

The Rise and Decline of British North American Protestant Orphans' Homes as Woman's Domain, 1850-1930

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There is power in sympathy and kindness and persevering and disinterested efforts for the good of others which has proved effective in cases of the most hopeless nature. We read of much that has been accomplished by female agency. Let us seek to imitate the examples set by our sisters in other lands, and 'haste to the rescue.' . . .

(Kingston POH; *Annual Report*, 1860)

Introduction

In 1927, Dr. Helen Y.R. Reid, an influential spokesperson for Montreal social work, delivered an address before the Canadian Conference of Social Workers. Her address described the growing divisions within the ranks of social workers between those whom she categorized on the one hand as

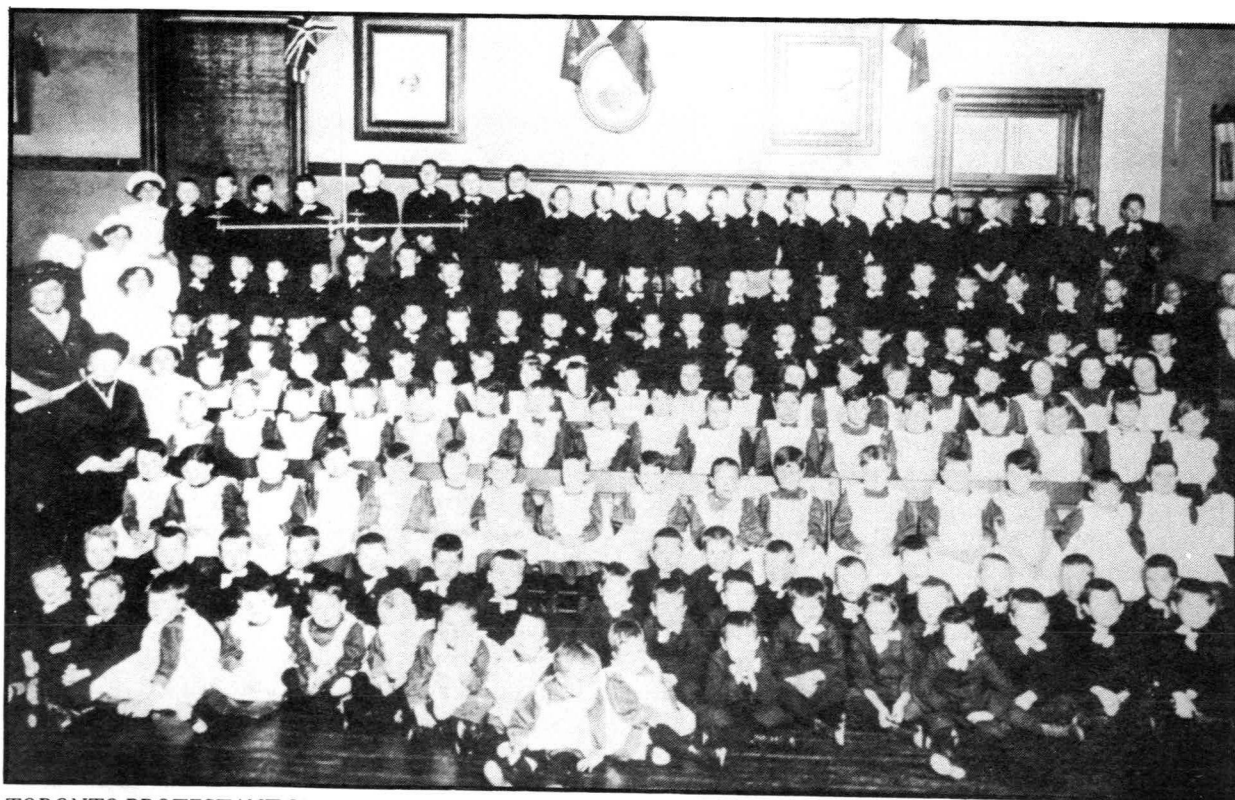
traditionalists, obstructionists and sentimentalists, and, on the other, as thinkers and experts.¹ The first three labels were pejorative descriptions of those female philanthropists and volunteers who clung to what Reid regarded as anachronistic methods of providing relief, and who in her view obstructed progress by responding immediately to heart rending appeals with a cry of, "For God's sake why don't we do something?" Such female emotionalism, Reid believed, was being replaced by a more rational approach and the volunteers by a new scientifically minded woman. These women were the "experts" and the "thinkers," that is, part of the emerging professional class of trained social workers who were committed to economy and efficiency in charity organization. Not unnaturally, given the audience, the address received loud acclamation!

Nowhere is the above anecdote more appropriate than for the transformation of the Protestant Orphans' Homes (POHs), institutions which represented one of the most remarkable nineteenth-century Canadian demonstrations of female philanthropic genius. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, at the behest of protestant middle class women, orphans' homes were established in most major cities from St. John's to Victoria. Founded by what Reid described as traditionalists, sentimentalists or even obstructionists, the POHs in the twentieth century became the objects of criticism from the professionalizers. Initially monuments to the philanthropic impulse, the POHs became arenas of tension between old forms of institutional charity and new forms of scientific child care.²

The following analysis uses the correspondence, minutes and reports of various Canadian POHs to demonstrate (1) the importance of these institutions as one of the first significant manifestations of women's role in social reform; and (2) the erosion of such women's role as the POHs declined in importance.

The Philanthropists

The care of dependent and neglected children in British North America fell under the colonial equivalents of the English poor laws. Under these laws, provision for the poor and destitute ranged from ad hoc assistance in the form of grants of goods and money or employment on public works to institutions intended for chronic paupers, whose populations



TORONTO PROTESTANT ORPHAN HOUSE, *Courtesy of the Metropolitan Toronto Library.*

often fluctuated with economic and seasonal conditions. The first significant institutional forms of charity were the houses of industry and refuge, which functioned as poorhouses for acute cases of destitution. Although there were private institutions which provided relief, they were often unable to "compete" with their state-sponsored counterparts. This can be seen in the case of the Halifax Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor whose patrons bitterly complained in 1866 that the work produced from its stone shed and spinning rooms was not in the same demand as the cheaper stone and spun articles from the Poor Asylum and Penitentiary.³ As the relatives of epidemic and accident victims tended to accumulate in the public institutions, children and dependent widows came to dominate the rolls of houses of industry and refuge; however, the condition of the youthful inmates did not evoke much comment until the mid-nineteenth century.

The public nature of generalized relief meant that control and management of benevolence resided in the hands of colonial officials and well connected gentlemen. The few efforts at private charity in the early nineteenth century, such as the Society for Improving the Conditions of the Poor and the Benevolent Irish Society in Newfoundland, the Poor Man's Friend Society of Halifax, the Montreal Committee for the Relief of the Poor and the Red River Relief Committee, were generally the result of male interest in relieving distress.⁴ It was not, however, surprising that colonial ladies, being in closer contact with real poverty through their ministrations in the visiting committees of these societies, were often the ones who sought more specialized forms of relief.⁵ As a result of first hand contact with wretched conditions in public institutions, female visiting committees in mid-nineteenth century Toronto, Montreal, Halifax and Kingston first articulated the necessity of taking children out of these squalid surroundings and sheltering

them in institutions specifically devoted to their care. The movement to separate the relief of children from adults coincided with the growth of organizations such as the Halifax and Montreal Ladies Aid Societies, and later the Women's Christian Association in London, the Women's Christian Union of Winnipeg, and the Local Council of Women in Vancouver. The Lady True Blues of the Orange Order in New Brunswick, British Columbia and Saskatchewan, later imitated these pioneer female efforts.

The early societies were sometimes founded as a result of epidemics that left children without effective guardianship. "A most awful visitation of Asiatic Cholera" in 1832 led the embryonic Montreal Protestant Orphans' Asylum to expand after receiving children from the quarantine sheds; while, in 1854, the Widows' and Orphans' Asylum in Newfoundland opened its doors as a thanksgiving "for deliverance from so terrible a visitation."⁶ The initial efforts created temporary facilities even though the sponsoring organizations came to have a much longer life. The real drive for permanent asylums and homes came only in the 1850s. Although often motivated by epidemics as in the case of the St. John's Asylum, the new institutions explicitly rejected the indiscriminate mixing of children and adults in existing institutions. In Kingston, the Widows' and Orphans' Friend Society rescued the "poor, uncared for, destitute children" from the House of Refuge which was seen as "a crowded receptacle of misery where they were too often consigned to those who desired them as household drudges." The ladies put the children "into so pleasant and comfortable a home, where, as one family they were preserved from evil influences without, instructed in the fear of the Lord, and trained in habits of virtue and regularity."⁷

Elsewhere, and perhaps most especially in Ottawa, the philanthropic spirit was a reflec-

tion of “noblesse oblige” in keeping with the social pretensions that prevailed in the capital despite its still being “a very straggling place” in the 1860s.⁸ The “relief of destitute children and other kindred objects [having] been long and ardently desired by the charitable and philanthropic part of the community,” the ladies admitted Thomas McDowell, the brother of Copper Johnie, a familiar Ottawa beggar, as its first boy orphan to the “cure” of the institution in 1864. The first funds came from the Ladies’ Benevolent Association representing several protestant denominations. The thirty lady subscribers displayed their social accomplishments before an excited public at literary and musical evenings and at a Grand Promenade Concert given at the British Hotel. The *Daily Mail*, on February 16, 1865, observed that “the commodious salon of the British will doubtless be crowded by the beauty and fashion of the city” and that social intercourse and parading would be impeded in the crowded rooms in those days of “crinoline and amplitude.”⁹ Ottawa had the example of the Toronto Ladies’ Aid Society which, in 1851, had imaginatively brought in singer Jenny Lind to raise the first public subscriptions for an Orphans’ Asylum.¹⁰

Both Toronto and Ottawa recruited eminent patronesses (such as Lady Head, the Countess of Elgin and Kincardine, and the Marchioness of Landsdowne) who featured prominently in their annual reports. Lady Macdonald, the wife of Canada’s first Prime Minister, was Ottawa’s first directress. Most POHs, however, began less auspiciously and with a more modest and prosaic awareness of a scheme’s usefulness and urgency. In Victoria, for example, a ladies’ committee of twelve members first accommodated neglected and orphaned children in private homes using subscriptions to pay for their support until a more spacious shelter was obtained.¹¹

The orphan asylums and related institutions offered socially prominent middle class women

one of their few opportunities to establish, make policy for and manage a significant social agency. Unlike general relief institutions POHs excluded men as objects of charity and progressively limited their attention to children and appropriate women. Moreover, the goals of such institutions went beyond the mere physical survival of the inmates. The London Refuge, for example, was intended to prevent widows and unwed mothers from descending “the path of degradation” and becoming “an easy prey for the enemies of souls.” The Halifax Ladies’ Benevolent Society, a committee of twelve women, reported that the St. Paul’s Almshouse of Industry for Girls, founded in 1867, was intended to withstand the awful possibilities of procuring and prostitution.¹² This committee quickly took over the organizational details of the Almshouse of industry from the founding gentlemen’s committee of ten males, and enthusiastically embraced a training program of girls otherwise growing up “under the most baneful influences.” The ladies’ committee of the Toronto Protestant Orphans’ Home, expressing as much concern for widows and girls out of work as for its orphan population, established an employment registry for seamstresses and servants to prevent them from being drawn into “the vortex of iniquity.”¹³ Several homes provided a similar rudimentary employment service as a safeguard against the dangers of prostitution.¹⁴

Even in those cases in which a men’s committee had organized the home, there was an immediate need for a “ladies” committee to supervise the domestic economy and management of the institution. Such immediate management soon relegated men to limited if essential tasks, e.g., audits of incomes and expenses, preparation of legal instruments, investment of the societies’ endowments, and honorary services such as those provided by physicians and solicitors. Many of the medical, auditing and legal officers, it might be noted,



"WE ARE SEEKING HOMES," Courtesy Public Brochures of Canada, PA120926.

were spouses or relatives of the women. This enabled the women to reduce the expenses of the home by paying only nominal fees for advice on land purchase and the subsequent building and architectural problems. Sometimes prominent citizens were retained as nominal governors, such as Sheriff Glass of London, to provide the necessary liaison between the home and the city in the distribution of municipal grants or in currying favours regarding civic regulations or the acquisition of suitable land sites.

Such pragmatic use of male involvement cannot be construed in any way as relegating the ladies' committees to a secondary status. An example was the founding meeting of the Ottawa home. Mrs. Thorburn, an Ottawa gentlewoman and one of the original members, observed in her memoirs that "It was not customary for ladies to occupy platforms in 1864 and they modestly sat on the side benches," as the gentlemen drew up the by-laws and the constitution. She wryly suggested, however, that modesty was quickly overcome once the official business arrangements of the fledgling project were completed.¹⁵ In Halifax, too, although William Cunard, the powerful shipping magnate, was nominated President of the POH in its first years of formation, it was his wife on the ladies' committee whose power was most keenly felt in the actual organization of the institution.¹⁶

These pioneering efforts in child welfare were related to several social and intellectual developments. First, by the 1830s there existed in several colonial centres sufficient population and wealth to make philanthropy possible. Thriving commercial towns such as Montreal and Halifax were the first to establish female societies aimed at widows and orphans. Secondly, pedagogical theories associated with nineteenth century educational reform emphasized that the ideal educational relationship

was that between a loving mother and her child, while advice to parents on child-rearing stressed the central role of the mother in insuring the proper development of human life. Consequently, women of the right classes were ideally equipped to direct and make policy for institutions devoted to children.¹⁷ Thirdly, protestant men and women were often aware of the substantial effort made by Roman Catholic religious orders to provide for the destitute and dependent. In particular, various orders of nuns were active in the establishment of orphan asylums, foundling homes and other institutions for women and children. The catholic challenge was explicit in the founding of protestant homes in Montreal, Victoria, St. John's and London. Fourthly, although some institutions were clearly the agencies of a single church, most POHs recruited their members from several protestant churches and thus served as "non-sectarian" but Christian organizations for women. Consequently the women combined generalized protestant evangelicalism and middle class social ethics in their commitment to charity and moral uplift of the deserving poor, values which justified their expanded feminine role.

The significance of the asylums rested first in the policies on admission and demissions, the training and education schemes, and the placing out and apprenticeship practices, which were common to all POHs almost to the point of uniformity. It was precisely in these areas that women through their ladies' committees exercised maximum control. Second, the pedagogical and medical literature of the early nineteenth century stressed the importance of childhood experiences in determining the future well being of society and the necessity of reconstructing schools and other agencies on the model of the new family with its emphasis on love and maternal care. Unlike the much earlier advice of Renaissance humanists and later writers such as John Locke, the advocates of "familializing" the school

took the mother and *not* the father as the crucial figure in transforming societal values. Thus, the women performed two significant functions by insuring that the asylum would display the proper homelike characteristics and that unlike the common school it would indeed provide the "institutionalized" equivalent of a child-centred family permeated by maternal love.¹⁸

Although it has frequently been observed of children's institutions that any resemblance to an actual "family like" situation was purely coincidental, Canadian POHs in some ways offer a curious anomaly to this perception. Without unduly exaggerating the pervasiveness of either mother love or family sentiment, it can be observed that many Canadian POHs more nearly approximated the ideal than did their huge and impersonal counterparts in the rapidly industrializing centres elsewhere in North America or in the great urban centres of Britain. In 1914, W.H. Hattie, Inspector of Humane and Penal Institutions in Nova Scotia, commenting on the county poorhouses, observed that:

In the small institutions particularly, a degree of friendly intimacy is often noted which even suggests a family spirit, and which assures one that institutional life may be happy and not devoid of pleasure.¹⁹

Such observations were clearly applicable to the smaller children's institutions. Ordinarily institutions held between fifty and two-hundred and fifty children, with few POHs exceeding three hundred residents at a given time. The institutions in Halifax, Fredericton, London, Ottawa, Calgary, Vancouver and Victoria, are examples of the smaller homes, while those of Winnipeg, Toronto and Saint John, at their height, represent the largest ones. Inadequate staffing and financing, compounded by the problems of the "ins and outs"

(non-orphans in temporary custodial care) which were always the majority, and erratic nursery and domestic help, frustrated the possibility of realizing the family ideal. Keeping staff for small remuneration and under extremely demanding conditions was a constant anxiety. The smallest homes made do with a matron (or "superintendent") and cook and whatever assistance the ladies' committee could provide on an ad hoc basis. The larger ones supplemented this cadre with a teacher, one or more nursery maids and housekeepers. In some of the first institutions, the matron who was frequently a widow used her older children to aid in the management. Some homes preferred a married couple with the husband performing maintenance services.

The POHs and Protestant Foundling or Infant Homes marked one of the first major thrusts of middle class women into concrete reform and social service. This experience opened women to wider vistas; with the establishment in 1893 of the Canadian National Council of Women, many ladies' committees of the orphanages affiliated with the local councils. Women of the Halifax, Winnipeg, Kingston, Ottawa, Toronto and Victoria homes quickly became aware of broader social concerns and worked actively in the amelioration of the more deleterious conditions of child life and family life.

Although much may be made of the religious proclivities of the women who founded and controlled the POHs, the institutions themselves did not seem to represent oppressive evangelical fervour in religious training and indoctrination. Aside from a selectivity regarding suitable objects of their benevolence, the ladies rarely promoted religious instruction in excess of that available in most churches and Sunday schools. There was, of course, perfunctory attention given to mealtime and "family" prayers, but this was under the supervision of the matron who was more often

than not too harried by her responsibilities to engage in excessive religious inculcation. Since, the records contain few indications of an obsession to proselytize, it can be concluded that religious earnestness was subsumed under the simpler practical goal of ensuring a "spirit of docility and subordination [that] testifies to good management."²⁰ In other words, the assumptions underlying the foundation and policies of the asylums reflect more the broad middle class values relating to social order and individual behavior than the views of religious enthusiasts.

This is not to say that annual reports or speeches at public meetings did not contain the predictable Christian sentiments and emphasis



THE "POOR," Courtesy of the Public Archives of Canada, PAC118221.

on religious and moral training, or institutional life contributing to the children's eternal life as well as temporal comfort. There is, however, little evidence in the daily journals or minutes that demonstrates repressive religious fervour, puritanical zeal or excessive religious indoctrination. One calls to mind at this point the cloying and fanatical preachments found in the records of Müller's Orphan Asylum at Ashley Down, or some of the grateful prayers before meals at the Bownman Stephenson's Homes or the systematic inculcation of religious values at smaller homes in Great Britain.²¹

Unabashedly committed to their philanthropic assumptions, the ladies rejected claims of "scientific" charity that called for the poor to be scrupulously investigated and their needs parsimoniously weighed according to strict standards of economy and impartiality. Many would have agreed wholeheartedly with the sentiments expressed in 1823 by the Halifax Methodist Female Benevolent Society that "misery itself has a claim for relief and that the cry of distress on its own account should be heard independently of the deserts of the sufferer."²² Such assumptions not only prevailed with the establishment of facilities designed for dependent children who were identified as "worthies," but also in the case of rescue, foundling and infant homes. Since these institutions often included unweaned babies with the "unfortunate" mothers, the general public was often far less sympathetic to the claims of such unequivocal charity than the women who heeded such cries of distress.

As a result of this approach to charity, many foundling and infants' homes were accused of encouraging promiscuity and illegitimacy by providing disreputable females with a convenient means of disregarding the consequences of their fallen state and escaping the onerous responsibilities of motherhood. Even as late as 1932, this attitude was still common as the case

of Cooke versus the Kingston Infants' Home demonstrates. The home was sued for nuisance "as it was distasteful to them [the neighbors] to have an institution which cared for illegitimate children in close proximity to their homes." The plea, which curiously was put forward on "sentimental grounds," was rejected in a rousing court decision which justified the courage and effort of the twenty women of all faiths who not only saw their institution's usefulness in terms of "salvaging" young women but also in directing them and their babies to health and social services. In denying the suit, the court ruled that:

. . . there must be an inconvenience materially interfering with the ordinary comfort physically of human existence, not merely according to the elegant and dainty modes and habits of living but according to the plain and sober and simpler notions among English people.²³

It should be noted, however, that POHs committees were not without "standards" for admission. As committed but genteel Christians, the ladies practised a conventional religious benevolence that distinguished between the worthy and unworthy poor; and, as privately maintained orphan asylums, which required nominal monthly payments for temporary custodial cases, the POHs became a refuge for those children who were approved of by the ladies' committees for admission often on grounds of the respectability of the families seeking assistance and of the likely ability to pay the requisite sum on a regular basis. Appeals of sheer destitution were often less important than the fact of being part of the 'worthy poor.' Subsequently when compared with the desolatory nature of the poorhouses of the Maritimes and many of the Catholic orphanages which operated on less discriminating and open door policies, the POHs remained generally smaller and more intimate, although depressingly poor. They were,

therefore, without being gratuitous, relatively "elite" institutions which catered primarily to that category of labouring poor deemed respectable. The state sponsored almshouses and the Catholic institutions were truly "the last resort." Subsequently children of the unwed, the transient, the "nefarious" sectors of society, were those who were usually destined for the almshouses and lunatic asylums where they became neglected public charges. Children of the marginal sections of society—defectives, epileptics, bastards and immigrant youngsters—were usually identified with the unworthy poor.

Two instances illustrates the point. In 1860 a Mrs. Stewart of Kingston, having been deserted by her husband, wanted her three children admitted to the POH.²⁴ Although her situation was so urgent that she herself was voluntarily entering the house of industry, the ladies of the Kingston home decided against receiving them as "both parents were alive" and it would be against the rules. Yet there is evidence in the same year of the circumvention of this rule in the case of other children. Clearly associations with the house of industry were not respectable and Mrs. Stewart's destitution was cast among the lot of the "unworthy." In 1867 the Ottawa ladies committee demanded that a Mrs. Armstrong from Brockville produce her marriage certificate before they would admit her children despite this woman's obvious desperation.²⁵

The ladies noted the advantages of careful guidance of dependent and destitute children and understood the differences between middle class family life and the situation of most children of the poor. They also doubted that the reformation of the children in their care was possible without the personal service of good Christian women. A description of Mrs. Thorburn, wife of an eminent Ottawa businessman, and influential member of the Ottawa POH committee for over sixty years,

could well be used in summary of her generation of women who founded similar asylums. When she died in 1927, it was said of her that she had been "the last of that group of women who were God-chosen over sixty years ago to be the founders of the POH in Ottawa. She was a woman of stalwart piety, unflinching determination, and great courage."²⁶ Actually Mrs. Thorburn's "piety" was less noticeable than were her singular loyalty to the home (she had missed but one annual meeting in those six decades) and her hardnosed, pragmatic organizational acumen over this impressive period of service.

The Professionalizers

Whatever the original motives, the managers of the POHs became primarily concerned with the survival of their institutions rather than the degree to which the service they provided met changing contemporary criteria of child care. That so many of the early founders remained "stalwart" members for decades also led in many cases to a lack of innovation. Women such as Maria Thorburn and Mrs. Bronson represented the faithful vanguard in Ottawa; Mrs. G.A. Sargison, founder of the Victoria home in 1875 and an active member until her death in 1905, demonstrated similar fidelity. Frequently generations of the same families, such as the Bronsons of Ottawa, Mucklestons of Kingston and Haywards of Victoria, continued to dominate the policy and domestic management of the institutions. Even in 1942, a Mrs. Edward Cridge still sat on the Board of the Victoria Home as a lasting reminder of its faltering beginnings under the patronage of Bishop Cridge in 1873.²⁷ The Haywards were so influential in Victoria that they sat on the boards of both the POH and the Children's Aid Society (CAS) with the latter being organized on identical principles, which were seemingly tried and true in Victoria but contrary to the spirit of developments elsewhere.²⁸ Such cases, which might well be

described as Charlotte Whitton's "apostolic succession of volunteers," demonstrated a tendency to perpetuate original institutional patterns in relative isolation from the demands and new assumptions of child welfare.

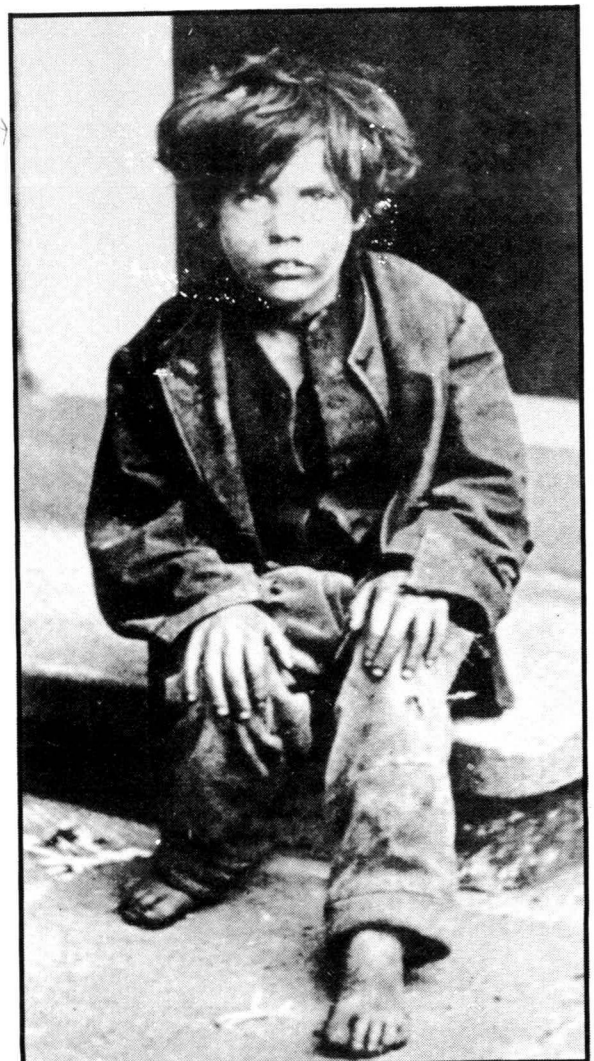
A growing emphasis on keeping families together when possible or on the boarding out of placeable children, and the "classification" of children transformed previously accepted assumptions about the needs of children into anachronisms. Improved standards of ventilation, space, hygiene, diet and nutrition, as well as new medical and psychological theories further eroded such assumptions.²⁹ The growing band of professionalizers, with its insistence on trained superintendency, nurses, social workers, caretaking staffs, and an active liaison with child welfare departments and family life agencies, represented a new view on social problems that contrasted sharply with "mere relief." Even the introduction of seemingly innocuous procedures such as filing systems, careful auditing, case histories, observation of child behaviour and the keeping of detailed records, proved costly and erosive aspects of the professionalizing mode. Thus, nineteenth century values of family life and child rescue, which originally justified both provision for orphans and the separation of children from delinquent parents by means of the asylum, increasingly gave way to new values that condemned the institutionalization of any child except the criminal and defective. By the 1890s the asylum operated in a climate of opinion that saw it as a necessary evil. In some jurisdictions, the official position as expressed in legislation, such as that of the Ontario Children's Protection Act of 1893, was committed to the quasi-public Children's Aid Society and to foster care.³⁰ It was in some ways ironic that the values of family life and the sentimentality surrounding modern Canadian childhood undercut the first institutions established to insure a properly protected environment for dependent children.

The reaction of POH directors to the rise of the Children's Aid Society, first in Ontario and later in other provinces, was suspicious and even hostile. Whereas the Kingston home, consistently sensitive to changing modes and policies of child care, received CAS wards into its institution and virtually became a "shelter" for children under the Children's Protection Act, the homes in Ottawa, Vancouver and Winnipeg were disinclined to do so. Although the great majority of POHs had accepted small government and civic grants, their managers were keenly aware of the implications of government aid, namely increasing intrusion in the form of regulations and inspection, and the loss of control and autonomy exercised by the ladies' committees. The acceptance of CAS wards increased this tension between philanthropic autonomy and government intervention by transforming the home into a "shelter" (thus meeting the obvious parsimony of provincial and civic authorities who were unwilling to establish and staff their own shelters when existing facilities could serve the purpose) or even occasionally into a detention centre for children awaiting presentation before a juvenile court under the Juvenile Delinquents Act of 1908. Such cooperation with municipal and provincial childwelfare authorities would in time alter both the essential character of the home and the total control exercised by the ladies' committees over admission and demission.

Criticized for the debilitating consequences of institutionalization and plagued by perennial problems of finance and public supervision that gradually eroded their autonomy, most POH governing boards fought a determined battle to maintain their institutions. When growing expenses, declining numbers of children eligible for their care, and government policies threatened to put an end to their usefulness, the women responsible for the institutions moved in a series of stages to convert them again into special purpose facilities. Sev-

eral examples include the Merrymount Centre in London for temporary cases, the Children's Village in Ottawa for disturbed youngsters, and Sunnyside Treatment Centre in Kingston for behavioral problems. Almost all of the POHs which survived followed such a pattern.

Surveys conducted in the late 1920s and early 1930s by the Canadian Council on Child Welfare (CCW) under the direction of Char-



Proper Subjects for Rescue

lotte Whitton examined the effectiveness of social agencies in various centres. These surveys represented the point of view of professional social workers, not that of POH philanthropists. Published CCCW reports of conditions in New Brunswick and Manitoba and in Vancouver, Victoria, Kingston, York, Ottawa, Edmonton and Calgary, were unusually insensitive reprimands that caused hard feelings to develop.³¹ POH matrons and assistants were chastised as unsuited for their positions while whole boards of management were denounced as inefficient and ineffectual. The matron of the Victoria CAS, which operated virtually as a small and intimate home, wrote ruefully that "the nature of our work in many cases does not bear publication but it is that very work that takes up most of my time." Miss McCloy, who was not "trained," realized that her replacement was imminent due to local professional criticism; indeed, her daily diary bears witness to a rather uneducated background, but it also testifies to warmth, humour, domesticity, patience, generosity and, above all, a genuine love for the "kiddies" that is quite touching to read. When she resigned in 1930 the home was totally demoralized.³²

The Children's Home of Winnipeg rejected overtures to affiliate with the Federated Charities fearing the inevitable interference with its domestic arrangements and did not yield to the seductions of a community chest until the 1920s when economic pressures forced the situation. Similar events occurred in Toronto.³³ In 1891 the Toronto committee of the Girls' Home and Public Nursery had resisted joining the Combined Charities although they eagerly affiliated with the National Council of Women in 1894.³⁴ Five years later they again refused but by 1922 their records indicate they had succumbed to the practical wisdom of such affiliation. By 1926 the Girls' Home and POH which met similar needs had amalgamated to reduce overhead

expenses.³⁵ The withholding of city funds due to minor dissatisfactions and the reduction of Federated Charities Service budget on the grounds of duplication of facilities hastened the merger.

The Toronto POH was relatively smooth in its transformation from a congregate institution to a specialized facility; nevertheless, such cooperation, ironically, was the beginning of the end of institutional autonomy and the social significance of the ladies who ran them. By 1918 the Toronto Home had included on its staff a trained housemother, called an "Institutional Manager," and an assistant social worker who together dealt with court work, apprenticeships, admittance policy, child placing and family case work.³⁶ The salaries and ideas of the qualified additions to the staff were to prove expensive enough to compel the homes into amalgamation.

Kingston's cooperation with the professionalizers who would undermine their original assumptions and erode the control exercised by a female agency was more striking since it occurred earlier than in the case of Toronto. The institution began its transformation under the pragmatic and "progressive" influence of Miss Muckleston who introduced methods of records keeping, case histories and the classification of the inmates in 1909. The new centre for specialized care, "Sunnyside," which developed in the 1920s was itself housed in the home of Mrs. G.Y. Chown whose family had been involved in the founding of the institution. The 1927 annual report noted that "the work of the Society is beginning again as it did seventy years ago, in a small residence with a small number of children, a matron, or superintendent, a garden and a cow."³⁷ The difference, however, was fundamental. "Sunnyside" would never evolve into a significant social agency providing custodial care for working class emergencies nor would it ever be totally controlled by a group of lay women. In-

stead, health departments, psychiatric clinics, public welfare professionals, public education facilities and sophisticated federated charities boards, admitted, placed, fed, trained and tested the children in highly specialized facilities supervised by trained personnel and supported by government funds.

The ethic of personal service had been subsumed by a professionalism which put high priority on qualification, remuneration and social status based on merit rather than ascription. Problems of social maladjustment and the imperatives of individual psychology had replaced the urgency of custodial care and the genius of female lay control.

Conclusions

Students of Women's History, rightly we believe, have come to comprehend the problems that might accrue from an inordinate concentration upon the negative aspects of past female socialization and are now emphasizing the "strategies" women adopted in realizing their own histories despite the constraints of a male dominated socio-political order. Many nineteenth century women's groups, while rarely the vanguard of major political change, held assumptions about social reform which they manifested through various philanthropic endeavours. These groups drew attention to objective social realities about them—urban squalor and social disorder—and attempted to provide amelioration through charitable institutions. One of the first expressions of female concern in all of the rapidly industrializing centres in English Canada, were Protestant Orphans' Homes which were founded and controlled, often totally, by women whose energies and organizational talents were fully challenged by the conditions of child life they saw about them.

The original assumptions behind the campaign to found child rescue institutions were

gradually transformed or eroded under the pressures exerted by trained child welfare professionals and by municipal and provincial child welfare departments staffed by civil servants. The New Woman in child welfare, committed to scientific methods of social intervention, gnawed away at one of the few significant expressions of past female autonomy. Such professionalizers, mixing personal ambition and humanitarian sentiment, apprehended the possibilities of expanding their own domains within newly created areas of social work. Child welfare experts subjecting child and family life to more sophisticated analysis created increasing demands for professional care, counselling and administration. Demonstrating either indifference or a righteous crusading zeal, child welfare experts disregarded the fact that the POHs were not merely "institutions" but were indeed reflections of the world view of a certain group of women and the spatial, physical and moral expressions of a real sense of usefulness, self-worth, identity and autonomy.

Appendix: Founding Dates of Institutions Examined*

| | |
|------|---|
| 1822 | Montreal Protestant Orphan Asylum |
| 1848 | Hamilton Ladies Benevolent Society and Orphan Asylum |
| 1851 | Toronto Protestant Orphan Home and Female Aid Society |
| 1854 | Saint John Protestant Orphan Asylum |
| 1855 | St. John's Church of England Widows' and Orphans Asylum |
| 1856 | Toronto Girls' Home and Public Nursery |
| 1857 | Kingston Orphans' Home and Widows' Friend Society |
| 1857 | Halifax Protestant Orphans Home |
| 1860 | Boys' Home Toronto |
| 1864 | Ottawa Protestant Orphans' Home |
| 1867 | Saint Paul's Almshouse of Industry for Girls, Halifax |

- 1869 Brantford Orphans' Home
 1870 Montreal Protestant Infants' Home
 1873 Victoria Protestant Orphans' Home
 1874-76 Women's Refuge and Children's Home, London
 Home for Orphans, Aged and Friendless, London
 1875 Halifax Infants' Home
 1885 Protestant Children's Home, Winnipeg
 1893 Maternity Home, Victoria
 1894 Alexandra Orphanage, Vancouver
 1894 Kingston Infants' Home and Home for Friendless Women
 1907 Protestant Orphans' Home, Prince Edward Island

* These institutions were either founded and managed by women, or in the case of those under male governance, had ladies' committees which substantially contributed to, and even controlled, their internal conduct or admission practices. Others such as the Methodist Orphanage, Newfoundland (1888) while a creation of the Methodist Conference was in fact run by deaconesses, matrons and by 1923, four female superintendents.

NOTES

The authors acknowledge the support provided by a SSHRC Research Grant (1979-81) and by The University of Calgary Research Grants Office (1979-80).

1. Quoted in "Victoria Report, 1932," File 139, Vol. 28, Canadian Council on Child Welfare Papers, MG 28I10, Public Archives of Canada (PAC).
2. The authors have discussed the role of Charlotte Whitton and the CCCW in the professionalization of Canadian child welfare in "Child Welfare in English Canada, 1920-48," *Social Service Review*, 55 (September 1981): 485-506.
3. Report of Halifax Association for Improving the Conditions of the Poor (1866); and also *Nova Scotian*, January 28, and March 18, 1867, Public Archives of Nova Scotia (PANS).
4. A Report of the Society for Improving the Condition of the Poor of St. John's (1809). Rules and Constitution of Benevolent Irish Society (1807), Provincial Archives of Newfoundland (PANf), and Accounts Books (1862-1875), Centre of Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University. Halifax Poor Man's Friend Society (1820-1827), PANS, and George E. Hart, "The Halifax Poor Man's Friend Society: An Early Social Experiment," *Canadian Historical Review*, 24 (June 1953): 100-123. Report of Montreal Committee for Relief of the Poor (1819), McGill University (MU), and *Nor'Wester*, October 9, 1868, discusses a call for a Red River Relief Committee, Provincial Archives of Manitoba (PAM). An analysis of the transformation of child welfare in the nineteenth century is provided by the authors in "Childhood and Charity in Nineteenth Century British North America," *Histoire sociale/Social History*, 14 (Spring 1982).
5. See, for example, Margaret Johnson, *The First One Hundred Years, 1874-1974* (of the Women's Christian Association), University of Western Ontario (UWO).
6. *Diamond Jubilee Report* (1914) and *First Annual Report* (1855), Anglican Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland; Montreal Ladies Benevolent Society, *40th Annual Report* (1873), and "Historical Sketch of the Montreal POH . . ." (1860), National Library of Canada.
7. Kingston POH, *Annual Report* (1859), Queen's University (QU).
8. *One Hundred Years: Protestant Children's Village, 1864-1964*, p. 3, Canadian Welfare Council Library, Ottawa (CWC).
9. Ottawa Orphans' Homes (POH) MG 28, I, 37, pp. 1-3 and Vol. 9, (PAC).
10. Minutes, 15/7/1851, MTL and *Protestant Children's Homes of Toronto, 1851-1951*, p. 5, CWC.
11. *Colonist*, June 23, 1893; also see Nora Lupton, "Notes on the British Columbia Protestant Orphan's Home," in *In Her Own Right*, ed. Cathy Kess and Barbara Latham (Victoria: Camosun College, 1980), pp. 43-45.
12. Johnson, p. 2; and Report for St. Paul's Almshouse of Industry for Girls (1868), p. 3, PANS.
13. Orphans' Home and Female Aid Society, Preamble, Vol. 1 (1851-1853), L, 30, Metropolitan Toronto Library (MTL).
14. In an effort to uncover the real significance of these institutions and strip the moralizing tenor of its rhetoric the authors agree with John T. Cumbler that such middle class responses to poverty provided in some cases a rudimentary, although quite insufficient, "advocacy organization for poor women," in the Canadian as well as the American experience. "The Politics of Charity: Gender and Class in Late Nineteenth Century Charity Policy," *Journal of Social History*, 14, (Fall 1980): 99-111.
15. Ottawa POH, MG 28, I, 37, PAC and *One Hundred Years*, p. 6.
16. The First Annual Report (1858) lists William Cunard as governor with Mrs. Cunard on the management committee. Subsequent annual reports reveal that, except in relation to raising the annual "Cunard Collection" which was essential to the home's survival, his involvement was minimal.
17. An excellent example of the literature popularizing a growing control of women over children is found in the writings of the educational theorist J.H. Pestalozzi, e.g., *Leonard and Gertrude* (1780) and *How Gertrude Teaches Her Children* (1801).
18. Daniel Calhoun, *The Intelligence of a People* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973); Barbara Finkelstein, "Pedagogy as Intrusion," *History of Childhood Quarterly*, 2 (Winter 1975): 349-79; and "In Fear of Childhood," *History of Childhood Quarterly*, 3 (Winter 1976): 321-335; and Neil Sutherland, *Children in English-Canadian Society* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976).
19. Reports on Public Charities, Halifax (1914), p. 9, MU.
20. Kingston POH, *14th Annual Report* (1971), QU.

21. An examination of available daily journals, minute books, and correspondence relating to the institutions listed in the appendix has led the authors, who were predisposed before the study to believe otherwise, to this conclusion. This discrepancy between the printed document (e.g., annual reports) and private communications illustrates the dangers of not going behind public statements, which in the case of philanthropic societies were intended to attract funds through popular appeal, to determine actual practice.
22. Halifax Methodist Female Benevolent Society, *Annual Report* (1823), p. 6, PANS.
23. In "Child Welfare: Legal Citations (1832-34)," MG 28, I 10, Vol. 45, PAC.
24. Kingston POH, Minute 10/4/1860, QU.
25. Ottawa POH, Minute 28/10/1867, PAC.
26. *One Hundred Years*, p. 50.
27. British Columbia POH, *70th Annual Report* (1942), Provincial Archives of British Columbia (PABC).
28. Charles Hayward, Papers and Children's Aid Society Collection, PABC. Hayward was president of the Victoria Children's Aid Society and the British Columbia POH.
29. Discussed by authors in unpublished manuscript, "Death, Diet and Disease: Aspects of "Serial" Contamination in British North American Children's Orphanages 1850-1930."
30. Neil Sutherland details these shifts in *Children in English—Canadian Society*. Also see Andrew Jones and Leonard Rutman, *In the Children's Aid: J.J. Kelso and Child Welfare in Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981).
31. "Child Welfare in English Canada, 1920-48"; and Rooke and Schnell, "Charlotte Whitton Meets 'The Last Best West': The Politics of Child Welfare in Alberta, 1929-49," *Prairie Forum* (forthcoming).
32. *Daily Journal*, Vols. 10 and 11; Minutes Vol. 1 and Secretary's Report (1926), Vol. 6, CAS collection, PABC.
33. The home affiliated with the National Council of Women in 1894, having officially separated from the Christian Women's Union in 1887. Its participation in the Associated Charities from 1910 to the Central Council of Social Agencies in 1924 ranged from acrimony to reluctance.
34. Toronto POH also affiliated with the National Council of Women in 1894 as did the Protestant Girls' Home and Public Nursery. The Girls' Home rejected affiliation with Charities Organization in 1899 and finally federated in early 1920s. Girls' Home Vol. 7 (M), 1917-24, and Vol. 3, 1899-1901. Also Minutes, April 29, 1919, report that the POH was unhappy about affiliation with the Federation for Community Service, Vol. 5, (M), 1909-19, MTL.
35. Letters and Papers, L30(B) Protestant Children's Homes, 1920-26 and (M) 1922-26, discuss the Girls' Home; whereas POH Vol. 6 (M) 1919-26 discusses the POH's part in amalgamation, MTL.
36. Minutes, May 13, September 9, October 31, and November 26, 1919, Vol. 5 (M), 1909-1919, MTL.
37. Kingston POH, *Annual Report* (1927), QU.