Prison Reform Commission of 1891 provides a convenient summary and analysis of several aspects of this issue as it evolved over the last half of the nineteenth century. Table 5-1 lists some of the statistics collected by the commission. Among many other tasks, the commission probed the causes and effects of juvenile delinquency. After studying documentation from Canada and

Table 5-1

Children Under Sixteen In Ontario Jails

Year	Boys	Girls
1869	294	82
1870	319	108
1871	329	58
1872	281	56
1873	323	74
1874	377	67
1875	389	70
1876	434	70
1877	542	62
1878	480	54
1879	416	53
1880	549	59
1881	468	73
1882	522	62
1883	423	48
1884	458	46
1885	450	50
1886	352	38
1887	409	38
1888	551	65
1889	451	46

Source: "Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Prison and Reformatory System of Ontario," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1891, Vol. XXIII, Part IV, No. 18, 19.

foreign countries and considering the testimony of numerous witnesses, the commissioners revealed the influence of a strong middle-class bias by identifying the personal behaviour and habits of parents, not stressful social and economic conditions, as the primary source of juvenile crime. Declared the authors: "The chief causes of crime in the community are: the want of proper parental control; the lack of good home training and the baneful influence of bad homes, largely due to the culpable neglect and indifference of parents and the evil effects of drunkenness."⁸ The investigators vigorously condemned drunken and dishonest parents for serving as poor role models and accused them of locking their children into a world of religious and literary ignorance. Although the commissioners acknowledged that economic demands could sometimes force working parents to leave their children unattended for long periods, they still insisted that "sheer neglect and indifference are in most cases the cause of the want of proper control and training which lead so often to such dreadful consequences."⁹ In a curious statement that contained a more profound insight into the world of working women than was probably intended, the commissioners identified another cause of crime as "the love of dress amongst girls and their preference for employment in shops and factories, even when the wages paid are scarcely sufficient to provide food."¹⁰

⁸ "Prison Reform Commission," 40.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 44.

Many witnesses provided support for the commissioners' views and added their own impressions of the nature of juvenile crime. Donald J. McKinnon, superintendent of the Victoria Industrial School in Mimico, blamed criminal and vicious behaviour among youngsters on "the lack of a sense of responsibility on the part of parents in the matter of bringing up and training their children."¹¹ Mrs. O'Reilly, superintendent of Toronto's Andrew Mercer Reformatory for Women and Refuge for Girls, named drunkenness and parental neglect as the primary causes of crime.¹² Reporter J.J. Kelso, future founder of the Children's Aid Society, expressed his belief that many young street vendors developed dishonest habits as a result of their work and then turned to crime when they outgrew their youthful occupation. "The profession of selling newspapers is in my opinion pernicious right through," Kelso moaned.¹³

In addition to exploring the causes of crime, the commissioners examined and commented on current practices pertaining to the confinement and treatment of criminals. The authors maintained that hard labour comprised an essential component of the rehabilitation process, especially as it applied to young offenders. They stressed, however, that such labour, in addition to serving as punishment and deterrent, should be productive and educational in nature. Several witnesses also made the link be-

¹¹ Ibid., 485.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 723.

tween work and reformation. William Stark, Inspector of Detectives, Toronto Police Force, spoke for many law enforcement officers when he earnestly pronounced that there could be no "possible chance of reformation with idleness."¹⁴ Even trade unionist Daniel O'Donoghue cautiously approved of prison labour so long as it did not compete with outside workers.¹⁵

The commissioners' recommendations followed logically from their class-biased view of the nature of juvenile delinquency and their belief in work as the primary agent of reformation. The authors stressed that all offenders under the age of fourteen should be treated in courts and institutions devoted exclusively to juveniles. Reform institutions should subject boys to "a thorough system of industrial training," ranging from agricultural labour to traditional trades, such as carpentry, shoemaking, and tailoring. Separate institutions for girls should teach farming and dairy techniques, cooking, laundry, sewing, and "all kinds of housework....so as to fit them for domestic service." Each institution should resemble "a hive of active, earnest, unremitting industry" where "the inculcation of industrious habits is of the very first importance." Industrious and obedient youngsters should qualify for parole, apprenticeship, or placement in a private home. The ultimate aim of all reform programmes should be to transform delinquent youngsters into hard-working, self-sufficient, and law-abiding citizens.

¹⁴ Ibid., 721.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Reflecting the widely-held belief that the immoral and baneful influences of urban life lay at the root of many wayward children's troubles, the commissioners expressed their preference for the "honest work and quiet contentment of farm life."¹⁶

The investigators based many of their conclusions and suggestions on their examination of the history and current practices of existing institutions devoted to juvenile offenders and incorrigible children. Among these, the Ontario Reformatory for Boys at Penetanguishene underwent careful scrutiny.¹⁷ Table 5-2 lists some statistics from this institution. The government of Canada established this institution in 1857 under the name Reformatory Prison as instructed by "An Act Respecting Prisons for Young Offenders."¹⁸ The institution detained male offenders between the ages of seven and twenty-one whose sentences ranged from six months to five years. The prison's primary purpose was to shelter and reform boys who otherwise would have faced the harsh conditions and harmful influences of an adult penitentiary. Thirteen juvenile offenders from Kingston Penitentiary

¹⁶ Ibid., 217-24.

¹⁷ Except where otherwise noted, general information on the Ontario Reformatory for Boys is drawn from the following: "Annual Reports of the Inspector of Prisons, Asylums and Public Charities," Ontario, Sessional Papers; "Prison Reform Commission;" National Archives of Canada (NAC), J.J. Kelso Papers, MG30 C97, Volumes 5 and 20; "The Boys Reformatory at Penetanguishene," The Globe, 20 November 1897; and Alf Rubbra, The Star Weekly, 14 February 1925.

¹⁸ Canada, Statutes, 1857, Chapter 28.

Table 5-2

Ontario Reformatory for Boys -- Average Number of Inmates

Year	Number
1868	226
1870	210
1875	210
1880	286
1885	295
1889	281

Ages of 85 Boys Committed in 1889

Age	Number
7	1
8	0
9	5
10	6
11	6
12	17
13	12
14	16
15	12
16	7
17	2
18	0
19	0
20	0
21	1

Source: "Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Prison and Reformatory System of Ontario," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1891, Vol. XXIII, Part IV, No. 18, 22.

summer, the routine started one hour earlier and finished a half-hour later. On Sundays, the boys remained in their cells except for chapel and meals.

As the above schedule indicates, work dominated the boys' daily routine. All capable lads performed basic domestic chores such as scrubbing floors, washing clothes, and gathering wood for fuel. Older boys determinedly attempted to cultivate seventy-five acres of stony land. The most promising lads studied part time as tailors, carpenters, shoemakers, and coopers. These programmes strove to reduce the institution's operating costs, provide the boys with industrial training, and supply some of their essential needs. A number of negative factors contributed to the generally unimpressive results of these early efforts: slowness of construction delayed the availability of proper workshop facilities; distance from markets discouraged surplus production; the necessity of maintaining the grounds and buildings distracted from the more formal training programmes; and an inefficient classification system assigned inappropriate work duties to some lads.

Following Confederation, the province of Ontario assumed responsibility for the reformatory. This move brought the institution under the critical eye of J.W. Langmuir, the Inspector of Prisons, Asylums, and Public Charities. Unlike many of his associates in the field of law enforcement, Langmuir stressed the need for rehabilitation over punishment. The inspector wasted no time exposing the prison's deficiencies.

and ten from Isle-aux-Noix comprised the reformatory's first guests.

Aside from shielding boys from the undesirable influence of adult convicts, however, the prison offered few environmental improvements. The remote location was deliberately chosen to stifle escape attempts. The original buildings consisted of army barracks which had sat empty since the War of 1812. High walls surrounded all the buildings and guards patrolled the grounds around the clock. An inadequate water supply sometimes forced inmates to go all winter without bathing. A journalist later described the dreary atmosphere of the inmates' narrow cells: "The walls were of massive grey stone, with iron bars firmly embedded in the rock outside every window, while the doors were of triple timber, iron-ribbed, double-locked and bolted."¹⁹ Prisoners wore yellow and grey prison garb. Although the reformatory's early promoters fought to include education and industrial training in the boys' daily routine, punishment triumphed over rehabilitation as the prison's primary function.

A typical winter day started with the boys up and dressed by 7:15 a.m. Prayers and school filled the next hour until breakfast was served. The boys worked from the end of breakfast until 11:45 a.m. The lads then enjoyed lunch and recreation until 1:00 p.m. Between 1:00 and 3:00 p.m. the boys worked, followed by school, and then supper at 5:00 p.m. After evening prayers, the lads returned to their cells. Lights went out at 7:30 p.m. In

¹⁹ Alf Rubbra, The Star Weekly, 14 February 1925.

According to Langmuir, the institution's location, structure, facilities, school curriculum, work programmes, and approach to discipline all fell far short of what was needed to provide the inmates with a satisfactory level of education, industrial training, and personal reformation. In 1874, he wrote: "The Provincial Reformatory is unfitted for the work it should perform, and is wrong in principle and faulty in practice." In place of punishment, Langmuir argued that the prison's programmes should demand "just enough of labour to teach habits of industry, and by firm though kindly discipline to induce regularity and obedience to orders."²⁰ This statement suggests that Langmuir's criticisms of the reformatory applied more to its methods than to its objectives.

Over the objections of warden William Kelly, a dogmatic law enforcement officer who favoured retribution to reformation, Langmuir attempted to diversify the prison's work programmes. In 1872, he signed a contract with C.P. Reid & Company to allow the inmates to produce cigars. In addition to teaching the boys a skill, Langmuir hoped that this activity would raise money for the institution. The reformatory failed to meet its quota, however, and Reid cancelled the contract in 1878. Moreover, company officials reported that the experiment had produced very few lads with any real knowledge of the trade. Some politicians also harboured doubts about the value of the cigar-making programme.

²⁰ "Annual Report of the Inspector of Prisons, Asylums and Public Charities," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1874, Vol. VII, No. 2, 60.

In 1877, federal Minister of Justice Edward Blake complained to Premier Mowat that "this trade does not offer any bright prospects" and expressed his suspicion that "it is prosecuted chiefly because it is thought to be under the peculiar circumstances of the institution the most profitable to the Government."²¹ Worse still, cigar-making led to a reliance on tobacco among many boys whom Kelly then punished for smoking.

The end of the decade brought happier news for Langmuir in at least two areas. First, William Kelly resigned in 1879 and was succeeded by the more progressive Thomas McCrosson. Second, the Ontario Legislature codified some of the inspector's ideas in "An Act Respecting the Ontario Reformatory for Boys,"²² assented to 5 March 1880. This legislation renamed the institution and stated as its objectives "the custody and detention, with a view to their education, industrial training, and moral reclamation of such boys as shall be lawfully sentenced to confinement therein." The act empowered the Lieutenant-Governor to appoint "a Superintendent, a deputy-superintendent, a bursar, a storekeeper and steward, two or more schoolmasters, a surgeon, and such trade-instructors, overseers, and other officers and servants as the

²¹ Archives of Ontario, Edward Blake Papers, Letterbook X, 381, Edward Blake to Oliver Mowat, 5 June 1877. Cited in Susan E. Houston, "The Impetus to Reform: Urban Crime, Poverty and Ignorance, 1850-1875," (Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1974), 172, footnote 129.

²² Ontario, Statutes, 1880, Chapter 34. To eliminate conflict arising from the constitutional overlap of responsibilities in the area of criminal justice, the federal government passed an act with the same name and similar content on 7 May 1880. See Canada, Statutes, 1880, Chapter 39.

efficient management of the said Reformatory may require." The Inspector, with the approval of the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, was authorized to "make rules and regulations for the management, interior economy and discipline of the said Reformatory, and for fixing and prescribing the duties and conduct of the Superintendent and every other officer and servant employed therein." This clause undoubtedly rose out of the disagreements Langmuir had had with Kelly.

The act provided judges and magistrates with the option of sentencing a boy to the reformatory for an undefined period, to last until such time "he be reformed or otherwise fit to be apprenticed or bound out, or be probationally or permanently discharged." Officials could choose this route provided that the lad in question could have been imprisoned for two years or longer under the normal court procedure and that he not be detained longer than the maximum possible sentence for his crime. This clause was a response to Langmuir's constant complaints that fixed sentences in many cases did not allow the reformatory the time it needed to effect maximum results. Furthermore, at the request of a parent or guardian who could provide proof, a judge or magistrate could sentence an "incorrigible or vicious" boy between the ages of ten and thirteen to the reformatory for an undefined period not to exceed five years.

The act empowered the Inspector to devise a system to record and evaluate the conduct of inmates "to encourage good behaviour and industry...and with a view to permitting every boy to earn a

remission of a portion of the term for which he was sentenced." The latter part of this clause applied only to boys who had spent at least one year in the reformatory. A judge or magistrate could recommit to the reformatory, for the remainder of the original sentence, any boy who had been released on probation but had subsequently violated the conditions of his parole. The legislation also allowed the Superintendent, with the consent of the Inspector, to arrange an apprenticeship for any boy over twelve for a period not to extend beyond five years from the commencement of his imprisonment. Any wages included in an apprenticeship agreement were payable to the boy "or to some other person for his benefit."

The act included a sample information form to be filled out for each boy sentenced to the reformatory. In addition to posing questions pertaining to the lad's personal background and the nature of his crime, the form inquired into the "physical and mental condition of the boy, and his fitness to perform ordinary work."

Over the decade of the 1880s, Langmuir and McCrosson attempted to reconstitute the reformatory as an agent of reformation as well as one of retribution. Dormitories replaced individual cells, the prison uniform was discarded, and bathing and heating facilities were improved. Expanded work programmes took into account a boy's individual interests and abilities and provided room for advancement. Education played a greater role in the boys' daily routine and discipline was relaxed. Despite

these notable improvements, the reformatory could not overcome all the obstacles it faced, and by the end of the decade many of its original problems had returned. Furthermore, a minor discrepancy between the provincial and federal acts of 1880 prevented one of Langmuir's major recommendations -- the use of the indefinite sentence -- from taking full effect.

By the time the Prison Reform Commission met, the fortunes of the Boys' Reformatory had apparently travelled full circle. In the course of their investigation, the commissioners discovered many of the same problems that Langmuir had identified in his reports more than a decade earlier. Despite the introduction of new training programmes, a lack of proper instruction and facilities prevented all but a very few boys from developing marketable skills. The relatively infertile land surrounding the reformatory refused to yield enough produce for the boys to supply even their own needs. Furthermore, the commissioners noted, "there is no official machinery to provide good homes and suitable employment for the boys when they return to the outer world, or to control, direct or guide them in any way."²³

Although he had participated in Langmuir's reform wave of the 1880s, Superintendent Thomas McCrosson readily acknowledged the reformatory's shortcomings. Referring specifically to the training programmes, McCrosson told the commissioners:

We have endeavored to employ the boys as best we can, but not to their benefit as it should be...So far as the teaching of a particular trade goes I cannot say

²³ "Prison Reform Commission," 88.

that it is of much benefit to them, and when they go out it frequently follows that they have a very imperfect knowledge of any trade. We might give them some knowledge of tailoring that might enable them to get in somewhere as improvers. Our shoemaking is no trade at all. We make shoes for the inmates, but the knowledge that the boys acquire is of no value outside.²⁴

McCrosson also declared the act of 1880 to be a dead letter. Since the beginning of the decade, the reformatory had arranged fewer than a dozen apprenticeships for its inmates. The superintendent blamed the institution's isolated location and court officials' reluctance to hand down indefinite sentences for the failure of this programme. Despite these disappointing results, McCrosson continued to argue that work formed a central tenet of the philosophy of juvenile reformation. If the reformatory could not produce skilled workers, he maintained, it still must "inculcate habits of industry" to prepare boys for honest labour on the outside.²⁵ An even more critical view of the reformatory came from J.J. Kelso who referred to the institution as "a relic of a past age" that had "not adapted to the requirements of the world anywhere today."²⁶

The Prison Reform Commission also investigated the reformatory's sister institution, the Andrew Mercer Refuge for Girls.²⁷

²⁴ Ibid., 89.

²⁵ Ibid., 459.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Except where otherwise noted, general information on the Mercer Refuge is drawn from the following: "Annual Reports of the Inspector of Prisons, Asylums and Public Charities," Ontario, Sessional Papers; Royal Labor Commission; "Prison Reform

Established in 1881 as an adjunct to the Mercer Reformatory for Women, the Girls' Refuge sheltered young female offenders and incorrigible and destitute girls considered by officials to be headed towards a criminal existence. Richard Splane commented on the inclusion of non-offenders: "It is apparent that, in accepting into the refuge girls who were in need of protection as potential rather than convicted offenders, and in undertaking to train and maintain them, the province had moved beyond any position it had previously taken."²⁸ Occasionally, the refuge allowed girls from this group to return to their families when conditions at home improved. Some inmates who rightfully belonged in other, less-tainted children's institutions arrived at the provincially-funded refuge as a result of the reluctance of some municipal councils to contribute to the per capita costs of other child-saving agencies as required by law.²⁹

The refuge's programme followed a relatively non-penal path, concentrating on elementary education and the development of basic domestic skills. With the exception of very young girls, all inmates sewed, knitted, mended clothes, and performed

Commission;" and Kelso Papers, Volumes 1 and 31.

²⁸ Richard B. Splane, Social Welfare in Ontario, 1791-1893: A Study of Public Welfare Administration (Toronto 1965), 171.

²⁹ As Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children, J.J. Kelso frequently complained about this practice as it applied to both girls and boys. See "First Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act, Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1894, Vol. XXVI, Part IX, No. 47, 42; and "Eleventh Report of the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children," Ontario Sessional Papers, 1904, Vol. XXXVI, Part IX, No. 43, 7.

housework and kitchen duties. A small number of girls worked in the officers' quarters attached to the women's reformatory. According to the refuge's matron, Mrs. O'Reilly, the work was "given in rotation so as to make the girls good servants."³⁰ Girls who performed well within the institution were hired out as domestic servants to local citizens. Occasionally, the inmates did sewing and laundry for the community to raise money for the refuge.

Like the boys from the provincial reformatory, the majority of the inmates of the girls' refuge were poor working-class children whose social status suffered even more once they crossed the threshold of the institution. The refuge's head teacher, Matilda Elliot, estimated that seventy-five per cent of the girls could neither read nor write upon arrival.³¹ Following a visit to the refuge in November 1887, reporter J.J. Kelso committed to his diary an impression of the inmates that typified the middle-class view of such creatures: "They are as a rule...the lowest children of the slums, and the dregs of vice." In March 1888, however, the future child-saver recorded a dramatically different opinion: "Reading over the above I wish to qualify the statements made with the remark that on subsequent visits I found some particular lovely bright and clever children there, who found themselves in the institution through no fault or crime of their

³⁰ "Prison Reform Commission," 97.

³¹ Ibid.

own."³² Kelso's change of heart indicated a minor but significant deviation from the widespread middle-class perception of working-class behaviour. Unfortunately, few of Kelso's fellow citizens could claim even one visit to the refuge as the basis of their uninformed, biased opinions.

In its first nine years of operation, the Mercer Refuge witnessed 160 girls pass through its doors. During that time, the institution usually earned satisfactory reports from Inspector Langmuir. By the time the Prison Reform Commission met in 1890, the refuge was approaching its capacity of fifty inmates. Like Langmuir, the commissioners put their stamp of approval on the institution's activities. Their only suggestion for change was that the refuge relocate to avoid the undesirable influence of the inmates of the women's reformatory.

The Prison Reform Commission also examined the record of a more recently-established agency devoted to the care and training of criminally-inclined and incorrigible children -- the industrial school. Following a few local attempts in the pre-Confederation period,³³ the industrial school idea reached maturity in Ontario in the early 1870s largely due to the efforts of William McMurrich, a Toronto lawyer and Presbyterian Sunday

³² Kelso Papers, Vol. 1, Kelso's diary, 4 November 1887 and 4 March 1888.

³³ See Canada, Statutes, 1857, Chapter 82; 1862, Chapter 79; and 1864, Chapter 145.

School teacher.³⁴ Under McMurrich's leadership, a reform group known as the Industrial Schools Committee petitioned the provincial government to create an institution to accommodate neglected and incorrigible children not convicted of crime. Habitual truants, in particular, engaged the committee's concern. In response, the Ontario Legislature passed "An Act Respecting Industrial Schools"³⁵ on 24 March 1874. The act empowered public and separate school boards to found and operate industrial schools, defined as institutions "in which industrial training is provided, and in which children are lodged, clothed and fed, as well as taught." Any person could bring before a police magistrate any child apparently under the age of fourteen found begging in public, homeless with no visible means of support, or who "by reason of the neglect, drunkenness or other vices of parents, is suffered to be growing up without salutary parental control and education, or in circumstances exposing him to lead an idle and dissolute life." Parents and guardians could bring their own uncontrollable children before a magistrate. A magistrate could commit any such child to a certified industrial school for any period of time not to extend beyond the youngster's sixteenth birthday. The legislation instructed magistrates to send Roman Catholic and Protestant children to the

³⁴ W. B. McMurrich, "Industrial Schools," Canadian Monthly, November 1872. See also Paul W. Bennett, "'Turning "Bad Boys" into "Good Citizens:"' The Reforming Impulse of Toronto's Industrial Schools Movement, 1883 to the 1920s," Ontario History, Vol. LXXVIII, No. 3, September 1986, 212-14.

³⁵ Ontario, Statutes, 1874, Chapter 29.

appropriate industrial school in areas where a choice existed, "as far as practicable." This last clause apparently rose out of previous public discussions concerning the religion of young vagrants.

The act authorized the industrial schools to place their charges "at such employments, and cause them to be instructed in such branches of useful knowledge as shall be suitable to their years and capacities." At the discretion of the school's managers, children could reside "at the dwelling of any trustworthy and respectable person." The Chief Superintendent could discharge a child from the school at any time. The School Corporation could bind a well-behaved child "to any trade, calling or service," with his or her consent. At the request of school authorities, a judge could order the parents or guardians of children committed to an industrial school to submit a maintenance payment of up to \$1.00 per week, if he believed their resources allowed them to do so. The school could also recover maintenance costs from the municipality where a child had last resided for the period of one year. An industrial school could release a child when

it is satisfactorily proved that the parents...have reformed and are leading orderly and industrious lives, and are in a condition to exercise salutary parental control over their children, and to provide them with proper education, and employment, or whenever, said parents being dead, any person may offer to make suitable provision for the care, nurture and education of such child as will conduce to the public welfare.

This last clause forcefully demonstrates that the legislation

sought to influence the behaviour of parents, as well as that of children, in the name of public interest.

The formal codification of the industrial school idea eventually aroused a number of vocal critics. In a series of articles published in the fall of 1878, The Globe articulated some negative aspects of industrial schools. One columnist complained that the industrial school would provide irresponsible parents with a way to lodge, clothe, and educate their children at public expense. This would be unfair to hard-working, honest citizens whose tax dollars supported the institution.³⁶ On a second occasion, the Globe reporter wrote: "If parents could get their children clothed, fed, educated, and apprenticed on declaring that they were incorrigible, we are not uncharitable when we say that the 'incorrigibles' would soon be legion....we should have something very like a premium upon vice."³⁷

Irrespective of the level of public support, by the early 1880s no school board in Ontario had found the time or resources to undertake the creation of an industrial school. Frustrated by this inaction, Toronto reformers W.H. Howland and Beverley Jones persuaded the Ontario government to pass "An Act Respecting Industrial Schools"³⁸ in February 1883. This act allowed school boards to delegate their power to establish and manage industrial

³⁶ "The Proposed Industrial School," The Globe, 5 October 1878.

³⁷ "The Proposed Industrial School," The Globe, 26 October 1878. See also "Industrial Schools," The Globe, 4 November 1878.

³⁸ Ontario, Statutes, 1882-83, Chapter 29.

schools to any duly-recognized philanthropic society. School boards that chose this option were obliged to supply teachers to the school, and the General Superintendent of the institution was to be selected from among the teachers, "when practicable."

With the necessary legislation in place, Howland and Jones launched the Industrial Schools Association of Toronto in June 1883 with the intention of establishing schools for troubled boys and girls. With a \$6,000.00 grant and fifty acres of good land on a long-term lease from the province, and an additional \$3,000.00 from the city,³⁹ the association opened the Victoria Industrial School for Boys in Mimico, approximately eight kilometres west of Toronto, in June 1887.⁴⁰ At the end of the first five months of operation, W.H. Howland claimed that many "poor 'bags of bones,' found in a deplorable state, [had] acquired the home feeling and habits of industry and obedience in the kindly atmosphere of the school."⁴¹ By the end of 1888, sixty-two young boys resided at the school. Of this number, twenty-five had been committed to the institution at the request

³⁹ Honora, M. Cochrane, ed, Centennial Story: The Board of Education for the City of Toronto 1850-1950 (Toronto 1950), 91.

⁴⁰ Except where otherwise noted, general information on the Victoria Industrial School for Boys is drawn from the following: Archives of Ontario, Records of the Industrial Schools Association of Toronto, MU1409; "Annual Reports of the Inspector of Prisons, Asylums and Public Charities," Ontario, Sessional Papers; Royal Labor Commission; "Prison Reform Commission;" "Annual Reports of the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children," Ontario, Sessional Papers; The Evangelical Churchman, (Prison Reform Number), Vol. XXII, No. 8, 25 February 1897; and Kelso Papers.

⁴¹ The Globe, 31 October 1887.

of parents or friends. This pattern revived earlier criticisms of parental abuse of the system, although some of these parents paid between fifty cents and \$2.00 per week in maintenance costs.⁴² The majority of the remaining boys arrived at the school after being convicted of larceny, vagrancy, or drunkenness. By October 1889, the number of residents had increased to 108, nine of whom ranged in age from seven to nine, forty-six from ten to twelve, and fifty-three from thirteen to fifteen.⁴³

The school followed what was known as the "family plan" or "cottage system." After classifying the boys according to age and size, the managers assigned each lad to one of the residences located on the grounds. A matron and a guard guided the daily operations of each cottage. The designers of this system hoped that the presence and influence of parental figures would create a family atmosphere in each residence. Some of these so-called cottages, however, reached four storeys in height and accommodated up to fifty boys. The high number of lads in each residence and the very size of the buildings prevented the achievement of this goal.

Consistent with the child-savers' general philosophy, work occupied a central position in the school's daily routine. Of 108 boys present in the institution in late 1889, twenty-seven performed household chores and mending in the cottages, twenty-one laboured in the kitchen and dining room, eighteen worked on

42 "Prison Reform Commission," 103.

43 Ibid., 102.

the school's farm, sixteen in the tailor's shop, fourteen in the laundry room, eleven in the carpenter's shop, and one in the superintendent's office and storeroom. On a typical day, the boys devoted four and a half hours to their work duties. Education, on the other hand, received only three hours. Recreation, personal hygiene, meals, bible-reading, and devotional exercises accounted for the remainder of the lads' waking hours.⁴⁴

Upon the expiration of their sentence, or when the school's managers judged that sufficient reformation had occurred, most boys returned to their homes. Some homeless lads who performed well during their detention were sent to live with nearby families. The majority of these boys worked as agricultural labourers, although a significant number were hired by business firms in the city. Theoretically, these arrangements took the form of apprenticeships, but in most cases the lads simply traded their labour for low wages. Furthermore, the absence of an efficient visitation system allowed many abuses to occur. From the mid-1890s, the Children's Aid Society assisted in the placement procedure.

Despite the school's emphasis on work, very few boys developed marketable skills. Testifying before the Prison Reform Commission, Superintendent Donald J. Mckinnon admitted that no boy to date had entered the trade that he had studied at the institution. "We really don't teach them anything but tailoring

⁴⁴ Ibid.

well," McKinnon conceded. The superintendent implied that the most these programmes could achieve was to turn out "handy lads" with a vague knowledge of agriculture and a few trades. This policy appeared to satisfy McKinnon who expressed his view that a future as agricultural labourers, perhaps in the developing province of Manitoba, represented the boys' best prospects for happiness and security. Like many others in his field, McKinnon believed that these lads should be shielded from the corrupting influence of city life.⁴⁵

Other witnesses obligingly offered their criticisms of the Victoria Industrial School. J.J. Kelso objected to the institutional nature of the school, a complaint that he regularly levelled against orphanages.⁴⁶ Speaking on behalf of trade unionists, Daniel O'Donoghue commented on the boys' feeble training and the negative impact it exerted on the labour market: "They are not taught sufficient to enable them to enter into competition with men outside with any hope of success; the tendency is therefore to lower wages, for employers who are glad to get cheap workmen will not pay so much for an inferior as they would for a competent hand." O'Donoghue expressed his preference to see the boys trained solely in agricultural techniques.⁴⁷ O'Donoghue was not alone in his belief that rural society offered a more appropriate environment for these youngsters, but the concerned

45 Ibid., 103.

46 Ibid., 727.

47 Ibid., 739.

unionist undoubtedly realized that this approach best served the interests of his fellow workers by removing these potential competitors from the urban labour market altogether.

Throughout the 1890s, the Victoria Industrial School sheltered a substantial number of boys, although the institution's population did not increase steadily. In September 1895, the school housed 179 lads. Twelve months later, the number of residents had dropped to 117. Of the latter group, forty-one ranged in age from seven to ten, thirty-eight from eleven to thirteen, and thirty-eight from fourteen to sixteen.⁴⁸ By 1897, the school sheltered 120 lads. The occasional decrease in population negatively affected the school's funding which in turn, according to the superintendent, delayed the purchase of needed equipment and "made it exceedingly difficult to provide for manual training."⁴⁹

A fluctuating population and continuing financial difficulties, however, did not prevent the school from expanding. By 1897, the school grounds contained six residential cottages, five workshops, a number of farm buildings, a schoolhouse, assembly hall, gymnasium, laundry room, knitting room, kitchen, bakery, and dining hall. A fifty-acre farm supported twenty cows and supplied the boys with all the vegetables they needed. The

⁴⁸ "Fourth Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," 40.

⁴⁹ "Fifth Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1897-98, Vol. XXX, Part IV, No. 16, 57.

workshops offered printing, tailoring, shoemaking, carpentry, and engineering, each under the direction of a specialist. The boys produced all their own clothing, stockings, and footwear. Manual labour still received greater attention than education. In an effort to stress reformation over punishment, the cottages continued to pursue the "home idea."⁵⁰

Despite the flurry of debate over child welfare practices that engaged reformers in the 1890s, by the turn of the century there was no indication that the basic philosophy of the Victoria Industrial School had changed significantly. Reporting to the government in 1900, Superintendent C. Ferrier asserted:

The great object of this school should be the training and development of character. To accomplish this we have to practise the most rigid discipline in every department of school life. The discipline that exacts a ready and willing obedience to every just command; that will not over-look eye-service and that demands of boys the habit of self-control in word and deed. This is the discipline that makes true men.⁵¹

Many middle-class observers, especially those with business interests, undoubtedly noted that such discipline also produced reliable and obedient workers. By 1905, the school's programme included a military drill, an exercise the superintendent considered "valuable for inculcating prompt obedience and self-control."⁵²

⁵⁰ The Evangelical Churchman, 25 February 1897, 120.

⁵¹ "Eighth Report on Work for Neglected and Dependent Children," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1901, Vol. XXXIII, Part VII, No. 40, 74.

⁵² "Fifteenth Report -- Neglected and Dependent Children," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1908, Vol. XL, Part VIII, No. 35, 92.

Throughout these years, the school exerted little effort to upgrade its education programmes. In his report for 1901, Ferrier defended the school's emphasis on industrial training by portraying the boys as incapable of higher achievement. "All mental effort seems a drudgery," observed the superintendent. To strengthen his case, Ferrier pointed out that truancy had been a problem with many of these lads from the beginning of their troubles. For the benefit of any remaining doubters, Ferrier added his belief that the boys' high dependence on tobacco lowered their intellectual capabilities.⁵³

Despite the stigma attached to the Victoria Industrial School, and the condescending attitudes of its managers, a significant number of working-class parents voluntarily committed their sons to the institution. Susan Houston best explained this phenomenon:

Sending a boy to the Industrial School in Toronto was a rational response to economic and social constraints. Institutions founded by the middle class touched the working class in unpredictable ways. A network of legal, educational, philanthropic and cultural institutions cushioned the impact of the transition to modern urban society for a large segment of the working class. Moreover, institutions survived and became part of the social fabric precisely because they were "used"

⁵³ "Ninth Report of the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1902, Vol XXXIV, Part IX, No. 43. 83. See also Ferrier's comments in "Eleventh Report of the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1904, Vol. XXXVI, Part IX, No. 43, 53.

in different but equally valid ways by different social classes.⁵⁴

Although their motives might have differed, parents and reformers agreed that Ontario needed a female equivalent to the Victoria Industrial School. During the hearings of the Prison Reform Commission, a few witnesses indicated that steps had recently been initiated to establish an industrial school for girls. According to Reverend J.S. Ross of Centenary Methodist Church in Hamilton, the main function of this institution would be to provide young wayward girls with domestic training. Ross hoped that such instruction would lead girls into their proper and traditional roles in life and counteract the damaging lure of factory work.⁵⁵ Another witness, former Toronto mayor W.H. Howland, expressed his approval of an industrial school for girls but warned that the inferior characters of the school's prospective residents limited the potential for complete reformation. Although he supported apprenticing boys as agricultural labourers, Howland feared that girls placed on farms would become immorally entangled with male workers. He attributed this problem to a flaw in the girls' characters. Farmers' daughters, Howland explained, "are brought up under different influences. They have wisdom and strength, and know how to do right...orphan

⁵⁴ Susan E. Houston, "Late Victorian Juvenile Reform: A Contribution to the Study of Educational History," in David C. Jones et al., eds, Approaches to Educational History (University of Manitoba, 1981), Volume 5 of Monographs in Education, Spring 1981, 21-22.

⁵⁵ "Prison Reform Commission," 305.

girls don't possess this sense of propriety."⁵⁶ Howland's opinion represented the typical middle-class view of the inherent weaknesses and limited potential of poor working-class children. This patronizing attitude, more so than any natural lack of scruples or ability, retarded the personal development of youngsters who fell into the hands of the child-savers.

This lack of faith in poor children did not deter reformers from erecting institutions designed to mould troubled youngsters into law-abiding citizens and reliable workers. On 10 December 1890, J.J. Kelso, on behalf of the Industrial Schools Association of Toronto, organized a public meeting of female philanthropists to discuss the founding of an industrial school for girls. Despite his long-established scepticism of institutional welfare, Kelso argued that a new agency was needed to shelter and train young girls whose problems required a less severe approach than that practiced by the Mercer Refuge. This meeting eventually led to the establishment of the Alexandra Industrial School for Girls in East Toronto in 1891-92.⁵⁷

Operating out of two cottages, the school accommodated troubled girls between the ages of seven and fourteen. A matron in each cottage provided the girls with moral guidance, taught

⁵⁶ Ibid., 695.

⁵⁷ Except where otherwise noted, general information on the Alexandra Industrial School for Girls is drawn from the following: Records of the Industrial Schools Association of Toronto; Kelso Papers, Vol. 1; The Evangelical Churchman (Prison Reform Number); and "Annual Reports of the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children," Ontario, Sessional Papers.

them basic domestic skills, and conducted all affairs "in the spirit and manner of a well regulated Christian Home."⁵⁸ The school's official regulations stipulated that "industrial education shall be such as is suitable for girls -- garden work, baking, needlework, dressmaking, housework, etc., and such other common handicraft as may be arranged."⁵⁹ A public school teacher visited the institution every day and provided half a day of elementary instruction. Recreation, exercise, scripture reading, and prayer also constituted part of the girls' daily routine. Despite the emphasis on reformation, the superintendent could administer corporal punishment in extreme cases.

To the dismay of its original supporters, the school progressed slowly in its early years. On 7 March 1893, Superintendent Forrest wrote to the school's managers complaining that the institution lacked "efficient help" and "proper conveniences for work." Forrest elaborated: "The moral and intellectual development has been in most cases satisfactory [but] the housework has not been so at any time." Ironically, this assessment appears to reverse the typical middle-class view of the capabilities of poor children. In the same letter, the frustrated, over-worked superintendent tendered her resignation.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Records of the Industrial Schools Association of Toronto, Series B, Correspondence, Box 2.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Despite this false start, the school held firm to its commitment to train girls as efficient housekeepers in preparation for their expected life roles as homemakers or domestic servants. Homeless girls who progressed well were placed with foster families or hired out as domestic servants, often with assistance from the Children's Aid Society. The school retained custody over these girls until they reached the age of eighteen. The limited goals set for the girls reflected traditional sexist beliefs and the school's managers' low opinion of their charges. In 1896, Superintendent Walker referred to the girls as "a dumb and helpless class."⁶¹ The following year, she blamed the school's less than satisfactory record on the girls' "lack of mental capacity."⁶²

By the late 1890s, the Alexandra Industrial School contained, on average, twenty-five to thirty residents, the majority of whom had been committed for incorrigibility. In 1907, the school housed sixty-five girls. In that year, Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children J.J. Kelso revealed that the school's primary goal remained the creation of ideal homemakers: "In all branches of domestic duties [the girls] are trained in

⁶¹ "Fourth Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," 46.

⁶² "Fifth Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," 58.

economy, cleanliness, gentleness, skill in doing work quietly, at all times refinement in speech and deportment."⁶³

Although the industrial schools continued to draw fire from a small number of vocal critics, the Ontario government demonstrated its support for the institutions with the passage of a number of supplementary acts, beginning with "An Act to Amend the Industrial Schools Act,"⁶⁴ assented to 23 March 1888. This one-clause act increased the weekly per capita maintenance fee payable to an industrial school from municipalities from \$1.50 to \$2.00. On the same day, the Legislature passed "An Act for the Protection and Reformation of Neglected Children."⁶⁵ This act reinforced the principle clauses of the original Industrial Schools Act of 1874 and raised the upper age limit of an industrial school resident from sixteen to eighteen.

"An Act Respecting the Custody of Juvenile Offenders,"⁶⁶ passed 7 April 1890, empowered the Provincial Secretary to transfer to a certified industrial school any juvenile apparently under the age of thirteen who had been sentenced to a reformatory or common jail for violation of federal or provincial law. The act also extended the provisions for maintenance of provincial offenders to cover federal cases. On the same day, the

⁶³ "Fifteenth Report -- Neglected and Dependent Children," 95.

⁶⁴ Ontario, Statutes, 1888, Chapter 39.

⁶⁵ Ontario, Statutes, 1888, Chapter 40.

⁶⁶ Ontario, Statutes, 1890, Chapter 75.

Legislature passed "An Act Respecting the Commitment of Persons of Tender Years."⁶⁷ This act reinforced the authority of judges, magistrates, and justices of the peace to commit juvenile offenders apparently under the age of fourteen to industrial schools and added the power to transfer an uncontrollable inmate from an industrial school to a reformatory.

In May 1891, the Legislature passed "An Act Respecting Industrial Schools."⁶⁸ This short but significant act allowed school boards to extend aid to industrial schools, granted permission to incorporated benevolent societies to borrow money on debentures, authorized religious corporations to grant or lease land to industrial schools, and permitted industrial schools to arrange for the maintenance and education of any of their wards in private homes. With this legislation the government continued its policy of avoiding direct intervention in the affairs of private benevolent societies while simultaneously creating conditions to help them achieve their goals.

"An Act to Amend the Industrial Schools Act,"⁶⁹ assented to 16 April 1895, authorized city and town councils to endorse or guarantee debentures issued by school boards or philanthropic societies for the purpose of financing an industrial school. The legislation directed public and Catholic school boards to assume

⁶⁷ Ontario, Statutes, 1890, Chapter 76.

⁶⁸ Ontario, Statutes, 1891, Chapter 59.

⁶⁹ Ontario, Statutes, 1895, Chapter 59.

separate liability for debenture debts incurred under their auspices. The act allowed school boards to pay a per capita allowance to an industrial school in place of providing teachers. Under this arrangement, the managers of the industrial school assumed responsibility for hiring and discharging teachers. The legislation transferred the duty of inspection of industrial schools from the Inspector of Prisons and Public Charities to the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children.

By 1900, new approaches to child welfare, such as the foster home model promoted by various Children's Aid Societies under the watchful eye of J.J. Kelso, the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children, motivated the Ontario government to revise its legislation on industrial schools. "An Act Respecting Industrial Schools,"⁷⁰ assented to 30 April 1900, introduced new regulations. This law stipulated that after three years in an industrial school a boy or girl shall "be given over to the custody of his or her parents or be apprenticed or placed out in a foster home as the Board or other body having the management of such Industrial School may deem advisable." The industrial school retained legal guardianship until the child reached the age of eighteen and could recall any boy or girl if circumstances suggested that this would be in the best interests of the child.

"An Act to Amend the Industrial Schools Act and for Other Purposes,"⁷¹ assented to 12 June 1903, significantly widened the

⁷⁰ Ontario, Statutes, 1900, Chapter 56.

⁷¹ Ontario, Statutes, 1903, Chapter 37.

circle of troubled children who could be sentenced to an industrial school. The act raised the upper age limit of prospective inmates from fourteen to sixteen. To the list of those who could be admitted, the act added any child who "by reason of long neglect cannot be satisfactorily dealt with by a Children's Aid Society" or who had failed "to do well in a foster home" arranged by a Children's Aid Society. The act authorized judges and magistrates to sentence children found guilty of petty crime to an industrial school rather than to jail. The Lieutenant-Governor could order the transfer of any boy from the Ontario Reformatory for Boys to an industrial school. Children between the ages of ten and fourteen who had been expelled from school "for vicious and immoral conduct" could also be committed to an industrial school.

The act ordered municipalities in which industrial school inmates had last resided for one year to pay a minimum of \$1.25 per week towards their maintenance, a reduction of seventy-five cents from previous legislation. Municipalities could recover maintenance costs from parents who were in a position to pay.

This long list of supporting acts guaranteed industrial schools a secure place in Ontario's child welfare system, but it did not prevent the province's key child welfare administrator, J.J. Kelso, from leading a vigorous protest against these institutions. As Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children, Kelso had consistently promoted the foster home model as the most progressive and effective method of dealing with

needy and delinquent youngsters, despite his earlier support for the Alexandra Industrial School for Girls. Although his views on industrial schools contain an obvious negative bias, they nonetheless offer informed insight into the operation of these agencies. Kelso's fundamental objection to the industrial schools rested on their institutional nature, a characteristic that he claimed permeated their operations even down to the dull uniforms worn by the inmates. The insular and isolated nature of the schools and the lack of external stimulation limited social life in the institutions and prevented the inmates from developing a proper appreciation of the value of money and property. Kelso feared that industrial school children, presented with no opportunity to practice thrift in a natural setting, would develop wasteful habits. Training in confinement, he argued, produced excessive routine and "undue detention under school discipline." Most of these problems stemmed from the schools' inability to reproduce a genuine family environment. The superintendent also questioned the long-term effectiveness of the schools' industrial training programmes. To support his contention, Kelso cited the cases of young lads who studied trades at the Victoria Industrial School for four or five years only to take up employment as newsboys or pin-boys in bowling alleys upon their release.⁷²

⁷² "Fourth Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," xviii and 51. See also "Ninth Report of the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children," 81.

Kelso argued that neither the industrial schools nor the juvenile reformatories constituted wise social and economic investments. Too many parents, he complained, willingly declared their children incorrigible hoping to subject them to the forced education of an industrial school. This practice exposed vulnerable children to the harmful influence of criminals.⁷³ The superintendent further argued that boys sent to the reformatory "learn the fatal lesson that the country takes good care of the lazy and shiftless, and makes life pleasant and comfortable for them."⁷⁴ Kelso's favourable description of institutional life in this instance clashes with many of his previous statements and starkly reveals his ability to modify the substance of his criticisms depending on the particular target in mind. Placing his arguments into a financial framework, Kelso estimated that the cost of maintaining a child for one year in an industrial school was \$140.00. Corresponding costs for reformatories and orphanages added up to \$200.00 and \$75.00 respectively. Placement in a foster home, on the other hand, cost approximately \$30.00 per year.⁷⁵

Although Kelso feverishly opposed many aspects of institutional welfare, he unquestionably shared the class bias routinely levelled against the inmates of industrial schools, refuges, and

⁷³ Kelso Papers, Vol. 15.

⁷⁴ Kelso Papers, Vol. 7.

⁷⁵ "Fifth Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," 8.

reformatories. Kelso warned against the danger of raising these youngsters' expectations by providing them with too much education: "The result is that they are educated away from domestic life and they have not the social standing or the family help that would enable them to acceptably fill the higher positions." Even within the institutions, Kelso perceived class distinctions. He recommended that industrial schools classify their residents and use the cottage system to avoid unnatural social mixtures. "It would be wise," Kelso instructed, "to have the cottages numbered so as to indicate the better class from those not so good, to furnish an inducement to those below to strive to qualify themselves for the more privileged class."⁷⁶

In 1902, Kelso decided to test his criticisms of institutional child welfare. In that year, he devised a plan to close the Ontario Reformatory for Boys.⁷⁷ The superintendent argued that all parties would be better served if the lads at Penetanguishene were placed in foster homes through the Children's Aid Society or transferred to the less oppressive Victoria Industrial School. Kelso cited some of the boys' opinions of their surroundings to build support for his plan. In his report for 1904, he recorded that the boys "spoke of the institution as 'the prison,' and of themselves as 'prisoners.' They were there to 'do time' as they expressed it, and they

⁷⁶ Kelso Papers, Vol. 5.

⁷⁷ Except where otherwise noted, information pertaining to the closing of the Ontario Reformatory for Boys is drawn from Kelso Papers, Volumes 1 and 20.

laughed incredulously when it was referred to as an educational institution."⁷⁸ In December 1903, the Ontario government defied the wishes of the reformatory's sceptical officials and approved Kelso's plan.

Early in the new year, the superintendent set about re-locating the boys. At the time, the reformatory housed ninety-eight lads ranging in age from twelve to twenty-one. After studying each case separately, Kelso returned approximately twenty boys to the care of friends or relatives and placed the majority of the remainder in foster homes or on farms as agricultural labourers. Kelso instructed the boys not to reveal their reformatory background, and this information was withheld from foster parents and employers. A few individuals returned boys when information pertaining to their previous life leaked out. On 4 April 1904, the Ontario government passed an Order-In-Council officially closing the reformatory. By May, five boys had abandoned their placements to live with relatives. A few more had absconded by June, and three were transferred to the industrial school. In the same period, not one lad had been re-arrested.

Pleased with the outcome of the Penetanguishene experiment, Kelso turned his sights on the Girls' Refuge the following year. With the support of Provincial Secretary W.J. Hanna, the superintendent sought private placements for the refuge's thirty-five

⁷⁸ "Twelfth Report of the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1905, Vol. XXXVII, Part X, No. 43, 89.

to forty inmates. In the belief that many of the girls' problems stemmed from the unhealthy and immoral environment to which they had been exposed as youngsters, Kelso intentionally placed them as far away from their old neighbourhoods and acquaintances as possible. At least one former inmate agreed with Kelso's logic. She wrote to him: "I want to entirely forget the past, and if I am to reach anything like the noble life you pictured to us it is better that everything should be blotted out and no mention ever made of where we have been or what we have done."⁷⁹ Kelso reported that the majority of girls adjusted well to their new placements. Although he had enjoyed Hanna's support in this matter, Kelso noted that he had partially funded the project out of his own pocket. He was earning \$1,500.00 per year at the time.⁸⁰

Kelso joyfully celebrated the success of his two plans. Not only had his schemes proven the superiority of the home placement method of child welfare, but they also represented a notable financial saving for the Ontario government. Kelso estimated that the closures saved the province between four and five hundred dollars per week in maintenance costs. Furthermore, the boys' reformatory could now be converted into a hospital for the insane, saving the government an additional \$100,000.00 on the construction of a new building. The closing of the reformatory

⁷⁹ "Thirteenth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1906, Vol. XXXVIII, Part IX, No. 43, 10.

⁸⁰ Kelso Papers, Volumes 14 and 31.

and the refuge, however, eventually led to an increase in the number of inmates at the industrial schools. The legislation that abolished the boys' reformatory also raised the upper age limit of those who could be committed to the Victoria Industrial School from fourteen to sixteen. Twelve months following the closing of Penetanguishene, the boys' school contained 320 inmates, an increase of fifty-three over the previous year.⁸¹ This number continued to rise over the next few years. Ontario's four industrial schools housed 351 youngsters in 1906, 382 in 1907, and 413 in 1908.⁸²

Two years following the closing of the Mercer Refuge, Kelso scored another significant victory when the federal government passed "An Act Respecting Juvenile Delinquents"⁸³ on 20 July 1908. This act, drafted by Kelso's Ottawa-based colleague W.L. Scott, extended and consolidated many of the practices and procedures embodied by provincial legislation. The act stated as a central principle that

the care and custody and discipline of a juvenile delinquent shall approximate as nearly as may be that which should be given by its parents, and that as far as practicable every juvenile delinquent shall be treated, not as a criminal, but as a misdirected and misguided child, and one needing aid, encouragement, help and assistance.

⁸¹ Andrew Jones and Leonard Rutman, In the Children's Aid: J.J. Kelso and Child Welfare in Ontario (Toronto 1981), 113.

⁸² "Sixteenth Report -- Neglected and Dependent Children," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1908, Vol. XLI, Part VIII, No. 35, 83.

⁸³ Canada, Statutes, 1908, Chapter 40.

The act granted full responsibility for the trial of any offender apparently or actually under the age of sixteen to the Juvenile Courts in the provinces. The legislation explicitly stated that children's trials "shall take place without publicity and separately and apart from the trials of other accused persons, and at suitable times to be designated and appointed for that purpose." In the case of an indictable offense, the judge could order a defendant apparently or actually over the age of fourteen to be tried in the adult court. Juveniles awaiting trial could be detained only in institutions designated for the use of children, except under exceptional circumstances. Accused children could be released on bail.

Judges could fine juvenile delinquents, place them on probation, assign them to a foster home, commit them to the custody of a Children's Aid Society or the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children, or sentence them to an industrial school. The act instructed judges to deal with juvenile offenders apparently under the age of twelve in their own homes, a foster home, or through a Children's Aid Society or the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children before considering the option of the industrial school. The court could order the child's parents or home municipality to contribute towards his or her support. All juvenile offenders remained wards of the court until they reached the age of twenty-one. Catholic and Protestant children could not be committed to the care of a Children's Aid Society or family of the other faith. The act

created Juvenile Court Committees in municipalities to aid in the trials, treatment, and reformation of juvenile offenders.

The Juvenile Delinquents Act of 1908 symbolized the successful efforts of child-savers such as Kelso and Scott over the previous two decades. Despite significant legislative advances, however, Kelso and Scott continued to rely on many of their original impulses to guide the child-saving movement. Commenting specifically on the federal act of 1908, Kelso reminded other child-savers of the importance of voluntarism: "It must be remembered, however, that the law in itself will be valueless unless its operation is placed in the hands of large hearted men and women who love children and who count it a privilege to help and befriend them."⁸⁴ Prior to the passage of the act, using words reminiscent of the Prison Reform Commission, Scott revealed that reformers' view of the source of juvenile crime had remained constant over time. Addressing the Ottawa Children's Aid Society in 1907, he asserted: "No doubt the greatest and most far-reaching cause of delinquency in children is the failure of parents, either through neglect or ignorance, to do their duty."⁸⁵

In the latter decades of the nineteenth century, middle-class social reformers looked with concern on the growing number

⁸⁴ "Sixteenth Report -- Neglected and Dependent Children of Ontario," 128.

⁸⁵ Fourteenth Annual Report of the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa 1906-1907, 11.

of juvenile offenders and incorrigible children in their midst. Underplaying the severe impact that social and economic inequality exerted on the development and behaviour of poor children, reformers usually laid the blame for juvenile delinquency squarely on the doorsteps of negligent and ignorant parents. Reformers feared that this rising tide of crime and vagrancy, if left unchecked, would eventually disrupt social peace and lead to increased welfare costs. They realized, however, that the adult criminal justice system could not serve the best interests of juvenile reformation. Over the objections of critics who feared that non-penal reformation programmes would create a class of irresponsible dependants, governments and reform groups supported each other's efforts to establish reformatories, refuges, and industrial schools devoted to training juvenile offenders and incorrigible children.

The fundamental nature of juvenile reformation revolved around reformers' belief in the intrinsic value of work and their low estimation of the abilities and potential of wayward working-class children. Reformatories, refuges, and industrial schools aimed primarily at transforming their troublesome inmates into industrious and obedient workers who would quietly slip into the lower echelons of the paid and non-paid labour force. Although the institutions introduced some boys to occupational training, a low level of instruction and a lack of proper facilities prevented most lads from developing marketable skills. Girls were

consistently directed towards home-making or domestic service. Apprenticed youngsters usually filled the role of cheap labour.

Reformatories, refuges, and industrial schools offered many poor and destitute children shelter and instruction unattainable elsewhere, but in return they condemned these youngsters to a stigmatized social and economic ghetto from which escape proved nearly impossible. Many former institutional children encountered difficulty locating respectable employment because of their backgrounds. Furthermore, in some cases acquaintances made inside the institutions led particularly vulnerable children deeper into social morass.

CHAPTER VI

"NATION-BUILDING ON THE BACKS OF CHILDREN:" THE BRITISH CHILD MIGRATION MOVEMENT

'doption, sir, is when folks
get a girl to work without
wages.

British waif in Canada¹

In 1869, fifty young girls from the Kirkdale Workhouse near Liverpool, England arrived at Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario under the watchful eye of social worker Maria S. Rye. Upon disembarking, the girls gathered up their baggage and their courage and headed for "Our Western Home," a large residence known as a distributing home designed by Rye to provide the new arrivals temporarily with shelter, religious instruction, and domestic training. Within a fortnight, however, a majority of the girls found themselves living and working with Canadian families in the surrounding countryside.²

¹ Cited in Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewitt, Children in English Society, Vol. II: From the Eighteenth Century to the Children Act, 1948 (London 1973), 568.

² Neil Sutherland, Children in English-Canadian Society: Framing the Twentieth Century Consensus (Toronto 1976), 5. See also Wesley B. Turner, "80 Stout and Healthy Looking Girls," Canada: An Historical Magazine, Vol. 3, No. 2, December 1975.

This series of seemingly insignificant events signalled the beginning of a benevolent movement that drew its inspiration from a combination of humanitarian, social, political, and economic impulses. Rye, and many other British child-savers who were soon to engage in this activity, hoped to release needy children from the impoverishment and neglect of their pasts by placing them in stable and caring Canadian homes. Rye and her colleagues believed that this approach to child welfare would infuse youngsters with desirable social traits and place them on the road to responsible adulthood. Many other British citizens, motivated as much by pragmatism as by compassion, supported the movement in the hope of relieving city streets and public welfare rolls of troublesome waifs and strays.³ Buying children a one-way ticket to Canada was less expensive than supporting them indefinitely in public workhouses.⁴ On the other side of the ocean, the Canadian government welcomed the children as future citizens of a young country in need of population.⁵ The Canadians who opened their doors to the youngsters looked forward to receiving a little extra help around the house. From all perspectives, these "little immigrants" comprise an important and unique chapter in the story of child labour and child welfare in Ontario.

³ See for example, Horatius Bonar's introduction to Ellen Agnes Bilbrough, British Children in Canadian Homes (Belleville 1879), iii.

⁴ Joy Parr, Barnardo Children in Canada (Ottawa), 2.

⁵ Originally the responsibility of the federal Department of Agriculture, supervision of the child migration movement later passed into the hands of the federal Department of the Interior.

Maria Rye's experiment did not constitute the first attempt to relocate dependent British children in Canada. From the early decades of the nineteenth century, private charitable organizations and State-run reformatories and industrial schools had sporadically arranged placements and apprenticeships for troubled British youngsters in Canadian homes.⁶ But the arrival of Rye's girls in 1869 marked the inception of a highly-organized and continuous campaign devoted to transplanting needy youngsters to Canadian soil. By 1874, more than a dozen British charitable agencies were sending over a thousand children to Canada every year.⁷ By 1897, approximately 29,000 British youngsters had reached Ontario in this manner and more than 10,000 had been placed in other provinces.⁸ This number would exceed 70,000 by 1919.⁹ Table 6-1 lists the largest of the child immigration agencies and the number of children they brought to Ontario.

Although the British child migration movement rested on more than singular motivations, the most pervasive and consistent

⁶ "Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Prison and Reformatory System of Ontario," ("Prison Reform Commission"), Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1891, Vol. XXIII, Part IV, No. 18, 46. See also Pinchbeck and Hewitt, Children in English Society, 458; Parr, Barnardo Children in Canada, 2; and Gail H. Corbett, Barnardo Children in Canada (Peterborough 1981), 23.

⁷ Sutherland, Children in English-Canadian Society, 5. See also Andrew Jones and Leonard Rutman, In the Children's Aid: J.J. Kelso and Child Welfare in Ontario (Toronto 1981), 91.

⁸ J.J. Kelso, "Special Report on the Immigration of British Children," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1897-98, Vol. XXX, Part VIII, No. 69 (60), 3.

⁹ Sutherland, Children in English-Canadian Society, 4.

Table 6-1

British Children Placed in Ontario 1872 to 1897

Agency	Boys	Girls	Total
Marchmont Home, Belleville	4,453	2,158	6,611
Dr. T.J. Barnardo	5,000	1,536	6,536
Dr. Stephenson	1,065	406	1,471
Miss M.S. Rye	200	4,200	4,400
Miss Macpherson	2,608	1,289	3,897
J.W.C. Fegan	1,400	--	1,400
William Quarrier	1,411	1,089	2,500
Southwark Catholic Emigration Society	130	--	130
Mr. Middlemore	--	--	1,000
Other smaller agencies	--	--	1,000
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	16,267	10,678	28,945

Source: J.J. Kelso, "Special Report on the Immigration of British Children," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1897-98, Vol. XXX, Part VIII, No. 69 (60), 3.

element of the programme proved to be Canadians' search for cheap agricultural and domestic labour. Throughout the life of the programme, the demand for British youngsters consistently out-paced the supply. Although the individual treatment of children could vary drastically from place to place, virtually all youngsters over the age of nine performed important chores in and around the household. Despite signed contracts, many children received much less than they had been promised in the form of wages, education, security, and opportunity. Weak or non-existent visitation systems allowed demanding Canadian employers to over-work and deprive their young charges. For their part, most of the children suffered in silence and loneliness until adulthood provided their only road to independence.

The arrival of Maria Rye and her young entourage at Niagara-on-the-Lake unleashed a minor torrent of British child-savers who saw in the newly-created Dominion the answer to the Mother Country's over-taxed child welfare system. Among the earliest of the crusaders, social workers Annie Macpherson and Ellen Bilbrough charted a course that many others would follow. According to Macpherson, Canada was "a very fine country with splendid openings for those who will put their hands to anything for the first six months."¹⁰ Beginning in 1870, Macpherson and Bilbrough annually brought to Ontario over two hundred boys and girls ranging in age from three to fifteen. Upon their arrival,

¹⁰ Cited in Corbett, Barnardo Children in Canada, 25.

the youngsters took up temporary residence at the Marchmont Home in Belleville where they honed their industrious habits by performing a host of domestic chores while awaiting their placements. An increasing demand for children led Macpherson to establish distributing homes in Galt, Ontario and Knowlton, Quebec in 1872.¹¹

The majority of children who passed through the Marchmont Home found placements with families in the surrounding countryside. The home paid families a small fee to board youngsters under the age of ten. Children ten and over, however, earned their own keep and usually received nominal wages for their work. Local farmers in search of cheap labour frequently visited the Marchmont Home and hand-picked the strongest-looking lads. Consistent with the sexual division of labour characteristic of Canadian farms, boys usually performed agricultural chores while girls filled the role of domestic servant or nursemaid.¹²

Signed contracts between the home and employers defined the terms and conditions of a working child's placement. Most agreements stipulated that children should attend Church, Sunday School, and elementary school at least part of the year. Employers were to notify the home in the event of a youngster's illness. Dissatisfied customers could return a child to the home

¹¹ Bilbrough, British Children in Canadian Homes, 22; and Kelso, "Special Report on the Immigration of British Children," 28-29. See also Pinchbeck and Hewitt, Children in English Society, 563-70.

¹² Ibid.

on two weeks' notice, but they could not arbitrarily send the youngster elsewhere. The home reserved the right to recall any child. Many youngsters who returned to the home complained of the hard work they had encountered on the farm, an indication of the central role their labour power played in their placements.¹³

A child's ability to perform work also formed a critical element of the placement schemes of Dr. Stephenson, who operated several children's shelters in England before opening a distributing home in Hamilton in 1872. Before emigrating to Canada, Stephenson's wards underwent training programmes designed to sharpen their industrial skills and increase their appeal to Canadian employers. Stephenson's homes taught boys various aspects of printing, carpentry, engineering, plumbing, shoemaking, tailoring, and agriculture while girls practised dressmaking and domestic service. Stephenson's work model, however, focussed primarily on traditional crafts, especially as it related to boys. Not all of these skills proved useful on Canadian farms, and many children discovered that learning on the job was the only way to adapt to rural life. Despite this minor flaw in Stephenson's scheme, the British doctor placed 1,065 boys and 406 girls in Ontario between 1872 and 1898. The district between Toronto and Niagara Falls provided homes for most of these youngsters.¹⁴

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Kelso, "Special Report on the Immigration of British Children," 23-24.

During the early stages of the child migration movement, a handful of sceptical British politicians began to question the propriety of the programme. In 1874, consequently, England's Local Government Board appointed one of its members, Andrew Doyle, to visit Canada and investigate the conditions of the young emigrants. Doyle's forty-page report, issued the following year, focussed primarily on the work of Maria Rye and Annie Macpherson. According to Doyle, Rye and Macpherson inadequately prepared youngsters for emigration and occasionally failed to obtain parents' consent before shipping their children to Canada. He also condemned the movement for its careless selection of placements and its lack of proper supervision and inspection. Although many young children had found secure homes, youngsters eight years of age and over usually resembled over-worked, under-paid servants. Doyle drew special attention to the young age at which Canadians put children to work.¹⁵ Doyle's findings led the British Government to withdraw public workhouse children from the migration programme.¹⁶

Doyle's report alarmed Canadian immigration officials who recognized that the child migration movement filled a demand for agricultural workers that adult immigration, temporarily in decline, and the domestic labour market, increasingly urban-based,

¹⁵ National Archives of Canada (NAC), Department of Immigration, File No. 3115, Andrew Doyle, "Emigration of Pauper Children to Canada," 1875.

¹⁶ Sutherland, Children in English-Canadian Society, 10. See also Wesley B. Turner, "Miss Rye's Children and the Ontario Press, 1875," Ontario History, Vol. 68, No. 3, September 1976.

could not meet. In fact, the Canadian government openly encouraged the programme by providing a subsidy of \$2.00 to private agencies for each child they brought into the country.¹⁷ In addition, the government of Ontario supplied child immigrants with a complimentary railway pass.¹⁸ To offset the negative ramifications of Doyle's criticisms, the Canadian government sponsored its own study of 2,301 child immigrants. The Canadian report, presented to the Local Government Board in July 1878, painted a more positive picture of the child migration movement but still failed to relieve the worries of the British. It was not until 1883, following much lobbying and a promise from the Canadian government to conduct annual inspections of child immigrants, that the Local Government Board lifted its ban on child emigration.¹⁹

It would appear in retrospect that the Canadian government had little to fear from the actions of the Local Government Board. Despite the temporary ban on the emigration of public workhouse children, private agencies continued to send needy youngsters to Canada.²⁰ The director of one such agency, Dr. Thomas John Barnardo, would shortly come to dominate the move-

¹⁷ Kelso, "Special Report on the Immigration of British Children," 7.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Kelso, "Special Report on the Immigration of British Children," 7; and Patricia T. Rooke and R.L. Schnell, Discarding the Asylum: From Child Rescue to the Welfare State in English-Canada 1800-1950 (Lanham 1983), 226.

²⁰ Sutherland, Children in English-Canadian Society, 10.

ment. Born in Dublin in 1845, Barnardo was the ninth son of a prosperous businessman and his wife. He moved to London in 1862 to study as a medical missionary and eventually became involved with the Ernest Street Ragged School where he arranged for a few boys to be placed with families in Canada. Throughout the 1870s, Barnardo supplied Annie Macpherson with many of the children she brought to Canada. In 1879, he opened a shelter for destitute boys in London's East end.²¹

In 1882, Barnardo opened a temporary distributing home in Toronto through which he placed thirty-one boys in the surrounding countryside. The following year, he found placements for 100 boys and seventy-five girls in Canadian homes. In 1884, he opened his first permanent distributing home in Peterborough. Within the next three years, he established a distributing home in Toronto and an Industrial Farm in Russell, Manitoba.²² By 1890, Barnardo claimed to have found placements for 2,095 boys and 810 girls in Canada.²³ Nine years later, J.J. Kelso, Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children of Ontario, credited Barnardo with the placement of approximately 5,000 boys and 1,900 girls in Ontario. Kelso stated that rural Ontario claimed the vast majority of these placements: "Demand is almost

²¹ Terrence Morrison, "The Child and Urban Social Reform in Late Nineteenth Century Ontario 1875-1900," (Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1971), 125-30; and Pinchbeck and Hewitt, Children in English Society, 575-77.

²² Kelso, "Special Report on the Immigration of British Children," 23.

²³ "Prison Reform Commission," 450.

exclusively confined to the farmers, no effort being made to find openings for boys in the cities or towns."²⁴

In 1890, Barnardo was called to testify before the Prison Reform Commission. Barnardo's appearance before the commission grew out of a belief shared by many Canadians that child immigrants contributed disproportionately to juvenile delinquency. Some concerned citizens, a few medical doctors among them, argued that Barnardo's children suffered from physical and mental defects and should be refused entry into the country. Other commentators accused the Mother country of dumping its undesirables onto the Dominion and expressed fear that a large number of these ragged youngsters would threaten Canada's social stability.²⁵

Barnardo countered his detractors by pointing out that only a small proportion of the children he cared for in England participated in the migration programme. Only those youngsters with exemplary records qualified for emigration and no child old enough to express an opinion travelled to Canada against his or her will. According to Barnardo, the children viewed emigration

²⁴ Kelso, "Special Report on the Immigration of British Children," 23. See also "Pauper Immigration to Canada," The Globe, 27 September 1878; "An Hour with Dr. Barnardo," The Peterborough Examiner, 21 August 1884; "Immigration of Waifs," The Globe, 10 January 1894; "Immigrant Children," The Globe, 16 February 1897; "Immigration and Colonization," The Globe, 27 November 1897; Gillian Wagner, Barnardo, (London 1979); and J. Wesley Bready, Dr. Barnardo: Physician, Pioneer, Prophet (London 1930).

²⁵ "Prison Reform Commission," 46; and Kelso, "Special Report on the Immigration of British Children," 10.

to Canada as a privilege and some of them enthusiastically volunteered for the programme. Barnardo maintained that of all the children he had brought to Canada only sixteen girls had drifted into immorality and only ten boys had been convicted of crime. Youngsters who created serious problems were returned to England. Barnardo added his belief that his London colleagues, Miss Macpherson, Mr. Fegan, and Dr. Stephenson, and Mr. Quarrier of Scotland, also took precautions to send only suitable children to Canada.²⁶

In the process of defending the child migration movement, Barnardo provided the commissioners with a detailed description of the basic operation of his programme. In conjunction with his Canadian agent, Alfred B. Owen, Barnardo usually attempted to settle three or four parties of children in Canada each year. Boys destined for the Ontario countryside normally passed through the distributing home in Toronto. On occasion, however, boys travelled directly to their placements, an indication of both the widespread demand for their services and Barnardo's belief that the programme worked best the sooner children found themselves in a family setting. Girls travelled first to Barnardo's home in Peterborough where they received elementary education and training in domestic service until the details of their placements were finalized.²⁷

²⁶ "Prison Reform Commission," 433-452; and Kelso, "Special Report on the Immigration of British Children," 19-23.

²⁷ Ibid.

Before considering a request for a child, Barnardo required prospective guardians and employers to submit personal references from a clergyman or magistrate attesting to their moral character, their standing in the community, and their suitability to guide children towards responsible adulthood. Employers also paid an initial fee of \$3.00 to cover the child's train fare.²⁸ Families that provided homes for very young children received a small monthly payment to cover the child's expenses. Children between the ages of eleven and eighteen entered into a more formal contractual arrangement. Youngsters this age usually lived with a family on a trial basis for one month. The parties then drew up a contract based partially on the results of the trial period.²⁹

Contracts varied slightly in detail depending upon a child's age, capabilities, and the amount of work he or she was expected to perform. Agreements usually ran a specified number of years or until the child reached the age of eighteen. Boys eighteen years of age could be contracted for a maximum of one year. In almost all instances, employers agreed to provide the child with board, lodging, clothing, and other necessities of life. Contracts usually obliged employers to send children to school at

²⁸ The Ontario government suspended its system of railway passes in 1884. Four years later, the federal government withdrew its immigration subsidy. See Joy Parr, Labouring Children: British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada, 1869-1924 (Montreal 1980), 54.

²⁹ "Prison Reform Commission," 433-452; and Kelso, "Special Report on the Immigration of British Children," 19-23.

least four months per year as well as encourage their attendance at Church and Sunday School. Employers also promised to maintain occasional contact with Barnardo's Canadian agent and co-operate with him on matters relating to the child's welfare. Either the employer or the placement agent could terminate the agreement upon one month's notice. Under exceptional circumstances, the placement agent could remove the child without prior notice.³⁰

In return for their labour, children received either a monthly wage or an accumulated payment upon reaching their eighteenth birthday. Wages for the first year averaged \$3.00 per month. In their second year, youngsters earned on average between \$8.00 and \$11.00 per month, although exceptionally strong and capable lads could pocket up to \$20.00. Payments varied considerably beyond the second year, but in almost every case children's wages registered well below the average earnings of unskilled adult workers. Youngsters who failed to complete the full term of a contract received payment in proportion to the time they had served. As an inducement for children to work hard at their placement, Barnardo occasionally offered awards for good conduct and length of service.³¹

A brief analysis of the preceding wage structure reveals a fundamental weakness in Barnardo's placement procedure and exposes the tilted priorities of the child migration movement. Barnardo defended low wages in the first year of service on the

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

grounds that it took time for children to acquire the skills associated with agricultural labour. This contention rested on the premise that newly-hired youngsters resembled apprentices in the early stages of craft training. Although it did require significant effort for poor city-bred children to adjust to the rhythm and rigour of agricultural labour, it is fallacious to suggest that youngsters learned the secrets of a recognized marketable trade in return. This situation also exposes the hollowness of Barnardo's claim that prior training in England prepared children for work in Canada. The young agricultural labourer more closely resembled the unskilled factory worker than he did the apprentice of pre-industrial times. Following the example set by manipulative industrialists and the masters of the sweat shop, employers invoked this notion of skill-training to exploit children as workers in the early stages of their placement.

Furthermore, Barnardo admitted that the placement of youngsters into a socially acceptable environment took precedence over fair wages.³² This emphasis on environmental factors reduced children's wages to a secondary position of importance in the placement procedure. Yet it can be argued that this situation did not arise inevitably. Given the overwhelming demand for agricultural labour in Ontario, Barnardo could have applied basic market forces to negotiate higher wages for his children while not sacrificing other desirable elements of the placement.

³² Ibid.

Failure to do so suggests that Barnardo concentrated more on the long-term social ramifications of his programme than he did on economic justice for his wards.

In response to public criticism that his children received little attention once placed out, Barnardo initially stated that trained and efficient members of his staff visited all youngsters between two and five times per year. He later submitted a statement to the commission admitting that boys received one or more visits a year and young girls averaged three. Older girls received fewer visits. To encourage empathy and to guard against children's reluctance to confide in members of the opposite sex, youngsters were matched with visitors of the same sex. On occasion, visitors would appear unannounced.³³

Assessing his programme in general terms, Barnardo contended that Canada offered children a wider variety of work opportunities than the Home country. He also pointed out that child immigrants filled a crying demand for labour in rural Canada. In 1890 alone, he had received over 900 requests for boys, approximately four times the number he was able to supply. Similarly, for every girl he placed in Canada, four or five requests went unfulfilled. Barnardo readily admitted that many Canadians wanted these children primarily as a source of cheap labour. When a critic charged that Canadian farmers chose Barnardo's children over adult workers because of the cheaper wages, Barnardo weakly suggested that if farmers were forced to pay

³³ Ibid.

their help higher wages the farming community would probably collapse. Moreover, Barnardo attempted to increase the appeal of his children through promotional literature that highlighted youngsters' work skills. Barnardo conceded that some employers expected too much from their young workers. This resulted in some boys changing placements three to four times. Despite these imperfections, Barnardo maintained that Canadian farmers preferred his boys to the country's own native lads who too often worked only long enough to earn enough money to move on to greener pastures.³⁴

For obvious reasons, Barnardo's testimony before the Prison Reform Commission accentuated the positive elements of the child migration movement. Later historical analysts, such as Joy Parr, have exposed some of the programme's less appealing attributes. Parr's research revealed that between 1882 and 1908 six per cent of Barnardo boys and more than eight per cent of Barnardo girls were shipped to Canada illegally, without the consent of their parents. Parr also stated that Barnardo tampered with mail in an attempt to sever children's ties with their family and friends in England. Drawing on placement statistics, Parr calculated that boys moved an average of three times and girls an average of four times during their first five years in Canada. Contrary to Barnardo's claim that life on the farm offered children a stable and fulfilling future, Parr has shown that the majority of trace-

34 Ibid.

able Barnardo children fled the countryside upon the expiration of their contracts and took their chances in the city.³⁵

In one area, Parr departs from her critical stance to render a more favourable assessment of Barnardo's programme. Referring to Barnardo's contract system, she argues: "The formal apprenticeship indenture did more to define the rights of British immigrant children than to extinguish their liberties....For the young stranger the formal apprenticeship system offered...fair payment, safeguards for fair treatment and resort to outside protection should fair play default."³⁶ In this instance, Parr's otherwise sound analysis falls victim to a few faulty judgements. First, Parr's use of the term apprenticeship upholds the notion that children underwent skill-training. In truth, contracts defined children as low-paid workers, not as apprentices. Second, Parr's own figures on the number of times youngsters switched placements suggest that signed agreements provided little insurance of stability and fair treatment. Third, Barnardo's weak visitation system allowed many employers to disregard or alter their contractual obligations. In such cases, it is unlikely that children who had grown accustomed to institutional control would possess the confidence or the instinct to report contractual violations to higher authorities.

³⁵ Parr, Labouring Children, 67-88. See also Gail Corbett, Barnardo Children in Canada; Kenneth Bagnell, The Little Immigrants: The Orphans Who Came to Canada (Toronto 1980); and Phyllis Harrison, The Home Children: Their Personal Stories (Winnipeg 1979).

³⁶ Parr, Labouring Children, 84.

Although Dr. Barnardo unquestionably dominated the child migration movement in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, several other British philanthropists and child-savers ran programmes of their own. One of the major secondary figures, Mr. Fegan, operated three shelters for destitute children in or near London, England. In 1884, Fegan established a distributing home in Toronto through which he secured placements for boys in Western Ontario and the Niagara region. Between 1884 and 1898, Fegan brought approximately 1,450 young lads to Ontario. Another major figure, Mr. William Quarrier of Glasgow, found placements for 2,232 Scottish youngsters around Galt and Belleville between 1872 and 1887. In 1888, Quarrier established the Fairknowe distributing home in Brockville. Between 1888 and 1897, he brought an additional 1,411 boys and 1,089 girls to Ontario. Beginning in 1896, the Southwark Catholic Emigration Society, using a distributing home located in Hintonburgh, on the outskirts of Ottawa, supplied boys between eleven and sixteen to farmers in Eastern Ontario.³⁷ Sensitive to the charge of dealing in cheap labour leading to child exploitation, this agency warned prospective employers: "A hired man should not, when needed, be dispensed with, and a boy between fourteen and sixteen put in his place to do his work."³⁸

³⁷ Kelso, "Special Report on the Immigration of British Children," 23-35; and Bilbrough, British Children in Canadian Homes, 15-18.

³⁸ Kelso, "Special Report on the Immigration of British Children," 34.

Although much of the child migration movement focussed on boys who performed agricultural labour, many Canadian homes, both rural and urban, sought the services of young girls. The records and letters of Charlotte A. Alexander, a British social worker who found placements in Canada for girls, as well as a few of their brothers, between 1887 and 1891, provide an insightful look at the experiences of these children.³⁹ Alexander first journeyed to Canada in 1887 with twenty-four girls ranging in age from two-and-half to twenty-two. In her notes, she listed three reasons why Canadians sought British children: 1) to compensate for a lower Canadian birth rate; 2) to replace their own children who upon maturity commonly abandoned farm life for greater opportunities in the city; and 3) to draw on child labour to accomplish the daily chores of life in rural Canada.⁴⁰

The youngest of Alexander's children entered into situations resembling adoption. Older girls found themselves in demand as household help. Some of Alexander's girls assisted in home-centred industries, such as eleven-year-old Jane Busby who helped her mistress produce waistcoats.⁴¹ The vast majority of girls, however, adopted the roles of domestic servants and nursemaids. In a letter to a friend, young Maggie Hall described a typical work day:

³⁹ NAC, Charlotte A. Alexander Papers, MG29 C58.

⁴⁰ Ibid., Vol. 2, Correspondence and Notes.

⁴¹ Ibid., Vol. 3, Indexed Register 1885-1893.

I have to get my morning's work done by 12 o'clock every day to take the children for a walk then I have to get the table laid for lunch when I come in then after dinner I help to wash up then I have to give the little boy his lessons then for the rest of the afternoon I sew till it is time to get afternoon tea and shut up and light the gas then by that time it is time for our tea after which I clear away get the table ready for Miss Smith's dinner then put the little boy to bed & after Miss Smith's dinner I help wash up which does not take very long then I do what I like for the rest of the evening till half past nine when we have Prayers then I take Miss Smith's hot water & hot bottle, the basket of silver & glass of milk to her bedroom shut up & go to bed which by the time I have done all it is just ten.⁴²

The letter's lack of punctuation perhaps unintentionally corresponds with the rapid pace of Maggie Hall's work day.

Like Dr. Barnardo, Alexander required prospective employers to submit references from a local clergyman or lawyer before she would consider placing a child with them. Also following the pattern set by Barnardo, most of Alexander's girls worked through a trial period before the parties signed a contract. Alexander negotiated each placement individually, thus failing to ensure that her girls would all receive the same treatment. Some girls were paid in trust and received their money only upon completion of the contract. Others were obliged to repay their transportation costs out of their first payment. Although an extremely competent and hard-working girl could increase her wages from a starting salary of \$2.00 per month to \$9.00 after a few years' service, she still earned less than a regular domestic servant. Some employers balked at the idea of paying wages at all and

⁴² Ibid., Vol. 1, Correspondence, Maggie Hall to Miss Lowe, 13 February 1890.

forced Alexander to settle for lower payments. Alexander appears to have submitted to employers' demands on many occasions rather than risk losing the placement. This practice left many girls at the mercy of particularly demanding employers, a situation exacerbated by Alexander's lack of a regular visitation system. Moreover, many employers satisfied education stipulations by sending their girl to night school, thus retaining her services for daytime work.

Some employers unilaterally altered the terms of an agreement if a girl failed to meet their expectations. Extremely dissatisfied customers simply returned unwanted girls to Alexander or shunted them off to other employers. In a letter to Charlotte Alexander, Alice Smith, employer of sixteen-year-old Nellie Gates, demonstrated how tenuous a girl's placement could be: "I do not need Nellie any longer & I really do need her room."⁴³

A girl's ability to perform housework almost always proved to be the crucial factor in determining the success of a placement. Prospective employers took few measures to camouflage their desire for help around the house. Correspondence describing available children and advertisements placed in local newspapers by Alexander frequently emphasized the children's abilities to perform certain tasks. Some employers placed requests for virtuous girls with specific skills. Despite

⁴³ Ibid., Alice Smith to Charlotte Alexander, 31 August 1888.

Alexander's efforts to meet the employers' demands, many of them complained of the children's rough manners and poor work habits. "There is still room for improvement in thoroughness and quickness in getting through her work," observed one employer.⁴⁴ Employers also charged that city-raised girls adapted slowly to rural responsibilities. Employer Christie Patterson described young Kathleen Featherby: "She does not seem to know but very little about our ways of working."⁴⁵ On the other hand, employers quickly claimed credit when youngsters displayed satisfactory progress.

Most employers looked with disdain on the poor families that had bred these children and some expressed fear that a youngster's questionable heredity and rough upbringing would manifest themselves despite rural Canada's more favourable environment. D.I. McIntyre wrote to Charlotte Alexander expressing doubts about a young boy for whom he was considering serving as guardian: "I believe in the influence of heredity upon the character and cannot reconcile myself to the idea of bringing up as my own child and giving a place in my affections to one whom I might be rearing up to pick my pocket or cut my throat."⁴⁶ Other employers reacted with surprise, and sometimes disgust, when children exhibited longing for their parents and siblings. K.H.

⁴⁴ Ibid., Vol. 1, Correspondence, 22 January 1887.

⁴⁵ Ibid., Christie Patterson to Charlotte Alexander, 6 July 1889.

⁴⁶ Ibid., Vol. 2, Correspondence and Notes, D.I. McIntyre to Charlotte Alexander, September 1888.

Robins, employer of fifteen-year-old Amelia Fairbank, huffed: "It astonishes me that she should have any desire to return to such a life as the poor child has led....She seems to [sic] silly to understand how well off she is now & how much better it is to live a quiet pure life."⁴⁷ Robins' arrogance provides a stunning example of middle-class superiority and reveals a severe under-estimation of the genuine ties of affection that united even poor families, some of whose younger members had been shipped to Canada against the parents' will.

The letters among the Charlotte Alexander papers disclose a life of hard and tedious work that offered little security or opportunity. When children complained of unfair treatment, Alexander appealed to their tolerance and encouraged them to be thankful that they had found employment. Many children clung to their placement out of fear that another position would present even greater hardships. All girls suffered from a basic insecurity that accompanied the performance of unfamiliar duties in a strange environment. As Joy Parr has written: "To be young, a servant and a stranger was to be unusually vulnerable, powerless and alone."⁴⁸ It comes as no surprise that the girls developed friendships among themselves and frequently enquired into one another's welfare in letters to Alexander. One letter among Alexander's papers unintentionally projects a vivid image of how

⁴⁷ Ibid., Vol. 1, Correspondence, K.H. Robins to Charlotte Alexander, 9 June 1890.

⁴⁸ Parr, Labouring Children, 82.

onerous life could be for a child immigrant. Lamenting the recent death of a young girl, a friend wrote to Alexander: "Poor dear little Ada Hees passed away from this cold world -- what a happy change for the dear child."⁴⁹ In the temporal sense, a more brutally frank assessment of the life of a child immigrant would be hard to imagine.

During the first two decades of its operation, relatively few Canadians objected to the child migration movement. By the early 1890s, however, a variety of critics began to raise their voices. In part, this reaction reflected a changing public attitude towards children and welfare. As Andrew Jones and Leonard Rutman have observed: "The new concern about the social and moral surroundings of Canadian children created opposition to child immigration."⁵⁰ Some opponents of the programme feared that ill-behaved British waifs would exert harmful influence on innocent Canadian youngsters. Others argued that child immigrants would inevitably swell the ranks of criminals. George Barnett, Superintendent of the Newsboys' Home in Toronto, claimed that eight of every ten British boys became "common thieves."⁵¹ James Moylan, Chief Inspector of Penitentiaries for Ontario, forcefully summarized many of the detractors' sentiments:

With a few exceptions these street-arabs of White-chapel, Rotherhithe, Ratcliffe-Highway, and other

⁴⁹ Alexander Papers, Vol. 2, Alice Maude Johnson file, Mrs. Coyne to Charlotte Alexander, 29 June 1888.

⁵⁰ Jones and Rutman, In the Children's Aid, 92.

⁵¹ "Prison Reform Commission," 729.

haunts of vice, speedily return to their old habits on arriving in Canada, and in consequence become a burden and an expense to the taxpayers of the Dominion in reformatories, gaols and penitentiaries, where they are found to be the most troublesome and worse-conducted convicts in Canada, their evil influence for the corruption of others being patent and pernicious.⁵²

One commentator resorted to poetry to beseech British child-savers to provide their wards with moral and industrial training before sending them to Canada:

You have homes and schools of training;
Take these children from the street;
Show them what God meant they should be;
Clear a pathway for their feet;
Make them feel that work is noble;
Teach them what their lives may be;
Then we'll give them hearty welcome
in our homes across the sea.⁵³

Opponents of the child migration movement drew on both environmental and hereditary factors to fortify their case. Testifying before the Prison Reform Commission in 1890, Dr. James Smith emphasized the harmful effects of the youngsters' early surroundings: "They have been greatly contaminated I fear by the bad example set before them in these low places, and their principles have become fixed to an extent." Smith estimated that more than half of the child immigrants he had observed were "physically defective and mentally defective."⁵⁴ Another witness, Dr. Richard Bucke, referred to the young British immigrants as "gutter children" and asserted that the child mi-

⁵² Cited in Kelso, "Special Report on the Immigration of British Children," 41.

⁵³ Cited in Rooke and Schnell, Discarding the Asylum, 239.

⁵⁴ "Prison Reform Commission," 520-22.

gration programme placed additional pressure on the Canadian welfare system: "It is just adding so much to the numbers for which we have to provide. These are not only savages, but they are nearly all diseased savages."⁵⁵ Jailkeeper Nelson Moore contended that many British girls fell victim to prostitution and alcoholism as a result of their heredity. "They are not strong enough to resist temptation," Moore commented.⁵⁶ Many of the preceding charges, however, relied more on middle-class xenophobia than on statistics, leading the commissioners to conclude that the available evidence did not sustain these arguments.⁵⁷

Taking a different approach entirely, other opponents of the child migration movement condemned it because it separated children from family, friends, and homeland and placed them in situations that exploited their labour. In his early days as a child-saver, J.J. Kelso counted among these critics. Addressing the founding meeting of the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa in 1893, Kelso remarked:

Some of the worst cruelties perpetrated in this country are in the case of children brought out from Britain and placed in houses where there is no one to protect their interests and where they are shamefully overworked. Many of these children are nothing but white slaves, made to get up long before daylight and to work

⁵⁵ Ibid., 532.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 540. See also Kelso, "Special Report on the Immigration of British Children," 41; and "Importation of Waifs," The Globe, 10 January 1894.

⁵⁷ "Prison Reform Commission," 45.

until late at night and deprived of the pleasures and advantage of childhood.⁵⁸

Although Kelso would continue to call for increased supervision and government regulation of the child migration movement, he later withdrew these criticisms, probably because he experienced many of the same problems through his work with Children's Aid Societies.

Another group of critics approved of the objectives of the child migration movement but believed that Canada should first arrange placements for its own waifs and strays. Goldwin Smith, a member of the Board of Directors of Toronto's House of Industry, expressed this view before the Prison Reform Commission.⁵⁹ Many prospective employers, however, had priorities of their own. According to immigration agent John Smith, Canadian farmers preferred British children to Canadian-born youngsters because most of the former group had no relatives in the country who might be tempted to reclaim the child or interfere in the placement.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Cited in Jones and Rutman, In the Children's Aid, 92.

⁵⁹ "Prison Reform Commission," 687. See also Canada, Royal Commission on the Relations of Capital and Labor in Canada (Royal Labor Commission) (Ottawa 1889), Ontario evidence, testimony of James Stevenson, 797; "Proceedings of the First Ontario Conference on Child-Saving," contained in "Second Report of Work Under the Children's Protection Act," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1895, Vol. XXVII, Part VI, No. 29, 33; and the comments of John Flett in The Hamilton Herald, 17 March 1899.

⁶⁰ Royal Labor Commission, Ontario evidence. See also "Prison Reform Commission," testimony of Daniel O'Donoghue, 744.

Canada's growing labour movement also contributed to the debate over child immigration. Every year between 1885 and 1890, the Trades and Labour Congress implored the federal government to restrict the importation of "paupers, indigents and orphans from abroad."⁶¹ In addition to the preceding arguments, union officials complained that many British children abandoned their rural placements and accepted city work at low wages, thus competing with and undermining the security of Canadian workers. Unionist Daniel O'Donoghue claimed that the child migration movement sometimes included a few desperate young adults among its needy children. "I have seen some of these orphans with side-whiskers," he told a meeting of child-savers.⁶²

In response to growing public criticism of the child migration movement, the Ontario government passed "An Act to Regulate the Immigration into Ontario of Certain Classes of Children"⁶³ in April 1897. This act subjected all authorized child immigration agencies to inspection at least four times a year by the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children. The legislation stipulated that no dependent child could board a ship bound for Ontario without first obtaining a certificate signed by a government-appointed examiner which stated that the child had neither been convicted of crime nor displayed criminal

⁶¹ Parr, Labouring Children, 54. See also Eugene Forsey, Trade Unions in Canada 1812-1902 (Toronto 1982), 476.

⁶² "Proceedings of the First Ontario Conference on Child-Saving," 34.

⁶³ Ontario, Statutes, 1897, Chapter 53.

tendencies. Any agent who brought to Ontario a child who suffered from physical or mental affliction or exhibited criminal tendencies, or whose parents fit the same description, could be fined between \$10.00 and \$100.00 or imprisoned up to three months. The act also instructed immigration agencies to keep complete personal records of all children, supervise placements carefully, visit each child at least once a year, maintain a permanent residence to shelter children whose placements ended unexpectedly, and investigate immediately any complaint of mistreatment of a child.

The legislation instructed guardians and employers who were unable or unwilling to fulfill an agreement to return the child to the agency's shelter at their own expense. Runaway and abducted children were to be reported immediately to the placement agency. Any guardian or employer who abandoned a child could be fined between \$10.00 and \$100.00 or imprisoned up to three months. Any person who enticed a child to abandon a placement could be fined up to \$25.00 or imprisoned up to three months. Other forms of mistreatment brought a fine of up to \$50.00 or imprisonment up to six months.

The new act addressed many of the reported abuses and shortcomings of the child migration movement and threatened transgressors with the force of the State, but nothing in the legislation discouraged continuation of the programme. In its widest application, the law sought general improvements in the operation and supervision of the programme. Specifically, the

legislation strove to curtail the immigration of potentially troublesome children into Ontario and to contain youngsters within the programme once they arrived in the province. The act thus sought a double-sided objective: to allow the child immigration movement to continue supplying cheap labour to Ontario farmers while simultaneously preventing it from placing any additional strain on the province's welfare system.

Although the new act materialized to a large degree as a result of public pressure, not all observers approved of the government's action. In a letter to The Globe in July 1897, Scottish child-saver William Quarrier referred to the legislation as an "inquisitorial law" and declared parts of the act to be "entirely at variance with British and Canadian law." Quarrier particularly objected to governmental intervention in the affairs of voluntary societies.⁶⁴ Similar objections to the law surfaced in a variety of British newspapers.⁶⁵

Undeterred by its critics, the Ontario government upheld the law and appointed P. Byrne to the post of Ontario immigration agent in Liverpool, England, a common point of departure for vessels headed for Canada. Byrne examined all Ontario-bound dependent children for signs of physical or mental affliction. Outlining his basic criteria for acceptance, Byrne stipulated:

All children over ten are expected to be able to read and write, to be free from any serious physical defects

⁶⁴ The Globe, 19 July 1897.

⁶⁵ Kelso, "Special Report on the Immigration of British Children," 30.

or blemishes, to have undergone a testing period of training, and to be of such age, character and disposition as will afford a reasonable guarantee that they will settle down contentedly and industriously in the farm homes of the Province.⁶⁶

Despite these prior qualifications, Byrne indicated that in some cases exceptions could be made if the underlying objective of the programme could still be met. One girl who otherwise might have been denied passage because of a learning disability was allowed to emigrate because, in Byrne's words, "she was a good and willing worker in the Home."⁶⁷ Furthermore, Byrne's practice of occasionally conducting examinations on board ship minutes prior to departure brings into question the thoroughness of his method.

In 1898, his first full year of service, Byrne allowed 461 boys and 357 girls to emigrate to Ontario, a slight decrease from previous years.⁶⁸ The following year, 666 boys and 343 girls passed Byrne's examination. In 1900, 758 boys and 488 girls headed for Ontario with Byrne's blessing.⁶⁹ Although Byrne's approval marked the beginning of a child's voyage to Ontario, it did not represent the final hurdle. Upon arriving at Halifax,

⁶⁶ "Tenth Report of the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1903, Vol. XXXV, Part IX, No. 43, 114.

⁶⁷ "Eighth Report on Work for Neglected and Dependent Children," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1901, Vol. XXXIII, Part VII, No. 40, 83.

⁶⁸ "Sixth Report of the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1898-99, Vol. XXXI, Part IV, No. 17, 77.

⁶⁹ "Eighth Report on Work for Neglected and Dependent Children," 83.

Quebec City, or Montreal, child immigrants endured a second examination at the hands of a health officer and a Dominion immigration agent, both of whom had authority to deport any youngster who appeared to be faulty in mind or body.⁷⁰

As part of his new duties as inspector of child immigration agencies, J.J. Kelso, Ontario's Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children, prepared a special report in 1898 detailing and evaluating the activities of the child migration movement in Ontario. Kelso stated that, in the past, general public ignorance, combined with a few sensational and misleading newspaper accounts of vicious child immigrants, had created an unfavourable image of the programme. An objective examination of the data, Kelso asserted, revealed that the vast majority of the approximately 29,000 dependent youngsters who had travelled to Ontario in the last twenty-five years had adapted well to their new environment.⁷¹

Despite this favourable assessment, Kelso admitted that some agencies selected placements carelessly. "I know that applicants who have been rejected as unsuitable by Canadian children's societies have almost invariably succeeded in getting an English child," he recorded.⁷² Kelso also revealed instances of employers' efforts to undermine the visitation system:

⁷⁰ Kelso, "Special Report on the Immigration of British Children," 6.

⁷¹ Kelso, "Special Report on the Immigration of British Children," 10.

⁷² Ibid., 17.

Sometimes the visitor will be assured that the child is not at home while she may be hidden away in an upstairs room, and efforts are frequently made to prevent private conversation between the child and visitor, for fear some unpleasant facts may be revealed.⁷³

In view of these and other abuses, Kelso instructed the agencies to upgrade their visitation systems. Improvements in this area would also help reassure the public that guardians and employers would not be allowed to abandon children who would later become charges on the provincial welfare system.⁷⁴

Kelso's investigation confirmed that a child's labour power figured prominently in the placement procedure: "The element of work, present or prospective, enters largely into the calculations of those applying to the English agencies."⁷⁵ Kelso reported that many Canadian farmers sought British children as replacement workers for their own offspring who commonly left the farm in their late teens. He estimated that working children around the ages of twelve and thirteen usually earned between \$2.00 and \$3.00 per month. "Where market wages are paid," Kelso observed, "there is the danger that an undue amount of work will be expected in return, and this consideration has usually been at the bottom of the ill-usage of children."⁷⁶ Kelso's conclusion exposed once again the economic factor that lay at the heart of the child migration movement: "Notwithstanding all the complaints

⁷³ Ibid., 14.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 13.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 15.

that have been made against child immigration it is only reasonable to suppose that if the work were suddenly stopped many a farm would be in a quandary to know how to get along."⁷⁷

Over the next several years, Kelso continued to monitor the activities of the child migration movement, as instructed by the act of 1897. In most cases, he staunchly defended the programme, a significant departure from his earlier assessment. Writing in The Globe in 1904, Kelso praised the movement for its contributions to Canadian nation-building:

Our greatest need is population....We have a great country, with vast resources, and it would be a grave mistake to shut out these young people, who, in a few short years, will become industrious men and women, thoroughly Canadian and British, and doubly valuable because of the moral tone and industrious habits acquired on our Canadian farms.⁷⁸

In Kelso's opinion, Ontario's new legislation led to considerable improvements in the operation and supervision of the child placement programme. He claimed to have received no reports of serious crime committed by child immigrants. On the other hand, he received some complaints of children being over-worked by employers. In such instances, he removed the child from the placement.⁷⁹ In his private papers, Kelso wrote: juvenile immigration "has always been a problem with me and has probably

⁷⁷ Ibid., 16.

⁷⁸ J.J. Kelso, "English Children in This Province," The Globe, December 1904, 20.

⁷⁹ "Eighth Report on Work for Neglected and Dependent Children," 79.

given me more concern than any other feature of child welfare work."⁸⁰

Despite exterior changes in the operation of the child migration movement, the issue of work remained at the heart of the programme. Kelso conceded that the scarcity of labour in the Ontario countryside continued to create situations in which "these children are taken mostly to work." But Kelso's belief in the personal and social benefits of labour, typical of child-savers and other reformers, prevented him from identifying this as a major problem: "Work, especially work on a farm, will never hurt any growing boy or girl, provided there is kindness and equality in the family relationship."⁸¹ Unfortunately, for most child immigrants, Ontario farms provided a greater supply of work than kindness and equality.

By the turn of the century, the federal government had rekindled its interest in the child migration movement. In 1900, the Dominion government appointed G. Bogue Smart to the position of Inspector of Juvenile Immigration. Smart soon became the champion of the children's cause and would go on to defend the movement for several decades.⁸²

Neither the provincial government's tighter regulations nor the federal government's new inspectorate deterred the child im-

⁸⁰ NAC, Kelso Papers, MG30 C97, Vol 13.

⁸¹ Kelso, "English Children in This Province," 20.

⁸² Rooke and Schnell, Discarding the Asylum, 231. See also Kelso Papers, Vol. 1; and Jones and Rutman, In the Children's Aid, 96.

migration agencies from continuing their work. In 1903, the agencies brought 1,116 boys and 559 girls to Ontario.⁸³ Two years later, 1,630 boys and 675 girls arrived.⁸⁴ The programme continued to operate at this level until 1915, at which time the federal government curtailed immigration for the duration of the First World War. Following the war, new forces began to exert their influence. In the 1920s, the Social Service Council of Canada and the Canadian Council on Child Welfare lobbied against the continuation of what they termed "nation-building on the backs of children." This pressure led the federal government in 1925 to impose a three-year ban on the importation of dependent children under fourteen. In 1928, the government declared the ban permanent. With a few exceptions over the ensuing years, the British child migration movement creaked to an inglorious halt on the eve of the Great Depression.⁸⁵

Writing in 1879, British child-saver Ellen Bilbrough claimed that the child migration movement delivered needy youngsters "from the haunts of sin, misery, and want in the old land, to homes of comfort and plenty in the new."⁸⁶ Typical of child-

⁸³ "Eleventh Report of the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1904, Vol. XXXVI, Part IX, No. 43, 74.

⁸⁴ "Thirteenth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1906, Vol. XXXVIII, Part IX, No. 43, 84.

⁸⁵ Parr, Labouring Children, 153.

⁸⁶ Bilbrough, British Children in Canadian Homes, 1.

savers of her generation, Bilbrough viewed Canada as a land of social opportunity and class tolerance that could offer poor British youngsters a new lease on life. For a majority of child immigrants, however, only the first part of Bilbrough's declaration rang true. On few occasions in history has a benevolent movement failed to fulfill its promise to such a startling degree. Despite the best intentions of the British child-savers, forces more powerful than humanitarianism overwhelmed the movement.

Despite rhetoric to the contrary, Ontario's cry for cheap labour proved to be the primary sustaining factor behind the child migration movement. In itself, this posed little problem for child-savers who universally believed that discipline and industrious habits produced through work would place children on the road to responsible adulthood, one of the primary goals of the programme. For their part, most Canadian employers viewed child labour as a necessary element of a successful farm or household and paid little attention to the long-term social implications of the programme. This conflicting interpretation of the meaning of work created the conditions that transformed child labour into child exploitation. In return for their toil as agricultural labourers and domestic servants, children received little in the form of wages, security, opportunity, or education. Although signed agreements defined the terms of a placement, they provided little guarantee of fair treatment. The agencies' lack of thorough visitation procedures allowed par-

ticularly demanding employers to disregard contracts with impunity. Even when the State intervened, legislation and departmental directives aimed more at increasing the efficiency of the operation and containing public welfare costs than at establishing justice for children.

In principle, the child migration movement enshrined the virtues of family life, but in practice it separated poor children from their parents and siblings and blocked opportunities for reunification. Far from being welcomed into Canadian society, child immigrants endured the cruelties of xenophobia and class prejudice. In every phase of its operation, the programme placed a middle-class vision of society ahead of the children's personal interests and aspirations. Most children had no choice but to wait until their eighteenth birthday freed them from their contracts. Even then few opportunities and benefits awaited youngsters of their background. For many of the child immigrants, the programme that had offered them salvation did little more than defer life's most difficult challenges. Even with their pasts behind them, poor British children discovered that inequality could last a lifetime.

CHAPTER VII

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND THE WORKING CHILD

The value of the training given in our schools does not depend so much upon the knowledge gained as the habits which the pupils form.

Richard Harcourt, Ontario's
Minister of Education¹

Social historians agree that the rise of public education constitutes the most important development in the field of child welfare in nineteenth-century Ontario.² No other institution, idea, or policy so profoundly affected the experience of childhood in the Victorian Age. The paramountcy of public education as a social policy revealed itself in the number and variety of interest groups that actively supported its implementation.

¹ Ontario, Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1899 (Toronto 1900), xxviii.

² General surveys of the development of public education include Honora M. Cochrane, ed, Centennial Story: The Board of Education for the City of Toronto 1850-1950 (Toronto 1950); Douglas A. Lawr and Robert D. Gidney, eds, Educating Canadians: A Documentary History of Public Education (Toronto 1973); Alison Prentice, The School Promoters: Education and Social Class in Mid-Nineteenth Century Upper Canada (Toronto 1977); R.M. Stamp, J.D. Wilson, and L.-P. Audet, eds, Canadian Education: A History (Toronto 1970); Robert M. Stamp, The Schools of Ontario, 1876-1976 (Toronto 1982); and J. Donald Wilson, ed, An Imperfect Past: Education and Society in Canadian History (Vancouver 1984).

Child welfare workers hoped that public education would snatch ragged youngsters from the factories and the street and drop them into an environment of protection and propriety. Middle-class reformers looked to public schooling as a means to produce future generations of upstanding, law-abiding citizens. Businessmen regarded public education as a suitable training ground for a competent and compliant work force. Trade unionists and other workers hoped that public schooling would provide their children with opportunities for personal development and social and occupational mobility. Despite their varying ideologies and objectives, almost all participants in the debate over public education believed that the classroom was the best place for youngsters to spend their formative years. High expectations alone, however, could not determine the actual operation of the public education system, nor could they force it to function in a social vacuum. In almost every aspect of its operation, public schooling reflected the social and economic realities of urban-industrial life. In particular, the concept of work, in both a material and philosophical sense, strongly influenced the direction and operation of the public school system.

The first impact that work exerted on the public education system surfaced in the case of many poor children whose responsibilities to their families simply precluded regular attendance at school. Public education could hardly take full effect in situations where youngsters did not attend school or where they frequently absented themselves from the classroom to perform some

necessary work. Some school boards responded to this problem by offering special part-time programmes and night classes for working children. Educators, of course, did not intend the classroom to be a place where youngsters could escape the responsibilities of work. On the contrary, one of the main functions of public education was to teach working-class children industrious habits and prepare them to step into their pre-ordained roles as labouring men and women.³ This goal became

³ No discussion of the ideology and objectives of public education can avoid reference to the social control thesis. Many left-leaning historians maintain that the primary aim of public education was social control of the working class and the protection of the values and economic status of the middle and upper classes. Some historians of education dispute this view. J. Donald Wilson argues that a significant degree of local autonomy, input from parents, and the strongly rural flavour of the nineteenth-century school system defied the principal elements of social control. "Some Observations on Recent Trends in Canadian Educational History," in J. Donald Wilson, ed, An Imperfect Past: Education and Society in Canadian History (Vancouver 1984), 11-15. Ian Davey contends that the social control thesis remains a functionalist concept that "downplays the struggle and negotiation within and between classes which is at the centre of the historical determination of institutionalized schooling in the nineteenth century." History of Education Quarterly, Vol. 21, No. 3, Fall 1981, 376. Despite the informed revisionist views of Wilson and Davey, the evidence presented in this study supports the main contentions of the social control thesis. In response to Wilson and Davey, the following postulates are offered. The practice of local autonomy and parental input alone does not necessarily imply an avoidance of social control. A small local oligarchy, which can include influential conservative parents, can divide and rule a community as effectively as a highly-centralized, bureaucratic one. Similarly, interaction within and between classes does not necessarily nullify the ultimate success of social control. It simply suggests that a struggle took place for control of the education system. As in many other areas of class struggle, those with the greatest means and power usually triumph. Lastly, this thesis concentrates on urban centres, where the social control thesis has greatest applicability. For further discussion of the social control thesis, see Neil Sutherland, "Towards a History of English-Canadian Youngsters," in Michael B.

especially evident in the late 1890s when school boards introduced industrial education for boys and domestic science for girls. By the turn of the century, the public school had firmly established itself as a major social institution closely tied to the dictates of industrial capitalism. Although working-class children stood to gain some benefits as a result of public education, their experience as students in no way nullified the class bias, authoritarianism, and sexism that characterized urban-industrial life.

By the mid-point of the nineteenth century, many prominent political figures in Canada West had come to recognize the potential social benefits of public education. Unquestionably, the most influential of these school promoters was Egerton Ryerson, a Methodist minister who held the position of Superintendent of Education for Canada West from 1844 until his retirement in 1876. Throughout his career, Ryerson fought for the establishment of a universal, compulsory system of education with strong religious and moral overtones. Writing in 1847, Ryerson unveiled one of the benefits society could expect to gain from public education: "A system of general education amongst the people is the most effectual preventative of pauperism, and its

Katz and Paul H. Mattingly, eds, Education and Social Change: Themes From Ontario's Past (New York 1975).

natural companions, misery and crime."⁴ In the same article, the superintendent presented evidence from around the world to prove that educated youngsters grew into productive and compliant workers.⁵

Assessing Ryerson's influence on education in Ontario, Robert Stamp summarized the nature of the early school system:

The immediate goal was the inculcation of Christian values; the underlying aim was the prevention of deviant behaviour and crime....Youngsters were taught to accept misfortune and to be thankful for God's blessings....Economics stressed the sacredness of private property, the wisdom of prudent investments, and the virtues of industry and frugality -- but neglected to mention the trade union movement and labour-management conflicts. There was a glorification of motherhood and an acknowledgment of the vast influence of women in shaping the life of the home -- but no thought of the woman pursuing her own career outside the home.⁶

Ryerson's approach to education also foreshadowed the development of an important link between public education and the rise of industrial capitalism. Michael Cross underscored the significance of this connection:

Throughout the Industrial Revolution, the reshaping of people accompanied the reshaping of nature, so that the school became as much the symbol of the age as the fac-

⁴ Egerton Ryerson, "Report on a System of Elementary Public Instruction for Upper Canada." Cited in Alison Prentice and Susan Houston, eds, Family, School and Society in Nineteenth-Century Canada (Toronto 1975), 69.

⁵ Ibid. For more on Ryerson, see James H. Love, "Cultural Survival and Social Control: The Development of a Curriculum for Upper Canada's Common Schools in 1846," Histoire sociale/Social History, Vol. XV, No. 30, November 1982; Neil McDonald and Alf Chaiton, eds, Egerton Ryerson and His Times (Toronto 1978); and Prentice, The School Promoters.

⁶ Robert Stamp, The Schools of Ontario, 10-12.

tory. School systems were created to teach the young, at least in part, the self-discipline necessary for a modern, efficient economy. Children learned to obey clocks and -- a vital skill for factory workers -- to subdue boredom. The heavy weight of social and divine sanctions was attached to work to reinforce the lessons....The purpose was clear. Once one subdued the animal spirit of youth and the boisterous inefficiency of the pre-industrial era, once one learned to sit quietly at a desk in row on row of desks, how much easier it was to sit or stand patiently at a machine, to measure out life from school bell to school bell, from factory whistle to factory whistle.⁷

Examining a private school in Hawkesbury operated by sawmill owners for their workers' children, Chad Gaffield provided a vivid example of Cross's view of education:

The rhythm and discipline of the classroom were appropriate training for later employment in the sawmill. Sitting in rows, responding to bells, and obeying the teacher were experiences not unrelated to the punctuality, sobriety, and deference desired in sawmill workers. In this context, schooling held a dual promise: the prevention of social disorder associated with idle children; and the preparation, both physical and psychological, of employees for the mills.⁸

Prior to the rise of large-scale industrialization and urbanization, Ontario's school system consisted of an uneasy mixture of self-directed private ventures and unevenly-financed, poorly-equipped public institutions. This early school system experienced rather limited success. In Hamilton, for example, Ian Davey writes that "at mid-century, approximately one-half of

⁷ Michael S. Cross, "The Canadian Worker in the Early Industrial Age," in W.J.C. Cherwinski and Gregory S. Kealey, eds, Lectures in Canadian Labour and Working-Class History (St. John's 1985), 49.

⁸ Chad Gaffield, "Schooling, the Economy, and Rural Society in Nineteenth-Century Ontario," in Joy Parr, ed, Childhood and Family in Canadian Society (Toronto 1982), 88

the school age children did not attend school and, of those that did, the majority were in private institutions."⁹ The future prospects of public education improved considerably when school promoters moved to establish local taxation as the basis of education funding. Following at least one false start at the local level,¹⁰ the government of Canada West established this principle across the province with the passage of the School Act of 1850.¹¹ This legislation allowed local trustees to introduce free schools based upon a property tax. Over the next two decades, virtually all towns and cities in Canada West adopted property assessment as the means to provide free schooling.

The establishment of a secure source of funding enhanced the school system's viability and appeal as a public institution and led to a notable increase in the number of students. This growth pattern, however, did not penetrate all working-class homes. Despite the best efforts and wishes of local trustees, a significant minority of working-class children shunned the schools on registration day. Of greater importance, the majority of those who did enrol were unable to establish a record of even semi-regular attendance. These two related problems would plague

⁹ Ian E. Davey, "School Reform and School Attendance: The Hamilton Central School, 1853-1861," in Katz and Mattingly, Education and Social Change, 295. See also Michael B. Katz, Michael J. Doucet, and Mark J. Stern, The Social Organization of Early Industrial Capitalism (Cambridge 1982), 308.

¹⁰ Peter N. Ross, "The Free School Controversy in Toronto, 1848-1852," in Katz and Mattingly, eds, Education and Social Change.

¹¹ Canada, Statutes, 1850.

the school system far into the next century.¹² As long as large numbers of working-class families continued to rely on the economic and domestic contributions of children, attendance at school would place second to other more pressing priorities. Statistical analyses from a variety of sources verify this claim.

A special census conducted by the Toronto School Board in 1863 uncovered 9,508 children between the ages of five and sixteen, 1,632 of whom were not enrolled in school. Of the latter group, 453, or 27.7 per cent, worked full time in the paid labour force. Another 263, or 16.1 per cent, routinely performed chores at home during the day. Other reasons for non-enrolment included "sick, too young, too far from school, lack of clothing." Of the remaining 7,876 registered students, only middle- and upper-class youngsters posted a record of regular attendance.¹³ The following year the school board found that of 5,550 children registered at nine Toronto schools, 3,157 attended less than half time.¹⁴ In 1866, Toronto teachers reported that youngsters commonly left school at age twelve, boys to go to a trade, and girls to enter service.¹⁵

¹² Ian E. Davey, "The Rhythm of Work and the Rhythm of School," in McDonald and Chaiton, Egerton Ryerson and His Times, 224, and Davey, "School Reform and School Attendance," 296.

¹³ Toronto Board of Education (TBE), Annual Report of the Local Superintendent (Toronto 1863), 43. See also The Globe, 19 March 1863.

¹⁴ Cochrane, ed, Centennial Story, 41.

¹⁵ Ibid.

In his study of public education in Hamilton, Ian Davey probed the relationship between school attendance, industrial growth, and children's economic responsibilities and opportunities. Between 1861 and 1871, Davey writes, new employment opportunities in industry drew some youngsters away from the classroom and into the workplace: "The proportion of thirteen to sixteen year old children attending [school] dropped considerably...In 1871 the proportion in school was less than 46%. Plainly, a corollary of the rise in employment among teenagers was a fall-off in school attendance."¹⁶ Davey pointed out that boys fit this pattern to a much greater degree than girls.¹⁷ Taking a close look at the impact of social conditions on family matters, Davey argued that

irregular attendance...was not so much the result of large-scale employment of young children as of the lack or loss of jobs for their parents. In large part, irregular attendance patterns in the urban areas were the cumulative results of many personal disasters stemming from the instability of the labour market and the incidence of sickness -- conditions which intersected most acutely during the winter months.¹⁸

Davey's study also exposed the class dimension of school attendance:

Entrepreneurs sent proportionately more of their school-age sons and daughters to school than did the others, and labourers and women household heads sent proportionately less....Entrepreneurs sent proportion-

¹⁶ Ian E. Davey, "Educational Reform and the Working Class: School Attendance in Hamilton, Ontario, 1851-1891," (Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1975), 180.

¹⁷ Ibid., 181.

¹⁸ Ibid., 285.

ately more boys than girls to school while the labourers and women sent more girls than boys. Over 81% of the five to sixteen year old sons of the entrepreneurs attended school compared to 56% of those of the labourers and less than 55% of those whose mothers were household heads.¹⁹

The economic circumstances and needs of families thus affected the school attendance of children. This point surfaced again in Davey's observation that children from families with servants posted a proportionately high attendance rate. Davey concluded: "Thus, although from 1871 onwards the majority of children were in school, family circumstance, economic pressures and physical conditions dictated the length of their stay and the seasonality and the regularity of their attendance."²⁰

In a separate study that also drew on data from Hamilton, Michael Katz, Michael Doucet, and Mark Stern introduced a new element to the discussion of irregular school attendance. In addition to listing factors such as trade depressions, crop failure, and seasonal employment, these authors argued that transiency significantly affected school attendance patterns:

Time and again...not only young men but families were on the move, and the poor moved most often. Inability to find work, seasonal unemployment, and economic depression all promoted the continual movement of working people from one place to another. Of course

¹⁹ Ibid., 187. In his study of Alfred Township, Chad Gaffield uncovered similar patterns of school attendance. Commenting on the conditions of poor working-class families, Gaffield writes: "For this group, the demands of the domestic economy were compounded by material insecurity. Within labouring families, necessities such as shoes became factors in controlling formal education experience." "Schooling, the Economy, and Rural Society in Nineteenth-Century Ontario," 83.

²⁰ Ibid.

transiency militated against regular school attendance. Many young people simply lived too short a time in any one place to attend school very often or very long.²¹

The difficulties encountered by the public education system in its formative years prompted the Ontario government to use its legislative and bureaucratic powers to shore up the troubled structure. Between 1871 and 1891, the government introduced a number of measures designed to strengthen and solidify the public education system. First among these important moves was the passage of "An Act to Improve the Common and Grammar Schools of the Province of Ontario"²² in February 1871. This law declared all public schools to be free schools and instructed municipal councils to levy and collect a property tax to fund the education system. The act announced that all children between the ages of seven and twelve had the right to attend school, or be otherwise educated, for four months in each year. Parents and guardians who denied their children this right could be fined up to \$5.00 for a first offence and double that amount for subsequent contraventions. Magistrates could choose to waive fines in cases of extreme poverty, ill health, or too great a distance from any school. The legislation also contained a myriad of rules and regulations pertaining to the internal operation of the school system. In March 1874, the government reaffirmed the primary

²¹ Katz, Doucet, and Stern, The Social Organization of Early Industrial Capitalism, 278.

²² Ontario, Statutes, 1870-71, Chapter 33. The terms "common" and "grammar" refer respectively to primary and high schools.

clauses of this act with the passage of "An Act to Amend and Consolidate the Public School Law."²³

Despite the best wishes and efforts of the government, it soon became apparent that legislation alone could not guarantee regular school attendance. In an attempt to improve attendance patterns in Toronto, the local school board appointed W.C. Wilkinson truant officer in 1872. Wilkinson investigated 272 cases in his first year.²⁴ Wilkinson's diligence notwithstanding, a member of the standing committee on school management wrote in 1874: "I find that...many of those whose names are on the roll are so irregular in their attendance that they must obtain very little profit from it themselves while at the same time they prevent the uniform advancement of their classes."²⁵ Older children of Toronto's working poor, those twelve to sixteen years of age, posted an especially dismal record of school attendance. Examining a cross-section of Toronto students, Haley Bamman observed: "Preliminary analysis of city school registers from 1877 shows that...upper common school classes were almost devoid of the children of labourers."²⁶

²³ Ontario, Statutes, 1874, Chapter 28.

²⁴ TBE, W.C. Wilkinson Diaries, Vol. 1.

²⁵ TBE, Standing Committee on School Management, Minute Book 1874.

²⁶ Haley P. Bamman, "Patterns of School Attendance in Toronto, 1844-1878: Some Spatial Considerations," in Katz and Mattingly, Education and Social Change, 240.

As Table 7-1 indicates, Toronto did not stand alone in its battle to place and keep children in the classroom. This table shows that a significant minority of youngsters from cities across the province did not register to attend school. Part of this number was likely composed of homeless, incorrigible, or extremely neglected children whose social circumstances militated against schooling. Dr. Ogden estimated that 5,000 such youngsters existed in Toronto in 1878.²⁷ Other children who did not attend school worked full or part time at home or elsewhere as part of their contribution to the family economy. A more significant problem appears in the number of children who signed up for school but failed to attend regularly. These youngsters, with the apparent approval or insistence of their parents, indicated their willingness to attend school but could not achieve a record of regularity in the face of social and economic pressures at home.

Compounding the problem of irregular attendance was the failure of school inspectors to recognize the value of children's contributions to their families. In the minds of most inspectors, the blame for irregular attendance of working-class youngsters lay with irresponsible, ignorant, and selfish parents. Henry L. Slack, Inspector of Public Schools for Lanark County, declared the attendance law to be a "dead letter" in 1872 and

²⁷ Cochrane, Centennial Story, 91.

Table 7-1

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IN MAJOR ONTARIO CITIES, 1871-1905**Cities:**

1871: Hamilton, Kingston, London, Ottawa, Toronto
 1879: Add Belleville, Brantford, Guelph, St. Catharines
 1883: Add St. Thomas
 1887: Add Stratford
 1893: Add Windsor
 1897: Add Chatham
 1903: Add Woodstock
 1905: Add Niagara Falls

Year	All Children between 5 & 16	Students between 5 & 16	Average Daily Attendance
1871	32,953	28,068	13,992
1873	35,104	31,091	15,788
1875	37,642	32,040	18,230
1879	51,863	45,500	26,771
1881	51,480	46,061	26,273
1883	56,168	49,251	29,025
1885	58,982	54,924	32,916

Table 7-1 (Continued)

Year	All Children between 5 & 21	Students between 5 & 21	Average Daily Attendance
1887	89,456	61,834	38,916
1889	97,519	56,071	35,178
1891	101,649	62,821	39,068
1893	104,329	63,450	42,805
1895	107,300	64,329	44,404
1897	112,475	66,564	47,737
1899	121,915	67,952	50,280
1901	125,844	67,304	49,708
1903	128,029	66,768	47,106
1905	128,219	68,045	48,994

Source: Ontario, Annual Reports of the Minister of Education, 1871-1905.

bemoaned the "apathy of an indifferent and a lawless people."²⁸ In the same year, Inspector Reverend James Porter of Toronto blamed "ignorant or careless parents" for low school attendance despite listing household duties such as picking potatoes, cutting wood, and minding ill family members as reasons why children frequently missed class.²⁹ Reporting in 1873, Inspector N.F. Dupuis of Kingston attributed irregular attendance to "the indifference of parents, or the willingness of many to allow their children to absent themselves from school upon the most trivial excuses, or the readiness with which they keep them at home to serve the most insignificant ends."³⁰ The following year, James Hughes, the influential Inspector of Schools for Toronto, wrote in his report: "The compulsory education law is intended for the benefit of young children whose parents desire to obtain money for their services when they should be at school; who are willing to sacrifice the future advancement of their offspring for their own immediate gain."³¹

²⁸ Ontario, Annual Report of the Normal, Model, High and Public Schools of Ontario for the Year 1872 (Toronto 1874), Appendix B, 100-101.

²⁹ Ibid., 105-107.

³⁰ Ontario, Annual Report of the Normal, Model, High and Public Schools of Ontario for the Year 1873 (Toronto 1874), Appendix B, 74.

³¹ Ontario, Annual Report of the Normal, Model, High and Public Schools for the Year 1874 (Toronto 1875), Appendix B, 81. See also report of Inspector D. Fotheringham, County of York--North, Ontario, Annual Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1879 (Toronto 1881), 67.

Only a handful of school inspectors attempted to explain irregular school attendance within the context of economic forces. Linking the wage-earning capacity of children to the labour market, one inspector in 1873 asserted that youngsters left school early partially as a result of "the opportunities which stores and manufactories offered for child labour, in the disposition of employers to engage children, because of the higher wages which must be paid for the labour of grown-up persons."³² The following year, the Inspector of Schools for the village of Hespeler reported that "irregularity is caused by the boys and girls, of almost all sizes and ages, staying out of school or going to it, according as their assistance is required or not at the factories."³³ One inspector, J.B. Boyle of London, distinguished himself from his colleagues by exhibiting genuine understanding of the conditions of working-class families. Writing in 1879, Boyle explained that parents could not "always control their domestic affairs to such an extent as to keep their children at school when these affairs require that the efforts of their children must be made available to promote the comfort of the family."³⁴

³² Ontario, Annual Report of the Normal, Model, High and Public Schools for the Year 1873, Appendix B, 77-78.

³³ Ontario, Annual Report of the Normal, Model, High and Public Schools for the Year 1874, Appendix B, 71. See also report of Inspector Robert Torrance, Town of Guelph, Ontario, Annual Report of the Normal, Model, High and Public Schools for the Year 1872, Appendix B, 112.

³⁴ Ontario, Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1879, Appendix D, 74.

The early returns of school inspectors encouraged the government to try a different approach to strengthening the public education system. In 1876, acting on the advice of Egerton Ryerson, the Ontario government centralized responsibility for the administration of public education within a newly-created Ministry of Education. This department oversaw the activities of local boards of education. Following Ryerson's retirement later that year, the government named Adam Crooks Minister of Education. Crooks held this post until 1883, at which time George Ross assumed ministerial responsibility for education. In 1899, Ross accepted a higher-paying position as Premier and handed his portfolio over to Richard Harcourt.

With the Ministry of Education in place to handle administrative affairs, the government turned once again to legislation. "An Act for Further Improving the School Law,"³⁵ passed in 1881, made school attendance compulsory for all children seven to thirteen years of age for eleven weeks in each of two school terms, "unless there be some reasonable excuse for non-attendance." Despite the tendency of school inspectors to blame parents for irregular attendance patterns, this act acknowledged the economic circumstances that forced some children to seek paid work and pronounced that a child "employed in any manufactory" need attend school only half-time. Four years later, "An Act to

³⁵ Ontario, Statutes, 1881, Chapter 30.

Consolidate and Amend the Public Schools Act,"³⁶ reduced compulsory school attendance to one hundred days per year.

The new legislation of the 1880s had little impact on the problem of irregular attendance. Reporting in 1881, W.R. Bigg, Inspector for the County of Leeds, used the familiar term "dead letter" to describe the attendance law and added: "At any hour of the day our streets are swarming with children between the ages of five and sixteen."³⁷ In the same year, Inspector M.J. Kelly of Brant County observed that "attendance was slightly less than during the preceding year, owing probably to the employment of more children in the factories."³⁸ Investigating the state of manufacturing in Canada in 1882, federal commissioners William Lukes and A.H. Blackeby recorded that they were "unable to find any place in which [the Ontario school] act is enforced."³⁹ Despite this discovery, Lukes and Blackeby reported that the majority of employers of children whom they interviewed agreed

³⁶ Ontario, Statutes, 1885, Chapter 49.

³⁷ Ontario, Report of the Minister of Education for the Years 1880 and 1881 (Toronto 1882), 30.

³⁸ Ontario, Annual Report of the Minister of Education (Toronto 1882), 40. See also reports of Inspector F.L. Michel, County of Lanark, Ontario, Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1883 (Toronto 1884), 125; and Inspector D. McCaig, District of Algoma, Ontario, Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1890 (Toronto 1891), 145.

³⁹ "Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Working of Mills and Factories of the Dominion, and the Labor Employed Therein," Canada, Sessional Papers, 1882, Vol. XV, No. 42, 3.

that youngsters should receive some education.⁴⁰ Testifying before the Royal Labor Commission in the late 1880s, Inspector J.B. Boyle of London once again distinguished himself as one of the few education officials to recognize the legitimate demands of the family economy. Explaining why so many boys in his district left school around the age of twelve, Boyle stated: "They do some work as a contribution towards the [family's] income. Sometimes they become errand boys in shops, or they sell papers, or they do what they can." The inspector added that a small number of lads under fourteen turned to factory work.⁴¹

Pursuing the persistent problem of irregular attendance, Minister of Education George Ross circulated a questionnaire in 1890 among the mayors of all cities and towns in Ontario. A majority of respondents called for stronger compulsory attendance laws, partially in the hope that such a move would lead to a decrease in juvenile delinquency.⁴² Responding in part to the findings of this survey, the Ontario government passed "An Act Respecting Truancy and Compulsory School Attendance"⁴³ on 4 May 1891. This act ordered all children between eight and fourteen years of age to attend school full time under normal circum-

40 Ibid.

41 Canada, Royal Commission on the Relations of Capital and Labor in Canada (Royal Labor Commission) (Ottawa 1889), Ontario evidence, 604-607.

42 "Report on Compulsory Education in Canada, Great Britain, Germany and the United States," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1891, Vol. XXIII, Part V, No. 33.

43 Ontario, Statutes, 1891, Chapter 56.

stances. The legislation also stipulated that "no child under the age of fourteen years shall be employed by any person, during school hours while the public school of the section or municipality in which the child resides is in session." Violators of this clause could be fined \$20.00 for each offence. Justices of the Peace and principals, however, could excuse a youngster from attending school for up to six weeks per term when, in their opinion, "the services of such child are required in husbandry or in urgent and necessary household duties, or for the necessary maintenance of such child or of some person dependent upon him." Parents and guardians found to be in violation of the act could be fined between \$5.00 and \$20.00. The legislation also instructed all municipalities to appoint one or more truant officers to "perform such services as may be deemed necessary for the enforcement of this Act."

Despite this act's limited recognition of the legitimacy of some forms of child labour, a majority of school inspectors continued to blame parents for the irregular attendance of their children. Cornelius Donovan, Inspector of Roman Catholic Separate Schools for the Western Division, charged in 1891 that too many parents "think more of the present services than of the future welfare of their children."⁴⁴ The following year, Inspector Thomas Gordon of County Grey-West submitted a slightly more balanced view but still reserved harsh words for parents:

⁴⁴ Ontario, Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1891 (Toronto 1891), 155.

Herein irregularity largely prevails, and in all probability is largely owing to the necessities of home requirements. There is, however, evidently a large element of carelessness and indifference on the part of parents and guardians as to whether children are regular attendants or mere occasional visitors at their several schools.⁴⁵

School officials found the 1891 act no easier to enforce than its predecessors, despite the new powers granted to truant officers. A typical experience can be found in the records of R.W. Ward, truant officer for London West. In 1893, Ward identified thirty-two juvenile delinquents in his district, named two corporations that had violated the act, and discovered twenty-three children under the age of fourteen who worked full time. For all of Ward's efforts, the courts imposed a single fine.⁴⁶ Table 7-2 indicates that Ward's experience in London formed part of a recurring pattern throughout the province. In addition to displaying extremely erratic record-keeping, this table reveals that only a minuscule number of reported occurrences of truancy led to charges being laid, and even fewer resulted in convictions. In some cases, municipalities simply refused to apply the act rigorously. Fifteen years after its passage, J.J. Kelso, Ontario's Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children, wrote: "Truancy laws are not enforced with sufficient thoroughness. In many of the smaller towns especially, the duties of a truant officer are supposed to be nominal and the aim of the

⁴⁵ Ontario, Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1892 (Toronto 1893), 123.

⁴⁶ Ontario, Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1893 (Toronto 1894), 165.

Table 7-2

TRUANCY IN MAJOR ONTARIO CITIES, 1892-1905

Cities:

1892: Brantford, Guelph, Hamilton, St. Thomas, Stratford
 1893: Add London
 1894: Add St. Catharines, Toronto, Windsor
 1897: Add Chatham
 1901: Add Belleville
 1903: Add Woodstock
 1905: Add Niagara Falls

Year	Number of Truants Reported	Number of Charges Laid	Number of Convictions
1892	327	9	7
1893	875	82	31
1894	2,273	99	58
1895	962	86	30
1896	6,612	51	16
1897	7,255	75	22
1898	1,462	70	30
1899	1,470	68	18
1900	1,329	38	15
1901	1,789	72	32
1902	1,588	64	29
1903	974	95	39
1904	1,397	134	66

Table 7-2 (Continued)

Year	Number of Truants Reported	Number of Charges Laid	Number of Convictions
1905	1,540	114	28

Source: Ontario, Annual Reports of the Minister of Education, 1892-1905.

municipality has been to get the work done as cheaply as possible."⁴⁷

The series of acts passed by the government between 1871 and 1891, along with the creation of the Ministry of Education in 1876, formally defined Ontario's public education system. On the positive side, the government declared public education to be a universal right, as well as a responsibility, that extended to all children between certain ages. A system of funding based on a property tax guaranteed youngsters free access to schools and emphasized the nature of education as a public matter. The State now assumed almost full responsibility for a previously private affair and indicated its intention to punish those who transgressed the law, although this rarely occurred. On the negative side, the social and economic burdens that weighed heavily on the shoulders of many working-class families rendered the acts inapplicable and unenforceable, particularly the sections pertaining to compulsory attendance. No amount of prodding by trustees or truant officers could compel a child to sit in a classroom when his or her services were needed at home or elsewhere. Indeed, certain clauses of the acts acknowledged this situation and implied that in some cases children played more important roles as contributors to their families than they did as students.

⁴⁷ "Fourteenth Report -- Neglected and Dependent Children of Ontario," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1906, Vol. XXXIX, Part VII, No. 35, 14.

Although governmental legislation implicitly recognized the connection between economic hardships and irregular school attendance, most local inspectors consistently identified irresponsible and selfish parents as the source of the problem. This pattern continued into the 1890s. Responding to a second survey conducted by Minister of Education Ross in 1895, W.C. Wilkinson, now secretary treasurer of the Toronto Public School Board, named "lack of proper control by parents" as the chief cause of truancy. Revealing little understanding of the wider social and economic aspects of this problem, Wilkinson's only recommendation to Ross was to toughen the punishment for truancy.⁴⁸ Offering an only slightly more informed assessment, James Robinson, truant officer for Campbellford, blamed truancy on parents who held to the "idea that school work is secondary to work at home."⁴⁹ Taking a different approach altogether, a later letter to Ross signed "An Anxious Parent" ascribed truancy to Wednesday afternoon theatre matinees patronized regularly by school boys who forged each other's parents' signatures on absentee notes.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Archives of Ontario, Responses to G.W. Ross's inquiry of July 1895 regarding revisions of the Truancy Act, RG2, Acc. 9631, Printed Circular No. 47, Wilkinson to Ross, 8 October 1895. I am indebted to Terrence Campbell, formerly of the Ontario Archives, for bringing this file to my attention.

⁴⁹ Ibid., Robinson to Ross, 1 October 1895.

⁵⁰ Ibid., "An Anxious Parent" to Ross, 16 April 1900. To avoid the impression that this period lacked normal youthful playfulness, it should also be noted that Toronto truant officer W.C. Wilkinson regularly discovered youngsters engaged in the usual truant shenanigans of fishing, swimming, and attending the

Most school inspectors' view of truancy reflected a combination of their mistaken belief that children's work in the home and elsewhere did not constitute an essential element of family survival and their perception that parents failed to recognize the social benefits of public education. This attitude frequently resulted in extreme condescension towards working-class parents. No one captured this sentiment more succinctly than J.J. Kelso, Ontario's Superintendent of Neglected and Dependent Children and the country's premier child-saver. Although he had no direct connection to the Ministry of Education, Kelso was no stranger to the act of patronizing working-class parents. In one such outburst of sanctimoniousness, Kelso remarked:

Failure on the part of parents to send children to school is often due to the poverty and wretchedness of the home life and lack of good management in the direction of household affairs. To secure the best results it is important that school attendance officers should be inspired with a motive of helping and uplifting such people. There should be the kindly and sympathetic advice, and practical aid that will lift a family out of the slough of despond and get them to realize that the law is intended to be for their protection and ultimate happiness and prosperity.⁵¹

Kelso was not the only government official outside of the school inspectors to show an interest in public education. Provincial factory inspectors also found occasion to comment on public schooling, particularly in connection with child labour. From the time of their first investigations in 1887, factory

_____ races. See TBE, Wilkinson Diaries.

⁵¹ National Archives of Canada (NAC), J.J. Kelso Papers, MG30 C97, Vol. 6.

inspectors regularly uncovered school-age children toiling in manufacturing establishments. A stunning discrepancy between school attendance laws and Ontario's original Factories' Act exacerbated this situation. Although the School Act of 1881 obliged children to remain in school until age thirteen, the Factories' Act of 1884 allowed for the employment of boys as young as twelve.⁵² The Truancy Act of 1891 raised mandatory school attendance age to fourteen, but the Factories' Act remained unchanged until 1895 at which time new legislation set the minimum age of employment for both boys and girls at fourteen.⁵³ School and factory legislation thus co-existed in contradiction for an eleven year period. Furthermore, the laws regulating retail stores and sweat shops continued to permit the employment of children as young as ten years of age.⁵⁴

Legislative discrepancies aside, all factory inspectors agreed that society would benefit if children spent more time sharpening their intellect and character in school and less time exhausting their bodies and minds in factories. Inspector Burke stressed this point in 1903:

Compare the children who have passed a year in even the poorest of our schools, and those who have spent the same time in one of the best of our manufacturing establishments, and comment would be needless. The tendency of the one is to awaken the dormant faculties

⁵² "An Act for the Protection of Persons Employed in Factories," Ontario, Statutes, 1884, Chapter 39, Section 6(1).

⁵³ "An Act to Make Further Provision Respecting Factories," Ontario, Statutes, 1895, Chapter 50, Section 2.

⁵⁴ Ontario, Statutes, 1897, Chapter 51.

of the mind, stimulate the sluggish powers of the soul, and gives us new men and women with keen, active, wide-awake brains, wise, intelligent souls, in healthy bodies. The tendency of the other is to dwarf the soul, stupefy the mind, and reduce the human beings to the level of a machine.⁵⁵

Inspector Margaret Carlyle concurred with her colleague and added a comment on the effect education would have on youngsters' work habits: "The cultivation of the mental faculties would certainly improve the social and moral character, as well as create a much superior class of workers than can ever exist under present conditions."⁵⁶

The actual nature and operation of public education, of course, depended on more than legislation and the hopeful efforts of school inspectors and other government officials. Despite its hierarchical structure and legal status, the school system could not escape the influence of common social and economic forces. As school inspectors and truant officers discovered, many working-class parents routinely withdrew their children from school temporarily whenever family circumstances demanded an additional wage-earner or an extra hand around the house. At the best of times, most parents either totally ignored attendance

⁵⁵ "Sixteenth Annual Reports of the Inspectors of Factories," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1903, Vol. XXXVI, Part III, No. 8, 4.

⁵⁶ "Seventeenth Annual Report of the Inspectors of Factories," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1904, Vol. XXXVII, Part II, No. 8, 33. See also "Sixth Annual Report," Sessional Papers, 1893, 21; "Seventh Annual Report," Sessional Papers, 1894, 23; "Fourteenth Annual Report," Sessional Papers, 13; "Nineteenth Annual Report," Sessional Papers, 49; and "Twentieth Annual Report," Sessional Papers, 1908, 52.

laws or indicated that they had no knowledge of such legislation.⁵⁷ More significantly, some parents negotiated special schedules with local school boards to allow their children to combine family responsibilities with educational opportunities. In 1874, Inspector Hughes recorded:

We have in Toronto a considerable number of pupils who desire to be absent regularly for a part of each day, either as newsboys, or to perform some necessary work at home. In addition to these, there is a class of children, some living with their parents, others engaged as servants, whose parents or employers would gladly send them to school during one-half the day, if they were allowed to do so.⁵⁸

Hughes held to his conviction that all children should attend school full time. But rather than lose touch with working children altogether, he recommended that the board establish special classes for "errand boys,...little maid servants," and other employed youngsters.⁵⁹ Eventually, the trustees designated the Elizabeth Street School for such a purpose. Hughes also strongly supported reformers' efforts to regulate newsboys and bootblacks "in order that one condition of their receiving a license should be their attendance at school for at least two hours a day."⁶⁰

Applying Hughes' reasoning in another area, the Toronto Board of Education, in conjunction with the Mission Union, opened

⁵⁷ See TBE, Wilkinson Diaries.

⁵⁸ Annual Report of the Normal, Model, High and Public Schools for the Year 1874, Appendix B, 84.

⁵⁹ Cochrane, Centennial Story, 90.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

the Mission Day School in 1881. This institution served extremely disadvantaged children whose social and economic circumstances prevented them from functioning satisfactorily in the regular school system. Despite the deprived environments from which these youngsters had emerged, school officials believed that proper training could turn them into skilled and well-adjusted workers. According to one observer, "the whole child is developed through play and work....For his hands there is delightful occupation, through which he learns to love work and to respect himself as a producer of that which is useful and beautiful."⁶¹ But even this school could not escape the forces of the family economy:

Many of the boys sell papers and have to be allowed off before the regular hour of closing. Others attend to furnaces, run messages, etc., and many of the girls have to take charge of smaller children and look after the house. The school hours, lessons, and in fact the whole line of action has to be arranged to suit the peculiar circumstance of the work.⁶²

In another attempt to accommodate working children, the Toronto board established special classes for newsboys at the Elizabeth Street School in 1890. According to a columnist for Saturday Night, the school failed to attract many lads because it was located too far from the area of town where they normally sold their papers. This writer also believed that youngsters who were attuned to the rituals of the street did not easily adjust to the discipline and conventions of the school system: "These

⁶¹ "Mission School," The Globe, 23 November 1889.

⁶² Ibid.

boys, having encountered life wrong end first -- having had to earn a living before they were rightly alive -- should get their education in inverted shape."⁶³

At the turn of the century, the Toronto Board of Education still followed the practice of occasionally permitting children to leave school early in the day to allow them to work at home or elsewhere. According to the management committee, however, fewer families required the services of youngsters than in previous years.⁶⁴ But the problem of working children continued to demonstrate itself in other areas. The committee responsible for organizing the annual school games, for example, recommended that they not be held on a Saturday because "many boys are engaged at work."⁶⁵

Determined to extend the influence of public education as far as possible, local boards pursued yet another method of drawing working children into the classroom -- night school. According to Susan Houston, free evening classes for working boys and girls had operated in Toronto as early as 1853 as "a combined educational and philanthropic venture."⁶⁶ A decade later, Mechanics' Institutes offered nightly instruction for young

⁶³ Mack, "Around Town," Saturday Night, Vol. 10, No. 1, 21 November 1896.

⁶⁴ TBE, Management Committee Minutes, 1899-1901.

⁶⁵ TBE, Committee on Annual Games, Minutes, 23 March 1900.

⁶⁶ Susan E. Houston, "The Impetus to Reform: Urban Crime, Poverty and Ignorance, 1850-1875," (Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1974), 211.

workers.⁶⁷ By the early 1880s, a small number of school boards throughout Ontario offered night classes part of the year. In 1891, Toronto's Technical School Board organized evening courses in industrial education. These classes grew rapidly between 1891 and 1900.⁶⁸ Although some night schools officially limited registration to pupils over the age of fourteen, trustees made numerous exceptions for working children rather than risk losing them as students altogether.⁶⁹ The idea of night schools met with the approval of many manufacturers who wanted their young employees to learn new skills but did not want to forgo their cheap labour in the day.⁷⁰ The Toronto Board operated separate classes for boys and girls and awarded prizes at the end of each term for "attendance, punctuality, good conduct, and proficiency,"⁷¹ the same qualities that demanding employers looked for in model workers. Susan Houston compiled some informative statistics on the night schools operated by the Toronto board:

Instantly successful, the program reached its peak between 1888 and 1893, involving between thirty-forty teachers and an average attendance of between 800-900 annually. In 1880 nearly twice as many boys (855) as girls enrolled and slightly more than one-half of the boys were between twelve and sixteen years old. Most had menial jobs. Mechanics (29 per cent), labourers

⁶⁷ Cochrane, ed, Centennial Story, 84.

⁶⁸ TBE, Night School Committee, Minutes, 1880-1903.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Royal Labor Commission, Ontario evidence, testimony of John Henderson, manager, J. McLaren & Company, lumber merchants, Ottawa, 1137-39.

⁷¹ TBE, Night School Committee, Minutes, 1880-1903.

(9.6 per cent), factory hands (8.6 per cent), printers and binding hands (6.6 per cent), and errand boys (6.6 per cent) predominated; clerks were modestly represented (14 per cent) while some boys were at home (8.7 per cent) or did odd jobs that remained unclassified (16.5 per cent).⁷²

In 1891, 2,930 students attended a total of thirty-six night schools across Ontario.⁷³ The following year, enrolment dropped to 2,293, perhaps because the Truancy Act of 1891 encouraged more children to attend school during the day.⁷⁴ But even with this decrease in the number of night school pupils, education officials continued to make special arrangements for certain students when circumstances demanded such action. In 1895, for example, the Toronto Board of Education, at the request of the managers of the Working Boys' Home, instituted night classes for the homes' residents two to three evenings per week.⁷⁵

The creation of night schools for working children who could not attend daytime classes provides another example of educators' conscious efforts to use public schooling to produce able and compliant workers to serve the interests of industrial capitalism. But nowhere was this impulse more forcefully expressed than in the movement to introduce industrial education in the

⁷² Susan E. Houston, "The 'Waifs and Strays' of a Late Victorian City: Juvenile Delinquents in Toronto," in Parr, Childhood and Family in Canadian History, 137-38. Houston's data is drawn from the records of the Toronto Board of Education.

⁷³ Ontario, Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1893 (Toronto 1894), xvii.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ TBE, Night School Committee, Minutes, 11 October 1895.

public schools. The original impetus behind this movement rested on the belief that although the public schools had experienced relative success in expanding the knowledge and intellectual capacity of students and in creating citizens willing to uphold the precepts of industrial capitalism, the system had failed to produce a sufficient number of workers who possessed the actual technical skills needed to fuel a modern economy. As early as 1871, Egerton Ryerson, argued that public education should reflect "the pursuits and occupations of the people."⁷⁶ Twenty years later, testifying before the Prison Reform Commission, Toronto mayor W.H. Howland accused the public schools of "filling the cities with book-keepers and clerks."⁷⁷ Placing the question within the context of class expectations, J.J. Kelso asked:

Should not the public schools aim to educate the average child in practical handicrafts on the supposition that he is going to be an industrial worker and not a bookkeeper, financier, or school teacher? Those who desire to have their children follow the professions can generally find the means to give them a specialized course, and this should not be a direct charge on the taxpayers.⁷⁸

The term industrial education covered two forms of instruction: manual training and technical education. Although many commentators past and present have used these labels inter-

⁷⁶ Ontario, Annual Report of the Normal, Model, High and Public Schools of Ontario for the Year 1871 (Toronto 1873), 33.

⁷⁷ "Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Prison and Reformatory System of Ontario," Ontario, Sessional Papers, 1891, Vol. XXIII, Part IV, No. 18. See also Howland's testimony in Royal Labor Commission, Ontario evidence, 165.

⁷⁸ NAC, Kelso Papers, Vol. 7.

changeably, when properly defined an important distinction emerges. Manual training taught students the practical elements of one particular trade. Technical education introduced students to the theoretical principles underlying mechanical production. Manual training prepared students to perform one specific task or job. Technical education produced students who could eventually participate in the production process at a variety of levels.⁷⁹ Conflicting interpretations of these terms would lead to substantial disagreement and confusion in future debate.

The first prominent public figure to raise the issue of industrial education was George Hodgins, Ontario's Deputy Minister of Education in the 1870s. While studying a number of educational displays at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876, Hodgins drew a connection between industrial development, national power, and science and technology. He noted how the mixture of these elements had boosted the power and prestige of nations such as the United States and Russia. Upon his return to Ontario, Hodgins began to agitate for the introduction of manual training in the public schools. His central argument rested on the contention that Canada's national survival depended on the country's ability to produce a large class of skilled workers for industry.⁸⁰ In a special report prepared for the Minister of Education, Hodgins presented his case:

⁷⁹ "Technical Education," The Globe, 30 December 1899.

⁸⁰ T.R. Morrison, "Reform as Social Tracking: The Case of Industrial Education in Ontario 1870-1900," The Journal of Educational Thought, Vol. 8, No. 2, August 1974, 97-98.

While we have liberally provided for the other wants of our people we have almost entirely neglected making suitable provision in the schools for training, and then turning to practical account, that superior scientific and industrial skill among ourselves which in other countries contributes so largely and effectively to develop their physical and industrial resources....No one can visit any of the industrial centers which have sprung up in our larger towns without being struck with their value and importance and the number and variety of the skilled labourers employed. Inquiry into the source of supply of this industrial class reveals the fact that we are almost entirely indebted to England, Ireland, Scotland and the United States for that supply.⁸¹

Hodgins failed to generate sufficient support for his campaign to succeed, but he provided the basis of an argument that would surface in educational circles time and time again over the next thirty years. Testifying before the Royal Labor Commission in the late 1880s, James Hughes provided an indication of the current state of the debate. Hughes argued that the rise of industrialism and the spread of waged labour had effectively destroyed the old apprenticeship system that had produced several previous generations of skilled workers. It was now up to the public schools to assume this crucial responsibility. Hughes made no effort to disguise the class interests involved in such a scheme. Schools should devote themselves to producing skilled craftsmen, he testified, because "the wealthy classes are calling for a higher style of ornamental woodwork in their houses, and for more artistic furniture, in construction and design." Despite this outright expression of class bias, Hughes maintained that industrial education would increase the prosperity of the

⁸¹ Cited in Ibid.

workers and elevate them to new levels of culture, refinement, and social status.⁸² To Hughes, this type of training complemented the new education theories associated with people such as Johann Pestalozzi and Friedrich Froebel.⁸³

Although Hughes acknowledged that the introduction of industrial education would result in significant changes in school curricula and procedures, nothing in his comments undermined the social control function of public education as developed by earlier school promoters. Hughes argued that even "naturally destructive" children could be taught to "take delight in work of a productive character." Furthermore, public education would maintain social peace and reduce the cost of public welfare by arresting the spread of crime and vagrancy.⁸⁴ Combining elements of the social control theory with a call for industrial education, J.J. Kelso echoed Hughes' sentiment and underscored the role of the school system in protecting the public good: "Boys should learn to work and to love work....Machinery is supplanting manual labour and the world has no place for the man who does not know a trade....The unskilled

⁸² Royal Labor Commission, Ontario evidence, 283. See also testimony of J.B. Boyle, Inspector of Schools, London, 604-607; and Ontario, Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1899 (Toronto 1900), xxxiii. For an analysis of Hughes' views of industrial education, see Terrence Morrison, "The Child and Urban Social Reform in Late Nineteenth Century Ontario 1875-1900," (Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1971), 376-78; and Stamp, The Schools of Ontario, 43-57.

⁸³ Stamp, The Schools of Ontario, 57.

⁸⁴ Royal Labor Commission, Ontario evidence, 283.

workman is too often without work and idle hands soon get into mischief."⁸⁵

Robert Stamp's summary of industrial education reveals the place of the culture of work within the school system:

Manual training was in part an attempt to preserve the traditional values of a society threatened by urban-industrial growth....It made pupils constructive rather than destructive, contributed to the nation's moral development, preserved the taste for work, increased respect for honest labour, led to more originality in the products of labour, and provided a great moral force for combatting the vices of drunkenness and lack of thrift.⁸⁶

Because of the growing importance, social influence, and cost of the public school system, the debate over industrial education attracted the attention and participation of individuals and groups beyond the circles of full-time educators and child-savers. Not surprisingly, most manufacturers supported the introduction of industrial education in the public schools. Many factory owners complained of the low level of skill and competence of some of their employees and hoped that a practical education would solve this problem.⁸⁷ In a more strategic area, manufacturers hoped that industrial education would undermine trade unionism and reduce work stoppages by supplying a pool of strikebreakers.⁸⁸ In 1898, the Toronto Board of Trade appointed

⁸⁵ NAC, Kelso Papers, Vol. 5.

⁸⁶ Stamp, The Schools of Ontario, 58.

⁸⁷ See footnote 55.

⁸⁸ Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, Report of Proceedings, 1888, 25.

a committee to investigate the possibility of instituting a system of industrial education at the post-elementary level.⁸⁹ Ontario's Minister of Education, Richard Harcourt, reflected on the manufacturers' position in his report for 1900:

Manufacturers generally, having in view, of course, the industrial aspect of the question, favour the introduction of manual training into the public and high schools. Some of them hold that we shall then retain the pupils longer in our schools, and thus supply a better educated and more useful class of workmen. Many complain of the lack of education and trained intelligence of the boys and girls that come to them.⁹⁰

Manufacturers' endorsement of industrial education reflected their desire to have at their disposal a steady and reliable supply of skilled and compliant workers. Across the table from the employers, as always, sat the trade unionists. In principle, organized labour strongly supported free compulsory education. Trade unionists hoped that a universal system of public schooling would lead to the abolition of child labour and provide working-class children with opportunities for social and occupational mobility.⁹¹ Manual training in public schools, however, encountered the opposition of unionists who feared that it would

⁸⁹ Morrison, "The Child and Urban Social Reform," 382-83.

⁹⁰ Ontario, Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1900 (Toronto 1901), 243.

⁹¹ For examples of organized labour's support for free compulsory education, see The Ontario Workman, 18 April 1872; Palladium of Labor, 16 May 1885; The Labor Advocate, Vol. 1, No. 15, March 1891; Royal Labor Commission, Ontario evidence, testimony of Stewart J. Dunlop, 36-51; Davey, "Educational Reform and the Working Class," 298; Eugene Forsey, Trade Unions in Canada 1812-1902 (Toronto 1982), 408-417 and 455-56; and Harvey J. Graff, The Literacy Myth: Literacy and Social Structure in the Nineteenth-Century City (New York 1979), 209-210.

flood an already over-crowded labour market with poorly-trained workers willing to accept low wages and cross picket lines, undermine traditional union control of entrance requirements to a trade, and deny working-class children opportunities for advancement.⁹²

Testifying before the Prison Reform Commission in 1890, trade unionist Daniel O'Donoghue presented labour's case against manual training. Ontario's trade unions unanimously opposed these programmes, O'Donoghue claimed, because they lacked the depth and detail necessary to produce competent workers. A careful reading of O'Donoghue's testimony, however, reveals an underlying concern that manual training programmes would glut the labour market, thus driving wages down and threatening the control of the workplace skilled workers had traditionally exercised through strict regulation of the apprenticeship system. Significantly, O'Donoghue did not suggest that schools improve the quality of their programmes. Rather, he recommended that young people be sent to work on farms. Between the lines, one can detect O'Donoghue's hope that this practice would remove these children from the labour market altogether.⁹³

Labour's opposition to manual training elicited disdain from

⁹² Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, Report of Proceedings, 1887, 25-26; and Report of Proceedings, 1888, 25. See also Forsey, Trade Unions in Canada, 408 and 456; Morrison, "The Child and Urban Social Reform," 380; and Morrison, "Reform as Social Tracking," 106.

⁹³ "Prison Reform Commission," 739.

the captains of industry. One business writer vented his anger in near-apocalyptic terms:

The day is coming when trouble will result from this effort of the Labour organizations to perpetuate ignorance and prevent the youths of the country from acquiring a technical education that will fit and prepare them to take their proper positions in society. Do these men love their children?⁹⁴

In an effort to neutralize these attacks while simultaneously maintaining their opposition to manual training, labour representatives attempted to steer the debate over industrial education in the direction of technical education. In a number of official policy statements, the Trades and Labour Congress endorsed technical education on the grounds that it would arm future workers with a valuable understanding of the production process while not posing a direct threat to any specific trade.⁹⁵ As a demonstration of its support for technical education, organized labour endorsed and participated in the establishment of the Toronto Technical School in 1891.⁹⁶

In the early 1890s, advocates of industrial education stepped up their campaign to increase the number of schools whose curricula included classes in manual training and technical education. This pressure led the Ontario government in 1895 to approve an amendment to the Public School Act that encouraged

⁹⁴ "Industrial Education," Canadian Manufacturer and Industrial World, 4 May 1888, 2.

⁹⁵ Forsey, Trade Unions in Canada, 408 and 456.

⁹⁶ Morrison, "The Child and Urban Social Reform," 381; and Morrison, "Reform as Social Tracking," 106-107.

local boards to "provide such facilities for industrial and manual training...as they may deem expedient."⁹⁷ In 1900, the Ontario government appointed Albert H. Leake Inspector of Manual Training and Special Instruction, another indication of the growing importance of this field of study.⁹⁸ In the same year, industrial education received another substantial boost, but this time the push came not from full-time educators and politicians but from Montreal tobacco millionaire Sir William Macdonald. Macdonald had been impressed with the impact of agricultural education on productivity in the dairy industry and believed that industrial education could produce similar benefits in the manufacturing sector. Beginning in 1900, Macdonald agreed to equip and maintain for a three year period centres of manual training in Brockville, Ottawa, and Toronto.⁹⁹ At the end of the three years, Macdonald handed control of his centres over to local school boards on the condition that they be integrated into the public education system.¹⁰⁰ Despite some resistance from conservative teachers and difficulty in acquiring equipment, space, and competent instructors, over thirty Ontario schools

⁹⁷ "An Act to Amend the School Laws," Ontario, Statutes, 1895, Chapter 57, Section 5.

⁹⁸ Ontario, Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1903 (Toronto 1904), 149.

⁹⁹ Ontario, Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1900 (Toronto 1901), 241.

¹⁰⁰ Morrison, "Reform as Social Tracking," 104.

were conducting classes in manual training and technical education by the early years of the twentieth century.¹⁰¹

As industrial education gained a firm footing in Ontario's public school system, its promoters continued to emphasize the wider benefits society could expect to gain from its introduction. In one such instance, Minister of Education Harcourt predicted that industrial education would soften the edges of a society divided along class lines:

The masses of the people must necessarily follow the more humble walks of life, but it does not follow that the masses of the people should be ignorant. They should not only understand the ordinary duties of citizenship, but should have marked skill in the performance of what pertains to their pursuits. The interests of society require that not only should there be a proper appreciation of labour, but that the different classes of society should live together in peace, esteeming and respecting the work of one another. On the common ground of Manual Training, the rich and the poor in our Public Schools can meet on a friendly footing, and those whose different positions in life too often induce disregard or even mutual antagonism would be reconciled and enjoined in greater harmony....It is reasonable to hope that the introduction of Manual Training will do much towards reconciling social customs and soften social prejudices.¹⁰²

The introduction of industrial education and educators' arguments pertaining to its social value confirm that the public school system served the interests of industrial capitalism before it offered its individual clients opportunities for

¹⁰¹ Ontario, Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1904 (Toronto 1905), 241. See also Lawr and Gidney, eds, Educating Canadians, 159-61.

¹⁰² Ontario, Annual Report of the Minister of Education (Toronto 1902), Part I, xxxii-xxxiii.

personal development and social mobility. In essence, this new approach to education carried forward Egerton Ryerson's conception of public schooling as social control and adapted it to fit the demands of the industrial age. In fact, it can be argued that industrial education added an even greater degree of class bias to the education system than had previously existed. From this point forward, a certain number of working-class students would be categorically denied access to higher levels of education that might have offered them a realistic hope of personal and social advancement. The respective positions of manufacturers and trade unionists on technical education provide evidence to support a class analysis of the objectives and effects of industrial education.

There is also no reason to believe that industrial education would help to palliate class conflict, as Richard Harcourt had hoped. On the contrary, Harcourt's assessment of the harmonizing potential of industrial education exposes the extreme contradictions between the naive hopes of middle-class educators and the hard reality of class inequality. Far from creating a common ground upon which class tolerance flourished, industrial education accentuated the differences between wealthy and poor children. While middle- and upper-class youngsters continued to study the more traditional academic subjects, an increasing number of working-class children were streamed into industrial courses. Enrolment in technical programmes almost certainly guaranteed that working-class children would step directly into

the industrial work force. Students in the academic stream, on the other hand, faced a greater number of occupational choices in business and the professions. Following a number of years during which educational equality existed as a realistic possibility, the introduction of industrial education turned the public school system into a microcosm of urban-industrial society, complete with all the trappings of inequality that characterized the world outside the classroom.

The controversy surrounding industrial education continued to rage into the early years of the twentieth century. During the provincial election campaign of 1905, Conservative leader and future Premier James Whitney promised to make public education more practical. In the same year, Richard Harcourt described the connection between industrial production and education in terms that awakened the spirit of George Hodgins:

With the increase and specialization now taking place in our manufacturing industries comes the necessity for preparing our young men and women for positions in which special knowledge and skill are required. To-day the great industries of the world are relying more and more upon the applications of scientific knowledge. From the trade schools and the technical schools and Universities of Germany were sent forth a body of young men and women who have created industrial Germany and made it a formidable competitor for the world's commercial supremacy.¹⁰³

In 1911, the provincial government extended industrial education

¹⁰³ Ontario, Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1905 (Toronto 1906), xxxviii. See also Report for the Year 1899 (Toronto 1900), xxxii; Report for the Year 1900 (Toronto 1901), xxxiv-xxxv; and Report for the Year 1901 (Toronto 1902), Part I, xxxi.

within the public school system with the passage of the Industrial Education Act.¹⁰⁴

The debate over industrial education naturally focussed on the schooling and future of young boys. But the education of their sisters also received close attention. Many commentators who protested that the school system had failed to produce skilled male workers for industry also criticized it for neglecting to prepare young girls for their traditional social roles. Even some employers registered complaints to this effect. Miss Burnett, a Toronto dressmaker and milliner, told the Royal Labor Commission in the late 1880s: "That is a great want in the schools now, that the girls are not taught what is really the most useful thing for a young woman to know, a knowledge of needlework."¹⁰⁵ More frequently, however, detractors pointed out that the school system had failed to train girls in the wider art of domestic or household science. This shortcoming challenged the basic nature of social relations by threatening to undermine women's traditional role as organizer of the home and family.

Private organizations and individuals concerned with the place of girls and women in society were the first to address this problem. Significantly, maternal feminists who revered women's traditional social role and feared its erosion figured as prominently in this debate as did male chauvinists who wanted to keep women in their historic place. In the early 1890s, in an

¹⁰⁴ Ontario, Statutes, 1911.

¹⁰⁵ Royal Labor Commission, Ontario evidence, 358.

attempt to compensate for the shortcomings of the school system, the YWCA offered cooking classes in Toronto, Hamilton, and Ottawa, and opened the School of Domestic Science in Kingston.¹⁰⁶ In Toronto, Mrs. Lillian Massey-Treble founded the Victor School of Household Science and Art, later renamed the Lillian Massey Normal Training School of Household Science.¹⁰⁷ Adelaide Hoodless and her colleagues in the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC), a federation of middle- and upper-class women's organizations dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of feminine influence on family and society, also promoted the teaching of domestic science. As a member of the Hamilton Public School Board in 1900, Hoodless led the campaign to establish the Ontario Normal School of Domestic Science and Art, later to be associated with the Macdonald Institute of Home Economics located in Guelph. The first of its kind in Canada, the Hamilton institution prepared instructors to teach domestic science in the public schools.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ National Council of Women of Canada, Women of Canada: Their Life and Work (1900), 145; and Ontario, Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1903 (Toronto 1904), 156.

¹⁰⁷ Ontario, Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1900 (Toronto 1901), 241.

¹⁰⁸ Ontario, Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1903 (Toronto 1904), 157. See also T.R. Morrison, "'Their Proper Sphere:' Feminism, the Family, and Child-Centred Social Reform in Ontario, 1875-1900," Part II, Ontario History, Vol. LXVIII, No. 2, June 1976; and Marta Danylewycz, Nadia Fahmy-Eid, and Nicole Thivierge, "L'Enseignement Ménager et Les 'Home Economics' Au Québec et en Ontario Au Début Du 20e Siècle: Une Analyse Comparée," in J. Donald Wilson, An Imperfect Past.

Following the lead of the maternal feminists, the Ontario government indicated its support for domestic science courses in 1895 by amending the Public Schools Act to allow local boards to provide "such instruction in needlework and domestic economy in all forms as they may deem expedient."¹⁰⁹ This same clause formally introduced industrial education in the public schools. In an annual report a few years later, Minister of Education Harcourt explained part of the rationale behind teaching domestic science in the schools:

Every section of the community has its claim to knowledge and culture. Few women, however, can be released, nor is it desirable that they should be released, from duties pertaining to the household. Under these circumstances, it goes without saying that the mistress of a home should not be ignorant of the most elementary knowledge of Domestic Science, even though she may be in a position to depend upon servants for the care of her home. It is not too much to claim, that every woman should understand cooking, sewing, laundry work, home decoration, etc. If Domestic Science is taken up in the Public Schools in our cities, a marked improvement may be expected to follow in the conditions of Canadian homes.¹¹⁰

Although the issue of teaching domestic science in the public schools obviously revolved primarily around the question of gender, elements of class also found a place in the discussion. The full objective of domestic science training often depended on the social status of the students. According to Adelaide Hoodless and her cohorts in the NCWC, domestic science

¹⁰⁹ "An Act to Amend the Schools Laws," Ontario, Statutes, 1895, Chapter 57, Section 5(14).

¹¹⁰ Ontario, Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1901 (Toronto 1902), Part I, xxx-xxxii.

courses should prepare middle- and upper-class girls for their future roles as mothers, wives, and homemakers. Working-class girls, on the other hand, were to be trained as domestic servants as well as homemakers. Good help being hard to find, the ladies of the NCWC hoped that this approach would provide their members with a reliable supply of proficient maids in the same manner that industrial education produced able workers for the manufacturing sector.¹¹¹

Elements of class also surfaced in domestic science advocates' explanations of the impact of industrialization on the traditional duties and responsibilities of working-class women. In his annual report for 1898, Minister of Education George Ross wrote:

Among the artisan classes the men and women who are occupied from ten to twelve hours per day in manual labor of some kind or another during the greater part of the day, are consequently absent from their homes. Young women enter factories very often immediately on leaving the public school, and, as a consequence have had no training in housekeeping or cooking or the making of garments, all of which are important in domestic life.¹¹²

¹¹¹ For examples of this double-edged argument, see Mrs. J.F. Stevenson, "Shall a Knowledge of the Domestic Arts Form Part of the Public School Curriculum for Girls?," National Council of Women of Canada, Report (1895), 87-91; and Adelaide Hoodless, "The Labour Question and Women's Work and Its Relation to Home Life," National Council of Women, Report (1898), 278. For a thorough general analysis of the NCWC, see Veronica Jane Strong-Boag, The Parliament of Women: The National Council of Women of Canada 1893-1929 (Ottawa 1976).

¹¹² Ontario, Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1898 (Toronto 1899), xxxvi.

Providing further evidence to support this contention, a sub-committee of the Toronto Local Council of Women submitted the following viewpoint in 1901:

In the working classes a generation has grown up in the years since sewing machines and shop-made garments became common with whom the use of the needle is almost a lost art, and the Industrial Room Society would most earnestly beg all its members to do everything in their power to impress on all interested in the future well-being of their country-women the necessity of establishing sewing classes in every school in the country....There is something very far wrong in the educational system that leaves such an all-important branch of a girl's education to chance.¹¹³

Closely associated with the question of class, domestic science courses also attempted to temper ethnic traditions. Marta Danylewycz, Nadia Fahmy-Eid, and Nicole Thivierge assert: "For immigrants it was supposed to entail the discarding of their own cultural and domestic practices and the adoption of Canadian ways."¹¹⁴

Despite similarities in content and purpose, the establishment of domestic science classes lagged behind the pattern set by industrial education courses. As in the case of industrial education, difficulty in acquiring equipment, space, and qualified teachers obstructed progress.¹¹⁵ In 1905, only 1.6 per cent of girls attending public school in Ontario took these

¹¹³ "Report of the Industrial Room Society," Toronto Local Council of Women, Seventh Annual Report (Toronto 1901), 16.

¹¹⁴ Danylewycz, Fahmy-Eid, and Thivierge, "L'Enseignement Ménager et Les 'Home Economics'," 98.

¹¹⁵ Ontario, Report of the Minister of Education for the Year 1901, Part I, xxx; and Report for the Year 1904 (Toronto 1905), 242.

courses. By 1925, however, that number had grown to thirty per cent.¹¹⁶ Despite its sluggish start, the introduction of domestic science classes at the end of the nineteenth century provides further evidence to support the contention that public education promoted and sustained a class-biased and sexist vision of society based upon both the material and philosophical aspects of work.

The development and spread of public education in late nineteenth-century Ontario unquestionably effected a dramatic change in the experience of childhood. The extent of this change, however, did not include a fundamental alteration in the structure of inequality that defined industrial capitalist society. From the beginning of the movement, school promoters, backed by an active State, relied on public education to create industrious workers and law-abiding citizens who would uphold the traditional values of a society characterized by class rule. But even within the context of social control, public education offered most of its young clients meaningful, if limited, benefits. The full extent of these benefits, of course, depended on a child's ability to attend school on a regular basis.

Children whose family responsibilities prevented regular attendance at school missed the full opportunity of personal development and social mobility that public education potentially

¹¹⁶ Danylewycz, Fahmy-Eid, and Thivierge, "L'Enseignement Ménager et Les 'Home Economics'," 98.

offered. The non-enrolment and irregular attendance of large numbers of working-class youngsters takes on even greater significance in view of most parents' apparent desire that their children attend school. This is suggested by the strikingly high enrolment figures recorded by almost all urban school boards. Many working-class children dutifully registered for school at the beginning of each semester but found it impossible to maintain regular attendance in the face of social and economic pressures at home. In an attempt to combine economic responsibilities with educational opportunities, many parents negotiated with local school boards to allow their working sons and daughters to attend school at least part time.

This view of public education, of course, rests on the premise that working-class children had something tangible to gain by attending school, despite the authoritarian designs of middle- and upper-class school promoters. This assertion engenders debate in historical circles. Harvey Graff claims that for many youngsters "the achievement of education brought no occupational rewards at all."¹¹⁷ Michael Katz, Michael Doucet, and Mark Stern offer an identical assessment: "School attendance played no role in occupational mobility."¹¹⁸ These authors contend that "ascriptive" conditions, such as class, ethnicity, sex, and geographic stability, exerted greater influence on social

¹¹⁷ Graff, The Literacy Myth, 75.

¹¹⁸ Katz, Doucet, and Stern, The Social Organization of Early Industrial Capitalism, 197.

mobility than did education. This argument, however, largely relies on data drawn from the middle decades of the nineteenth century, a period when neither the public school system nor the urban labour market had advanced much beyond their formative stages. Early school promoters unquestionably placed greater emphasis on social control than they did on the creation of occupational opportunities for working-class children. By the latter decades of the century, however, less obsessive school boards injected more job-oriented programmes into the educational curriculum, such as bookkeeping and commercial arithmetic.¹¹⁹ This initiative succeeded to the point of sparking a counter movement to introduce industrial education in the schools. But the rapid growth in the number of white-collar workers in the urban labour force indicates that these programmes provided many young students with new occupational opportunities. In 1898, for example, Imperial Oil Canada employed only eleven white-collar workers. This number grew to 6,000 by 1919. In addition, the number of public service employees in Canada, already 17,000 in 1901, increased to 77,000 by 1911.¹²⁰ Although policies of social control and other "ascriptive" conditions remained dominant factors in late nineteenth-century society, improvements in school curriculum, coupled with the opening of new sectors in

¹¹⁹ See TBE, Management Committee Minutes, 1899-1901.

¹²⁰ Gregory S. Kealey, "The Structure of Canadian Working-Class History," in Cherwinski and Kealey, Lectures in Canadian Labour and Working-Class History, 28.

the labour market, increased the value of education for many working-class children.¹²¹

The preceding argument requires serious qualification when applied to the teaching of industrial education and domestic science. In these cases, public schools denied some students the wider benefits of a general education by streaming them into preordained social roles dictated by class and gender. Yet at no time did these courses contain more than a significant minority of students. Only a handful of girls studied domestic science prior to the First World War. Moreover, by the turn of the century some trade unionists expressed their approval of manual training courses despite the earlier protests of organized labour. In 1901, the secretary of the Plumbers' and Gas Fitters' Union sent a letter to the Toronto School Board commending it on its programme of manual training.¹²² Even in this situation, it can be argued that these children faced more promising futures than did youngsters who received no education at all. If industrial education did not provide workers' children with opportunities for upward mobility, it at least offered them a

¹²¹ Combining "ascriptive" conditions and educational opportunities, J. Donald Wilson adds another dimension to the school question: "What happened to children in schools, how long they stayed in school, and how much they were influenced by schooling depended to a considerable extent on their ethnic and cultural background." "'The Picture of Social Randomness': Making Sense of Ethnic History and Educational History," in David C. Jones et al., eds, Approaches to Educational History (University of Manitoba, 1981), Vol. 5 of Monographs in Education, Spring 1981, 36.

¹²² TBE, Management Committee Minutes, 14 February 1901.

relatively secure place within their own class, something that an unstable economy marked by periodic outbreaks of widespread unemployment could not promise unskilled labourers.

Evidence also suggests that public education did not operate exclusively according to the rigid designs of authoritarian and bureaucratic school officials. In many cities, local boards instituted night schools and offered special part-time classes for working children. Although these developments reveal school officials' commitment to extend the long arm of education, they also demonstrate the need for local boards to accommodate the schedules of working children if education was to reach a larger number of youngsters. Furthermore, public education offered working-class children benefits beyond the purely academic and technical. Schools frequently doubled as community centres that organized social events and influenced the pattern of neighbourhood relations and activities.¹²³ Chad Gaffield maintains that some working-class families relied on the school system to ease the burden of urban life:

The poor, the culturally diverse, and the illiterate did not send their children to school to learn habits of regularity and passivity, and eventually to become assimilated; rather, they hoped that schools would aid youth to withstand the psychological upset of migration, to integrate into new neighbourhoods, and to maintain themselves in the absence of the constant supervision which young children had traditionally known.¹²⁴

¹²³ TBE, Special Committees, Minutes, 1875-1887.

¹²⁴ Chad M. Gaffield, "Demography, Social Structure and the History of Schooling," in Jones, Approaches to Educational History, 103.

Also in the area of extra-curricular benefits, Neil Sutherland has shown that health measures introduced in the public schools in the late nineteenth century exerted a positive impact on the lives of Canadian children. Celebrating the public health movement's successful intervention in the schools, Sutherland writes: "By 1914, a physician or school nurse regularly examined most Canadian children who attended school in the large cities of the nation. Sanitary inspectors made routine visits to school premises. The pupils themselves studied personal health care from interesting and up-to-date textbooks and learned of the wonders wrought by modern bacteriology."¹²⁵ In addition to introducing children to modern health habits, schools frequently brought attention to particular problems, such as poor eye sight.¹²⁶ Naturally, children whose family responsibilities prevented them from attending school regularly forfeited the full benefit of these programmes.

Children who did not attend school regularly likely spent at least part of their day working at home or elsewhere as part of their contribution to their family's survival. Youngsters who attended classes daily learned both material and philosophical aspects of work from a system clearly dedicated to the prolongation of industrial capitalism and class divisions. In and

¹²⁵ Neil Sutherland, Children in English-Canadian Society: Framing the Twentieth Century Consensus (Toronto 1976), 79. See also Sutherland, "'To Create a Strong and Healthy Race': School Children in the Public Health Movement, 1880-1914," in Katz and Mattingly, Education and Social Change.

¹²⁶ TBE, Special Committees, Minutes, 1898-1903.

out of school, the concept and reality of work dominated the lives of most working-class children. In this manner, the public school system took its place among other authoritarian institutions committed to preserving an economic system that offered individuals limited opportunities for advancement while simultaneously guarding against meaningful social change.

CONCLUSIONS

By the early years of the twentieth century, most child-savers and other social reformers in Ontario believed that their province had made significant progress in the area of child welfare over the previous three decades. Labour legislation regulated the hours and conditions of children's work in most industrial and commercial establishments. Municipal by-laws shielded youngsters from the harmful influences of street life. Orphans' Homes and Children's Aid Societies provided or arranged shelter for neglected and dependent children. Reformatories, refuges, and industrial schools attempted to draw juvenile offenders and incorrigible children back to the straight and narrow path. Trans-Atlantic philanthropic societies found homes in Canada for destitute British children. Increasing numbers of youngsters attended school regularly. From the reform perspective, twentieth-century children appeared to live in a more protected and promising world than had their nineteenth-century counterparts.

Despite these noteworthy developments, the issues of child labour and child welfare continued to command the attention of reformers, politicians, labour spokesmen, and educators. Many concerned observers feared that Ontario would fall behind in child welfare measures if it did not take steps to keep up with

the continuing rapid pace of urbanization and industrialization.¹ Responding to this sentiment, the Ontario government in 1906 appointed Minister of Agriculture Nelson Monteith to conduct a study into child labour. A comparison between the approach and findings of Monteith's commission² and the evidence presented in this thesis provides an appropriate context within which to offer some concluding comments.

Consistent with most reformers' belief that theirs was an age of progress, Monteith's report opened on a note of optimism:

A careful consideration of the evidence leads us to conclude that the law respecting the employment of children in factories and shops has been enforced by the inspectors in a painstaking and conscientious manner; that employers for the most part are disposed to co-operate in lessening and preventing the employment of children of tender years, and the conditions under which both children and adults are required to labor have been greatly improved.³

Despite the study's sanguine overture, much of the remaining content painted a bleaker picture. The report exposed many industrial and commercial establishments where children between the ages of eleven and sixteen toiled long hours for low wages under dangerous and unhealthy conditions. The commissioners also discovered youngsters who assisted their families in fulfilling ready-made clothing contracts in their homes. Few of these children could look forward to reasonable employment prospects in

¹ The Toronto News, 14 February 1907; and National Archives of Canada (NAC), J.J. Kelso Papers, MG30 C97, Vol. 11.

² Ontario, Report of Committee on Child Labor (Toronto 1907).

³ Ibid., 3.

the future. Drawing special attention to immoral surroundings, work-related stress, and dangers to health and safety, the study observed: "Nearly every child at work to-day is subject to one or more of these undesirable conditions."⁴ The commissioners emphasized that children's negative impact on wage levels undermined all workers' earning power: "Instead of increasing the family income, the employment of children appears to reduce it."⁵

The report claimed that the lack of "uniformity and comprehensiveness"⁶ of current legislation explained many of these problems. Accordingly, the commissioners implored the Ontario government to effect the following changes: forbid children under sixteen years of age to work between 6:30 p.m. and 6:30 a.m., "either in the factory or at piece-work at home or elsewhere, except that provision be made for a reasonable amount of overtime at holiday seasons;"⁷ raise the minimum age of work in shops from ten to fourteen to bring it into line with the Factories' Act and truancy laws; set the minimum age of female workers at eighteen to protect "the health of the future women of the country;"⁸ exercise greater strictness in issuing age certificates; modify the special privileges of the canning industry; extend labour legislation to home sweat shops, hotels, concert

⁴ Ibid., 4.

⁵ Ibid., 5.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 9.

⁸ Ibid.

halls, amusement resorts, and other places not presently covered; and ensure that all young workers achieve a minimum level of literacy, through night school if necessary.

The study also contended that the failure of the public education system to reach a larger number of children accentuated the problem of child labour. The commissioners complained that only a handful of cities in the province had appointed truant officers. Moreover, most rural municipalities had "ignored the [school] law entirely." In words reminiscent of Ontario's school inspectors, the report concluded: "It has been made very clear that the truancy law is, in most parts of the Province, a dead letter."⁹ Irregular school attendance, the study asserted, engendered serious social problems. "Truancy leads to vagrancy and vagrancy leads to crime,"¹⁰ warned the commissioners. An effective system of education, on the other hand, "would promote intelligence and create a superior class of workers."¹¹ Failure to respond to this problem would result in a future class of derelicts dependent on public funds.

Although the study identified weaknesses in legislation and the education system, nothing in the report threatened the interests of business. In fact, the study specifically instructed the government to apply new legislation slowly and methodically

⁹ Ibid., 6.

¹⁰ Ibid., 11.

¹¹ Ibid., 7.

to prevent "serious injury to industries"¹² that employed children. Moreover, the report argued that "considerations of this nature dictate that legislation should aim at placing such restrictions on youthful labor that employers will find it profitable to give preference to more mature help."¹³ Although the commissioners condemned parents who falsified their children's age certificates, they excused employers who hired under-age workers at the request of pleading mothers.

Employers who appeared before the commission stressed the need for Canada to develop an efficient and reliable work force. In a separate document, J.J. Kelso summarized the position of the business class and added some thoughts of his own which revealed the contradictions that plagued reformers' views of children and work:

Employers were practically unanimous in declaring that young people who start work soon after fourteen become more adept and acquire a real love for their work while at sixteen it required great effort for young people to apply themselves and they need more expense money than they are able to earn as beginners. There is something in this contention. If we are to encourage and develop an efficient artisan class -- and in a young country like Canada that should be our objective -- then it seems reasonable that boys and girls should start technical employment at an earlier age than sixteen. All necessary safe-guards should of course be imposed, comfortable surroundings provided and instruction given on the principles underlying the work so that it might not be regarded as mere drudgery.¹⁴

12 Ibid., 9.

13 Ibid., 5.

14 Kelso Papers, Vol. 7.

Of greatest significance, no part of Monteith's study detracted from the culture of work that characterized industrial society. Although the commissioners disapproved of the conditions under which some children laboured, they did not dispute the valuable role that work played in shaping young citizens. Moreover, the commissioners admitted that child labour would continue in the future and called on the State only to "restrict and regulate that labor so that it may do as little harm as possible to those who engage in it."¹⁵ Appearing to justify some forms of child labour, the report concluded:

It would be idle to maintain that all work for children is harmful, or that it is not occasionally necessary for a child to find employment even at a comparatively early age; there are cases where a child is absolutely dependent on his own efforts for his daily bread, or where he has others dependent on him, and the circumstances of the home, such as illness, accident or other misfortune, make it imperative that he should contribute to the support of himself or others as soon as possible.¹⁶

Approaching the problem from a different angle, the study echoed reformers' concerns that the undesirable influences of urban centres impeded youngsters from developing industrious habits:

Hundreds of boys from nine to sixteen are frequent attendants at cheap shows [in Toronto]. The late hours, nervous excitement and moral deterioration resulting from the practice are injurious to character. This, with the reading of dime novels, smoking cigarettes, etc., frequently prevents boys from settling down to a trade or to regular employment, and leads to idleness, theft and vicious habits.¹⁷

¹⁵ Report of Committee on Child Labor, 4.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 5.

Monteith's report provides a model example of nineteenth-century reform thought. Imbued with the idea of progress, the commissioners commended both the State and employers, but not trade unions, for having reduced the level of child labour and for having improved the general conditions of all workers. Although serious problems remained, these could be solved through tougher legislation and a more efficient public education system. The report aimed at eliminating the most objectionable aspects of child labour yet defended the belief that children inculcated with industrious habits at a young age would develop into efficient and responsible workers. Nothing in the report challenged the hegemony of industrial capitalism or questioned the legitimacy of a social system built upon inequality. Ultimately, the study sought the traditional reform objectives of preserving social order and avoiding future welfare costs.

In contrast to Monteith's report, this thesis contends that child labour represented neither an economic appendage of industrial capitalism that could be controlled through legislation and education nor a simple formula for social responsibility. Alternatively, this study argues that child labour composed a critical element of a complex social culture, deeply rooted in a capitalist economy, that defined work in both a material and philosophical sense. At the material level, working children made essential contributions to families that could not survive in the city on parental wages alone. Simultaneously, children provided cheap labour for self-serving employers in industrial,

commercial, and domestic settings. At the philosophical level, most members of nineteenth-century society believed that hard, honest work held the key to life-long success and happiness. This view prevailed among middle-class reformers who additionally believed that child labour under proper supervision would preserve social order and avoid future welfare costs by creating a class of efficient and compliant workers. Together, these two approaches to child labour composed a culture of work that encompassed almost all children in late nineteenth-century Ontario. The failure of this culture to balance its social and economic motivations, however, led to suffering and exploitation for youngsters more often than it created personal opportunity and social harmony. As the poorest, most powerless, and least secure members of industrial society, children of the working class most visibly bore the scars inflicted by a social system designed to serve middle- and upper-class interests.

In working-class homes, material want, not parental greed or neglect as many reformers professed, defined the most basic dimension of child labour. The demands of urban life and the inadequate wages of adult workers forced many families to rely on the earning power of children. Paradoxically, the biased forces of capitalism used child labour as a means to exert downward pressure on the wages of all workers. Young boys, who in an earlier age might have developed valuable skills under the tutelage of a craftsman, now performed unskilled work in factories, mills, retail stores, and sweat shops. Both boys and

girls toiled long hours in dangerous and unhealthy environments for one-third to one-half the wages of adult workers. Requiring little skill or formal training, few such jobs offered children occupational mobility. Although many versions of Factories and Shops Acts set mild restrictions on the conditions of working children, many employers disregarded the regulations and inspectors failed to apply the law rigorously fearing a negative impact on business interests. Only in the 1890s did the number of children in the industrial work force begin to decline, and this largely resulted from changing demands of the labour market. Those youngsters who remained in industry continued to confront dangerous and unhealthy conditions.

Children also made valuable contributions to their families by performing a host of domestic chores in and around their homes. Cleaning, laundering, gardening, and baby-sitting composed but a handful of the tasks youngsters routinely carried out as part of their family responsibilities. In some cases, children helped their parents operate small home-centred industries, such as producing ready-made clothing and taking in boarders. These youngsters surrendered the privacy and solace of their homes to the economic imperatives of the family economy. Many young girls added to the family coffers or supported themselves by working as domestic servants or nursemaids in middle- and upper-class households. None of these young workers enjoyed the protection of legislation.

Moving beyond the home, many children participated in a variety of street trades, such as selling newspapers and shining shoes. Out of desperation, a few girls turned to prostitution. Extremely poor youngsters used the streets as begging grounds, sometimes under instruction from their parents. These activities daily exposed children to potentially harmful physical and social elements while offering them little opportunity for future employment. The high visibility and rough appearance of these youngsters attracted the attention of reformers who intervened with legislation and special institutions designed to bring order to the streets and influence the young vendors' characters and behaviour.

Many children who came from extremely impoverished and troubled families spent part of their formative years in Orphans' Homes. In the more fortunate cases, youngsters returned to their homes when the family's economic and domestic circumstances improved. For most of these children, however, the culture of work loomed particularly large. Inside the orphanages, youngsters performed basic chores but did not develop marketable skills. Many of these institutions arranged work contracts for their older wards. In almost every case, employers treated children as low-paid hired help. In the 1890s, Children's Aid Societies began to place neglected and dependent children in foster homes. Although the CAS operated in a more professional manner than the Orphans' Homes and enjoyed the backing of law and government, many foster homes overworked and underpaid their wards. Juvenile

offenders and incorrigible children sentenced to reformatories, refuges, and industrial schools suffered similar treatment whether confined to their institutions or placed out in the community. In all of these cases, reformers' perceptions of the limited capabilities of dependent children and their commitment to producing a dependable labour force prohibited the majority of these youngsters from rising above the level of working class.

One striking example of the reform impulse at work involved several Trans-Atlantic philanthropic agencies that placed thousands of needy British children in Canadian homes. Imbued with a mixture of political, social, economic, and humanitarian motives, this movement aimed at transforming dependent children into responsible adults by removing them from their tainted environments and putting them to work in respectable Canadian homes. Many British citizens welcomed the opportunity to rid their country of the troublesome waifs before they grew into criminals or became public burdens. The Canadian government welcomed the children as additions to a small but growing population. Many employers, however, simply regarded the children as needed farm hands and domestic servants. Signed contracts did little to protect children's rights and a lax inspection system allowed numerous abuses. These youngsters also elicited resentment from many Canadians, including some child-savers who believed that native-born children deserved attention first, and trade unionists who feared the competition of cheap labour.

Economic responsibilities prevented all groups of working children from attending school regularly. Although attendance regulations existed as early as the 1870s, they consistently proved to be even more ineffective and unenforceable than the Factories and Shops Acts. Wanting their offspring to receive education, however, some parents successfully petitioned school boards to allow their working children to attend classes part time. Other working youngsters gained their education at night school. Educators, of course, exhibited as much desire to indoctrinate children with the culture of work as did other middle-class reformers, as industrial education and domestic science programmes, aimed primarily at the sons and daughters of the working class, demonstrate. In contrast, middle- and upper-class children attended school more regularly and studied in areas more conducive to personal and professional development.

Throughout all of these activities and programmes moved the hand of a reform movement devoted to turning children into model citizens. Almost exclusively middle-class in composition and outlook, this group displayed genuine sympathy for needy youngsters but concerned itself primarily with preserving social stability by inculcating children with industrious and moral habits at an early age. With the support of their allies in government, reformers exercised social control in the hope of preserving the class structure of their society and avoiding future welfare costs. No part of reform thought sought to explain poverty and suffering within the context of an economic

system structured on a highly unequal distribution of wealth and power. Referring to the child welfare movement in England, Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewitt offered an insightful analysis with near-universal application:

In considering the immediate implications and the latter application of the Tudor legislation which formed the basis of statutory provision for the children of the poor for well over two centuries, it is essential to recognise that it was an integral part of a general social policy whose aim was to conserve a social order, hierarchical in character, sanctioned by Providence, and maintained by particular concepts of mutual responsibility. Among these, the duty of each to contribute according to his ability and station was emphasized as necessary to the social and spiritual well-being of State and citizen alike. In large measure, the achievement of such an end depended on the ability to instill habits of industry and the acceptance of Divine authority, and to this end therefore the Tudors and their imitators sought directly and indirectly to encourage the twin disciplines of work and worship.¹⁸

Abbot Smith passed harsher judgement on the reform movement when he described its impact on needy British children in the following words: "It is to be feared that nearly all of them were persons on whom charity descended as a heavy penalty rather than a gentle mercy."¹⁹

Although the voluntary reform movement of the nineteenth century eventually gave way to the trained, professional social workers of the twentieth, the issue of child labour continued to form part of the social agenda in Canada. In 1921, approximately

¹⁸ Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewitt, Children in English Society, Vol. I: From Tudor Times to the Eighteenth Century (London 1969), 223.

¹⁹ Abbot Smith, Colonists in Bondage (London 1947). Cited in Ibid., 107.

12,000 Canadian children under the age of fifteen held down full-time jobs. This figure excluded youngsters in the agricultural work force. In the same year, the Dominion Bureau of Statistics issued a special census bulletin devoted exclusively to working children.²⁰ Four years later, Judge Helen MacGill submitted a report to the Conference on Child Welfare that stated: "In Ontario and New Brunswick, children under fifteen worked ten hours a day for sixty hours a week. In Manitoba, it was not unusual for them to put in a fourteen hour day, and in British Columbia sixty-six and a half hours a week in shops was commonplace."²¹ In 1931, census-takers found that children contributed "40 per cent as much as family heads earning in the \$50-449 range and 21 per cent as much as heads of families earning in the \$450-949 range."²²

Recent Canadian history also contains examples of child labour. In 1973, a federal government Task Force appointed by the Minister of Manpower and Immigration discovered large numbers of under-age workers in the agricultural sector, especially among immigrant families. Responding to these findings, Minister of

²⁰ John Herd Thompson with Allen Seager, Canada 1922-1939: Decades of Discord (Toronto 1985), 12.

²¹ Patricia T. Rooke and R.L. Schnell, Discarding the Asylum: From Child Rescue to the Welfare State in English-Canada, 1800-1950 (Lanham 1983), 267.

²² "The Canadian Family," Census of Canada, 1931, 99, 104, 7, and 83. Cited in Joy Parr, Introduction to Joy Parr, ed, Childhood and Family in Canadian History (Toronto 1982), footnote no. 35. See also Irving Abella and David Millar, eds, The Canadian Worker in the Twentieth Century (Toronto 1978), 131.

Agriculture Eugene Whelan commented in a fashion that might have caused nineteenth-century reformers to blush: "It's a part of the farm heritage for children to work. We'd pay a hell of a lot more for food if it wasn't. Child labour is a fact of life."²³ In recent years, thousands of Canadian teenagers have experienced their first taste of paid labour serving up hamburgers and french fries in fast-food restaurants.²⁴

As in the nineteenth century, government officials continue to pass legislation as one means of controlling child labour. In 1987, Ontario's Minister of Education proposed amending the Education Act to increase the fine for employing school-age children during school hours from \$100.00 to \$10,000.00. The Minister identified fast-food restaurants and retail stores as main offenders. Also recalling the spirit of the nineteenth century, Geoffrey Hale, Vice-President of the Canadian Organization of Small Business, found the proposed changes to be excessive. Hale claimed that employers could not be held responsible for teenagers who lie to them about long lunch hours or school semester systems. He added that young people who work for wages, unlike most students, were at least receiving the opportunity to develop industrious habits: "There are a lot of kids who can grow up a lot faster holding down a job than being baby-sat in a

²³ Cited in Abella and Millar, The Canadian Worker in the Twentieth Century, 297-98.

²⁴ See Ester Reiter, "Life in a Fast-Food Factory," in Craig Heron and Robert Storey, eds, On the Job: Confronting the Labour Process in Canada (Kingston and Montreal 1986).

classroom....I think it's terribly irresponsible to try to crack down on truancy in such a way, where it makes it more difficult for employers to provide job experience and makes it harder for kids to mature through good work experience."²⁵

Examining the general conditions of children in 1970, the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto estimated that twenty-five per cent of Canadian youngsters lived in poverty.²⁶ Five years later, the National Council of Welfare released a report entitled Poor Kids that stated: "Canadians like to believe that ours is a society in which all children are born with equal chance to rise as far as their abilities carry them...The facts, however, are otherwise."²⁷ In 1988, the Ontario government recommended changes to the Family and Child Service Act to increase the authority of the police and social workers to take runaway teenagers into custody. These amendments aimed at removing teenagers from the street before they turned to crime or prostitution. Some officials estimated that up to 10,000 runaways lived in Toronto.²⁸

²⁵ Globe and Mail, 11 February 1987.

²⁶ Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, Social Infopac, Vol. 5, No. 4, December 1986, 1.

²⁷ National Council of Welfare, Poor Kids (Ottawa 1975), 1. See also Canada, Special Senate Committee on Poverty, Poverty in Canada (Ottawa 1971); Canadian Council on Children and Youth, Admittance Restricted: The Child as Citizen in Canada (Ottawa 1978); and The Child Poverty Action Group, A Fair Chance for All Children: The Declaration on Child Poverty (Toronto 1986).

²⁸ Globe and Mail, 8 April 1988.

These recent examples of child labour and child welfare, placed within the context of this thesis, persuasively demonstrate that current social issues, despite their modern face, cast shadows far into the past. It is therefore reasonable to argue that a comprehensive understanding of the historical roots of these problems provides an appropriate starting point for the eventual elimination of the suffering and injustice that continue to plague many aspects of modern childhood. This task takes on special significance when it is remembered that our experiences as children directly influence our abilities and attitudes as adults. This is one lesson worth drawing from nineteenth-century reformers. Furthermore, if individuals seek self-understanding through their personal roots, it is equally true that a society perceives itself most clearly through the prism of the past. Legions of historians have expressed the hope that their efforts to identify and explain the imperfections of previous generations would provide the groundwork for the construction of a more progressive and just society. In the best of all historical traditions, this study hopes that it has taken a small step towards that end.

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