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"This is our work": The Women's Division of the Canadian Department of Immigration and Colonization, 1919-1938

by

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Abstract

Anglophone women, working in a new capacity as federal civil servants, exercised a significant influence on Canadian immigration policy in the interwar years. This dissertation focuses on the women's division of the Canadian Department of Immigration and Colonization, an agency charged with recruiting British women for domestic service from 1919 to 1938. The division was a product of the women's wing of the social reform movement and prevailing theories of gender difference and anglo-superiority. Tracing its nearly twenty years of operations shows how the division, initially regarded as a source of imperial strength and a means of English Canada's cultural survival, came to symbolize the disadvantages of Canada's connection to Great Britain and supposed weaknesses inherent in the female character. This institutional study explores the real and imagined connections among gender, imperialism, and the changing socio-economic landscape of interwar Canada.

Résumé

Après la première guerre mondiale, les femmes anglophones ont participé à la vie politique en tant que fonctionnaires dans le service de l'immigration à Ottawa. Cette thèse se concentre sur l'agence des femmes dans le service d'immigration dont le mandat devait recruter des femmes anglaises pour le service domestique au Canada. Cette agence qui a fonctionné a partir de 1919 à 1938, était un produit du mouvement social de réforme, les théories qui règnaient sur les rôles de sexe et les idées de la superiorité de la culture anglaise. Le gouvernement a crée l'agence pour enrichir le rapport entre la Grande-Bretagne et le Canada et aussi pour assurer la survivance culturelle du Canada anglais. Toutefois, d'ici 1930 l'agence des femmes a éte associée aux inconvénients du rapport impérial, et le travail des fonctionnaries aux faiblesses dans le caractère des femmes. Cette thèse examine les vraies et imaginées connexions parmi le genre, l'impérialisme, et les développements sociaux et économiques au Canada entre les deux guerres.

Acknowledgments

During the time I spent on my doctoral studies, I immigrated to Canada from the United States, recovered from a divorce, traveled, taught, lived in three Montreal neighbourhoods, was diagnosed with a mental illness, returned to the United States, worked three office jobs, relied heavily on my wonderful family, and was carried through by lifelong friends. I have come to believe that earning a doctorate is in many ways a selfish pursuit, for although graduate students tend to work alone and live on a shoestring, at the same time they must be dependent upon the emotional and financial support of so many in order to succeed.

I am grateful to my supervisor, Professor John E. Zucchi, for his guidance and encouragement. For giving me the benefit of his knowledge, kindness, and not least his patience he will always have my gratitude and respect. I also owe so much to Professors Stuart "Doc" Givens and Sue Morton who sparked my interest in Canadian history and women's history. Professor Leonard Moore taught me that earning a doctorate is a major accomplishment but only a small part of life, and I wish to thank him for the inspiration and advice--it worked.

It is hard to express how much I appreciate the support I received from my crowd in Montreal. Thanks to Sue Iuliano, Aileen Baird, Janine Stingel, and Joan Pozer for listening and giving advice about my work. Their help and friendship made my time in Montreal so much more meaningful. Thanks also to Ian Ritchie and Michael Murphy, friends who may not know how influential they were in my decision to study Canada. For love and support, I owe a special thanks to John Serrati, my best friend, and his family.

Financial support was provided by McGill University in the form of a Vineberg Graduate Fellowship and several teaching assistantships. A travel grant from the McGill Centre for Research and Teaching on Women made possible a research trip to London, England. I am also grateful for a Graduate Student Fellowship awarded by the Canadian Embassy in Washington, DC. Finally, the Danish Canadian Society of Montreal not only paid me for an enjoyable research and writing project which carried me financially through several summers, but they also welcomed me into their community and showed me a great time in Montreal.

I would not have been able to make my way through McGill's bureaucracy without the help of hardworking women Mary McDaid, Georgii Mikula, Joan Pozer, and others of the History Department staff. They never complained when I made my problems their problems.

Throughout my studies I have had my family's constant encouragement, and although I know that my parents, sisters and brother, and all my in-laws would have supported me in any decision I had made in life, they let me know from early on that earning an advanced degree was something I could accomplish. My nine nieces and nephews helped me keep a sense of perspective, and I want them to remember that someday, we will all take that trip to Montreal on the train, I promise.

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Introduction

Mary V. Burnham directed the women's division of the Department of Immigration and Colonization for over fifteen years. Supervising a staff of over fifty women by the mid-1920s, she was praised by women's organizations, churches, and the press for her work managing the immigration of single British women to Canada from 1921 to the mid 1930s. Miss Burnham's job title, "Women's Division Supervisor," represented a shift from the prewar period when the civil service was no place for women. In 1919, however, the presence of a high-level female bureaucrat did not dismay the public or strike male immigration officials as inappropriate. English-Canadian women with years of experience in the paid and voluntary sectors were installed as supervisors of entirely new agencies, including a child welfare division in the Department of Health and the women's branch of Immigration and Colonization. In the course of their daily work, it was not uncommon for these bureaucrats, or "good ladies," to rub shoulders with women in the Employment Service of Canada or on various committees for post-war reconstruction.

This study examines the women's division of the Canadian Department of Immigration and Colonization. This branch oversaw the immigration of over 25,000 British women and advised the government on policy surrounding their recruitment and settlement. Inaugurated in 1919, the division was a product of the women's wing of the social reform

movement, and drew much of its support from British imperial sentiment expressed by English Canadians during World War I. Its responsibilities included recruiting only the best British female immigrants for Canada, assisting them through every step of the migration process, and finally placing them as domestics in Canadian homes. The appointment of female immigration officers was the fulfillment of an important goal of the "woman movement," a collective effort to win the rights of citizenship, thereby improving the lives of women, families, and communities. Women's demand that government end its gender-based voter discrimination against them was one component of a greater movement for change. Many women, whether they considered themselves feminists or not, called for government regulation of food industries and sanitation practices, and for stricter controls on immigration. Women had long been working on a voluntary basis helping poorer families and immigrants, and it was therefore a triumph when the government not only created new agencies which incorporated reform values into their mandates but also recognized that certain aspects of government service could be women's work. The following chapters provide insight on why middle-class women wanted a role in the Canadian immigration bureaucracy, how this was gained, and how women fit into the existing system and culture of the immigration department. This work also examines why the immigration department's women's division ultimately failed to attain it's goals.

Canadian historical scholarship has not thoroughly addressed the nature of women's political participation after suffrage was attained. *Beyond the Vote*, an excellent collection of essays edited by Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster, shows the diversity of women's activism and experience

but does not examine women in the civil service. A component of women active in the English-Canadian social reform movement sought to influence policy by participating in the civil service or supporting those who did rather than entering the arena of electoral politics. There is a great deal of evidence, gleaned from publications of voluntary organizations, magazines, and government documents suggesting that women wanted women on the federal payroll, working to implement improvements in women's immigration and public health. It may have been considered more suited to their talents and more respectable for women to deliver social services as government bureaucrats than to engage in the competitive and potentially corrupt business of running for office. Also, women's experience within voluntary associations, a by-product of the social reform movement, prepared them for similar work on a professional basis.

Female civil servants in Ottawa's immigration department are the main focus of this study, not their lives as individual workers so much as the expectations and limits placed upon them, and how they adapted, or in some cases refused to adapt, to changes in policy and public opinion. Various turn-of-the-century voluntary associations, both British and Canadian, will also be discussed because of their role in the women's division's creation. Much has been written on women's voluntary work in migration promotion, mainly in the context of women's club formation during the social reform era. The female immigrant clients of the women's division do not figure very prominently in this study, but this does not reflect a belief in their unimportance. Their migration and work

experiences have been the subjects of earlier monographs,[1] and the present study reinforces the conclusions of historians Varpu Lindstrom-Best, Ruth Frager and others who suggested that immigrant women were often strong, savvy individuals for whom migration was a means to meet their own set of objectives. Quite simply, their actions spoke louder than their words. Chapters Three and Five of this work address the collective behaviour of immigrants, namely their overwhelming choice to avoid domestic service, which had a definite impact on the division's overall lack of success. It is noteworthy that the division, in operation for nearly two decades, has been mentioned only briefly in a few works, the most recent being Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock's 1998 book *The Making of the Mosaic*. This gap in the scholarship is somewhat surprising since the women's division and the Empire Settlement policy it carried out were the subjects of a good deal of media attention and lively public debate in the interwar years.[2]

Women's entrance into the federal bureaucracy in this period was accomplished because of common assumptions about women's difference.

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[1] Marilyn Barber's "The Women Ontario Welcomed" in Ontario History 72, 3 (1980): 148-172, and A. James Hammerton's *Emigrant Gentlewomen* (London: Croom Helm, 1979) cover working conditions of immigrant domestics, but much information can also be found in monographs about various ethnic groups in Canada, because domestic service was such a common occupation for so many immigrant women. See, for example, Varpu Lindstrom-Best, *Defiant Sisters* (Toronto: Multicultural Historical Society of Ontario, 1988) and Frances Swyripa, *Wedded to the Cause* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).

[2] See Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988): 191-93. The historiography of the various elements behind the creation of the women's division of Immigration and Colonization -- social reform, feminism, British imperialism, anglo-superiority, and others -- is more effectively covered separately. Each chapter of this thesis presents a review of the literature surrounding the particular topic or topics dealt with in that chapter.

Reform-minded women, or maternal feminists, advanced the model of gender difference because it afforded them greater recognition and an avenue toward power. Women, they claimed, had God-given nurturing abilities and a deeper moral conscience that men lacked, and argued that the political and commercial realms promoted the brutish masculine impulses of competitiveness and greed. Down the ages, enormous harm had resulted from women's captivity in the home. Immigration policy was one area that female reformers wanted to bring under their gentle influence. It was not enough for women to ask for policy changes; it was essential for women, with their unique talents, to be publicly involved in the process of immigration reform.

Women insisted that their qualities were different, but not inferior, and that all of society might benefit from their presence in the civil service. Early on, however, the limitations of their "difference model" of feminism were revealed. Female officers in the immigration department were limited to working with female immigrants, and once their programme was established, were excluded from most policy meetings. The time came when officers wanted to expand their programme, and as they gained more experience, the desire to have a voice in policy decisions followed. Working in an occupational ghetto, women could not advance because they ostensibly lacked the leadership qualities and business acumen that men possessed. They were not about to change tack and insist that men and women were equally capable of making all decisions, since such an assertion would have gone against their maternal feminist beliefs.

Examining women's experience in the immigration department also reveals how their strong commitment to the concept of difference was a

detriment to the advancement of working-class and non-British women. By calling for strict supervision of female travelers, women officers supported a "boys will be boys" attitude, curtailing working-class women's freedom of movement and occupational choices to protect them from sexual danger. They thought that not only were women different from men, but also that anglo women were extremely different from Italian women and wealthy wives from working-class single women. The division refused to accept Continental European women under its auspices, rejecting their applications based on racist assumptions. It's officers did not see, or perhaps did not acknowledge, that just as the difference concept had encouraged men to limit anglo women's choices, they were using it to keep other groups of women in subservient positions.

Reformers and migration enthusiasts in this period were not all women; ministers, academics, and male social workers supported assisted migration programmes for British women. Men do not figure prominently in this study, but not by oversight. In recognition of what was thought to be one woman's innate ability to understand another woman's needs, men in the reform movement did not attempt to take control of this popular activity, leaving it in the hands of organizations such as the Young Women's Christian Association, Girls' Friendly Society, women's Protestant missionary groups, and ultimately the women's division.[3] Like the nursing and teaching professions, social work was acceptable "womanly" work, an extension of the nurturing role into the public sphere.

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[3]The careers of prominent men in the Canadian social reform movement are featured in Ramsay Cook's *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

Chapter One of this study examines middle-class English-Canadian voluntary endeavors in women's immigrant aid in the early decades of the twentieth century, and how this work reached a quasi-professional status on the eve of World War I. Through a proliferation of voluntary organizations, women devoted considerable resources to help immigrant women. The results were travelers' aid networks, hostels, and job placement programmes. The majority of voluntary societies concentrated on placing immigrants in domestic service. Their members benefited by having first choice of newly-arrived maids, but their migration assistance efforts also forged stronger links among the many societies in Canada and won them even greater resources. The immigration department, impressed by their success and more than willing to contract with outside agencies to recruit immigrants, granted women's groups ever larger sums of money to continue their work.

An important component of the movement for immigration policy reform was its association with empire-building. Canadian women's migration societies waved the British flag enthusiastically when dealing with the media and requesting government funding. The brand of British imperialism that had captivated English Canada, from the turn of the century through the First World War, bestowed great importance on anglo women as guardians of British cultural values. English Canadians reasoned that more British females ought to land on the country's shores to the exclusion of Continental Europeans, to ensure a new generation of loyal, white Canadians. In what was considered a very positive trend, the period from 1911 to 1914 witnessed more than 600,000 British immigrants to Canada, a record number. Ottawa increased its reliance on outside

organizations to assist in the settlement of so many newcomers from the Home Country. Women reformers did not object when, in order to receive government grants, they were limited to recruiting British domestics. They had always espoused anglo-superiority and, like Ottawa, expected extensive British immigration to continue. This limitation on recruitment activities of voluntary associations (and later on the women's division) was in large part self-imposed and was later solidified by Britain and Canada's Empire Settlement Agreement of 1923.

Immigrant aid was not to remain in the realm of volunteerism. The second chapter discusses the successful lobbying efforts of voluntary organizations and churches to increase federal funding for single women's immigration, which grew into a larger campaign to place women in charge of official immigration programmes. A window of opportunity for Canada's reform-minded women opened in 1919. With the Great War at an end and the federal franchise attained, women pointed to their backgrounds in voluntary social work to support their claim that they were the best candidates for women- and family-oriented jobs in Ottawa's growing civil service. The federal Cabinet, interested in maintaining its social and economic regulatory powers after the postwar reconstruction period, was willing to listen to women's proposals for a more carefully managed immigration process. The inauguration of a women's division within the Department of Immigration and Colonization was a maternal feminist goal fulfilled. Ottawa had placed value on women's concerns, and in a leap of progress had expanded the definition of women's work.

For reformers, the women's division represented the practical application of Christian principles through a state agency. Its officers

sought to change the immigration department, beginning with the women's migration programme, to make it less of a servant of business interests than an instrument to fulfill God's purpose for Canada. For a short time, they challenged the notion that the department existed mainly to facilitate the importation of labour. Social reform ideology dictated that the immigration department had obligations to more than employers. The host society, or future neighbors of these newcomers, as well as the immigrants themselves deserved consideration. In the early twenties, English Canadians accepted reformers' assertions that it was a matter of Christian duty to see that female immigrants had assistance until they were satisfactorily settled, and further that immigration was a privilege which should be reserved for "quality individuals," or the morally upright and ethnically compatible peoples of Britain.

The immigration department's women officers, and the voluntary organizations that continued to work with them, regarded British women's immigration primarily in terms of morality and ethnicity. They rarely saw domestic service in terms of economic gain for their own social class, or one woman's desire for the cheap household labour of another. Chapter Three examines how the women's division tried to balance the often conflicting aims of three groups of women involved in the managed migration process: the women officers, the female employers of servants, or "mistresses," and the immigrant domestics. Contrary to what officers expected, the first years of the women's division's existence did not witness mutual cooperation among these groups of women; instead, the division was plagued with problems as it struggled with its clients' irreconcilable interests. When responding to complaints of mistresses and maids, the officers in general

followed their class interests by taking the side of the mistresses. Officers and mistresses expected loyalty from immigrant servants because migration assistance was a gift which should inspire thankfulness. When maids left domestic positions for industrial or shop work, it was interpreted as an act of impropriety and disloyalty rather than a move to escape poverty or bad working conditions. The early twenties were crucial years in which the division tried to establish itself as an efficient branch of the immigration department, but with little success. Its programme was ill-equipped to stand up to challenges that were to come its way in the near future.

The complex nature of the relationships among officers, employers of servants, and immigrants makes it difficult for the historian to settle on adequate terminology. Officers and employers are referred to here as "middle-class," and immigrants as "working-class" women. According to employment announcements, officers were required to possess at least a high school education and were considered professionals. Employers, while not necessarily women of leisure (especially women on farms), were nevertheless women of some means who believed it vitally important to ease their burden of housework. They pointed to the lack of domestic help as a responsible for "race suicide," or the reason for declining birth rates among white women.[4] Women officers shared this concern, which for some was an obsession, to increase the domestic labour pool. Sociologist Mariana Valverde has identified the class basis of social reform efforts, a movement

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[4]National Archives of Canada, Record Group 76/C-4777/113/22787. Second Conference of Organizations Interested in Housing and Care of Domestics, 14 May, 1919, 4. Hereafter, citations of National Archives of Canada documents begin with "RG 76."

she regarded as an effort by the new professional class to define itself.[5] This it attempted to do in part by assigning great importance to the institution of domestic service as an essential component of the respectable household, and the middle-class woman's place in the mistress-servant relationship as an important part of her identity. Even if an immigrant had considered herself of the middle class in her home country, she would become a working-class servant girl under assisted migration policies and in the English-Canadian household. Employers expressed their sense of superiority by calling themselves "mistresses" and their servants "girls." The women's division also consistently referred to immigrant clients as "girls," even though documents show that not a few servants were in their thirties and forties, no doubt older than some officers and employers. To call immigrants "domestic servants" is problematic because most women recruited for assisted migration had never been domestics, and judging by their tendency to abandon such work in Canada, they did not identify with the term. However, this term is used here in the interests of clarity. Finally, the men in this study are often referred to by their official titles, usually "commissioners" or "agents." The designation of "officer" always applies to women. Only one officer was found to have reached agent status, and no women became commissioners.

The officers were assigned a fairly narrow scope of duties and responsibilities to which their male colleagues limited them; nevertheless, no matter how segregated their work was from the men's, grafting a division

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[5]Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991): 29.

of morally-minded women onto the immigration department disturbed its culture and traditions. Chapter Four shows how other groups with an interest in immigration, in particular Canada's transportation and resource industries, launched an attack on assisted migration and British preference, the twin purposes of the women's division. The growth of corporations such as the Canadian Pacific Railway and Canadian National Railway had always depended heavily on immigrants because of the revenue generated from ticket sales and the cheap labour the newcomers performed once in Canada, all part of the phenomenon Robert Harney called "the commerce of migration."[6] Railway and overseas shipping companies enjoyed a privileged relationship with the immigration department, and were permitted to circumvent regulations to a certain extent in order to import the labour they required from a variety of countries. The policy shift of the early twenties, which focused on the individual British immigrant and his or her suitability and safety, interfered with long-standing corporate privileges and possibly threatened profits. The women's division's programme was simply bad for business. In the ensuing fight for influence, transportation companies played a major role in reclaiming the immigration policy as a business-oriented arena, and its administration as work fit only for men. The women's division and corporations had shared interests, since both were aggressively recruiting immigrant labour, but notions of gender difference led them to see themselves as competitors in a battle of moral versus market interests.

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[6]Robert Harney, "Montreal's King of Italian Labour: A Case Study of Padronism," *Labour/Le travailleur* 4 (1979): 59.

Despite widespread public support in the early twenties, the women's division had a relatively brief life. Chapter Five observes the forces that brought the division to an end. By 1936, cutbacks brought a drastic reduction in the number of female officers, and under Depression-era policy directives the few still employed saw their duties change from recruiting immigrant women and finding them jobs to tracking their whereabouts so they might be deported. This final chapter acknowledges that while the economic crisis of the 1930s dealt the final blow to the women's division, there were other factors involved in its decline. First, the behaviour of British immigrant domestics was generally disappointing to the immigration department and especially to the families that employed them. The women had a tendency to break their promise to work in a home for a year's time, and it became clear these so-called ideal immigrants were using federal assistance to meet their own "selfish" goals. By contrast, Continental Europeans were succeeding as settlers without help from the government, a fact that did not escape public notice. Second, Canadian officials were abandoning the concept of anglo-superiority, and seriously questioning Britain's motives in promoting Empire Settlement. The assistance schemes of the late twenties, some merely lackluster and others disastrous, prompted a great deal of mistrust in Ottawa for the Home Government. The division was further weakened when Supervisor Mary Burnham was confined to her home due to serious illness and tried from there to advise what remained of her branch. She was demoralized by the turn of events which had practically negated her department's earlier work to help British women find homes in Canada.

The women's division of Immigration and Colonization was made up of a relatively small group of women who worked with one type of immigrant. When examined as part of the larger picture of immigration to Canada in the 1920s, along side the hundreds of thousands of European and American newcomers, the division's work might not appear particularly significant. An institutional study such as this allows the historian to explore the real and imagined connections among gender, imperialism, and the socio-economic changes of interwar Canada. Immigration has always been regarded as an area of problems and promise, as have the lives of women. When these two factors were joined, embodied in the single British immigrant "girl," English-Canadian society recognized the potential for its own cultural survival or the source of its decay. Tremendous importance was therefore placed on these immigrants and the women who guided them.

The methodology for this project was straightforward, consisting mainly of analyzing government documents connected with female migration and Empire Settlement which are housed in the National Archives of Canada and the British Public Records Office, and in McGill University's MacLennan Library. Additional primary material was found in magazines, association yearbooks, and collections such as Empire Club speeches, all of which are listed in part I of the bibliography. Part II of the bibliography lists recent monographs. I was unfortunately not able to uncover the personal lives of the female civil servants mentioned in this work. Archivists in Ottawa informed me that their personnel files had been destroyed, most likely at the request of the employees themselves.

It is my hope that this study becomes one of several on women in bureaucratic systems in Canada. In growing numbers, English-Canadian women moved into administrative work in government and into non-profit organizations as social work became professionalized. Francophone women would do so much later. More research may answer questions about what motivated women to serve the Canadian state in the twentieth century, and how women and men struggled to redesign women's work. Australian feminists Diane Court and Suzanne Franzway posited that women can more easily advance to higher levels in the "people-oriented" branches of the civil service such as family services and health, and find the "coercive" ones--the military, police, and intelligence services--to be more or less hostile to their presence.[7] This has most likely been the case in Canada. Immigration and Colonization straddled the line because it had coercive and beneficent aspects: it was both business-oriented and people-oriented. The Department of Immigration and Colonization was foremost a servant of the economy, and therefore women had a notable, but not enduring presence as supervisory employees in its ranks.

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[7]Franzway, *et. al., Staking a Claim: Feminism, Bureaucracy, and the State* (Sydney, Australia: Allen and Unwin, 1989).

Chapter One

A "peculiar kind of work": Social Reform and Women's Assisted Migration

The issue of single women's migration occupied a prominent place in the social reform movement in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Canada. Before the reform impulse reached its zenith in the early decades of the twentieth century, Canadian and British women, as individuals and within reform organizations, had been working to find new homes throughout the British Empire where young British women could settle and thrive. From the viewpoint of many reformers, and eventually of government officials on both sides of the Atlantic, women's migration was the perfect solution for some of the empire's greatest social and economic problems, in both the short and long term. This chapter will provide a background on the inter-connections among social reform, British migration, and imperial sentiment in turn-of-the-century Canada. More specifically, it will focus on bourgeois women's voluntary migration promotion, how they set up networks and coordinated their efforts, and the Canadian government's increasing regulation of and financial support for this "rather peculiar"[1] work.

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[1]Mrs. Donald Shaw, "Women Who Work for Women," *Everywoman's World* (June 1914): 23.

By the outbreak of World War I, Ottawa was already extensively involved with the numerous organizations interested in transplanting single women from Britain to Canada. The immigration branch, as part of the Department of the Interior, issued grants and licenses, solved disputes among migration promotion organizations, and coordinated and investigated activities according to the organizations' suggestions and its own concerns. Assisting female immigrants became an accepted activity during this period, to the point where the government admitted that "hostels, matrons and such [services for female immigrants] exist because they are necessary."[2] By examining the evolving relationship that these groups maintained with the federal government, we can come to a better understanding of Ottawa's willingness to include women in the immigration bureaucracy after the war.

The historiography on women and social reform is considerable. Historians in Canada, Britain, and the United States have studied in depth the turn-of-the-century feminist response to industrialization and urbanization, a response prompted by anxieties about apparent shortcomings of industrial "progress." While the industrial revolution had increased the standard of living for many families, it had trapped others in poverty because of its rapacious need for cheap labour, often supplied by women and children. Disruptive to traditional family life, the existing wage system did not provide most working-class men with money enough to feed their families, robbing them of the status of family breadwinner and compelling women to leave home to work for wages.

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[2]RG 76/C-4777/114/22787. W. D. Scott to W. W. Cory, 13 March 1919.

Reformers feared that the urban poor, caught in an unnatural, ruinous cycle, were turning to drink or sexual sin to escape their misery.

When reform-minded women looked at the direction in which their society was headed under industrial capitalism, they saw greed for gain replacing Christian principles. Editorials in women's magazines and speeches at women's clubs sounded the call for feminist activism, reminding women of their God-given responsibility to care for the weak. *Everywoman's World*, a popular Canadian magazine, cited high-profile women as models of what Canadians could do to improve social conditions. One such woman was Colorado State Senator Helen Righ Robinson who stated:

> I would like to impress upon all women that they should take a particular interest in public affairs at all times when public corporations threaten to keep a stranglehold on the community...Public affairs, then, become a question of morality for women. With corrupt corporations you find spendthrift methods, unfair advantage, false economic standards. What are they but immorality?[3]

Women activists, often referred to as maternal or first-wave feminists in the historiography, generally did not consider industrial capitalism to be a purely evil force. They believed that industrialization could indeed bring improvements in health and living standards for all classes of people, if only the wealthy would accept their responsibility for moral leadership. Few upper- and middle-class feminists had socialist leanings; they envisioned a capitalist system to which their Protestant principles were applied, a society in which businesses operated according to a communitarian spirit and the poorer classes might uplift themselves

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[3]"A Woman Senator," editorial, *Everywoman's World* (February 1914): 3.

through frugality and sobriety. The onus was on men, as heads of working-class families and as owners of big business, to mend their ways, and women would show them how.

The social reform movement encompassed people of diverse backgrounds and interests; it was by no means monolithic.[4] Before the First World War, however, the middle-class feminist wing of the movement coalesced around several fundamental beliefs. In her dissertation on the Young Women's Christian Association in Canada, Diana Pedersen explained that the social reform movement was grounded in the Christian faith, and showed how women used religious organizations as vehicles to propel themselves into public life without risking their respectability.[5] They convinced themselves and others that they were doing God's work by using their nurturing talents for the betterment of the community, in what amounted to "a great scheme of civil cleansing and improving."[6] No longer was women's sacred role as mother to be limited to the home, an isolated and relatively powerless space, but rather extended into the male-dominated spheres of law and politics. Safer, better lives for women and children would result from the state's regulation of "feminine" interests such as health care delivery and water quality. The goal was not to empower women by encouraging them to acquire masculine traits, but to feminize the public realm by

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[4]John Herd Thompson, *Harvests of War: The Prairie West, 1914-1918* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978): 95.

[5]Diana L. Pedersen, "The Young Women's Christian Association in Canada, 1870-1920: A Movement to Meet a Spiritual, Civic and National Need," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Carleton University, 31-32.

[6]Shaw, 13.

advancing the concept that God valued the male and female callings equally. The lack of regard for women's talents and experience was contrary to God's divine plan.[7]

In the case of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), the focus of a study by Wendy Mitchinson, members justified moving out of the confines of the home in order to protect it. With a Canadian membership of approximately 10,000 in 1900, the WCTU pointed to the availability of alcohol as an example of society's tolerance for laissez-faire economics and male prerogative. Alcohol was legal even though its availability threatened the safety of women and children. Avowing that women would be silent victims of drunken men no longer, temperance activists called on politicians to fulfill their Christian duty by banning the sale and consumption of alcohol. This organization played a major role in middle-class women's politicization since it became apparent early on that persuasion alone would not win the fight against demon drink. The power of the state to legislate and punish was essential for prohibition's success, and thus it followed that women needed to vote in order to install reformers in Parliament.[8] An organization dedicated to improving the lives of women, the WCTU adopted an extensive platform which included protecting the welfare of female immigrants.

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[7]Wayne Roberts, "'Rocking the Cradle for the World': The New Woman and Maternal Feminism, Toronto 1877-1914," in Linda Kealey, ed., *A Not Unreasonable Claim* (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1979): 18.; see also Barbara Roberts, "Women's Peace Activism in Canada," in Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster, eds., *Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women and Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989): 278.

[8]Wendy Mitchinson, "The WCTU: 'For God, Home, and Native Land': A Study of Nineteenth-Century Feminism," in Kealey, 154.

Diana Pedersen and Mariana Valverde interpreted the social reform movement as fundamentally an effort in nation building. Reformers' attempts to impose a Christian moral order on society were part of a plan to place the nation back on a proper foundation.[9] Just as the religious right today warns that the apparent breakdown of the family is a harbinger to the collapse of the Canadian state, at the turn of the century reformers wanted to bring the nation's laws in line with God's laws as a matter of national survival. Christianity provided the blueprint for addressing such "modern" problems as urban decay, child labour, and immigrant integration. This brand of Christian doctrine stressed personal responsibility and self-control.

Reformers, as paid and voluntary social workers, involved themselves in the lives of the poor to thwart the process of social decay which they feared was advancing practically unchecked. Unless reform measures were adopted, they warned, Canadian society was at risk of deteriorating through a process commonly called "race degeneration." Regarded as a consequence of both congenital and environmental factors, "race degeneration," was thought to be taking place most rapidly in unsanitary urban dwellings where children, in many cases those of immigrants, appeared to have little chance of becoming healthy adults. While recognizing that low wages played a role in preventing working-class people from escaping their lot, reformers were adamant that a high proportion of Canada's poor suffered from such "hereditary" disorders as imbecility, insanity, or sexual deviance, which locked them and their

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[9]Valverde, 27; and Pedersen, 21.

offspring in poverty. Worse yet, these inferior foreign peoples might mix with Canadian stock through marriage, contaminating the gene pool. An appeal went out for Ottawa to set and enforce standards for public health, and for a more restrictive immigration policy to prevent the arrival of inferior stock.[10] The most worrisome groups included Chinese, Italians, East Indians, Doukhobors and others with languages and behaviours considered unusual. Without curbs on the immigration of undesirables, scores of diseased and feeble-minded immigrants were able invade the country, something that immigration critics said was already taking place.

Historian Mary Louise Adams suggested that it was easier for middle-class Canadians to assign blame for social problems to the foreign-born than to scrutinize the behaviour of native sons and daughters.[11] The public associated immigration with poverty and deviance. Reformers claimed that immigrants were already at a disadvantage since they came from "backward" countries, and they were not helped by the existing immigration system which dumped them onto Canada's shores and left them to fend for themselves. Such immigrant neglect had resulted in troubling trends: the growth of urban ghettos and rural block settlements, two types of impoverished, isolated communities which were considered

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[10]Alan Sears, Immigration as Social Control Policy: The Case of Canadian Medical Inspection 1900-1920," *Studies in Political Economy* 33 (Autumn 1990): 92-93. See also Angus McLaren, *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada 1885-1945* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990).

[11]Mary Louise Adams, "In Sickness and in Health: State Formation, Moral Regulation, and Early VD Initiatives in Ontario," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 28, 4 (Winter 1993-94): 122.

unhealthy for the immigrants and threatening to the host society.[12] Ardent immigration critics and reformers pushed for a policy of British preference which sought to identify physically and morally healthy candidates for migration in the United Kingdom and then provide them with some financial incentive to move. Members of reform organizations offered their services, suggesting that their members act as guides to help newcomers follow the path toward productive citizenship. What they envisioned was a system of managed immigration, funded largely by the state, in which migrants' safety and behaviour were monitored every step of the way.

The adage "people must be helped to help themselves" is a fitting description for social reform and charity work among immigrants in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Canada. Opposed to giving handouts to the less fortunate, organizations offering assistance to newcomers operated according to principles of "scientific social work." Their object was to provide help in an efficient, organized manner to "deserving" candidates who were expected to conform to middle-class expectations.[13] To be considered worthy, recipients were required to adopt middle-class Canadian standards of cleanliness and dress and, above all, to remain temperate and sexually virtuous. If charity workers did not see what they considered evidence of industrious and respectable behaviour, no further assistance was granted, as the aim was not simply

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[12]Kate Foster, *Our Canadian Mosaic* (Toronto: Dominion Council of the YMCA, 1926).

[13]Patricia T. Rooke and R. L. Schnell, "Child Welfare in English Canada, 1920-1948," *Social Service Review* (September 1981): 485-486.

to alleviate suffering but foremost to strengthen character.[14] Taking this approach was considered especially appropriate toward potential emigrants, since settling in Canada was not for the weak.

Animosity toward immigrants was growing in the early twentieth century as a result of significant policy changes initiated by Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier and his Minister of the Interior, Clifford Sifton. Holding office from 1896 to 1905, Sifton emphasized the component of the National Policy which had been neglected by previous governments, that of immigration and settlement. Sifton encouraged the assertive recruitment of immigrants who voiced a willingness to settle the Canadian West, and welcomed them from Britain, the United States, and to the dismay of many Canadians, Eastern Europe. The rapid pace of industrial change coupled with the increase in immigration during the Laurier years provided an impetus for reform efforts. The sheer numbers of new arrivals alarmed Canadians in general. After 1900, when Minister Sifton's recruitment efforts began to bring results, the yearly immigration totals increased dramatically. While 1902 saw 67,379 immigrants enter Canada, the 1903 figure reached 128,364, an increase of more than ninety per cent. The total increased almost every year thereafter until 1913, when it peaked at over 402,000.[15] Could such a young country handle

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[14]James Pitsula, "The Emergence of Social Work in Toronto," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 14, 1 (Spring 1979): 36 and 37.

[15]Canada, Sessional Papers, 56, 6 (1918-19), Department of Immigration and Colonization, 5. Figures include immigration from Britain, the United States, and "Other Countries."

the huge influx of peoples of diverse ethnic backgrounds and relatively low living standards? Reform interests thought it doubtful unless the process of immigrant integration were more carefully systematized. Women's societies took it upon themselves to develop, on a voluntary basis, services to keep out undesirables and aid those deemed worthy to immigrate. As Chapter Three will discuss in more detail, women's groups checked immigrants' references, met their trains, and followed up on their progress in Canada. H. P. Plumptre of the National Council of Women cited immigration as one of her organization's highest priorities. "The question of immigration has of late been given more time and thought by our National Council than any other theme," she reported, "because we feel that, at the present time, it is at the root of many of our social problems."[16]

Despite the tremendous increase in immigration in the decades before World War I, there was in fact an immigration policy shift from a laissez-faire approach to a more restrictive one.[17] When it became clear to the Laurier government that there was no shortage of potential migrants, Ottawa insisted that recruiting agents be more selective, and in 1902 instituted compulsory medical inspections for non-British European immigrants. Because these inspections were usually cursory at best,

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[16]Sears, 94, from H. P. Plumtre, "The National Council of Women and Conservation," *Commission of Conservation Annual Meeting*, 1914.

[17]Mabel F. Timlin, "Canada's Immigration Policy, 1896-1910," *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 26, 4 (November 1960): 517. See also Kelley and Trebilcock, 165. I have extended the restrictive period identified by Timlin to 1920, first because World War I halted immigration for its duration and brought an increase in anti-foreign sentiment, and secondly because significant policy changes continued to be made, notably regarding occupational and health requirements.

reform groups complained that the policy could do little to catch the feeble-minded or those not obviously diseased.[18] It is notable that the government listened to the public and made an effort to address, however feebly, concerns about the health and national origins of immigrants.

After Clifford Sifton was replaced as Minister of the Interior by a more cautious Frank Oliver in 1905, additional restrictive measures followed.[19] Oliver and the Cabinet gave inspectors and other bureaucrats greater latitude by refining points of policy through the use of orders-in-council. In this way, the Cabinet was able to instruct the Ministry of the Interior to deal with issues as they arose; for example, it swiftly ordered the exclusion of some British labourers and Chinese immigrants in response to public concerns.[20] The power of bureaucrats to exclude immigrants on the bases of ethnicity, race, health, and behaviour was enshrined in the Immigration Act of 1910. The language of Section 3, which outlined "Prohibited Classes," allowed officials to decide on the basis of a brief inspection who might be feeble-minded, immoral, or "likely to become a public charge."[21]

Canadian social reform associations identified many shortcomings in the new legislation. First, they believed that the root of the problem

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[18]Sears, 96.

[19]Timlin, 517.

[20]Ibid., 523 and 529.

[21]An Act respecting Immigration, 9-10 Edward VII, Chap. 27, Section 3, assented to 4 May 1910.

was in the faulty selection procedures which allowed immigration agents, many of whom were employed by transportation and resource industries, to continue recruiting unsuitable individuals. Operating on a bonus system, agents were entitled to collect one pound or three dollars per head from the Canadian government. This practice lead reformers to charge that desire for profit compelled agents to overlook negative qualities of migrants.[22] Moreover, under a 1910 policy directive agents were instructed to recruit only bona fide agriculturalists and domestic servants, but agents cast their nets widely to include anyone who merely agreed to accept such work.[23] Charitable organizations crusaded for the abolition of bonus payments, maintaining that no matter how much power Canadian bureaucrats might possess, they could not pick out all the bad seeds recruited by unscrupulous agents. Once they arrived on Canadian shores, undesirable immigrants became Canada's problem.

The social reform vision for national growth was somewhat in conflict with officialdom, which considered agricultural settlement as key to economic strength, and with Canadian industrialists who were set on expanding transportation networks and exploiting natural resources with immigrant labour. Reformers, who emphasized moral and cultural issues, expressed anxiety about the potential of immigration to change Canadian society in a radical way by diluting the anglo-Protestant influence. It was generally accepted among English-speaking peoples that their "anglo"

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[22]RG 76/C-4712/48/1836. Unsigned letter to Women's National Immigration Society, 11 August 1900; C-4777/113/22787; Scott to Cory, 4 November 1914. Bonus payments per head were five dollars by 1915; see C-4777/113/22787, Scott to Ames, 17 March 1915.

[23]RG 76/C-4777/113/22787, Scott to Stafford, 18 October 1915.

values such as Protestantism and representative government had led them to the "apex of civilization." Canada could thus endure as a great country only as long as its British character and institutions were preserved.[24] The popularity of Methodist minister and reformer James Woodsworth's books, *Strangers Within Our Gates* and *My Neighbor*,[25] among many others, demonstrated a concern for immigrant assimilibility. Reformers were both responding to and fueling this anxiety.

Encouraging the movement of women, primarily women of British origin, was regarded as one of the most critical issues to be dealt with in migration policy reform movement. Essential not only for Canada's survival, but for that of the British Empire, women's migration was at once problematic and full of promise. These sentiments were expressed by Canadian and British women's organizations and the Colonial Office in London, and to a lesser extent by Ottawa. The increase in British immigration to Canada from the turn of the century until the First World War was considered a positive development with one major drawback: current trends in British migration were cited as the cause of a gender imbalance between the Mother Country and her dominions which could negate the benefits associated with high migration levels. Because it was vastly more common for single men to migrate than single women, the

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[24]Howard Palmer, "Reluctant Hosts: Anglo-Canadian Views of Multiculturalism in the Twentieth Century," in *Multiculturalism in State Policy*, Report of the Second Biennial Conference of the Canadian Consultative Council on Multiculturalism (Ottawa: Ministry of Supply, 1976): 10-12.

[25]James S. Woodsworth, *Strangers Within Our Gates* (Toronto: F. C. Stephenson, 1909); *My Neighbor: A Study of Social Conditions, a Plea for Social Service* (Toronto: Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, 1911).

dominions had an overabundance of men, while Britain had far too many women.[26]

The Home Government put the gender imbalance under intense study and estimated that in 1911 young adult emigrant males outnumbered emigrant females by more than three to one.[27] According to the Royal Statistical Society's analysis, this left a "surplus" of 346,000 unmarried women in England and Wales, many of whom were middle-class and unaccustomed to supporting themselves.[28] They were identified quite simply as a burden on society. On the other hand, an overabundance of single men in the dominions, although advantageous for business as a source of cheap labour, was ultimately undesirable because single men tended toward transcience and violence. A nearly equal proportion of the sexes in the dominions was necessary to counteract the negative effects of single men's migration. Women's alleged civilizing influence, ostensibly their greater religious devotion and nurturing instincts, was just what the dominions needed. Women's immigration allowed for the creation of families and thus stable, prosperous settlements.[29]

The image of single women languishing in Britain, on the margins of society without homes of their own, childless, and without work

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[26]G. F. Plant, *A Survey of Voluntary Effort in Women's Empire Migration* (London: Society for the Oversea Settlement of British Women, 1951): 6.

[27]United Kingdom, Dominions Royal Commission, Minutes of Evidence, Migration (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1915): 2.

[28]Ibid., 1.

[29]Plant, *A Survey of Voluntary Effort...*, 3-4.

appropriate for their sex moved social reformers to action. Women's voluntary associations in particular placed enormous emphasis on female migration, not only as a palliative for women's unemployment, but to help provide opportunities for women's moral and social uplift. Reformers could be overbearing, if not oppressive, in their insistence on helping 'surplus' women whether they wanted help or not, but they believed they were assisting less fortunate women fulfill their destinies as wives and mothers. G. F. Plant, Secretary of the Home Government's Oversea Settlement Committee and author of several books on empire migration, summed it up by quoting Gibbon Wakefield: "Was there ever a country in which grown-up unmarried women were as numerous in proportion to the married?...Great Britain...is the greatest and the saddest convent that the world has ever seen."[30]

Since Canada's Ministry of the Interior appeared less than totally committed to giving priority to British immigration, reform organizations made a concerted effort to recruit new Canadians in the British Isles. Indeed it became all the rage, as hundreds of organizations involved themselves in schemes to transplant single women from Britain to the dominions. Many existing organizations such as the YWCA and WCTU devoted resources to it, and new ones were created for this specific purpose. Numerous British emigration societies had been operating for decades and were more than willing to cooperate with dominion agencies. An exercise in social imperialism, promoting female migration had both short- and long-term benefits. It was highly touted as a method

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[30]Ibid., 7.

of alleviating Britain's problem of redundant women swiftly, although London maintained that this was not the primary aim. The anticipated outcome was a larger population in the dominions that remained "British by birth and spirit...".[31] The redundant women of Britain were necessary to bring this about, as they would blossom in the far reaches of the empire and strengthen the social, cultural, and economic bonds of the white imperial community.[32]

While men had long been encouraged to migrate to destinations within the empire, the migration of women was looked upon in a different light, as an issue subject to a gender-specific set of problems. Reform organizations and the Colonial Office in London warned of the dangers awaiting female travelers at the hands of unscrupulous agents and immoral sailors. It was considered unnatural for a woman to strike out entirely on her own. Even if no disaster befell her on the journey, the single woman arrived in a new land where her all-important reputation was in question. By moving beyond the reach of her father or husband, her traditional male protectors, the female migrant placed herself in a most vulnerable position with no one to vouch for her purity. Reform societies, primarily those run by women, aimed to transform the migration experience by providing a maternalistic network of guidance and protection, thereby raising the respectability of the migration option.[33]

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[31]Great Britain, Public Records Office (hereafter PRO)/CO 721/46. Memo, Conference of Prime Ministers, 1922, 3.

[32]Barbara Roberts, "'A Work of Empire': Canadian Reformers and British Female Migration," in Kealey, 190.

[33]A. James Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen: Benteel Poverty and Female*

Reform women were galvanized to watch over female travelers every step of the way because of the widely-accepted belief in the existence of a world-wide "white slave" network. Newspaper articles, reports of voluntary and religious associations, and government documents from the late nineteenth century to the 1930s attest to a conviction that scores of white women and girls were being kidnapped and forced into prostitution, usually at the hands of Chinese, Jewish, or Italian men. Sociologist Mariana Valverde explained that the fear of this "traffic in vice" reached the magnitude of a nation-wide "moral panic."[34] Carolyn Strange, in her work on single women in Toronto, has shown how this panic was an expression of anxieties about social change, including the rising number of non-British immigrants and the new work opportunities for women in an urban, industrial environment.[35] Chinese men rubbing elbows with naive British immigrant girls raised fears of moral turpitude and miscegenation, which from reformers' viewpoint were major causes of social decay.

Procurers of white slaves were thought to lurk everywhere, in ice cream parlours, dark movie houses, and especially near train stations and boarding houses where female travelers were likely to be found. It was commonly believed that pimps lured girls away with promises of cheap housing and good jobs.[36] In several instances, police alerted the

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Emigration, 1830-1914 (London: Croom Helm, 1979): 125.

[34]Mariana Valverde, 88-99, passim.

[35]Carolyn Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City, 1880-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995): 99-102.

[36]International Congress of Women, *Report*, 1909, 2 (Toronto: 1910): 417; National Council of Women of Canada, *Yearbook* 1908 (Toronto 1908): 63, hereafter cited as

immigration department to a kidnapper disguised as a dapper gentleman who was haunting Montreal's train stations, looking for "possible victims of his wiles."[37] This was clearly considered a class-based crime; it was impossible for the suspicious man, no matter how well-dressed, to be anything but an imposter in the higher ranks of society. A most heinous aspect of white slavery, reform organizations insisted, was that girls were sometimes led astray by other fallen women. This betrayal by "procuresses" implicated working-class women in the trade; those who made a living as street vendors, factory workers, and as prostitutes were suspect.[38]

Canada's fascination with this vice led feminists, religious leaders, and the press to speak and write about it in detail to titillate their audiences as much as to warn them. A lurid urban mythology circulated, like the following story recounted at the 1908 National Council of Women of Canada meeting:

> A revolting story was told in court by a young woman lured by a supposed friend to a Chinese opium den, and there abandoned, where police found her behind a concealed door, virtually a prisoner, her clothes hidden by the keepers of the joint. The girl said she had never smoked opium in her life. This den was only two doors east of the Great Northern Depot. The police of British Columbia are vigorously prosecuting the campaign against the Chinese who traffic in white girls.[39]

NCW; and Shaw, 13.

[37]RG 76/C-10648/570/813739. Scott to Colonel Sherwood, 6 March 1914.

[38]International Congress of Women, *Report*, 1909, 421; Valverde, 90-91.

[39]NCW, *Yearbook* 1908, 61.

Efforts to call attention to the pervasiveness of the problem had the ironic effect of creating a competition among Canadian cities to be known as the center of the trade, with several community leaders claiming that their city was the site of the most abductions. A member of the Local Council of Women of London, Ontario, surmised that her city "...certainly contribut[ed] its share to the too-long list" of victimized girls,[40] while women from British Columbia thought their cities were the most dangerous due to larger Chinese populations. After a Montreal *Herald* reporter called his city the "hot-bed of vice" and claimed that it was the major distribution point for white slaves, a Baptist minister insisted that Hamilton, Ontario, was the true hub of the vice traffic.[41] Montreal appeared most able to defend its claim, and the numerous articles appearing in local newspapers during the 1910s prompted the Canadian Pacific company to warn the immigration department that such scare-mongering should be stopped because it might discourage female immigrants from landing there.[42] When pressed, ministers and other defenders of morality could not cite specific sources for their information. The YWCA could not do so after it produced the figure 26,000 as the number of women who disappeared from Montreal, Toronto, New York, and Detroit combined in 1913.[43] Reform

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[40]Ibid., 62.

[41]RG 76/C-10648/569/813739. "Warns English Girls to Stay Away from Montreal." Montreal *Herald*, 30 July 1910; Ottawa *Free Press*, 1 December 1910.

[42]Ibid., CPR letter to Scott, 5 December 1913; and 570/813739, "Places Montreal among Worst on This Continent," Montreal *Star*, 12 January.

[43]RG 76/570/813739. "Twenty-Six Thousand Girls Disappear," Montreal *Star*, 18 February 1913.

organizations tended to downplay the importance of numbers, saying that the shadowy nature of the trade prevented acquisition of concrete evidence. Axiomatically, lack of evidence itself was cited as proof of

> "...the cunning and ingenuity of those who carry on this trade. But no one should take for granted that it does not exist because they do not see it. To watch and read carefully is to be convinced that it flourishes, and that few countries are free from it."[44]

While social reformers were certain that the white slave trade existed, they also recognized that taking part in the crusade to end it might bring their respective organizations greater publicity. Reform societies were willing to cooperate extensively to stamp out this vice, but each group lost no opportunity to publicize what it was doing individually.

White slavery was the subject of several international conventions at which women were prominent. The first two, in 1904 and 1910, did not receive a great deal of publicity and their resolutions were considered "feeble" by several interested parties.[45] By 1920 however, reformers got the ear of the League of Nations which appointed an officer to study the vice traffic, and in 1921 a League-sponsored International Conference on Traffic in Women and Children was held in Europe. Delegates reinforced the belief system which deemed a women's purity to be the basis of her worth, but at the same time they affirmed a woman's right to travel and work without harassment. The final conference resolution called for nations to take legislative and bureaucratic measures to protect traveling

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[44]NCW, *Yearbook* 1908, 61.

[45]RG 76/C-10648/570/813739. League of Nations Conference on Traffic in Women and Children, Provisional Verbatim Report, June-July 1921, 5.

women, something that Canada was already beginning to do. Ottawa had incorporated clauses in the Criminal Code revisions of 1892 prohibiting involvement in the white slave traffic, but in the opinion of reform organizations this did not end the need for front-line immorality prevention efforts. Women's associations in particular thought that the existing anti-procurement laws were without teeth, thus they demanded increased government regulation of women's migration.[46]

Roughly three types of migration associations for women were operating from the turn of the century to World War I: the sending societies in Britain, which recruited women as candidates for emigration; the local receiving societies in the colonies and dominions, whose members met immigrant ships and offered short-term housing and job placement services; and the international organizations, such as the YWCA, which oversaw several aspects of the migration process through their many branches in Britain and Canada. In the rather tangled network of migration sponsorship and tutelage that grew during this period, certain societies found a niche because of their special interests or the unique services they offered to traveling women. The Anglican Church Army, for example, appointed matrons to chaperone women, while meeting ships and providing hostel accommodation was a strong point of Canadian YWCA branches.[47] The system eventually became more coordinated as interested groups formed umbrella organizations to assist women and pursue government funding.

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[46]Ibid.

[47]Pedersen, 360.

Voluntary societies divided potential candidates for migration into categories according to class, age, religious denomination, and sometimes by area or town of origin. A myriad of sponsorship groups sprang up in Britain and the dominions to help British women of small means begin life anew as respectable wage workers--usually governesses, teachers, or servants--throughout the empire. Indigent girls (as well as boys) from Britain's urban centres were taken into the care of the Church of England Waifs and Strays Society, the Catholic Emigration Association, or the largest child migration agency, Dr. Bernardo's Homes. These groups placed girls with foster families in the dominions "...with the purpose in view of checking pauperism, ignorance, and the moral depreciation of the race."[48] This "scientific" system removed young people from what were judged unhealthy environments and, by placing them with families in the dominions, ostensibly allowed them to build character by working for their keep. While some families adopted these children, the Canadian government, which kept statistics on child migration, admitted that the great majority of receiving families requested children for their labour alone, boys for farm work and girls for domestic service.[49] Enthusiastic emigration societies targeted the poor of certain regions of Britain or even certain urban neighborhoods. In Scotland the Scottish Women's Emigration Association sought out hardy rural women who were considered choice domestics by Canadian middle- and upper-class

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[48]Canada, Sessional Papers, 56, 6 (1918-19), Department of Immigration and Colonization, 32.

[49]Ibid., 34; Joy Parr, *Labouring Children: British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada, 1869-1924* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1980): 150.

housewives. The East End Emigration Fund operated from the working-class district of eastern London, while the Metropolitan Society for Young Servants recruited women living throughout the city. Inmates of the Liverpool Sheltering Homes were also encouraged to emigrate.

There were several associations which took middle-class women under their wings. Two early promoters of women's emigration were Maria Rye and Jane Lewin, founders of Britain's Female Middle Class Emigration Society (FMCES) in 1862. As its name implies, its purpose was to assist refined and respectable women who had seen a reverse of fortune and were faced with the need to earn a living. British social norms dictated that for a middle-class woman, performing domestic service in one's hometown was to be avoided if possible since it represented a step down the ladder of social status. Rye and Lewin presented emigration as a way for women to save face while earning a wage, and like most migration sponsorship societies the FMCES stressed the increased chances of marriage for single women in the dominions. The society's clients had to express a willingness to become governesses, seamstresses, or "lady helps," a euphemism for domestic servant. Rye and Lewin stipulated that only women who were willing to thus humble themselves would be considered as candidates for sponsorship.[50] Their counterpart in Canada was Mary Agnes FitzGibbon, an author and staunch imperialist who, among other immigration promotion activities, opened a hostel for immigrant women in Toronto.[51]

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[50]Una Monk, *One Hundred Years of Women's Migration* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1963): 10.

[51]Roberts in Kealey, 195-196.

There were also a small number of societies which placed formally educated women, or at least made an attempt to do so. The Society of the Maple Leaf was comprised of British and Canadian Anglicans interested in sending British school teachers to the sparsely settled regions of western Canada. Exclusive in its recruitment, the society usually sent fewer than fifty women to Canada in a given year, but to one prominent member, the Reverend George Exton Lloyd, these select women had a profound effect on Canada's development. An Anglican bishop and migration enthusiast, the Reverend Lloyd rejected any sort of melting pot ideology, insisting that non-British immigrants corrupted Canada's British culture and institutions.[52] As for sending British women to the far reaches of the Canadian West, he believed their civilizing influence could be quantified, figuring that the thirty teachers who went to Canada in 1919 were "...a small matter from the standpoint of emigration, but if you multiplied each one by 16 square miles, that is the British and Christian influence we are putting into that big western country."[53] The immigration of middle-class women seeking such work was not, however, encouraged by the Canadian government which by 1910 was directing single women into domestic service.

In Canada, the almost countless number of receiving societies were divided along similar lines as their British counterparts with regard to religion and age, but the vast majority operated in compliance with federal policy and funnelled immigrant women, no matter what their

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[52]Palmer, "Reluctant Hosts," 25-26.

[53]PRO/CO/721/5. Lloyd to MacNaghten, 13 September 1919.

social status in Britain, into service in Canadian homes. Overwhelmingly a middle-class endeavor, assisting female migrants was this class' answer to "the two great problems" facing women in Canada: the lack of appropriate jobs for working girls and the scarcity of domestic help for well-to-do housewives.[54] In general, these societies agreed with the government that the country did not need more single women for retail or factory work as long as maids were hard to find; hence, they combined their efforts in a grand exercise to strengthen the connection between women's immigration and paid housework.

The larger women's organizations such as the NCW, YWCA, and Girls Friendly Society (GFS) had branches in cities and towns in Britain and Canada. The WCTU and Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE) were North American associations and thus concentrated on reception work.[55] All had established migration committees by the early twentieth century and were providing practical immigration assistance at the local and national levels. Most churches too were highly involved in this work through their women's missionary societies. Increasingly, these organizations' activities intersected, since they kept in close contact with one another in order to keep track of the traveling women under their watchful protection. As a first step, it was very important that the British sending societies record each immigrant's religious affiliation so that Canadian receiving societies could put the case in the proper hands. The

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[54]Charlotte Lightborne, "New Housewives for Canada," *Everywoman's World* (February 1914): 12.

[55]Catherine Gillian Pickles, "Representing Twentieth Century Colonial Identity: The Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE)," unpublished doctoral dissertation, McGill University, 1996, 3.

NCW and YWCA of Canada, for example, asked for lists of newcomers and gave their names to local churches in towns to which they were destined.[56] These local organizations carried out "follow up" work consisting of placing immigrants in domestic employment and encouraging them to attend church. The names of "problem" immigrants were gathered by local societies or churches who notified the Big Sisters' Association, Girls' Friendly Society, or National Committee of Mental Hygiene of any unacceptable behaviour.[57] These groups and others attempted to steer wayward immigrants back onto the straight and narrow, or recommend deportation for the hopelessly "degenerate."

The ability of women's organizations to cooperate in such a way was enhanced by the tendency of individual women to become members of several reform organizations at once.[58] Typically, a woman might be active in the ladies' auxiliary of her church and have memberships in the local WCTU and the Local Council of Women, all of which had programmes for the reception of female immigrants into the community. Between approximately 1875 and 1920, throughout the British Empire, communication among reform organizations became more common. The buoyant economy at the turn of the century brought significant

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[56]Plant, *A Survey of Voluntary Effort...*, 54.

[57]Canada, Sessional Papers, 60, 4,(1922-23), Immigration and Colonization, 56. The National Committee of Mental Hygiene was founded in 1918 when the principles of eugenics were fairly widely accepted. The Committee held that certain behaviours such as promiscuity and insobriety were inherited. Members spoke out against the immigration of "undesirables," a category which included anyone with any physical or mental problems, the "immoral" and intemperate. See also McLaren, 59.

[58]Linda Kealey, *A Not Unreasonable Claim* (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1979): 3.

developments in technology and communications, including an explosion in the amount and availability of printed materials. According to historian John MacKenzie, imperial sentiment remained strong after the Boer War because of the greater ease with which propaganda about the conflict had circulated throughout the empire. Men, women, and children consumed imperial culture through books and magazines, post cards, games, and pamphlets, and as a result, the distances between the Mother Country and its territories seemed smaller than ever before.[59] Women's organizations published their annual reports and conference proceedings, making it easy for reform-minded women to learn what sister organizations were doing and to explore their shared interests. This era also saw the first mass-market women's magazines, and some, such as *Imperial Colonist* and *Work and Leisure* (both published in England) were devoted to women's empire migration.[60] *Everywoman's World* publicized what Canada had to offer to British newcomers in the way of protection en route, jobs, and husbands.

Canadian women's organizations followed the example of their sister societies in the United States and created a joint Travellers' Aid network for single women and mothers traveling alone. Organized by the WCTU, YWCA, Presbyterians, and Methodists, the Travellers' Aid sent badge-wearing representatives to train stations where they acted as "...a link in the chain of protection,"[61] providing information on reputable

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[59]John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984): 16.

[60]See Monk, 9-10, and 18; Plant, *A Survey of Voluntary Effort...*, 45.

[61]Shaw, 23.

hostels and public transportation in a given city, or simply helping travelers find connecting trains. These volunteers did not shy away from their own kind of police work when, due to what they called the "perversity of girl nature" some independently-minded young travelers refused their advice.[62] Rather than giving up on these girls, the aid workers called upon the network of reform organizations to try to track them down, and if successful, informed wayward girls' relatives of their whereabouts.[63]

While the larger women's organizations dominated immigration reform campaigns, many women carried out immigrant assistance work within local societies. Historians have tended to neglect these smaller, grass-roots organizations in favour of the more visible ones, but these local women's groups had as great an impact on the lives of individual immigrant women as the larger organizations. In Montreal, the wives of some of Canada's leading businessmen formed the Montreal Women's Protective Immigration Society (WPIS) in 1882 to undertake what they called the "peculiar kind of work"[64] helping female immigrants find employment in their city. Members included Lady Mount Stephen, whose family grew wealthy from the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway; Mrs. Hugh Allan, wife of the shipping magnate; and Mrs. George Drummond, whose husband founded the Canada Sugar Refining

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[62]Ibid., 13.

[63]Valverde, 125.

[64]RG 76/C-4712/48/1836. Women's Protective Immigration Society (WPIS), Annual Report, 1882-3, 6. By 1898 the Society had changed its name to the Women's National Immigration Society.

Company.[65] Among the richest families in Canada, their fortunes were directly tied to the transportation of migrants and the use of their labour. The WPIS, fairly short-lived compared to some of the national women's organizations, was nevertheless notable because of its elite members who probably exercised an influence on shipping company policies through their powerful husbands. As long as it was cost effective and popular, railway and shipping companies were not adverse to making special arrangements for female passengers by the early 1900s. Most of the largest Canadian shipping companies permitted reform societies to organize single women into parties and appoint chaperones for them on board ship, an idea advanced by the WPIS.[66]

Montreal's role as a clearing house for people on the move induced the members of the WPIS to see unaccompanied women as "so many doves let loose in a cage of vultures" and themselves as workers on the front lines of vice prevention.[67] In their view, coloured as it was by their Victorian values, the most appropriate way to prevent vice was to control the behaviour of young women. It was, after all, young wage-earning women traveling alone who were out of place in society; they were the ones posing a challenge to social and economic norms. Moreover, because of their lack of formal political power, middle-class reform women were limited to exercising control over women younger, poorer or

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[65]Ibid., see WPIS Annual Reports; and Margaret Westley, *Rememberance of Grandeur: The Anglo-Protestant Elite of Montreal 1900-1950* (Montreal: Editions Libre Expression, 1990): 17-18.

[66]RG 76/C-10648/569/813739, Scott to NCW, 7 August 1913.

[67]RG 76/C-4712/48/1836, WPIS Annual Report, 1882-3, 6.

socially inferior to themselves. They did this through private yet powerful institutions such as churches and women's societies.

The WPIS developed a structured programme to recruit women overseas, preferably British women, to work as maids in Canadian homes. Their overseas recruiters were often wealthy British women with an interest in promoting empire migration, but any emigration agent operating in Europe could contact the WPIS and place female recruits under its auspices, and in fact, in 1898 the Canadian government required all agents to notify the WPIS of any single women bound for Montreal.[68] A non-profit society, the WPIS funded its efforts through gifts from wealthy benefactors and by charging immigrants a fee for reference checks and job placement. By the early 1900s the WPIS and many similar societies received annual federal government grants because they were carrying out Ottawa's official policy of directing female immigrants into domestic work. The Women's Welcome Hostel Board, a Toronto-based society, received $1000 annually from Ottawa, while the WPIS was given $2000. It is remarkable that the Ottawa Valley Immigrant Aid Society, which would have supplied the families of federal officials and politicians with domestic servants, received $3500 per year.[69]

A task often undertaken by a local immigration society was the purchase of suitable property for a boarding house to accommodate female travelers. To accomplish this, a society sought support from a religious body or from a wealthy patron or patroness. The WPIS hostel

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[68]Ibid., immigration department to Hall, 18 January 1898.

[69]RG 76/C-10248/338/356358. Copy of Order-in-Council P.C. 849, dated 23 March 1914.

opened with a gift from the Marquis of Lorne and Princess Louise, while the Girls' Home of Welcome in Winnipeg received a grant from Octavia Fowler, the daughter of a former mayor of London, England.[70] By the first decade of the twentieth century, there were immigrant women's hostels operating in Montreal, Toronto, Halifax, Winnipeg, and Vancouver. In addition to those established by local women's immigration aid societies, there were Roman Catholic and Anglican boarding houses, and YWCA hostels which catered primarily to Protestant women. Hostel boards of directors usually included men, but the day-to-day management of hostels fell to women who administered funds, served as "matrons" or house mothers, cooked, cleaned, and handled public relations and job placement.[71] Hostels were important for centralizing the immigrant assistance work of local societies, giving them a headquarters so to speak. Once hostels were up and running, they acted as connecting points among local immigration societies and local branches of national women's organizations. Several women of the WPIS were members of the Montreal Local Council of Women, and they encouraged other LCW members to become involved in the hostel's work. As early as 1896, the WPIS was inviting the YWCA, LCW, and other interested groups to attend meetings at its Osborne Street boarding house.[72] Agnes Fitzgibbon, founder of the Women's Welcome Hostel of

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[70]RG 76/C-15865/138/33136, Gordon to Sifton, 6 January 1897.

[71]See Annual Reports for Women's Protective Immigration Society and Women's National Immigration Society in RG 76/C-4712/48/1836; for Montreal's Dorchester House in C-4777/114/22787; for the Toronto Women's Welcome Hostel in C-10248/338/356358; for Winnipeg's Girls' Home of Welcome in C-15865/138/33136.

[72]RG 76/C-4712/48/1836, WPIS Annual Report, 1896.

Toronto, garnered support from the Toronto chapter of the LCW and the British Women's Emigration Association.[73]

A large component of those involved in voluntary immigration work disapproved of treating it as a business venture, even though their families had connections to corporations which depended on immigration for labour and profits. According to the women of the WPIS, female immigrants belonged in the private, protective environment of the home and should not have to sell their labour on the open market. But these wealthy women in fact had a great deal to gain from female immigration; their desire to increase the availability of domestic labour was as much a motivating factor as their concern for immigrants' well-being. Immigrant aid societies used a terminology which obscured the economic activity they were promoting. By calling themselves "guardian angels" whose work constituted "services to the nation,"[74] they played down their essential role as employment contractors.

For a number of middle-class women, however, managing the immigration and job placement of single women was a livelihood. As booking agents working alone or in partnership with others, these women traveled to Britain once or twice a year to recruit emigrants and make necessary arrangements for their transportation and employment, and then accompanied their recruits to Canada. Some formed clubs or guilds, such as the Canadian Domestic Guild established by Sarah MacArthur in Toronto in 1912. MacArthur, an immigrant herself from Northern

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[73]Barbara Roberts, "'A Work of Empire'" in Kealey, 196.

[74]Shaw, 23.

Ireland, publicized her guild as an employment agency. Wealthier Torontonians joined by paying a $42 membership fee to cover the costs of locating and transporting an immigrant servant. With a yearly federal grant of $500, MacArthur attempted to deliver domestics to all guild members, but it was a goal she could not meet, and as a result, the Canadian Domestic Guild was the source of several complaints to the immigration department. Guild members accused Sarah MacArthur of not finding servants quickly enough and of failing to refund fees upon request. Ottawa was obligated to investigate the complaints because of its support for her efforts, and in 1916 the government revoked the guild's license to import labour. What was particularly disturbing to officials was MacArthur's habit of telling the public that she was closely linked to the immigration department, a sort of federal agent herself.[75] The government's implication in the misconduct of women in the immigration business was an unforeseen consequence to the grant system. Problems associated with businesses such as the Canadian Domestic Guild made officials wary of leaving women's immigration schemes in the hands of private citizens without implementing greater regulatory measures. After 1910, the immigration department kept a closer watch on the operations of guilds and voluntary organizations which were also the subject of some complaints.

Voluntary societies lobbied the government to stop supporting organizations which profited financially from women's migration, claiming that questionable practices discredited other more honest

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[75]RG 76/C-10635/552/806038, copy of P.C. 46-177; also Herron Brothers to Minister of the Interior, 5 June 1916; Scott to MacArthur, 15 January 1917.

attempts to help female immigrants. Agents working for businesses, domestic guilds, and the Salvation Army were condemned for taking part in the bonus system which, as far as voluntary groups were concerned, smacked of an officially sponsored trade in women.[76] Agents were accused of caring little about their recruits' backgrounds and even less about guiding them into a healthy lifestyle in Canada, since "[t]he agent has made money over the transaction and there his work ends!"[77] While voluntary societies did not often mention offending male immigration agents by name, they did so for female agents and guild owners. Several references were made to Mrs. Isabel Bowder of Glasgow, Scotland, who recruited women of questionable background and sent them to Canada as bona fide domestics. Catherine Louttit of the Toronto hostel charged that Bowder's recruits were "illegitimate mothers," had venereal diseases, or were otherwise immoral and unfit to be servants.[78] Recruiters like Bowder and MacArthur with their need for profit were caught in a conflict of interest and thus expected to abuse the bonus system. As long as the system endured, it was the quantity of immigrants recruited, rather than their suitability for citizenship, that was the agent's primary concern. There were, however, additional messages that voluntary societies were conveying: first, it was not entirely respectable for women to engage in business, and second, those who made a living sending vulnerable girls

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[76]RG-76/C-4777/113/22787, Scott to Cory 4 November 1914; PRO/CO/721/2, Oversea Settlement Committee Meeting, 16 March 1920. Several representatives of Canadian women's organizations were present at this meeting.

[77]RG 76/C-4777/113/22787, Burrington-Ham to Toronto Chief Commissioner of Police, 22 September 1914.

[78]RG 76/C-4777/114/22787, Louttit to Patriotic Fund, 7 June 1919.

across the ocean transgressed the ethical code that women should freely help other women as part of a universal sisterhood. And, quite simply, they didn't like the competition. Voluntary societies were possessive of "their girls" and assertive about staking out their turf.

The crusade to abolish bonus payments was backed by the Church of England, the Methodists, Congregationalists, Baptists, and Presbyterians. The Roman Catholic Bishop of Montreal also spoke out against it and called for a federal bureau of women's immigration to take the place of the present "evil" system.[79] As much as they came under attack, however, bonuses were a major source of funding for many non-profit organizations, including several of the local societies with hostels. These societies were not criticized as severely for accepting bonuses because they operated on a non-profit basis, with no administrator or recruiter benefitting directly from the payments, but nevertheless the temptation for wrongdoing still existed. Striving as they did for a higher standard, voluntary organizations knew that any hint of unethical behaviour among their members might bring criticism, hindering their immigration work in the future.

As government grants increased over the decades, accountability was indeed an important issue for social service organizations, and reputation a valued asset. To project an image as skilled workers and not "matronly busybodies,"[80] voluntary organizations adopted businesslike, bureaucratic methods similar to those of government and social workers. Their

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[79]RG 76/C-4777/113/22787, Bishop of Montreal to immigration department, 25 February 1919.

[80]Rooke and Schnell, 499; see also Pedersen, 200.

connection with officialdom encouraged the use of forms and files to keep track of immigrant women, referred to more often as "cases."[81] To become a sponsored immigrant, a woman was required to submit application forms and written employment and/or character references.

Women's organizations were greatly encouraged when their lobbying efforts paid off and Ottawa abolished bonus payments and commissions for immigrant job placement in 1914.[82] By that year, most of the organizations sponsoring women immigrants including the YWCA, NCW, and WCTU, along with leading clergymen, favoured a plan for federal management of women's migration. The WPIS did also; since 1882 it had been calling upon Ottawa to "...pour out of its treasury into the hands of those willing to look after Immigrants,"[83] and the immigration department had indeed encouraged women's immigration materially through grants. Ottawa's regulatory role had also become greater. Any society or individual engaged in recruitment and placement of immigrant domestic servants was required to be licensed in 1913, and there were limits on fees that recruiters could charge to immigrants or employers.[84]

In recognition of volunteers' abilities and years of experience with female migration, the government granted them some authority by

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[81]NCW *Yearbook* 1909, 410; C-4712/48/1836, see WPIS Annual Reports. British Assocations also adopted application forms and certificates. See Plant, *A Survey of Voluntary Effort*...25.

[82]RG 76/C-4777/113/22787, F. C. Blair memo, 23 November 1914; Scott to Cory, 23 November 1914.

[83]RG 76/C-4712/48/1836, WPIS Annual Report, 1882-3, 6.

[84]RG 76/C-4712/49/1836, Scott to WNIS, 19 May 1913; C-4777/113/22787. Scott to Carmichael, 11 October 1913.

requiring recruiting agents to notify them before women set sail. Voluntary organizations pushed for these regulations because they lent legitimacy to their efforts and put greater controls on traveling women. There was, however, a growing concern that the state might co-opt the work, taking it out of the hands of the women who painstakingly built the system.[85] Cooperation among migration assistance groups reached the point where they began working together on a proposal for a federal women's migration committee or department, headed by someone with a background in the voluntary sector. This would allow for enforcement of regulations, coordination of activities, and, these groups hoped, retention of their influence in this area.[86]

There was also a need to maintain public confidence in migration assistance programs. Support for assisted immigration in the press was now and then punctuated by articles claiming that migration was not a good option for the destitute, especially those with a history of accepting relief payments. The argument was that anyone who failed in Britain would fail in Canada because poverty was symptomatic of laziness no matter where a person lived.[87] Reformers asserted that assisted migration was not charity work, but scientific social work providing deserving, morally suitable individuals with indirect assistance rather than handouts. Concerns about self-reliance and resourcefulness were more often directed toward immigrant

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[85]Nicola Cunningham, "Seduced and Abandoned: The Legal Regulation of Domestic Workers in Canada from 1867 to 1940," unpublished master's thesis, York University, 1991, 88.

[86]RG 76/C-4777/113/22787, Scott to Cory, 24 July 1917; Chisholm to Calder, 17 November 1918.

[87]RG 76/10421/487/752538, Montreal *Star* clippings, 31 May 1910, and 25 May 1910.

men who were expected to be self-sufficient; women could request assistance and not be so stigmatized, and therefore it is not surprising that there was greater approval for assisted women's migration based on the assumptions that they needed protection and rarely had any savings.

Before any concrete proposal for an official migration assistance agency could take shape, the outbreak of the First World War halted immigration, diverting English Canada's attention to the defense of the Mother Country. When Canadians at home became aware of the horrors of the Great War in Europe, they interpreted the struggle as one not only for European imperial hegemony but also in spiritual terms -- the fight of good against evil.[88] Prominent suffragist and author Nellie McClung interpreted it thus, and added the gender component to her analysis of the war's causes and consequences. Her 1917 collection of reflective essays, *The Next of Kin: Those Who Wait and Wonder*, explored the wartime experience from the point of view of English-Canadian women. Nearly overwhelmed with fear for husbands and sons abroad, McClung's subjects took up constructive action for the war effort and for reform causes at home rather than pining for their men.

McClung insisted that women experienced the war in a unique and meaningful way, and as the nation came of age through war, so did its women. They worked, they sacrificed, and they proved themselves. To

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[88]Robert Craig Brown, "Sir Robert Borden, the Great War and Anglo-Canadian Relations" in A.I. Silver, ed., *An Introduction to Canadian History* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 1991): 579-580, originally published in J. S. Moir, ed., *Character and Circumstance* (Macmillan of Canada, 1970); and Doug Owram, *The Government Generation: Canadian Intellectuals and the State, 1900-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986): 90.

McClung, it was women, second only to soldiers, who paid the most dear price by giving up their husbands and sons. She reminded her readers that while so many Canadians were willing to make such sacrifices, there were businessmen and politicians profiting from the slaughter. Several short poems in *Next of Kin* leave no doubt as to whom she deemed responsible for the war:

> Gay, as the skater who blithely whirls
> To the place of the dangerous ice!
> Content, as the lamb who nibbles the grass
> While the butcher sets the price!
> So content and gay were the boys at play
> In the nations near and far,
> When munitions kings and diplomats
> Cried, "War! War!!! War!!!"[89]

In the context of the Great War, social reform ideology took on greater validity. McClung and other feminists hoped that war, a "great teacher,"[90] would convince those who had not previously supported social reform and women's suffrage to take up the causes. The hypocrisy of trying to defeat the enemy abroad without working for a more just society at home was impressed upon Canadians who began to support prohibition and public health measures that women had promoted for decades.[91] This boost to the social reform movement also boosted women's confidence and fueled their sense of mission.

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[89]Nellie McClung, *The Next of Kin: Those Who Wait and Wonder* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1917): 34.

[90]Ibid., 99.

[91]Thompson, 97.

World War I was an important milestone in the changing identity of Canada's English-Canadian women.[92] Not only did women bond through support of "women's" causes, but gained confidence from taking on new roles and responsibilities as the nation underwent significant economic and social change. According to several historians, women in Canada made important gains during the Great War, some more lasting than others.[93] The federal franchise, certainly, was a victory in itself, but one considered by many women as a stepping-stone to greater involvement in public life. Moving into the paid work force in unprecedented numbers, often to take jobs traditionally held by men, women's labour was essential to wartime production. These "privileges" of voting and working in heavy industry were granted to women primarily out of expediency, but there was also a certain amount of genuine appreciation for women's contributions.[94]

Women in Britain made similar gains, and reform-minded women had some influence on reconstruction policy, or were at least welcomed to give their views at hearings. When the imperial government assembled the Dominions Royal Commission, migration enthusiasts presented the aims and achievements of women's emigration societies. The Commission's mandate in 1912 had been to examine British-Dominion trade and

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[92]The First World War also influenced the identities of French-Canadian women, non-British immigrant women, and women of colour. These women, however, did not play as great a role in the middle-class arm of the social reform movement or in 'empire-building,' the two subjects dealt with here.

[93]Ibid., 98 and 106; Ceta Ramkhalawansingh, "Women during The Great War," in Janice Acton et. al., *Women at Work: Ontario 1850-1930* (Toronto: Women's Educational Press, 1974): 262-263.

[94]Alison Prentice et. al., *Canadian Women: A History* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988): 208.

economic development, but after mid-1914 issues relating to reconstruction bore heavily on the hearings.[95] Migration became a major focus since it was an important component in London's postwar readjustment programme. Sending ex-servicemen to the dominions was presented as a less expensive option than reintegrating them into the economy,[96] and encouraging female emigration was even more urgent since that war had worsened the "surplus women" problem.[97] The Commission's migration hearings were supposed to pave the way for a more vigorous programme to settle British people throughout the empire, beginning with schemes for ex-servicemen and servicewomen.[98] Representatives of British emigration societies took the opportunity to testify to the extent of their cooperation with sister societies in the dominions, and proposed a "Central Authority" in London to expedite the emigration process and regulate all promotional activities.[99]

The war had stopped migration but did not suspend debate on the issue. It provided an interval during which Britain, Canada, and interested voluntary organizations contemplated policy goals for the long term, all

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[95]G. F. Plant, *Oversea Settlement: Migration from the United Kingdom to the Dominions* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951): 61.

[96]Plant, *Oversea Settlement*, 69; Keith Williams, "'A way out of our troubles': the Politics of Empire Settlement," in Stephen Constantine, ed., *Emigrants and Empire: British Settlement in the Dominions between the Wars* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990): 32.

[97]Dominions Royal Commission, Minutes of Evidence, Migration, 82.

[98]Ken Fedorowich, "The Assisted Emigration of Ex-servicemen to the Dominions, 1914-1922," in Constantine, 65.

[99]Plant, *A Survey of Voluntary Effort...*, 60-63.

wanting to depart from their somewhat haphazard past approaches to the movement of peoples. Britain and Canada's fight against Germany and its allies kept ethnicity at the centre of the immigration debate, reinforcing notions that British culture in Canada had to be protected from evil influences that non-British immigrants might bring.[100] In Canada, the immigration department and the voluntary sector were committed to giving British migration first priority once people were free to migrate again.[101] The British government did not hesitate to take advantage of the enthusiasm English Canadians expressed during and after the war for the imperial connection. London released reports on the benefits of state-aided empire migration for defense, the economy, culture, and individual migrants.[102] Soon after the Dominion Royal Commission issued its report in 1917, London established an Empire Settlement Committee, chaired by Lord Tennyson, to study assisted migration and plan for a permanent emigration office.[103] Lord Tennyson, who had served as Governor General of Australia, was one of many notable individuals who favoured empire migration in this period; other promoters included the author Henry Rider Haggard, Earl Grey, the Rhodes Trustees, and of course, the noble ladies of

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[100]Donald Avery, *Dangerous Foreigners* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979): 96.

[101]Canada, Sessional Papers 56, 6, (1918-19), Department of Immigration and Colonization, 30.

[102]See Dominions Royal Commission, Minutes of Evidence, Migration; also PRO/CO/721/2. Conference on State-Aided Empire Settlement, Record of Proceedings, 1921.

[103]Plant, *Oversea Settlement...*, 64; see also Keith Williams, 33.

the BWEA.[104] There remained the task of convincing the dominions to support Empire Settlement but, as chapter two will discuss, the course of Anglo-Canadian relations in the early twenties was conducive to cooperation in this regard.

The social reform movement allowed middle-class women to rise to positions of some influence in a respectable manner. Although "...their skirts should become a little dusty at the hem through the contact with sinning, suffering humanity,"[105] reform-minded women were praised for raising public awareness of the negative side of industrialization and for their initiatives to bring about change. Their zeal to help vulnerable members of society was attributed to maternal instinct, and as long as their class loyalties were sustained they were not criticized for developing their interests. Their work with immigrant women was defined by the state, churches, and women themselves as specially suited to the female temperment, and it would still be considered as such when it was professionalized in the interwar period. Reform women acted according to the concept of scientific charity, a maternalistic approach to imparting middle-class values on the poor in hopes they would help themselves as a matter of Christian duty and out of concern for the national, and imperial, interest. Immigration policy reform, a pillar of the reform movement, gained widespread support among English Canadians and the British, in

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[104]Constantine, 28-29.

[105]Shaw, 23.

large part because women's organizations publicized both their fears about migrants and their efforts to help them.

Not least in importance to the movement was the interest of this privileged class of women in maintaining a supply of servants. Women's migration assistance associations and the federal immigration department agreed that female immigration should serve the demand for domestic labour; however, reformers argued that the health and moral behaviour of even the lowly immigrant servant girl had vast implications for the future prosperity of Canada and the British Empire. It would be of no benefit to place "ruined" servant girls in dominion homes. Vigilant matrons, on ships and in hostels, claimed to save thousands of women from "...being lured and dragged down to the lowest depths of degradation.".[106] They were the guardians of purity and protectors of Canadian society as a whole.

Some migration assistance societies received public funds as early as the 1880s, indicating that the government recognized the value of their "peculiar work." Strings were attached to these public monies in the form of regulations, but the societies were generally in favour of increased state involvement in any area related to public health and welfare, which immigration was considered to be. By the beginning of World War I Ottawa had come to rely on such "quasi-official" bodies as migration assistance societies to carry out aspects of its policy.[107] Reform-minded women, more experienced and organized through their cooperation with government, set a new goal to carry out their work as part of a state agency.

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[106]NCW *Yearbook* 1908, 63.

[107]Rooke and Schnell, 490.

Chapter Two

"This is our work": The New Women's Division and Empire Settlement

In post-World War I Canada, immigration recruitment, inspection, and chaperoning female newcomers became acceptable paid occupations for women. Although their duties and responsibilities had definite boundaries based on preconceived gender roles, newly-hired female civil servants occupied positions of authority that women of previous generations might never have imagined possible. This chapter presents the argument that during the period just after the First World War until approximately 1921 the reform movement crested, affording women an opportunity to benefit from the popularity of reform ideology, an interventionist state, and their own hard work. One such opportunity arose in the Department of Immigration and Colonization in 1919.

Those in favour of creating an official women's immigration agency drew upon a number of very popular beliefs to make their appeal, and with emotions high just after the war, the public was receptive to their arguments. It appeared that what reformers' had warned against had come true: greed, political corruption, and a lack of concern for the consequences of unregulated market activities were not only responsible for poverty but had brought on the war's unfathomable devastation.[1] Women suggested

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[1]Doug Owram, *The Government Generation: Canadian Intellectuals and the State*

that through their participation in the public sphere such suffering might be alleviated in the present and avoided in the future. Because of their experience dealing with the so-called "unique" issues surrounding women's migration, a handful of talented reform-minded women were chosen for prominent positions in the nation's growing civil service bureaucracy. The women also possessed wartime work experience as nurses, relief workers, or sat on various wartime advisory committees.[2]

During the First World War and early twenties, middle-class reformers, and English Canadians in general, looked to the state more than ever to act as facilitator of their goals. Canadian historian John Herd Thompson asserted that the vast expansion of government power in wartime was welcomed by English Canadians who came to view the state as "...an organization capable of vigorous, positive activities."[3] To wage war effectively had required regulation of the economy and curtailment of personal freedoms, ostensibly to protect national security. Censorship, consumer rationing, and even a personal income tax and conscription were considered by English Canadians as necessary for the public good. The state, as the only body powerful enough to enforce such measures, expanded its powers to an unprecedented extent within a few years.[4]

(Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986): 104.

[2]RG 76/C-4779/116/22787. McFarlane memo, "Women's Division," 3 August 1944, 2.

[3]Thompson, *Harvests of War*...97.

[4] Ibid., 97, 116; see also Desmond Morton and J. L. Granatstein, *Marching to Armageddon: Canada and the Great War* (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1989): 256; see also R.T. Naylor, "The Canadian State, the Accumulation of Capital, and the Great War," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 16, 3 & 4 (Autumn-Winter 1981): 42-46.

As the war drew to a close, Ottawa's attitude of "plan now or pay later"[5] influenced its postwar readjustment programme, of which a more regulated immigration system was a part. To guard against a resurrection of prewar policies with all their inadequacies, reformers asked the immigration department to adopt of several initiatives: to give British migrants decided preference, to protect immigrants' welfare by wiping out abuses, and to apply the Immigration Act more rigorously in terms of migrants' suitability for life in Canada. The policy goals of senior bureaucrats, namely Acting Deputy Minister W. W. Cory, Assistant Deputy Minister W. D. Scott, and Commissioner J. O. Smith, were in line with reformers. Careful selection, supervision, and follow-up would equal easier absorption of British immigrants into the economy and result in fewer "degenerates" to endanger the Canadian population.[6]

The staggering numbers of British who had come to Canada before the war compelled Ottawa to be prepared. From 1910 through 1914, more than 600,000 people immigrated from the United Kingdom.[7] In anticipation of a large postwar influx of similar dimensions, Ottawa organized the new Department of Immigration and Colonization in 1917. Now separate from the Department of the Interior, the immigration bureaucracy was divided into three regional Canadian districts and had several European offices, some of which officials shared with shipping companies. Immigration and Colonization included a publicity bureau, under the direction of Robert J.

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[5]Owram, 88-89.

[6]RG 76/C-4777/113/22787. *Manitoba Free Press*, "Emigration of Women," 27 September 1919, 10.

[7]Canada, Sessional Papers, 56, 6 (1918-19), Immigration and Colonization, 5.

C. Stead, which released publications and organized exhibitions directed mainly at British audiences.[8] Canada was trying to keep up with the other dominions which already had publicity mechanisms in place and offered various types of passage assistance.[9]

Ottawa went to work developing immigration policies which gave some weight to political, cultural, and moral suitability of individual immigrants as well as to conditions of the labour market.[10] To better enforce regulations, more emphasis was placed on screening potential emigrants overseas. Members of wartime enemy nations were excluded, and the British benefited from new recruitment offices and assistance programs. It was imperative to increase migration from Britain in order to offset the "foreign" influence of Ukrainians and Germans, groups which tended to increase assimilation anxiety among Canadians. Agnes Macphail, the first woman to be elected to the House of Commons, argued that Canada must be "very careful about further immigration", since paying little attention to quality would bode ill for the future. "I for one," she told the House of Commons in 1922, "do not favour the sort of immigrant who wears a sheepskin coat unless he has a better one someplace else."[11] Her concern was that many of the Continental immigrants who had arrived before the war were unassimilable, and might lower Canada's overall standard of living as they diminished it's British character. The immigration department

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[8]Canada, Sessional Papers, 57, 6 (1919-20), Immigration and Colonization, 35, 37.

[9]Plant, *A Survey of Voluntary Effort*...41-42.

[10]Avery, 90.

[11]Canada, House of Commons, Debates, 3 (1922): 2155.

agreed, stating a report that "The Mother Land will be for all time the true source of desirable people of British birth and sentiment."[12]

Since English-Canadian women's migration societies first began to recruit clients, they focused their efforts on British women. Migration societies' evolution toward "official" status was aided by of their commitment to anglo-superiority, with most of them working exclusively with British immigrants since the mid-1800s. Focusing their efforts exclusively on the United Kingdom proved to be a popular strategy at least until the mid-1920s, for even though British migrants of poor background might be rough around the edges, a belief in their cultural kinship with Canadians gave them the badge of ideal immigrant.[13] Emphasis was placed on British women throughout the twenties because of the belief that mothers, more than fathers, influenced a child's cultural identity, hence these future mothers with British cultural loyalties were most sought after.[14] Promoting state-funded migration schemes for the British satisfied English-Canada's sense of imperial duty and was viewed as an acceptable avenue toward women's goal to participate in the civil service.

As new immigration offices opened and new programmes were put in place, migration promotion societies and female politicians in Canada continued to lobby for a separate agency for women's migration, calling attention to their unique knowledge and experience. A letter from Roberta

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[12]Canada, Sessional Papers, 59, 4 (1921-22), Immigration and Colonization, 21.

[13]Palmer, "Reluctant Hosts", 10, 16.

[14]Janice Gothard, "'The healthy, wholesome British domestic girl': Single Female Migration and the Empire Settlement Act, 1922-1930," in Stephen Constantine, *Emigrants and Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990): 74.

MacAdams, M. L. A. of Alberta, to the Minister of Immigration contained the maternal feminist justifications for women's input toward migration policy and delivery of services:

> As mothers, women are essentially answerable to our native-born... and as teachers, as nurses, as welfare workers, as employers of [domestic] service and as workers themselves in the numberless activities outside the home they have always been largely responsible for the moral tone of the nation, and yet hitherto they have not been seriously consulted regarding the character of the incoming people...Women are asking permission to...present the woman's viewpoint at least as touching women and children.[15]

As we have seen, female reformers and politicians called upon the state to acknowledge the vast differences in the migration experience depending upon one's gender. Female immigrants, they claimed, faced different physical and spiritual dangers because of their inherent vulnerability. Ideally, women immigrants were expected to work in homes as servants before establishing homes of their own, and so their protection as future mothers was in the nation's interest. Voluntary organizations stressed that immigrants should be regarded as women first, rather than simply as labour, for it would follow that morally good women would bless the country throughout their lives as good houseworkers and mothers.[16] Middle-class English-Canadian women promoted themselves as the appropriate guides of immigrant women, to keep them on the straight and narrow path toward productive citizenship.

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[15]RG 76/C-4777/113/22787. MacAdams to Calder, 27 January 1919.

[16]Ibid., Conference on Immigration, Minutes, 28 March 1919.

Voluntary migration societies decided that by creating their own amalgamated migration management system they could speak the government's language, while at the same time demonstrating their ability to cooperate and expand their services. Interested societies chose representatives to attend a conference on women's migration, held in Ottawa on the 28th of March, 1919. The "prime mover" in this consolidation effort was Jean S. Robson of Winnipeg.[17] Robson headed the Women's Advisory Section of the Repatriation Committee which oversaw the transportation of Canadian soldiers' wives and children from Europe, and she was also active in the Red Cross. According to the women of Britain's Oversea Settlement Committee, Robson was "in the know" regarding female migration and well connected with influential Canadian officials.[18] She met with the immigration department's top bureaucrats several days before the conference, accompanied by Mrs. Vincent (Alice) Massey representing the National Council of Women, and Ena Saunders of the International YWCA. The women were encouraged by the department's positive response to their suggestions.

During the course of the March conference, the delegates mapped out the basic principles they wished the government to adopt. Their first recommendation was that women be placed in charge of a system to manage the recruitment and placement of immigrant domestic servants, and that this system include federally-funded reception hostels. Next, they demanded that recruitment under the bonus system be abolished. They

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[17]RG 76/C-4779/116/22787. McFarlane memo, 2.

[18]PRO/CO 721/5. Pott to OSC, 9 May 1919.

also discussed, in vague terms, the need for the government and society in general to support the "professionalization of housework;" that is, reducing the stigma surrounding domestic service by improving working conditions and educating the public about its value. By September, the parties had decided to hold regular conferences, and had adopted the name Canadian Council for the Immigration of Women for Household Service. The Council's constitution stated that its membership must be two-thirds women, with one member from each interested society and one from each participating province.[19] Church missionary societies, the YWCA, WCTU, and the many other long-time supporters of women's immigration were represented, as were several male-dominated organizations including the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada and the Great War Veterans' Association.[20] Male representatives did not maintain a high profile, however. The council's spokespersons were female, and the organization was identified almost exclusively with women since it dealt with what was considered a women's issue.

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[19]RG 76/C-4777/114. "Constitution of the Canadian Council of Women for Household Service, 1919." Prince Edward Island was the only province not to send a representative to the CCIW.

[20]Canada, Sessional Papers, 58, 6 (1922) Immigration and Colonization, 57. Some of the more notable representatives to the Canadian Council were Lady Falconer of the YWCA; Mrs. Gordon Wright of the WCTU; Mrs. Vincent Massey of the NCW; and Mrs. W. D. Spence of the IODE. Tom Moore represented the Trades and Labour Congress, and Mr. C. MacNeil was delegate for the Great War Veterans' Association. Missionary societies from the Roman Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Church of England were represented. The Council's membership reflects the Anglophone character of voluntary efforts in women's immigration. The Province of Quebec was represented by Madame F. L. Beique of Montreal, one of the very few Francophones involved in this endeavor. The decision to limit each interested group's representation to one person helped the Council avoid the acrimony that the SOSBW experienced in its first years.

Advocates of a comprehensive immigration policy for women had several allies in the Department of Immigration and Colonization. Since at least 1914, the Superintendent of Immigration, W. D. Scott, concerned himself with the particular problems that the migration of single women posed. He issued instructions to immigration agents that single immigrant women without contacts or concrete plans should be detained until they could be questioned and given guidance. He appeared familiar with women's voluntary activities and anticipated their policy recommendations in a letter to Deputy Minister W. W. Cory, where he mentioned his support for a women's branch in his department and the abolition of bonuses. Concerned by the shortage of domestic servants and the numbers of "idle women" in Canada's cities, Scott linked female immigration to the need for household service.[21] Most importantly, the new Minister of Immigration, J. A. Calder, was also willing to harness women's efforts, and in 1919 he endorsed nearly all the Council's proposals.

The department's senior bureaucrats, all male at this point, did not early on record any serious opposition to establishing a bureaucracy of women with limited powers. Commissioner J. O. Smith was initially alarmed to learn that principal woman officers were to be stationed in his office in London; he presumably did not know what their duties would entail and did not want anyone encroaching on his turf.[22] However, Smith saw the benefits of a new system that was ostensibly kinder to the British migrant. He wrote that "It is not too much to say that at least a human

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[21]RG 76/C-4777/113/22787. Scott to various immigration agents, 2 February 1915; and Scott to Cory, 23 November 1914, and 13 March 1919.

[22]RG 76/C-4780/116/22787. Smith to Robson, 4 September 1920.

being, as a potential asset in any country, ought to be selected and receive as much consideration and be carefully nurtured and provided for as the produce of the manufacturer or the cattle of the field."[23] For the first time, certain classes of migrants were to be given as much consideration as livestock. This was a new departure for the Canadian government, the beginning of policies that provided greater services for the migrant while demanding more control over her destination and working life.

Other male officials also reacted favourably. W. W. Cory, the Acting Deputy Minister in 1919 and 1920, was not adverse to bringing women into the department, nor was Commissioner W. R. Little. The acerbic Assistant Deputy Minister F. C. Blair, who in the coming years would work quite closely with female officers, did not register any antagonism to its creation or mandate (although he would, later). The bureaucrat with the least enthusiasm for such a division was J. Bruce Walker, the Director of European Emigration. Walker was somewhat less supportive of government-sponsored migration than his colleagues, preferring to view the movement of peoples as an effect of business cycles. He did not want immigrants to be coddled, but made some exception for single women whom he believed needed an inducement to migrate and protection en route. It appears he thought an entire division of female officers to be excessive. He frequently expressed his support for Canada's shipping companies, voicing the opinion that too many regulations were a hindrance to business.

The Canadian Council of Immigration of Women for Household Service received a $17,000 grant by order-in-council in October 1919, and

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[23]Canada, Sessional Papers, 57, 6, (1919-20), Immigration and Colonization, 37.

was designated an advisory body to the Department of Immigration and Colonization. In 1920, it shortened its name to the Canadian Council for the Immigration of Women (CCIW). There was no explanation given for the Council's name change, but perhaps the specificity of the term "household service" was not only awkward but regarded as potentially limiting. As following chapters will show, the CCIW and the women's division, after some hesitation, tried to increase their responsibilities to include supervision of non-domestics and "foreign" (non-British) women. The term "household service" also betrayed their class interests. In 1919, Jean Robson left the Repatriation Committee to assume the CCIW's chair, a temporary paid position. The immigration department was preparing to hire her as the first supervisor of its new women's division.[24]

In postwar Britain, staunch social imperialists preached with a renewed sense of urgency and optimism about the need to "people the empire," advancing various schemes as panacea for extensive population redistribution to ease Britain's postwar readjustment. Migration enthusiast Leopold Amery of the Colonial Office argued in 1919 that it was normal for governments to create policy to deal with immigration, therefore nations with an outflow of people were justified in creating emigration policy.[25] The Dominions Royal Commission designated British emigration as an important imperial postwar aim. New emigration policies and programmes were to be part of a more orderly, prosperous society in the 1920s, and of

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[24]RG 76/C-4779/116/22787. McFarlane memo, 6.

[25]PRO/CO 721/3. Amery of Government Emigration Office to Colonial Office, 10 February 1919, p. 3.

course, addressing the question of redundant women was crucial to attaining this goal. Encouraged by English Canada's wartime support, the imperial government nevertheless handled the emigration issue with delicacy, mindful that fervor for the empire would not likely translate into any willingness on Ottawa's part to relinquish control over immigration policy. A cautious approach was in order because immigration had long been under the dominions' authority.

Cultural and economic connections remained strong between Britain and Canada, but to bring about an agreement on imperial migration, Britain would have to frame its proposals in terms of a partnership of equals, an expression of mutual respect and imperial unity. As historians Carl Berger and Robert Craig Brown asserted, Canada's increasing autonomy from Britain did not preclude close cooperation with London. The imperial tie was valued for sentimental as well as economic reasons. English Canadians felt their country had grown to greatness mainly because of its British heritage, thus the desire for autonomy while remaining within the empire was a form of Canadian nationalism. The empire remained a viable entity in the English-Canadian mind now that the war had shifted the course of relations toward a greater role for the dominions in imperial governance, perhaps a toward sort of imperial federation.[26] The challenge for Canada was to draw strength from the imperial relationship without falling back into the colonial role. Ottawa had to prevent the administration of such large-scale programmes as Empire Settlement from being appropriated by London.

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[26]Berger, 9 and 109; and Brown, 591.

The new British Oversea Settlement Office, which arose from a 1919 Committee for Emigration, decided to allow several imperialist organizations to take part in official efforts to promote migration. Where female emigration was concerned, women's voluntary organizations urged the government to recognize "the great economy of using existing machinery", namely the networks that these organizations had established.[27] Knowing that middle- and upper-class women regarded female migration as their territory, members of the OSC halfheartedly invited them to form a committee, having resolved that "If you could keep the Women's Emigration Societies out of this business altogether it might be best, but you cannot, so you may as well have them in from the start."[28]

The Joint Council of Women's Emigration Societies, which was comprised of the British Women's Emigration Association (BWEA), the South African Colonization Society (SACS), and the Colonial Intelligence League (CIL), agreed to amalgamate in 1919, thereby proving to the imperial government their willingness to put aside their many differences and cooperate for the good of the empire and its women.[29] After several months of quarreling among the various emigration organizations and with OSC representatives, the Joint Council expanded to include women from such bodies as the YWCA, the Girls' Friendly Society, Women's War Services,

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[27]PRO/CO 721/4. Women's Legion to Plant, 31 March 1919.

[28]Ibid., MacNaghten to Amery, 5 May 1919.

[29]For backgrounds on these and other British migration promotion societies, see Monk, Chapter One, and Plant, *A Survey of Voluntary Effort*....Plant wrote separate chapters on the SACS and CIL.

and the Ministry of Labour.[30] The Council adopted its new official title, the Society for the Oversea Settlement of British Women (SOSBW), and was bestowed with its first government grant in 1919.

Before the SOSBW was created, the Oversea Settlement Office had led women's groups to believe that their new amalgamated society would be given executive powers. However, the OSC soon became aware of the dominions' reluctance to share control over the migration process with British authorities, and thus the SOSBW was not permitted any influence beyond that of making suggestions concerning women's emigration. G. F. Plant, Secretary of the OSC, informed the SOSBW that it could work with the OSC in an advisory capacity only.[31] The Society was also informed that in order to receive its grant, it had to agree not to go against policy dictates of the OSC.[32] Historian Brian Blakeley wrote that "the lack of a common emigration philosophy" among British women's organizations was another important factor in the imperial government's reluctance to give them greater powers.[33] While some societies sponsored the migration of professional women or ex-servicewomen, others wanted only to send domestics. Older organizations, such as the BWEA, upheld traditional ideas of the woman's "proper" role as wife and mother. The Women's War Services and the Colonial Nursing Society, in favour of new roles for women

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[30]Brian Blakeley, "The Society for the Oversea Settlement of British Women and the Problems of Empire Settlement, 1917-1936" *Albion* 20, 3 (Fall 1988): 431.

[31]PRO/CO 721/4. Plant, 8 May 1919.

[32]Monk, 20.

[33]Blakeley, 428.

as waged workers, were adverse to pushing well-educated women into domestic service. The OSC knew that Canada's commitment to British preference did not open doors to new work opportunities for immigrants; most women admitted to the dominions would have to agree to become maids.[34]

The British government, concerned about rising levels of unemployment, supported a proposal submitted by the Royal Colonial Institute (RCI) to settle British ex-servicemen on dominion lands.[35] In 1919, the RCI suggested that the wartime shipping and communications network could be utilized to send migrants--ex-soldiers and their dependents--to the dominions' shores. The government-assisted emigration programme that arose from this plan was the first one negotiated jointly between Britain and Canada. The dominions agreed to take part since the scheme stipulated that recipients of aid must try to homestead. Historian Kent Fedorowich referred to it as "the cornerstone for the expansion of assisted migration", or the basis for the Empire Settlement Act of 1922.[36] This "soldier settlement" agreement, officially named the Government Free Passage Scheme, was funded entirely by Britain, but Canada insisted on retaining sole authority over selection of emigrants and providing them with passage warrants after approval. It was in effect until late 1922, and of the 82,196 assisted ex-service migrants, nearly 20,000 men went to Canada. The numbers of emigrants approved by Canada represents less than one-

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[34]PRO/CO 721/4. Plant, 8 May 1919; and Blakeley, 428.

[35]Fedorowich, 46.

[36]Ibid., 65.

third of the applicants who wished to go there, so strict were the Canadian entry requirements.[37]

British officials were perturbed by the high rejection rate of ex-service personnel, but Canadian Commissioner J. O. Smith was resolved that "The hundreds of 'rejected' cases form a unique, pathetic, and curious collection of defective and immoral persons who would not be an acquisition to any Dominion."[38] It became evident that the immigrants Canada wanted were not those whom Britain wanted to send. Underneath the discourse of imperial unity and cooperation was a good deal of suspicion and frustration on both sides. There was considerable discord between Britain and Canada concerning empire migration, but at the same time they remained more or less committed to it throughout the 1920s, corroborating historian Carl Berger's assertion that their relationship was "...a mixture of affection and anxiety, resentment and solicitude."[39] As the receiving country, Canada insisted that British immigrants not compete with Canadian labour; therefore all assisted ex-servicemen had to accept farm work, and the women were directed into domestic service. The setting of precise ground rules at the outset was a calculated move to discourage Britain from dumping its poor onto Canada, and it allowed Ottawa to retain control over immigrant selection and placement for the rest of the decade.[40]

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[37]Plant, *Oversea Settlement*, 73-74.

[38]Canada, Sessional Papers, 57, 6 (1919-20), Department of Immigration and Colonization, 41.

[39]Berger, 260.

[40]Fedorowich, 60.

Less conservative British emigration societies were anxious to see that similar privileges given to ex-soldiers be granted to ex-service women. Meriel Talbot, member of the British Women's Land Army, reminded the OSC that ex-service women were desirous of land "to farm on their own account."[41] Most emigration societies pulled back from this position when it was clear that the dominions were not going to accept female farmers as immigrants. The British women concurred with Canadian government that "women should be home makers rather than soil breakers";[42] however, their proposals to help ex-servicewomen kept this type of women's migration from being overlooked by the government. The female delegates to the OSC, Gladys Pott and F. M. Girdler, suggested that British women of the War Services could be trained and sent to Canada to fill that country's need for servants. They further suggested that discharged women be given badges of recognition before being placed as maids, thereby raising the status of the domestic worker.[43] Ultimately, over 7000 British ex-service women were accepted by Canada as part of the programme to settle ex-service personnel.[44]

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[41]PRO/CO 721/46. Talbot to Macnaghten, 23 January 1919.

[42]PRO/CO 721/6. "Report to the Oversea Settlement Committee of the Delegates Appointed to Enquire as to Openings in Canada for Women from the United Kingdom," April-September 1919 (London: HMSO, 1919): 13.

[43]Ibid., 6.

[44]Plant, *Oversea Settlement*, 73.

In November of 1919, Jean Robson left the CCIW to accept a salaried position as supervisor of a new women's branch in the immigration department. This signaled the birth of the women's division.[45] The CCIW continued to meet and operate in an advisory capacity to the new division. By September of the next year, several orders-in-council were passed allowing for the appointment of principal women officers in Montreal, Quebec City, and St. John, and an officer in charge of selection in Great Britain.[46]

Robson began immediately to extend the guiding hand of her staff to as many traveling women as possible. Earlier, the CCIW had requested the hiring of government conductresses for all steamships and trains, but the department's budget only allowed for two train conductresses. Mrs. Robson and her women advisors were adamant about the need for chaperones on board ship, and they recommended that Canada's transportation companies be required to assign conductresses. Conditions of travel represented "a complicated and dangerous state of affairs" according to Catherine Louttit, matron of the Canadian Women's Hostel in Montreal. Men in shirt sleeves and young women "in various stages of their toilette" were in close proximity.[47] The government, convinced of the moral dangers such situations posed, instructed steamship companies to hire

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[45]RG 76/C-4779/116/22787. McFarlane memo, 6.

[46]Canada, Sessional Papers, 59, 4 (1921-22), Immigration and Colonization, 59.

[47]RG 76/C-10671/604/89086. Louttit to Kneil of CCIW, 20 April 1919.

female conductresses and stated that all single British women coming to Canada had to travel in supervised parties.[48]

Another of Jean Robson's responsibilities was to bring immigrant reception hostels, operated by various voluntary organizations, under the auspices of her division. Eight hostels, including Dorchester House in Montreal, run by the Protestant Directorate of Female Immigration, the Vancouver YWCA hostel, and Women's Homes of Welcome in several cities, agreed to become government controlled Canadian Women's Hostels.[49] Systematizing their operations was considered urgent, since the Oversea Settlement Committee had informed the women's division that up to 10,000 British women were anxious to emigrate to Canada to take up domestic service.[50] The officers wanted to secure funding for the hostels and have consistent policies in place when post-war passenger shipping increased. Figures for 1920 showed a jump in British immigration, from 9914 individuals arriving in 1919 to 59,603 in 1920.[51] These numbers were used to predict even greater yearly increases. The hostel administrators welcomed the government's appropriation of their administration and the grants that accompanied it. Regulations required hostels to provide newly-arrived immigrants with a free twenty-four hour stay, or a forty-eight hours' stay in western cities. Federal funding allowed the hostels to accommodate

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[48]Canada, Sessional Papers, 57, 6 (1919-20), Immigration and Colonization, 39.

[49]Canada, Sessional Papers, 59, 4 (1921-22), Immigration and Colonization, 55.

[50]Ibid., 58.

[51]Canada, Sessional Papers, 57, 6 (1919-20), Immigration and Colonization, 6.

the newcomers, while provincial grants paid for heat, light, and rent.[52] The Province of Quebec was the exception; Premier Lomer Gouin voiced his support for a women's branch of immigration, but his government did not provide any support for the Montreal hostel, nor did the next government of Louis-Alexandre Taschereau.[53]

By 1920 Jean Robson had set up her "Five Step" processing system for British immigrant women, consisting of selection, civil inspection, medical inspection, distribution, and placement in housework (the division generally referred to such placement as "settlement").[54] The women's division began with ten employees, but this number would grow to fifty-two by 1929. These workers included officers in Canada and those stationed in London, Liverpool, Glasgow, and Inverness. As the division expanded, officers were assigned to immigration offices in Dublin and Belfast, and principal women officers in larger cities had assistant officers assigned to them. Two investigators based in Montreal and Toronto were in charge of immigrant follow-up work. The remaining employees were the train conductresses and support staff.[55] Interestingly, married women were not prohibited from becoming officers; Mrs. Robson and Mrs. Yemans, principal officer in London, had spouses.

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[52]Canada, Sessional Papers, 59, 4 (1921-22), Immigration and Colonization, 58.

[53]RG 76/C-4777/113/22787. Gouin to Calder, 18 January 1919.

[54]RG 76/C-4778/114/22787. *Edmonton Journal*, June 1921.

[55]RG 76/C-4661/5/41. Memo "Points Settled," 14 September 1920. Also see C-4779/116/22787. MacFarlane memo, 3 August 1944.

Civil service employment application forms for many of the women's professional positions specified that a secondary school diploma was required. That being the case, several of the principal woman officers were vastly overqualified for the positions they held. Miss MacDonald of the Inverness office held a diploma in agriculture and dairying from the Agricultural College at Edinburgh and a teacher's certificate in poultry-keeping from another post-secondary school in Scotland. She had lectured at MacDonald College in Montreal and at agricultural schools in Alberta.[56] Other officers had post secondary training in nursing or education. A conductress appointed in 1922, Miss A. McKowan, served as a Red Cross Nurse in Siberia during World War I. She also spent eight years as a missionary in Japan, and through her extensive overseas service she had become a fluent speaker of Russian and Japanese.[57]

These female employees and their work were subject to boundaries of space and authority. In the words of historian Meta Zimmeck, who studied female employees in the United States Postal Service, women in the civil service bureaucracy were "not so much integrated as bolted on."[58] Female officers and their duties were marginalized by concepts of gender difference. In most locations, the officers were given separate work areas, and they were expected to interview prospective women immigrants in private since a discussion of each applicant's moral, that is sexual, history was so

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[56]RG 76/C-4661/5/41. Walker to Blair, 28 August 1926.

[57]RG 76/C-4778/115/22787. Bulletin to CCIW from Burnham, 23 May 1922.

[58]Meta Zimmeck, "Marry in Haste, Repent at Leisure: Women, Bureaucracy and the Post Office, 1870-1920," in Mike Savage and Anne Witz, *Gender and Bureaucracy*, Sociological Review Monograph (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992): 68.

important. Female officers were, except in one case, always subordinate to the male Canadian immigration agents where they worked. In the bureaucratic hierarchy, the position of women officer was grade one or two, the low rungs on the ladder. Female officers in Britain had the authority to interview women migrants, fill out forms, and declare a migrant suitable; however, any doubtful cases had to be referred to the male agents. Women officers communicated freely among themselves, but only the supervisor of the division was permitted to sign official forms, other than the most simple form letters. The one exception was Miss MacDonald. She was promoted to agent status in 1926 in Inverness, Scotland, when the department had difficulty filling the position. In her dual role as immigration agent and women's division officer, she saved the department a considerable amount of money. She needed an assistant, however, and having to assign a male subordinate to her presented a problem. Uncomfortable as the department heads were with granting authority to a woman, Miss MacDonald became the superordinate to a male employee. J. Bruce Walker, Director of European Emigration, evaluated Miss MacDonald's performance as "eminently satisfactory"[59] but added his opinion that "her personality and her sex would not have the same appeal as would that of a competent male officer."[60]

Supervisor Jean Robson, and her successor Mary V. Burnham, respected the boundaries established for the division, keeping the women officers and the voluntary associations "in line" -- compliant and focused

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[59]RG 76/C-4661/5/41. Walker to Blair, 28 August 1926.

[60]Ibid., Walker to Egan, 19 October 1926.

on their "women's work" assisting women. The CCIW's request that women be brought into the department is evidence of its faith in the power and methods of bureaucracy. Once they assumed their places, the female officers immediately tried to mimic the language of their male colleagues, which was to be expected, as they wanted to be regarded as serious, efficient workers. The division's yearly reports stressed the officers' motherly role to reassure the public that the women were in the department to exercise their special talents and not to do the work of men. The women and their work were always considered to be separate and anomalous, and any attempts to push against the boundaries established for the officers was considered improper behaviour. The two female supervisors received rebukes if they questioned their superiors' decisions or challenged existing policies. As Chapter Four and Five will discuss, approval among male bureaucrats for the women's division did not endure. It was not immediately evident, to the women or the men, that the women's branch was challenging the department's methods and policy while upholding existing power structures. The challenges presented by infusing maternal feminism and social reform values into the system were overshadowed by the many other factors that the department was dealing with after the war, and would not emerge until several years later. By 1929, F. C. Blair would compare the women's immigration programme to a diseased body part, something pathological that should be cut off.[61] In the early twenties, however, male officials did not identify any threat from bureaucrats in skirts.

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[61]RG 76/C-4779/116/22787. Blair to Forke, 26 October 1929.

The division carried on the work which had been done by numerous voluntary societies, albeit in a more coordinated, controlled fashion. The Canadian officers stationed in Britain made the necessary travel arrangements for the parties of unaccompanied women and attended their embarkation. For the journey by sea, ship conductresses appointed by the transportation companies had guardianship over the migrants until they were again placed under the charge of government train conductresses in Canada. The women's division's insistence that immigrant domestic servants be assisted every step of the way received some criticism in Britain. An article in the London *Daily Express* with the headline "Conducted Women: Will the Women of England Stand It?" took issue with tougher medical exams and compulsory guardianship because these requirements implied that British working-class women were prone to moral turpitude.[62] Canada's Superintendent of Immigration, J. O. Smith, seconded this concern in a letter to Ottawa in which he claimed that women found it humiliating to undergo physical and mental health examinations, and then be placed under a chaperone.[63] The women's division supervisor, unwilling to reconsider the need for conductresses, stressed in her yearly reports that a conductress was "a mother" and "a hostess" whose job was bringing comfort to the migrant; moreover, a chaperoned journey was carefree, safe, and more fun. The train car reserved for single women was "quite a social centre through the day' where passengers enjoyed "...a

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[62]RG 76/C-4661/5/41. *Daily Express*, 12 March 1919.

[63]RG 76/C-4778/114/22787. Smith, 6 January 1920.

continuous round of happy moments."[64] A policy of close supervision of all women traveling alone was supported by W. D. Scott and Minister Calder.

Assistance to migrants did not end when they had reached their urban or rural destinations. Leaving immigrant women to find their own way in Canada was unfathomable to the federal officers, especially since few of the women were inclined to find their way into domestic work. The placement service provided by the division through the hostel network and provincial employment offices made certain that immigrant women were placed with families needing servants. The division cooperated closely with federal and provincial women's branches of the Employment Services, most extensively with the Ontario office headed by Miss Jessie Duff. Each migrant came under a nomination category; either direct or bulk nomination. If a Canadian resident named an individual he or she wanted to employ, that individual was interviewed in the British Isles and then sent under direct nomination to the employer, who had to guarantee that the job was indeed available. Jesse Duff's office attempted to match up employers with domestics who had not yet left Britain. Women under the bulk nomination category were those who had been recruited in Britain but who had no Canadian contacts or pre-arranged employment. Bulk nominees were sent to Canadian Women's Hostels to be placed as maids with families on Employment Service lists.[65] Through the follow-up system the government

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[64]Canada, Sessional Papers, 60, 4 (1922-23), Immigration and Colonization, 53; and Annual Departmental Report (1925-26), Immigration and Colonization, 45-46.

[65]RG 76/C-4779/116/22787. MacFarlane memo, 18.

collected payments on passage loans, first by requiring women to send payments to hostels, and later through local immigration offices. While most women repaid their loans, the system was a cumbersome one and was in part responsible for the British perception that assisted migration amounted to a contract labour scheme. Grants and reduced fares replaced loans by the mid twenties, doing away with the need for a collections system.[66]

The creation of the women's division did not bring an end to immigration-related work of voluntary associations; in some cases, associations expanded their activities and cooperated closely with the division, performing follow-up work and sending reports to the supervisor. Women of the Canadian Red Cross Society set up nurseries in immigration department buildings in Quebec City, St. John, and Halifax in 1920. Since there were considerable numbers of European women with children coming to Canada to join their husbands after the war, the Red Cross facilities offered mothers and children advice and basic medical care, and provided sleeping cots and food. The nurseries also served as a method to screen children for illnesses or defects, but overall it appeared that the Red Cross nurseries were appreciated by immigrants who used them. The YWCA and churches throughout the country were also involved in aftercare, especially in rural areas where new immigrants tended to be isolated. Members sent letters inviting women to church services and club meetings, and sometimes paid personal visits.[67] These organizations were interested in ensuring the

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[66]RG 76/C-10263/361/434173. Aftercare Agreement Report, 1936.

[67]Canada, Sessional Papers, 59, 4 (1921-22), Immigration and Colonization, 57; and (1922-23), 55.

servants' adaptation and comfort; however, the next chapter will explain in more detail how their aftercare was also a means to assess immigrant behaviour and work performance.

The British government and migration societies did not cease their appeals to the dominions to expand empire migration programmes, including those for single women. The perceived benefits that women brought to the colonies -- physical, moral, and economic -- were important issues in Empire Settlement talks of the early 1920s. The gender imbalance between the British Isles and the dominions had become even more acute; it was identified as "one of the most serious social and economic effects of the war and of uncontrolled emigration in the past."[68] Empire migration proponents cited urbanization, industrialization, and the war as factors which had recently affected women, taking them from their proper sphere and thus lessening their chances for marriage and motherhood. Industrial and office work gave young women "the wrong mental attitude toward domestic work,"[69] and was thought to be complicating the postwar readjustment process in both Britain and Canada. Most importantly, "unwholesome" demographic changes, coupled with the new trends in women's work, were resulting in fewer anglo-saxon babies. In the long term, this meant fewer "big white areas" in the Empire.[70] References to race

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[68]PRO/CO 727/3. Emigration Policy memo, 18 February 1919.

[69]RG 76/C-4-778/115/22787. Jean Muldrew to Burnham, 4 March 1924.

[70]PRO/CO 721/4. Meeting of representatives of women's emigration societies, at Colonial Office, Minutes, 17 February 1919; Great Britain, House of Commons, Debates, 198 (1926): col. 2392.

suicide and anglo-superiority were staples in the discourse of Empire Settlement. The time had come, argued members of the OSC and the Canadian women's division, to rectify these problems through assisted, chaperoned migration of women of child-bearing age. With the hand of government directing so many reconstruction programs, there had never been a better time for Ottawa and London to cooperate in this endeavor.

Jean Robson agreed with the OSC's claim that many desirable British individuals and families had the mettle to succeed in Canada; all they lacked were the liquid funds. Although transatlantic shipping was recommencing slowly, the cost of steamship tickets had increased considerably due to inflation, raising ticket prices beyond reach for many British people.[71] The Home government's free fare scheme for ex-service personnel was only a temporary initiative due to end in late 1922.[72] Robson also understood that the unpopularity of domestic service lessened the attraction of relocating to Canada, and therefore the offer of passage loans in exchange for a term in domestic service could prove enticing.

Robson's research on the potential for houseworker migration took her to England where she met with members of the Oversea Settlement Committee in March of 1920. This meeting was an opportunity for the OSC to ascertain Canada's openness to further state-assisted migration. As with the ex-service personnel scheme, Robson's proposals to stimulate female migration reflected the belief that all aspects of the plan should be primarily under Canadian jurisdiction, except for the funding. She

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[71]Canada, Sessional Papers, 57, 6 (1919-20), Immigration and Colonization, 37; see also Naylor, 40.

[72]RG 76/C-4779/116/22787. McFarlane memo, 15.

stipulated that in order for Canadian and British bureaucracies to cooperate, Canadian women must continue to be in charge of selection and inspection in England as well as job placement; indeed she had no authority to suggest otherwise. The conductresses on ships and trains also had to be Canadian because these officers would provide valuable advice about life in Canada. Moral boundaries were established as well; Robson refused to consider assisted emigration for any "rescued girls", a euphemism for former prostitutes, substance abusers, or unwed mothers.[73] She favoured the expansion of government-sponsored schemes for poor but "deserving" women.

Canada's preference for British stock was one thing, admitting large numbers of assisted British immigrants was another matter. Ottawa's reasoning was that people needing financial assistance to emigrate must have failed at home, and thus they were likely to fail in Canada.[74] Britain's OSC was encouraged by such statements as J. O. Smith's when he said, "Canada has to make her appeal to the best blood and sinew of the homeland in the cradle of the British race",[75] but it was soon evident that the operative word was "best", and only on Canadian terms. The OSC spoke of empire migration as Britain's "key to the problem of post-war reconstruction",[76] but Canada's Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie

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[73]PRO/CO 721/16. Macnaughten's report on Robson's visit, 10 March 1920.

[74]John A. Schultz, "'Leaven for the Lump': Canada and Empire Settlement, 1918-1939," in Constantine, 151.

[75]Canada, Sessional Papers, 57, 6 (1919-20), Immigration and Colonization, 37.

[76]Plant, *Oversea Settlement*, 69. Plant is quoting an OSC memo of 1920, published as Command Paper 573, 4-6.

King and the immigration department hesitated to enter into an extensive formal agreement lest Britain's successful reconstruction become Canada's burden. Lord Amery's view of Empire Settlement as a great equalizer, a method to thin out Britain's population, increase imperial trade, and stimulate economic and population growth in the dominions was a simplistic equation. Nevertheless, Canada entered into cautious negotiations with Britain, and the other dominions did the same. Cooperative efforts in women's migration were, after all, already in place, and therefore the dominions were less skeptical toward other limited agreements of a similar sort.

Schemes to promote migration in the dominions were discussed at the Conference of Prime Ministers in England in 1921. The empire's prime ministers endorsed several proposals on migration after they made it clear that any schemes had to meet their approval and come under their control.[77] In London, Parliament passed the Empire Settlement Bill in the summer of 1922. An act to promote migration to the dominions, it allocated a maximum budget of £3,000,000 per year for fifteen years to provide assisted passages, training, and the development of settlement schemes. A restriction was that the funds could only be spent if equal amounts were forthcoming from the dominion government(s).[78]

The imperial government was informed in no uncertain terms that the dominions did not want industrial workers, and Britain's bargaining position was weakened by the difficulties that had arisen with "soldier

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[77]Ibid., 84.

[78]Empire Settlement Act, 1922, 12 & 13 George 5 ch. 13; also see PRO/DO 57/103, Oversea Settlement Office draft memo, 6 November 1929.

settlement." Under the scheme to assist ex-servicemen, the participants had to agree to take up agricultural work, but many of them allegedly drifted to Canada's urban areas where, unemployed, they accepted charity. Others could not succeed because of physical disabilities acquired in the war, and this led to accusations that Britain had dumped its unproductive men into Canada. The scheme came under severe criticism and was the basis of Canada's ambivalence toward other agreements involving male immigrants.[79] The British government looked for windows in dominion immigration policy, hoping to achieve its aims by focusing on the more traditional and popular programs such as the long-standing efforts to attract immigrant domestic servants and children. All parties were in agreement on two points, that the servant shortage brought hardship on middle-class families, and greater numbers of British women and children would be a boon if sent to the dominions' rural areas. As it turned out, Canada was only willing to consider subsidized passages for the three most sought-after classes of immigrants: farmers and their families, female domestic servants, and children.

The Empire Settlement Agreement signed by Britain and Canada in April of 1923 allowed migrants selected by Canadian officers in Britain to receive interest-free loans for third class travel. The dominion and imperial governments provided the funding for passage loans on a fifty-fifty basis. After the migrants landed, Canadian officials or designated voluntary organizations had the responsibility for their placement and aftercare.[80]

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[79]Fedorowich, 61.

[80]RG 76/C-4778/115. Proposed Schedule of Agreement between the Empire Settlement Board of Great Britain and the Government of Canada, 27 February 1923.

Public opinion regarding financial assistance to immigrants was somewhat more positive than that of officialdom. The public expected a large postwar movement of European peoples and wanted its government to make an effort to secure British immigrants to the exclusion of Continentals. The *Manitoba Free Press* called assisted British migration an opportunity which should not be allowed to pass.[81] Canadians were also aware that their country was competing with Australia, New Zealand, and several African colonies which were offering loans or free passages to British migrants. Bureaucrats remained cautious, knowing that criticism about the quality and performance of immigrants and about the cost of any schemes would be directed at them. Prime Minister Mackenzie King, in his usual style, was ill at ease with a formal commitment.[82]

Immigration Minister J. A. Calder, and his successor J. A. Robb, approached the provinces to ascertain their eagerness to become involved in migration promotion. The favorable responses from the Provinces of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, New Brunswick, and Ontario were followed by each one appointing a female officer to cooperate with the women's division officers in England. The officers selected emigrant domestics and coordinated transportation to and placement in their respective provinces.[83] The western provinces were enthusiastic about the "Three

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[81]RG 76/C-4661/5/41. *Manitoba Free Press*, 25 October 1920; see also *Vancouver Sun*, 12 October 1921; and *Montreal Gazette* 4 January 1923.

[82]Schultz, 154-155.

[83]Sessional Papers, 59, 4 (1921-22), Immigration and Colonization,.58; and Sessional Papers (1922), Immigration and Colonization, 58-59. The special female representatives, as they were called, of Saskatchewan and Ontario had long-term appointments. It appears that the other provinces discontinued appointing special officers to recruit women.

Thousand Families Scheme" arranged in 1924, by which British families (the goal was to recruit three thousand) were supplied with loans and grants for land and farming implements.[84] Any scheme that emphasized the settlement of farming families, as opposed to single men, was expected to bring enduring success. The Province of Ontario later extended and formalized its own sub-agreements with Britain through the Empire Settlement Act.

The Oversea Settlement Committee had expected the dominions to enact their own legislation corresponding with Britain's Empire Settlement Act, but none did.[85] Instead, the dominions adhered to their individual agreements with Britain and left the policy details to be hammered out in the realm of bureaucracy. The passage of an Empire Settlement Act in the Canadian Parliament would have been a much appreciated gesture showing Canada's commitment to imperial strength and unity. An act would not, however, have done much to lessen the power of bureaucrats to select, reject, or deport British immigrants.

The meeting of the CCIW in March 1922, presided over by President Agnes Dennis, was expected to be the last. It was resolved that since the women's division had been inaugurated, with its support system of hostels in full operation, there was no more need for a body such as the CCIW to advise the government.[86] The council did not see an increase in its

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[84]Canada, Annual Departmental Reports (1925-26), Immigration and Colonization, 33; also see *The Canadian Annual Review* (1925-26): 163-164.

[85]Plant, *Oversea Settlement*, 85.

[86]Meeting of the Canadian Council of Immigration of Women, *The Labour Gazette* 22, 5 (May 1922): 498.

funding in 1922 now that the women's division officers had received their permanent appointments, and the council had returned an unexpended portion of the previous year's budget allocation.[87] Although the CCIW disbanded, the supervisor of the division continued to act as a liaison between the immigration department and women's voluntary organizations which continued to carry out aftercare programmes. Under Prime Minister Mackenzie King's insistence, the Empire Settlement Act did not prevent private organizations from offering services to immigrants. Businesses too, such as Canada's transportation companies, were free to sponsor colonization schemes after receiving government approval.[88]

The creation of the women's division was an important victory for the women's movement, as greater numbers of women in the civil service would bring Canada that much closer to becoming a reformed, Christian nation. The women's Branch of Immigration and Colonization was not unique; other arms of the reform movement had also lobbied successfully for their work to come under Ottawa's aegis. Most notably, a crusade by the Canadian Association of Child Protection Officers, the NCW, and others led to the establishment of a child welfare division of the Department of Health in 1920. Headed by Dr. Helen MacMurchy, the child welfare branch cooperated closely with the women of the immigration department. Many child care pamphlets published by the Department of Health were aimed at immigrant women and distributed by both women's branches. MacMurchy

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[87]RG 76/C-4778/115/22787. Auditor General's Office memos 1921.

[88]Schultz, 154.

notified women immigration officers of homes where mothers were in dire need of domestic help, and she consistently recommended domestic service for young women as an apprenticeship for motherhood.[89] The women of Immigration and Colonization also worked with women in the Employment Service, and with female representatives to the Home Branch of the Soldier Settlement Board.[90] These professional women had followed their specific interests under the umbrella of social reform to broaden the definition of women's work.

The CCIW and the women's division officers operated according to certain class and ethnic assumptions which were tied to a belief in their own moral superiority. They saw their work in terms of moral absolutes, believing that unchaste women could not become good mothers or citizens and that promoting immigration for profit was an evil. They were different from the men they worked with because they were so strongly influenced by social reform ideology and maternal feminism, and simply because they were new and enthusiastic. In their idealism, the women officers did not yet realize that although they were set apart from the men in the department, they were not removed from politics. The finer points of the Empire Settlement Agreement would change throughout the twenties, as Mackenzie King favoured one scheme over another, or played games of give and take with politicians and businesses.[91] In the years to come, the women's division officers were dismayed by orders-in-council and messages

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[89]Canada, Sessional Papers, 58, 5 (1921), Department of Health, 22-23; and Sessional Papers, 60, 4 (1923) Department of Health, 41.

[90]Ibid.

[91]Schultz, 161-163.

from senior bureaucrats informing them of snap changes in policy. Women officers believed that their division's regulations, like sound moral fiber, were not supposed to bend according to political or economic winds.

Several Canadian historians have assessed women's political activities in the interwar period very narrowly, using women's participation, or lack thereof, in electoral politics as a yardstick. Although women did not run for office in large numbers or vote *en bloc* for major change, historians should not judge the success of the suffrage movement in those terms.[92] Doug Owram, for instance, wrote:

> Though an obvious step forward. . . the vote for women, which was achieved in all provinces but Quebec and in federal elections by the end of the war, proved a disappointment. Rather than marking the opening of an era of higher values, it seemed to suggest the dying of a great cause. As with male reformers after the war, women found themselves 'divided by region, race, and class.' They could not provide the lead for their uncertain male counterparts.[93]

There have been a number of works produced in the last decade which dispel the assumption that women became politically invisible after winning the federal franchise in 1920. Though Owram is correct in his claim that the feminists' expectations were not entirely fulfilled, I believe a more appropriate approach to the subject is that of historians Linda Kealey,

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[92] John Herd Thompson, *Canada 1922-1939: Decades of Discord* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985): 71. Thompson's analysis of the suffrage movement is less judgmental than Owram's; however, Thompson stresses the disappointments in order to fit the movement into his overall theme of "discord." He gives much attention to the fact that very few women were elected after the vote was won, and to the failure of prohibition.

[93] Ibid., 109.

Joan Sangster, and Nancy Cott. They point out that female suffragists had always been divided by factors of race, class, and region, among others, and maternal feminists' use of the term "sisterhood" did not belie their diverse, at times conflicting, interests. Despite different visions they had united to work toward a goal -- gaining the vote -- but after 1920 they followed many different paths toward social improvement that had inspired them in the first place such as public health, prohibition, or immigration policy reform. Canadian historian Carol Bacchi, who presented a negative assessment of the women's movement after the war, criticized first wave feminism because of its origins in the middle-class. Rather than condemning leaders of the women's movement for their "bourgeois" value system, it is more fruitful to accept that a driving force of first wave feminism within the social reform movement was the desire to foist middle-class Protestant values on the working class.[94] Concerned about employment patterns, urbanization, and the immigration of non-British peoples, middle-class women were trying to control the direction and pace of change, and involve themselves in politics in ways they thought most suitable. Perhaps they saw long-term employment as social service bureaucrats to be a more productive way to bring about change, and more appropriate for them as women than the competitive arena of electoral politics.

Supervisor Jean Robson resigned in 1920 after declining to take the civil service examination required for her to keep her position. She

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[94]See Carol Bacchi, *Liberation Deferred? The Ideas of the English-Canadian Suffragists 1877-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983); see also Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism, and History* (London: Verso, 1992). Ware contends that throughout the British Empire, white women activists believed they had a duty to lead and civilize less affluent women and women of color.

remained on the federal payroll for nearly a year in order to train the division's new supervisor, Mary V. Burnham of Toronto. It was when Burnham took Robson's place that F. C. Blair considered the women's division to be "part and parcel of the department."[95] Before her appointment in Ottawa, Mary Burnham gained experience in the Canadian Women's Hostel in Toronto overseeing the placement of domestics. Appointed to Immigration and Colonization through the Civil Service Commission in November 1921, Burnham expressed confidence in the abilities of her officers to locate "pure domestic girls" in Britain who were willing to settle in Canada and "live happily ever afterwards."[96] The fairy-tale phrases regarding the division's success suggest idealistic beliefs in anglo-superiority and maternalistic bureaucracy. At the same time, the new supervisor approached her job with practicality and protectiveness, objecting to those who tried to evade regulations or duplicate her programmes. Believing that managing women's immigration was an occupation specially suited to women and especially her trained officers, Burnham confidently reminded politicians and businessmen that "This is our work."[97]

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[95]RG 76/C-4779/116/22787. Blair to Cullen, 30 March 1931.

[96]RG 76/C-4777/114/22787. Burnham to Murphy, 24 August 1923.

[97]RG 76/C-10583/643/990380. Burnham to Macdonell, 26 June, 1923.

Chapter Three
Officers, Mistresses, and Maids

English-Canadian reformers envisioned an empire in which women of all classes worked together for God and prosperity, not necessarily by setting aside their class differences but by using their talents to meet each others' needs. The women's division was established to capture this sentiment of imperial sisterhood, acting as facilitator between household employer and servant to ensure the placement of wholesome immigrant girls with respectable Canadian mistresses. Middle-class women who rallied to the rescue of working girls from white slavery and other perils were willing to provide shelter, a steady income, and moral guidance in exchange for their working-class sisters' domestic labour. The difficulties involved in managing this endeavor on such a grand scale came as somewhat of a surprise to the division which, convinced that an imperial sisterhood existed, expected that its client groups would cooperate with each other. In reality, what were supposed to be a mutually beneficial relationships were most often contentious and fraught with problems. For employers, obtaining cheap labour was the highest priority; for immigrants, it was to succeed in Canada without spending a prolonged period in domestic service. Not sharing a sense of sisterhood with Canadian mistresses, British women receiving passage assistance became notorious for shunning the domestic positions they had promised to accept. Taking a closer look at the

dynamics of class in the migration assistance programme, this chapter examines the women's division's struggle in the early twenties with the conflicting agendas of employers and immigrants. Unable to reconcile the demands of these two groups, the officers identified with women of their own class and joined employers in criticizing immigrant behaviour. To explain the division's lackluster placement record from 1921-24, officers and the CCIW cited immigrant recalcitrance as the greatest hindrance to its success, rather than the unappealing working conditions set by mistresses. Such a tactic avoided the sticky problems of trying to standardize pay rates and conditions of domestic labour. The women's branch refrained from meddling in the middle-class household, but crippled itself in the process.

It was clear from employers' letters about immigrant domestics, as well as division reports, that household work was disliked by many women who undertook it to fulfill their obligations under the Empire Settlement Agreement. The women's division presumed to identify the most pressing problems immigrant servants faced, placing "moral ruination" high on the list, while servants were apt to want working conditions addressed. With few channels existing for immigrants to ameliorate their situations or even express their concerns, they abandoned domestic work with a frequency and rapidity dismaying to the immigration department.

The disincentives for taking up domestic service were many. It is beyond the range of this study to discuss the typical servant's workday in detail; this has been done by Varpu Lindstrom-Best, Marilyn Barber, Genevieve Leslie, and Pamela Horn, but broadly speaking, domestics objected to the long work hours and lack of freedom to go out or entertain guests. The servant had to "live in" so that she was always at the mistress'

beck and call, so at no time could she say that her time was her own. Although considered an essential part of any well-functioning bourgeois household, the maid was to be rarely seen and never heard. One servant explained to the staff at the Toronto hostel that, "If we go into a private place [a home], everyone looks down upon us, the world as well as our employer, and we are only wanted just so long as we do our work. When we are finished we are in the way."[1] It was this demand to make oneself invisible that gave domestic service much of its stigma.

Live-in service offered almost no chance for career advancement, and working women of the 1920s had more employment options than ever before. A woman seeking a job might have contemplated a position in retail sales, in food service or, depending on skills or training, in an office, and these opportunities were added to those already existing in manufacturing. Many factory and service jobs had become thoroughly feminized, if they had not been created with women workers in mind in the first instance. Typing and stenography were considered women's work, as well as telephone switchboard operation.[2] While more women in the twenties worked in household service than in any other single occupation, the number of homes with maids was steadily declining, and not due to

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[1]RG 76/C-10248/338/356358. Canadian Women's Hostel, Toronto, Report, 1920.

[2]Graham Lowe, "Class, Job, and Gender in the Canadian Office," *Labour/Le Travailleur* 10 (Autumn 1981): 17-18; see also Strange, 21 and Chapter 7. Joy Parr explores issues of gender and labour in *The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990). Joan Sangster discusses female telephone operator's resistance in "The 1907 Bell Telephone Strike: Organizing Women Workers" *Labour/Le Travail* 3 (1978): 109-130.

lack of demand.[3] Factory and office work, like domestic service, was characterized by low pay and long hours, but with work time clearly defined, a woman's evenings and days off were her own. These jobs afforded a greater measure of independence for women and were certainly of a higher status than housework.

The reluctance of working-class women to engage in domestic service was regarded by the upper classes as a serious national issue. Well-off wives across the country discussed their inability to find and retain servants, and voluntary organizations debated the causes of the "servant crisis." Employing a servant to clean, cook, and launder clothes freed the mistress of the house from performing these mundane and often difficult tasks,[4] but it was not only a matter of mistresses finding housework distasteful. Middle- and upper-class Canadians adhered to the concept of home as an orderly Judeo-Christian universe where deference was given: children to parents, wife to husband, and certainly servant to mistress. This hierarchical organization of the household, as a pillar of society, had to be maintained. A respectable housewife needed one or more servants to reinforce her status, for without a female subordinate, she might not be secure in her role as a lady. The mistress, freed from the burden of domestic drudgery, devoted her attention to the pursuits of the modern,

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[3]Marilyn Barber, "Immigrant Domestic Servants in Canada," Canada's Ethnic Groups Series (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1991): 14; and Genevieve Leslie, "Domestic Service in Canada, 1880-1920," in Acton et. al., 75. Leslie shows that there was one servant for every 15.1 households in Canada in 1911, but one for every 21.4 households by 1921.

[4]Helen Lenskyi, "A 'Servant Problem' or a 'Servant-Mistress Problem'? Domestic Service in Canada 1890-1930," *Atlantis* 7, 1 (Fall 1981): 4.

enlightened woman: raising children, socializing, and doing community service work.[5]

Not all Canadian women who sought domestic help were wealthy; there was a "crying need" for servants in the nation's rural areas where farmers' wives performed domestic labour without the modern conveniences that urban housewives enjoyed.[6] Reformers envisioned farmers' wives and their maids working side by side to strengthen the Canadian West one household at a time. However, in urban and rural homes, the mistress exercised considerable power over her servant, controlling her work schedule, the food she ate, her accommodations, and amount of free time. A leaflet published by the Halifax Local Council of Women in 1910 warned prospective immigrants that any rumours they had heard about equality between mistress and servant in Canada, even in farm households, were "wild and absurd."[7] Girls considering a government passage loan were told to be prepared to adopt outward signs of deference, such as wearing a cap and uniform, and allowing her employer to call her by her first name. Above all, she must not expect to be treated as a member of the family.[8]

Middle-class women implored their working-class sisters to recognize that there were numerous benefits, at least in the long-term, to domestic

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[5]Marilyn Barber, "The Women Ontario Welcomed: Immigrant Domestics for Ontario Homes, 1870-1930," *Ontario History*, 72, 3 (1980): 150. and Bonnie Smith, *Ladies of the Leisure Class: The Bourgeoises of Northern France in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981): 81; Lenskyi, 3.

[6] PRO/CO 721/46. Memorandum, Conference of Prime Ministers, March 1922.

[7]RG 76/C-10422/489/755319. Mrs. Dennis, President, LCW of Halifax, "Emigration to Canada -- Open Letter to Domestic Help," 1910.

[8]RG 76/C-4778/115/22787. Duff to Burnham, 28 November 1922.

employment. The home was presented as the safest, most natural work place for women in contrast to shops or factories where moral and physical dangers lurked.[9] Gladys Pott of the Oversea Settlement Committee spoke of domestic service as a most honorable occupation, one upon which the survival of the empire depended.[10] Attempts to exalt domestic service by linking it with the future of the British "race" were lost on most working women, and when flowery rhetoric failed, working-class women were condemned as selfish, the ones to blame for society's ills. At a meeting of women interested in promoting migration of British domestics, Lady Pope, representing the Roman Catholic Women of Ottawa, claimed that the lack of home help was causing "race suicide."[11] Housewives simply could not carry the burden of proper child rearing and housework alone, and smaller family size among the middle class was the alarming result. Lady Pope and others feared this trend would continue until the "better classes" ceased to bear children. For her part, Mary Burnham deplored the desire of young British women to "roam all over the world, and yet not do housework."[12] Burnham, her officers, and leaders of social service organizations did not see their reasoning as contradictory; applying separate sphere ideology to the working class, they insisted that immigrant women belonged in the home,

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[9]Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*; see also Karen Dubinsky, *Improper Advances* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993) and Valverde, Chapter 6.

[10]PRO/CO/721/2. Government Emigration Committee Memo, January 1919; PRO/CO/721/6. *Report to the OSC*...(London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1919).

[11]RG 76/C-4777/113/22787. Second Conference of Organizations Interested in Housing and Care of Immigrant Domestics, 14 May 1919, 4.

[12]RG 76/C-4778/114/22787. Burnham to Kate Manicom of the British Worker's Union, 2 August 1923.

but allowed themselves a prominent role in public life as salaried professionals.

Convincing the working class to accept domestic service was not only the concern of matrons who disliked performing housework. Men were also disturbed by immigrant women's avoidance of their obligation. Immigration Commissioner J. O. Smith, in a letter to the Ottawa office, sympathized with families without servants and revealed his own class and gender biases: "I need not go further than my own household to express to you my distinct dislike of being obliged to get up at 6:15 in the morning to make the fires and do a housemaid's job before coming to my official duties."[13] The Border Chamber of Commerce, representing businessmen in Southern Ontario, implored the government to find more immigrant maids, as "[t]he lack of such help has almost demoralized the home life of our country."[14] These complaints suggest a fear that gender roles were unraveling, leading to an unhealthy situation where women and men performed work unsuited to them. Immigration officers and their male colleagues believed that factory and retail positions were inappropriate for women, potentially harmful to their bodies and minds, and, because these jobs encouraged independent living and a willful attitude, women were left unsuited for housework and possibly even for marriage and motherhood.[15]

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[13]RG 76/C-7368/217/94169. Smith to Egan, 28 February 1924.

[14]RG 76/C-4778/114/22787. F. Maclure Sclanders to Scott, 16 December 1919. The Border Chamber of Commerce was made up of representatives from Windsor, Walkerville, Sandwich, and several other small Ontario towns.

[15]RG 76/C-4777/114/22787. "New Basics," 4.

One women's magazine called the servant question "...a burning one, affecting as it does the welfare of the entire community."[16]

The most common type of servant sought for Canadian homes was the "cook-general," sometimes called the "maid-of-all-work." The difficulty filling such a position was due to the long hours and extremely heavy work load expected of an only servant. Unlike other occupational fields, domestic service did not undergo a division of labour; the opposite had taken place.[17] Where once several pairs of hired hands carried out domestic tasks, by the early twentieth century a whole range of work had become the responsibility of one servant, most often a female. Families of the expanding middle class wanted the status that engaging a servant brought, but could only afford one domestic employee. Industrialization and urbanization increased the demand for servants while decreasing the number of willing employees, and by the early twentieth century household service had become a thoroughly feminized, low-status occupation. More opportunities in industry and sales had opened up for women, and they took advantage of them when possible. Generally, the young, poor, and unskilled, and those who lacked family support comprised the domestic service labour pool. Immigrant women tended to fall under these categories; however, only through enticements of higher pay and passage loans or grants would the desired British women agree to accept positions as

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[16]Margaret Hamiliton, "The Servant Girl Problem," *Everywoman's World*, May 1911.

[17]Judith Rollins, *Between Women: Domestics and Their Employers* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985): 34.

cooks-general in Canadian homes. Domestic service work was available to British women without the expense and uncertainties of overseas migration.

The immigration department's publicity pamphlets presented generalizations about Canadian housework and family life. It was admitted that some mistresses, mainly in urban areas, expected the servant to wear the hated uniform and cap and to stay removed from the family, eating and entertaining her guests in separate quarters, if having guests were permitted. To make these requirements more palatable, the literature claimed that housework in Canada was less strenuous because of machine technology present in most homes. The introduction of labour-saving devices such as vacuum cleaners and washing machines were not necessarily a boon to the maid because they raised the standards of cleanliness, and consumer culture dictated that the modern wife must possess each new machine.[18] The prevalence of these devices and the exacting standards that went with them made it difficult to meet employer demands, often because the working-class households in which most of the immigrant women grew up probably could not have afforded the latest appliances. One Canadian mistress complained that her servant from Northern Ireland was unsuitable because she came from a primitive home. The young woman did not know how to operate certain utensils to make fancy desserts, nor was she familiar with the use of the telephone.[19] Being confronted with noisy, heavy, strange-looking equipment was perhaps intimidating for servants who did not know how to use it. Canadian wives

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[18]Barber, "Sunny Ontario for British Girls 1900-1930" in Jean Burnet, *Looking into My Sister's Eyes* (Toronto, 1986): 63-65.

[19]RG 76/C-7368/217/94169. Burnham memo, 12 July 1926.

and immigration officers did not recognize that knowledge and experience were class-based and culture-based; they were quick to label as stupid domestics who were inexperienced according to North American standards.[20]

Historian Nancy Kinnear, whose work focuses on Western Canada, analyzed a survey taken by the United Farm Women of Manitoba in 1922. The survey results provide details of women's work on the farm and can help us make generalizations about what awaited a British domestic servant placed with a Western family. Women's work was broadly defined and required intense physical exertion. One of their duties was providing water which often had to be hauled to the house from an outside well. They cooked meals for the family and often a group of male hired farm hands, and were responsible for feeding animals.[21] All duties within the home were their responsibility; they cleaned, did the laundry, sewed and mended clothing, and preserved fruits and vegetables from the kitchen garden they cultivated.[22] Children might help with chores once they reached a certain age, but other than that, women had little help. Kinnear tells us that only

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[20]Ibid., and Charlesworth to Burnham, 28 August 1925.

[21]Mary Kinnear, "'Do you want your daughter to marry a farmer?': Women's Work on the Farm, 1922," in Donald Akenson, ed., *Canadian Papers in Rural History*, 6 (Gananoque, ON: Langdale Press, 1988): 137.

[22]See Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987): 307-308; also Veronica Strong-Boag, "Pulling in Double Harness of Hauling a Double Load: Women, Work and Feminism on the Canadian Prairie," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 21, 3 (Fall 1986): 37-38. For a selection of writings by pioneer women, see Susan Jackel, ed., *A Flannel Shirt and Liberty: British Emigrant Gentlewomen in the Canadian West, 1880-1914*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1982.) Frances Swyripa's study of Ukrainian women, *Wedded to the Cause* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993): 28-32, discusses these women's pioneering work in the West.

fourteen percent of the Manitoba women who answered the survey had a domestic servant, and many did not possess much in the way of labour-saving technology. Basic comforts were lacking in the majority of rural Manitoba homes; twenty-seven percent of the respondents had an indoor toilet, and only eighteen percent had a bath.[23] The country maid might be touched by less of a social stigma than her urban sister, but the loneliness and isolation could be extreme, especially if the employer family treated her unfairly. Social centers such as the YWCA and women's hostels, touted by the division as the servant's refuge, were inaccessible to most domestics in rural areas.

During the few hours of free time she possessed, the servant was anxious to get out of the house where she lived and worked. The servant's public behavior was of interest to the family and the larger society; if a servant were seen drinking or conversing with "strange" men, she could be reprimanded or lose her job. Some women did not hesitate to challenge limits, such as Emily W. who stayed out all night with sailors she had met in Montreal.[24] Many British women were disturbed to discover that the few benefits acceded to domestic workers in the United Kingdom did not exist in Canada. A domestic in Ontario did not believe that higher wages in Canada made up for the benefits she had lost by emigrating. She wrote, "Well, I just wish I had enough money to bring me back, I would gladly go tomorrow." She missed the two hours of free time each day that was her due in England, and she was shocked when she had to pay six dollars for a

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[23]Kinnear, 145.

[24]rg 76/C-7368/217/94169. Lightbourne to Burnham, Report from Dorchester House, Montreal, Autumn of 1923.

doctor visit.[25] She referred in her letter to regulations of the British Domestic Workers Employment Bureau, established after the war, to guard the interests of servants. It had become one of the foremost placement agencies for servants in Britain, and any employer engaging a worker through it had to conform to its regulations. These included allowing the servant two hours off each afternoon, set working hours, and a minimum wage.[26] There was no such influential organization in Canada, and addressing these types of servant grievances was low priority for the division.

For girls who signed agreements of assisted passage, the most accurate information about the range of working conditions could be found at the Canadian Women's Hostels where immigrants met and shared their knowledge. As part of the Empire Settlement aftercare policy, single immigrant women were sent by train to the government-funded hostel nearest to their specified destination, and there they rested for a day awaiting placement in a home. Hostel matrons encouraged all British domestics to treat the hostel as a social club and job placement center where they could return for advice or to visit on their free evenings. By offering comfortable space and wholesome entertainment, the hostel system was "a means for retaining more or less direct influence over these young women until they become definitely settled."[27] In the hostels, immigrant

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[25]RG 76/C-10583/643/990380. Anonymous letter to immigration department, 4 April, 1922.

[26]Henrietta Pope, "Standardization of Domestic Service," 390.

[27]RG 76/C-10248/338/356358. Smith to Blair, 10 May 1920.

domestics informed one another about wage discrepancies and heard other immigrants' complaints about working conditions. Most disturbing were the former domestics now in shop or factory work who frequented the hostels, telling newcomers about their higher pay and free time on weekends.[28] Their stylish clothes and entertainment habits advertised an independent lifestyle that live-in maids could not attain. The hostels did not shelter the immigrants to the extent desired by the women's branch or employers.

To combat working-class women's negative attitudes toward service and discourage them from switching to other occupations in droves, the division, along with the British OSC, the CCIW, and women's organizations claimed that the twenties would see the "professionalization" of housework, where servants would be on a par with shop girls and stenographers. Although one of their stated goals was to improve working conditions for maids, the women's branch and the CCIW neglected this component of their programme, despite its potential to increase retention rates in domestic service. They talked of instituting extensive training programs, and giving servants certificates of qualification and references to establish a more business-like basis for the mistress-maid relationship. There were some attempts to follow through on these ideas, but the onus was placed on servant women to improve their skills or accept their lot rather than on employers to improve conditions in the household. Bureaucrats reasoned that domestics themselves should be responsible for increasing the standards of efficiency and developing some of their own training programs,

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[28]RG 76/C-7368/217/94169. Burnham to Blair, 26 October 1928.

and usually concluded that dissatisfied domestics had done nothing to deserve better conditions.[29] Mistresses enthusiastically agreed that the best way to improve the status of service was to simply convince the public of its true value. Lady advisors to the OSC suggested that young women of the War Services be given badges of approval to enter domestic service, a move which would bring an instant increase in the status of maids.[30] There was also agreement among employers that a solution to the servant problem should include a more respectful treatment of their own houseworkers, but again their circuitous reasoning was that the average maid was not professional enough in her demeanor or abilities to deserve much respect.[31] Employers praised their maids who were honest and clean, but wished the department to know that they had "much to learn in the art of cooking and in Canadian methods and ways."[32] It appeared that what mistresses liked the least was investing time and effort into home-training the maids while paying them a regular wage.

The officers of the women's division and employers had a very clear picture of the ideal servant. They expected boatloads of "smart parlourmaids" willing to don a "French cap and Muslin apron," or devoted and hardworking general servants content to remain in one home for

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[29]RG 76/C-4777/113/22787. Conference on Immigration Report "New Basis," 4.

[30]PRO/CO/721/5. Report to the Oversea Settlement Committee of the Delegates Appointed to Enquire as to Openings in Canada for Women from the United Kingdom, 1919, 6.

[31]Ibid.; and Jean Muldrew, "The Housework Problem," *Everywoman's World* (May 1919): 28.

[32]RG 76/C-10583/643/990380. Letters from the files of Mary Burnham, forwarded to H. A. Macdonell, 26 April 1922.

several years.[33] The ideal British immigrant domestic for Canada had been under construction since the mid-nineteenth century. She was the "pure domestic girl"[34] untainted by industrial work who was willing to dedicate her younger years to house work, recognizing its importance to the empire.[35] Expounding on the ideal servant's origins, one recruiter painted this picture:

> "She is country bred and born; it is in the country villages she thrives; she is the useful eldest daughter of the large families of the poorer clergy. She lives in the riverside homes of retired officers of both services; she gets her education and some knowledge of the world at high school."[36]

The few servants actually described as exceptional by immigration officers and employers appeared to be overqualified, leading one to wonder how long they would remain in the field. Harriet Porter, an officer stationed in Western Canada, cited one satisfactory servant among the many Empire Settlement women that she investigated during a tour of the prairie provinces. She submitted a glowing report of Miss Annie Smellie, an English domestic who besides having great musical ability also had a good basic education and diploma in bee-keeping. Miss Smellie had not complained about her meager wage of twenty-five dollars per month, and as a kind gesture Miss Porter requested a better-paying position for her.[37]

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[33]Hamilton.

[34]RG 76/C-4778/115/22787. Murphy to Burnham, 8 July 1923.

[35]Blakeley, 424.

[36]Quoted in Una Monk, 113.

[37]RG 76/C-4778/115/22787. Porter to Burnham, March 1925

In English Canada, the search for the ideal domestic was influenced by stereotypes of British peoples. Several female officers were stationed in Scotland where "girls nearest to the ideal domestic type" were to be found. Scottish women were valued for their good sense and strong character that Canadian women imagined came from tramping daily across the green hills among the sheep. Scottish women, like women from northern England, were considered to be "average to well in appearance, intelligence, and adaptability." Irish women, on the other hand, were considered the least desirable among women from the British Isles, mainly because they were Catholic, but also because they were considered unattractive, unintelligent, and weak in character.[38]

Canada's transportation companies constantly pushed for increased immigration of non-British women in the twenties, but the women's division resisted the recruitment of these women, even though it appeared that some desperate employers would not have shunned them. Mary Burnham dismissed Czech women as "peasants," and declared that Russian women were probably prostitutes because of their colorful dress.[39] She also flatly stated that women of African descent living throughout the empire were not fit for service in Canada for "climatic reasons,"[40] and there was no effort made to recruit them. The racist claim that Caribbean and East Indian

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[38]RG 76/C-7368/217/94169. C. M. Charlesworth to Burnham, 28 August 1925.

[39]Ibid., Memo, 22 November 1923.

[40]RG 76/C-4778/115/22787. Burnham to Hutchison of the YWCA in Toronto, 15 June 1923. African Canadians have been studied by Robin Winks in *The Blacks in Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1971) and by Ken Alexander and Avis Glaze in *Towards Freedom: The African-Canadian Experience* (Toronto: Umbrella Press, 1996).

women would not be able to withstand the Canadian winter was presented as a humanitarian reason for prohibiting their immigration, but the main concern was that a supposed intellectual and moral inferiority posed a threat of contamination to the household and society. It was not only the women's division which held these views; they were incorporated into Section 38 of the Immigration Act of 1910.[41]

Prospective employers submitted lists describing the types of domestics they sought, including stipulations on religious denomination, ethnicity, age, and appearance. "Not Roman Catholic," one employer insisted. Another would accept only a "smart type," but not if she were German. One family was so desperate for a servant that it would "Take Finnish if speak English [sic]." A list of employer's demands sent to the division by Jessie Duff of the Employment Service of Canada showed the extremes of employer preference. Duff, who had decided opinions about immigrants, classified as undesirable any women "with varicose veins, smokers, those with decided religious preference [and] those with peculiarities in personality."[42] A few employers informed the division of their refusal to engage a worker who expected wages -- the servant should be satisfied to receive only room and board for her labour.[43] Rather than expressing concern about employers' demands, division officers and hostel

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[41] Canada, An Act Respecting Immigration, 9-10 Edward VII, assented to 4 May 1910. The exclusion of Asians was made official by the Asian Exclusion Act of 1923. See Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990); see also Kelley and Trebilcock.

[42] RG 76/C-4778/115/22787.

[43] Ibid., Burnham to Franklin of SOSBW, 22 February 1924.

matrons attempted to satisfy their narrow requirements. They were rarely successful; the ideal domestic proved hard to find. The division categorized potential clients using terms more colourful than those of the employers. There were the "doubtful cases," "lazy" and "slouchy" women, "casual types," and "bar-maid types."[44] With such exacting criteria and harsh assessment, successful placement of houseworkers was all the more hindered.

The goal to set minimum wages for domestic employment had been cited as an important step toward professionalization of housework,[45] but neither Jean Robson nor Mary Burnham made standardization of pay rates a priority for the women's division. Servants' wages varied considerably, with seemingly little regard to experience, age, or workload, although location may have had a bearing on pay rates. Miss Anderson, the matron of the Montreal Women's Hostel in 1924, claimed that the hostel placed girls with families that paid a minimum of $25 per month. In Quebec City and Saskatoon, however, wages might be $20 per month. Toronto employers who answered questionnaires reported paying between $25 and $45 in 1923, but an experienced cook-general working for a family in Ottawa could receive as low as $18 per month.[46] The Employment Service of Canada's office in British Columbia notified Burnham in 1923 that a British domestic in that province had filed an official complaint concerning

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[44]Ibid., Porter to Burnham, March 1925.

[45]Muldrew, 28; RG 76/C-4778/115/22782. W. J. Black memo about CCIW, 22 September 1921.

[46]RG 76/C-7368/217/94167. Anderson to Burnham, 28 October 1924. Wages for Quebec City and Saskatoon reported by R. Rogg of Employment Service of Canada. Also RG 76/C-4778/115/22787, Rogg to Burnham, 15 February 1924.

her monthly wage of only $10 for heavy work. A year later, the same office said that immigrant domestics were complaining of "gross misrepresentation of conditions."[47] Mary Burnham considered printing a list of pay rates according to region in her recruitment pamphlet "Women's Work in Canada" but had second thoughts about it because, as it turned out, her figures tended toward the high end which she feared might lead prospective immigrants to "get their hopes up."[48] Rather than taking a critical look at the larger issues of pay and conditions, officers and hostel matrons dealt with problems as they arose, often responding to complaints about pay with the explanation that only employers could decide which "girls" deserved raises. Miss Anderson reported that women in her hostel knew little about child care or meal preparation, but "[t]here is one thing they do know, and that is to ask for big wages."[49]

Another issue which neither the women's division nor the employment services department addressed adequately was the difference in household responsibilities from one position to another. Compensation was generally not higher in relation to family size or family lifestyle, factors which certainly affected the servant's workload. Duties varied greatly, with laundry or shopping part of some servants' work week, but not of others. Dining late, a tradition among many well-to-do families, meant that some unlucky servants' kitchen duty extended into the night. Domestics in rural homes were often expected to do the "outside work" of gardening or looking

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[47]RG 76/C-4778/115/22787. McVety to Rogg, 15 February 1924.

[48]Ibid., Burnham January 1923.

[49]RG 76/C-10248/338/356358. Anderson to Burnham, 25 October 1923.

after animals. J. W. Mitchell, Director of the Alberta Employment Service, asked Ottawa to find more girls who were willing to "take full charge of work around the farm" for $30 per month.[50] Servants assigned to farm work were supposed to be classified as "farm domestics", but terms of work were at the employer's discretion, as was the case in urban homes.

The women's division's methods of immigrant follow-up are telling; officers sent immigrants a form letter wishing them contentment in domestic service and offering to help if problems arose. Domestics were also encouraged to go to the hostels to pick up mail and socialize. To the employers, however, the division sent questionnaires which enabled the mistresses to evaluate their servants' performance and behavior.[51] It was not until 1929 that the division assigned an officer to interview a number of domestics in urban situations, when it had become clear that the division's various publicity, loan, rebate, and training initiatives had failed to end the service crisis. Allowing domestics to air grievances was a last resort.

Immigrant servants' voices are rarely discernible in the available written sources. Federal officers and members of voluntary organizations nearly always talked *about* immigrant servants rather than talking or listening *to* them, and based their perceptions of the "servant problem" on reports of employers, and on their own experiences as employers. An interesting exception was Lady Henrietta Pope who discussed the concerns of Calgary domestic, Miss G. S. Manning, in an article appearing in *The Labour Gazette*. Miss Manning had organized the Calgary Housekeepers'

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[50]RG 76/C-4778/115/22787. Mitchell to Burnham, 7 February 1923.

[51]RG 76/C-7368/217/94169 and C-10583/643/990380. Follow-up letters and employer responses.

Association, a non-radical, Christian support group in favour of standardizing domestic service.[52] This group of domestics met regularly at the YWCA, and their conversations nearly always revolved around work grievances: the long hours, hard work, lack of privacy, and the unequal workload in one household compared to another. Lady Pope's article included other reports "from the maid's point of view," but not in the words of the maids themselves. Similarly, records of the Department of Immigration and Colonization provide us with no more than a glimpse of the opinions of immigrant houseworkers in Canada in the twenties, and then it is through the bureaucratic filter. When voices of immigrants are found in government documents, it is often because they were put to use, either as propaganda to attract immigrants to Canada or as evidence in deportation hearings.

Officers believed that with a little persuasion single women would see the benefits of assisted passage and domestic work. Officers made much of Canada's abundant space and fresh air, and stressed a girl's increased chances for matrimony. While stressing that employers demanded deference from their servants, the immigration department also claimed that social class had little bearing on one's future in Canada. Despite the glossy pamphlets and Empire Settlement passage loans, which became outright grants in 1926, the number of women recruited was disappointing. Even the year with the greatest movement of domestics, the fiscal year 1923-24, saw only 8,722 British women arrive in Canada, many of whom

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[52]Pope, 338-339.

were coming to join kin or under individual nomination and with no interest in domestic work.[53]

The agreement, or promise, that Empire Settlement girls were required to sign for assisted passage committed them to domestic service for one year, but the agreement was non-binding as long as the immigrant made payments on her loan, through whatever means she could. Many immigrant women adopted the strategy of signing the agreement but bolting from service as soon as the opportunity arose. Assisted passage was the ideal way to join a working husband or partner who could afford to repay the loan. Others, after a brief period as a cook-general, assessed their economic opportunities and took up factory or retail jobs, much to the consternation of Mary Burnham and her officers. In the event of criminal or immoral behavior, female immigrants were sought after and deported, but the high number of women who simply "broke faith" with the division and moved on with their lives made enforcement of their work agreements impracticable.

In the United Kingdom, representatives of the women's branch were present in the three main offices of the Department of Immigration and Colonization: London, Liverpool, and Glasgow, and women officers traveled through Ireland and Wales on recruitment missions. They attempted to reach single women through lectures, posters, and films, as well as pamphlets such as Burnham's "Women's Work in Canada."[54] Officers only had to read the papers, however, to gain a sense of British women's aversion

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[53]RG 76/C-4997/116/22787. McFarlane Memo, 20.

[54]Ibid., 21.

to domestic service and their ambivalence toward the Empire Settlement as the path to a better life. Counteracting the effects of rumours, as well as undeniable facts, that appeared in newspapers remained a hurdle for recruiters. An article in the *Donegal Democrat*, called "Emigrants' Perils," warned women that Empire Settlement was a contract labour scheme in which government "sharks" took all of a servant's wages to apply them to the loan. It discussed the cases of several Irish women who claimed that the government was misrepresenting the conditions of the agreement, because they had not been told that passage assistance was a loan to be repaid.[55] The women's branch in Ottawa was very concerned about these misunderstandings, but Canada's Immigration Commissioner in London, J. O. Smith, said that girls were "playing dumb" if they claimed they had received erroneous information.[56] There is a good deal of evidence that women who were considering emigration relied on the print media, letters, and reports of previous emigrants. Agent S. Murphy of the Glasgow office found that knowledge of conditions in Canada had been "broadcasted" wherever officers went to recruit. At the mention of positions available in British Columbia, Scottish women responded that they knew of the "...long journey of from three to six days in a colonist sleeper where a girl is to get a bit of rest as best she can, and her food consists of sandwiches with a cup of tea made on the colonist range if the fire happens to be going."[57] As early as 1921, "word was out" in the British Isles that the higher wages offered in

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[55]RG 76/C-7368/217/94169. *Donegal Democrat*, 11 July 1924, 3.

[56]Ibid., Smith to Blair, 5 October 1923.

[57]RG 76/C-4778/115/22787. Murphy to Burnham, 7 August 1923.

Canada were offset by the cost of clothing, the servant's greatest expense.[58] Before the war, some women's voluntary emigration organizations "outfitted" the women they sponsored with a uniform or a suit of winter clothes. Under Empire Settlement, emigrants had to make or buy a wardrobe suitable for the Canadian winter. Knowledge had also circulated that the term "general servant" had a different meaning in Britain and the dominions. In Britain, a general servant was not expected to cook. Women warned others that an advertisement for a position at higher wages overseas masked the whole range of kitchen duties; it in fact amounted to slightly more money for doing the work of two servants.[59] Euphemistic phrases for a domestic servant such as "companion-help" or "home-help" were supposed to make the additional responsibilities of caring for an invalid or for children seem more appealing. This had not been particularly successful in the mid-nineteenth century when voluntary organizations had first come up with the phrases, and they did not work in the 1920s.[60]

The bureaucratic procedure for assisted passage with its forms, interviews, and medical inspections was also a deterrent. Here again, Canada's regulations were not sensitive to migrant concerns. Stringent requirements were supposed to discourage unsuitable women from emigrating, thus preventing their economic or moral downfall, but they frightened women away. The first step was an interview with a woman officer. Promising applicants were instructed to fetch references from

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[58]RG 76/C-4778/114/22787. Robson to Blair, 17 August 1921.

[59]RG 76/C-4778/115/22787. Blair to Little, 10 September 1924.

[60]See Monk, Chapter 1.

previous employers and character references from clergymen, then undergo medical exams. J. O. Smith, disturbed that his input on emigration regulations for women had not been sought, questioned the need for references, medical exams, and conductresses. Although there are no precise numbers available, many applicants did not follow through on all the requirements or were rejected in the early stages of the process. Smith worried that potential emigrant women did not want to be identified as servants, and they did not want anyone to know that they were going out under government assistance. The whole process was an affront to the applicants' working-class sensibilities. This claim was not a display of empathy on Smith's part; he believed that British women would resort to deviousness to find their way around regulations, and slip into Canada "with impunity."[61]

The application for household service with its accompanying medical questionnaire showed Ottawa's incorporation of eugenicists' theories into policy. The numerous questions about mental health history were a means to alert authorities to mentally defective immigrants, long considered responsible for the majority of crimes and acts of immorality.[62] The applicant also had to list any physical defects; of greatest concern being those of congenital origin. Two women with abnormal fingers were held at port in 1921, but were permitted to continue at the request of the division's first supervisor Jean Robson because they had experience as paid

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[61]RG 76/C-4778/114/22787. Memo, Smith to Ottawa office, 6 January 1920.

[62]RG 76/C-4777/113/22787. "Emigration of Women," *Manitoba Free Press*, 27 September 1919, 10.

domestics.[63] Failure to meet certain health standards might cause migrant women to suffer humiliation at the hands of immigration officials. The report of an unnamed ship's conductress described the "mortifying" requirement that women show their vaccination scars to officials before disembarkation. Those without scars were restrained and vaccinated.[64] Migrants were expected to relinquish control over their destinations, their working lives, and to some extent, their bodies.

The discovery of hidden pregnancies, such as that of Edith C., were not uncommon and touched off a battle of memos. Edith C. arrived in Canada on the "Cassandra" on the third of May, 1921, and immediately fell ill, whereupon it became obvious to the ship's doctor that she was due to give birth within weeks. Federal immigration officials were notified of the scandal by the Saskatchewan Commissioner of Labour who denounced federal inspectors as lax. F. C. Blair responded, blaming transportation companies and British doctors who had no interest in what was best for Canada. Representatives of shipping companies, the women's division, and the Department of Health pointed fingers at one another, but eventually placed the blame on Edith's Liverpool doctor, P. Garry. Dr. Garry explained that he did not notice the woman's protruding abdomen because she was "a big proportioned girl." He mentioned that she was a quiet daughter of a family he knew well, which may suggest he overlooked the pregnancy to help the woman save face in her hometown. The twenty-seven-year-old woman had planned to go to her sister's home in Saskatchewan, but she was

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[63]RG 76/C-7817/269/228124. Memo to Cory from Robson, 18 May 1921.

[64]RG 76/C-4777/113/44787. Conductress Report to Smith 1919.

deported later in the year. The result of such oversights was the introduction of a more detailed medical form,[65] and a roster of approved doctors who could be trusted to put Canada's interests before those of emigrants.[66]

The SOSBW was also not entirely reliable as a screening organization. The trouble was that servants were almost as scarce in Britain as they were in the dominions, and the SOSBW was not about to help Canada snatch good maids from British ladies' homes.[67] Canadian officers reported that there were long "domestic help wanted" sections in British newspapers, a claim confirmed by F. C. Blair on a trip to London in 1923. Blair wrote Ottawa about the challenges of recruitment, and that despite high unemployment in London, most women on the dole refused to consider service, even in their own country.[68] The SOSBW, which was generally of the opinion that Canada's occupational requirements were too strict, wanted to send more women trained for other types of work.[69]

In Ottawa, officers wrestled with the challenge Canadian demography presented to recruitment and placement of immigrants. Policies of the twenties ran counter to the preferences of individual newcomers, and did not take into account the changing settlement patterns from rural to urban

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[65]RG 76/C-7817/269/228124.

[66]RG 76/C-10583/643/990380. Blair to Egan, 17 September 1924.

[67]Pamela Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, second edition (Phoenix Mill, Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton, 1990): 190; and RG 76/C-10583/643/990380. Burnham to Macdonell, 4 November 1922.

[68]RG 76/C-7368/217/94169. Blair to Macdonell, 22 November 1923.

[69] Blakeley, 442.

areas. There was little Mary Burnham could do to counteract the attraction of urban centres over rural areas, beyond publicizing the invigorating lifestyle of the typical Canadian farm. With remarkable consistency, she addressed this problem by doing nothing to change working conditions and urging domestics to accept the status quo.

Burnham knew the need for domestic help in Western Canada was acute, and that a lack of attention to western households would diminish support for immigrant domestic schemes. Support for Empire Settlement had been fairly high in the West, particularly in Saskatchewan and Alberta, where farmers needed harvesters and their wives wanted female helpers. This was the region regarded as most in need of the direct British influence, after the policies of Clifford Sifton at the turn of the century had allegedly allowed it to be over-run by hordes of foreigners. Empire Settlement, however, was not meeting expectations as the panacea for the West, as British immigrants refused to behave as they were bid.

Canada's agreement with Britain spelled out the requirements for male and female workers; they were bound to accept farm labour or domestic service. British men, most of whom had never been on a farm, registered their distaste for the labour and living conditions by heading to western urban centers, a process of secondary migration which heightened tension between the Canadian government and the OSC. For the women's division, the problem was not one of managing female immigrants in the West, but getting them there in the first place. The lopsided results of the first official year of women's assisted migration under Empire Settlement were disappointing. From May to December of 1923, of the 700 British domestics to arrive, only 100 were willing to travel beyond central

Canada.[70] It was no accident that very few immigrant servants ever reached rural homes, especially homes in the prairie provinces. Most British immigrants were deterred from going West because of cost, isolation, and an unfamiliarity with the farming lifestyle. The wearisome and expensive journey deterred women from accepting jobs in the west, and wealthy families in the eastern cities snatched up almost all the immigrant women for their own homes. Immigrant women had a preference for cities because of the greater opportunities for entertainment and employment, once they had made their escape from domestic service.[71]

For an Englishwoman contemplating emigration, it did not take much mathematical ability to determine that the further West one took employment, the less economical the move would be. The 1924-25 passage lists from the *S.S. Metagama* gave the loan amount each immigrant received, and the further the destination, the higher the loan. Women boarding the vessel in Glasgow and ending their journey in eastern Canada took out loans of £10, and those on their way to Calgary needed £25. Accepting work in Vancouver left an immigrant in debt for up to £28.[72] When the loan and collection process proved cumbersome, Britain and Canada agreed to reduce passage rates dramatically and do away with loans in 1926 under a new Aftercare Agreement, but the West was still at a disadvantage. The Empire Settlement passage rate from Liverpool to Montreal in 1926 was £4, and just over £4 to Toronto. Transportation to

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[70]RG 76/C-7368/217/94169. Blair to Egan, 6 December 1923.

[71]Ibid., Burnham to Smith, 12 July 1923, and Smith to Blair, 15 December 1923.

[72]RG 76/C-7380/230/127825. See ships' passage lists.

Winnipeg was £5.10, to Edmonton £6.10, and to Vancouver £9.[73] As we have seen, rural and Western employers generally offered lower wages, so repaying a bigger loan with a lower wage was an equation the majority of British emigrants did not wish to accept.

Mary Burnham instructed her Principal Woman Officer in London, Charlotte Lightbourne, to emphasize to British women the benefits of country life, the fresh air and healthy food. Most importantly, Lightbourne was told to stress that because men outnumbered women, domestics in country situations usually found a marriage partner sooner than women in cities.[74] The Agent-General for Ontario, William Noxon, offered to give girls a £6 rebate in 1923 for accepting a rural position in his province. This initiative was copied by the federal Immigration Department one year later,[75] but neither rebate plan resulted in a dramatic increase in the flow of British women to rural areas. Expense was not the only factor; movement to the country went against current migration trends. By the 1920s, immigration had become an urban phenomenon and migrants preferred to follow routes to Canada's largest cities. Historian Deirdre Mageean demonstrated through her study of Irish emigration that travelers followed established trade and communication networks, and that much depended upon routes and prices set by large transportation companies. These trends were further strengthened by the migrants who established patterns of

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[73]RG 76/C-4779/116/22787. McFarlane memo, 17.

[74]RG 76/C-10583/643/990380. Burnham to Lightbourne, 26 April 1922.

[75]Ibid., Noxon to Burnham 20 March 1923; and RG 76/C-7368/217/94169. Women's division announcement, February 1924.

communication and family migration along the same routes. Historically, attempts by governments to alter the flow were largely unsuccessful.[76] While one of the aims of this chapter is to recognize migrant agency, it is important to place the migrant within the international economic system which influenced her decisions.

Supervisor Burnham understood the pull that Montreal and Toronto had for British women. Besides their economic advantages, these cities were home to family members and friends whom new immigrants were anxious to join. The overwhelming preference shown for these cities had gone far beyond the department's predictions, and the immigrants' reluctance to proceed west brought on the ire of male bureaucrats. The department, having never before dealt with female waged workers to such an extent, were not prepared for the domestics' willfulness. J. Bruce Walker, who on several occasions criticized the policies of the women's branch, voiced his impatience in a letter to Deputy Minister Egan in a memo in 1926. Walker suggested that Burnham should dictate a destination to each domestic to avoid the appearance that the department favoured the cities in the central provinces. He was also concerned that the reputation of the immigration department might suffer if it could not keep control over female immigrants.[77]

From the outset, Canadian mistresses registered their dissatisfaction with Empire Settlement houseworkers, and succeeding years did not see much improvement in the houseworker programme. In numerous letters to

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[76]Deirdre Mageean, "Emigration from Irish Ports," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 13, 1 (Fall 1993).

[77]RG 76/C-7368/217/94169. Walker to Egan, 23 October 1926.

the women's branch, employers cited a lack of commitment to their standards of work, lack of skills, and a superior attitude on the part of their British immigrant servants. Officer Charlotte Lightbourne, while in Montreal, warned Mary Burnham in 1923 that "bad cases are accumulating at an alarming rate, causing uneasiness here."[78] Several girls were found to be pregnant, and one Emily W. arrived at the Montreal Women's Hostel "with evidence of strong drink upon her." A Scottish girl was sent packing by her employer family after she spread head lice to their baby, but most insulting was her lack of gratitude for the disinfection treatments the family gave her. It was noted that in Britain she had been a factory worker, an occupation that had most likely left her contaminated.[79] Other immigrants who appeared compliant before leaving Britain were using their assisted passage to further their own plans; Irish Catholics and Mormons reportedly tended to leave employment without notice and disappear over the United States border. F. C. Blair ordered women officers to stop recruiting Mormons, "as they are discontented anywhere else except in the shadow of a Mormon temple".[80]

Hostel matrons and provincial employment service officials forwarded the complaints to the beleaguered Mary Burnham, who could do little but reassure them that better girls would soon be coming. Burnham advised officers and hostel workers to remind immigrant women of their obligations to stay in domestic service for at least one year, but that was the extent of

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[78]Ibid., Lightbourne to Burnham, 12 September 1923.

[79]RG 76/C-10583/643/990380. Duff to Burnham, 14 September 1922.

[80]RG 76/C-7368/217/94169. Blair to Little, 9 June 1925.

the divisions enforcement powers.[81] Although Burnham's assessments of British immigrant women were becoming more harsh by the mid-twenties, she either still believed that ideal domestics were out there and could be found through assertive recruitment efforts, or she wanted employers and her male colleagues to believe this. She held out hope that British migration would rise to pre-war levels once imperial economies became more stabilized. In the meantime, her division remained a major advocate for British preference and migration assistance, despite the challenges that British migration posed. The disappointing results of the Empire Settlement Agreement's first years cast serious doubt on the ability of such programmes to make an impact on the servant crisis or western settlement.

It was imperative that the women's division build a solid reputation during its early years. Burnham's 1923 annual report, however, reveals that only four percent of unaccompanied women arriving in Canada during the fiscal year 1922-23 were seeking housework. Thirty-one percent of the women came under direct nominations, and while many of these were destined for housework, the division had obviously fallen short of its goal to become a clearinghouse for unemployed British women. Burnham reiterated the division's commitment to quality above quantity, and explained that it was as much her officers' responsibility to weed out undesirable women as to send ahead more houseworkers, and thus the low number of assisted immigrants was mainly a reflection of her officers' careful work.[82]

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[81]Ibid., Burnham to Duff, 26 November 1923; Burnham to Egan, 17 November 1923.

[82]Canada, Sessional Papers, 59, 4 (1923), Department of Immigration and Colonization, 53-54.

Despite the claims of the CCIW and the women's division to treat immigrants as "women first, rather than simply as labour"[83] the employers' concerns clearly took first priority among the women officers. By accepting the gift of Empire Settlement assistance, the servant had given her promise to repay her passage and remain obedience to regulations and to the wishes of her employer. Under contract labour laws, it was impossible to force immigrants to remain servants for any length of time, but officers could have pushed for uniform standards and some real benefits such as hours off work or higher pay to retain more domestics. Instead, the officers simply hoped that Canadian housewives would take an altruistic interest in their servants by treating then well and training them in the ways of Canadian domesticity.

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[83]RG 76/C-4777/113/22787. Conference on Immigration, Minutes, 28 March 1919.

Chapter Four

Bad for Business: The Transportation Companies and the Challenge to Assisted Migration

Canada's immigration department and transportation companies maintained a symbiotic relationship from the nineteenth century through the 1920s. Railway construction and immigration were synthesized under the aegis of the Conservative Party's National Policy of 1879, and consecutive governments continued to advance the notion that these two factors were interdependent. The railways cultivated their status as nation-builders by calling attention to the influence and privilege that governments had given them since the birth of the National Policy.[1] Railway executives reminded Canadians that their corporations had opened the West for settlement and provided the rail network which held their nation together economically and culturally, and provided for its defense.

Traditionally, Canada's immigration branch concentrated on bringing in agricultural settlers while allowing the railway and shipping companies to recruit labour through a "back door" system. The Department of the Interior never sanctioned a guest-worker policy, but it tolerated a work-

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[1]RG 76/C-10442/625/951760, Dominion-Provincial Conference on Immigration transcript, 150; and *Agricultural and Industrial Progress in Canada*, monthly review published by Canadian Pacific Department of Colonization and Development, 7, 2 (February 1925): 22. Canadian Pacific Archives, Montreal, Quebec.

settlement arrangement whereby immigrants, in the ideal, laboured for resource industries before settling on their own farms. The department reserved the final word on selection and approval, but the Canadian Pacific Railway, Grand Trunk, Canadian Northern and affiliated transatlantic shipping companies came to regard themselves as the government's equal partners in immigration policy administration.[2] After the Great War, the Department of Immigration and Colonization continued to allow the railways to carry on their own recruitment and settlement activities. Throughout the twenties, "the railways and the department...confer[red] together before the beginning of each year's program as to just how they shall work for that particular year,"[3] proof of a mutual sense of the railways' importance.

This chapter examines the transportation companies' views toward migration and their attempts to make their needs within Canadian industrial capitalism the basis of immigration policy in the 1920s. Frustrated with the low immigration figures of the early twenties, the railway companies orchestrated a challenge to the immigration department, aiming for nothing less than usurping control of immigration from the government. They almost succeeded through the Railways Agreement of September 1925. This agreement, approved by Prime Minister Mackenzie King's cabinet, gave the CPR and CNR vastly increased authority to recruit and place immigrants. This was a major blow to the immigration department's authority. The year 1925 represented the high

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[2]Avery, 12.

[3]Canada, House of Commons. Select Standing Committee on Agriculture and Colonization, *Report* (Ottawa: 1928): 28.

point for involvement of outside organizations in Canadian immigration. By the latter half of the 1920s, bureaucrats were fighting to protect the limited powers they retained. In the wake of such a crisis, the men in Immigration and Colonization by and large brushed aside the concerns of the women's division, alienating the women officers and making much of their work redundant. By yielding to the demands of business, the Liberal cabinet ushered in the decline of the women's division.

Transportation companies were not adverse to government-assisted migration because it increased ticket sales among a class that could not afford to travel otherwise; however, they objected to the occupational, ethnic, and moral criteria that were part of the policy. British preference was especially disturbing when migration did not swell to the flood transportation companies anticipated. Railway companies began an assault on bureaucratic authority just after the war, and a primary target was the women's division's regulations. Mary Burnham was the most outspoken supporter of British preference, if not the official most committed to it. Not only did the division and its affiliated social reform organizations pose a threat to capitalist interests, they were competing for influence on government policy and thus had the potential to jeopardize the companies' privileged partnership arrangement with Ottawa.

The companies were successful in their attempts to circumvent official policy because the immigration department lacked both strong leadership and direction in the early 1920s. The leadership problem did not stem from personal failings of individual bureaucrats, who had many years of experience, but because neither the Union nor Liberal governments had developed a broad, under-lying philosophy to guide the immigration

department in its work. Top-level bureaucrats floundered amid the confusion while advocates of the moral approach to immigration clashed with capitalist interests.

Railway and shipping companies lost no opportunity in the early twenties to express their opinion that immigration was a business, and their business at that. With their collective finger on Canada's economic pulse, they were regarded as the best predictors of Canada's absorption capacity because they owned so much unsettled western land and were the major recruiters of labour for resource industries. Like the women officers and voluntary organizations, they claimed to know the needs of immigrants and the nation, but asserted that the application of social reform theories to immigration was an approach no more valid than their own. They questioned the emphasis on quality above quantity, pointing out that Empire Settlement had narrow, regressive aspects to it. The government's commitment to British preference, half-hearted as it was, had business interests alarmed. Immigrants, as paying travelers, labourers, and settlers, were crucial to the companies' existence. The CPR's Colonel J. S. Dennis stated frankly that Empire Settlement was a misguided policy, and that Canada should welcome Eastern Europeans who were hardier and cheaper to settle. F. J. McClure of the Robert Reford Company, a smaller firm trying aggressively to increase its share in overseas shipping, called for an end to all visas, inspections, and restrictions. "Open the door," he argued, "and you have a prosperous Canada."[4]

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[4]RG 76/C-10422/625/951760. Dominion-Provincial Conference on Immigration.

Railway company executives placed their concerns constantly before the public. It was the habit of CPR executives J. S. Dennis to travel throughout the country on publicity tours, speaking to businessmen's' clubs and farmers' organizations about the dire need for more immigrants. Dennis also wrote newspaper editorials on the subject.[5] Chairman of the CNR, Henry Thornton, and Director of Colonization, W. J. Black, were somewhat more cautious in their publicity activities because of their company's status as a public corporation. W. J. Black, as a former Deputy Minister of Immigration and Colonization, was perhaps hesitant to appear too critical of his former fellow employees. None the less, Thornton and Black also gave public speeches on the nation's need for immigrant labour.

The disappointing immigration figures for 1923 were of grave concern to transportation company executives who were anxiously awaiting the end of the post-war recession. Immigration and Colonization's annual report showed an overall decrease in immigration of 19 percent.[6] However, some improvement in the national economy, especially the harvest of "the largest crop on record"[7] in the autumn of 1923 was cause for optimism. But this was tempered by the low price of wheat which prevented farmers from realizing an increase in income. Low grain prices also kept wages low for immigrant harvesters. Railway executives hoped

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Proceedings, 15 November 1923. Dennis, 150; McClure, 159.

[5]Canada, House of Commons, Debates, 1 (1925), 207; see also *Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs* (Hereafter CAR), 1923, 264; CAR, 1925-26, 171; and RG 76/C-7811/623/216822.

[6]Canada, Sessional Papers 60, 4 (1922-23), Immigration and Colonization, 6. The Report shows a decrease in British immigration of 12%, and from the U.S. of 25%.

[7]CAR (Toronto: 1923): 243.

that with luck a price increase in the next year or two might precipitate a wheat boom.

Not surprisingly, Canada's transportation companies reported new records for quantities of grain shipped across the country and for speed of delivery in 1923.[8] The price of Canadian grain on the international market was not their only concern; their intent had always been to transport as many immigrants and goods as possible. The mining, lumbering, and construction sectors were also robust in 1923. Resource industries imported significant numbers of Eastern Europeans, but they had to obtain special government permits for each labour-settlement scheme they devised. For instance, the government allowed lumber companies to recruit among experienced farm labourers; the 2000 Yugoslavs and Czechs they brought over in 1923 were expected to work as harvesters after leaving lumber camps.[9]

Indeed, by 1924 Canada witnesses a period of economic buoyancy that has since characterized the twenties. The restrictions placed on immigration in response to public opinion and wartime concerns appeared more and more inappropriate as the recession waned. The government had already begun to tentatively relax immigration restrictions in 1923.[10] By November, the new Minister of Immigration and

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[8]CAR, 1923, 322.

[9]Canada, Sessional Papers 61, 2 (1923-24), Department of Immigration and Colonization, 22.

[10]See John Herd Thompson, *Canada: 1922-1939: Decades of Discord*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985): Chapter 5: The New Economic Era; and James B. Hedges, *Building the Canadian West: The Land and Colonization Policies of the Canadian Pacific Railway* (New York: Macmillan, 1939): 358.

Colonization, James A. Robb, would describe the department's policy as "an open door, with a firm hand on the knob."[11]

The year 1923 began and ended with conferences on immigration. The first, held in the early days of January, brought together top-level officials of Immigration and Colonization with representatives of the transportation companies to discuss concerns about the overall decline in immigration. Also mentioned was the competition from the other dominions for British emigrants.[12] Canada must look to other sources to populate its lands and extract its resources, business interests warned, or risk lagging in its development. The department accepted the transportation companies' recommendations for more assertive recruitment of Continental Europeans, and agreed to send federal inspectors to offices in Paris, Antwerp, The Hague, Libau, Warsaw, and Budapest.[13]

An intense debate on the admission of "foreigners" dominated the Dominion-Provincial Conference on Immigration, held in Ottawa in November. Transportation interests took one side while prairie politicians, the women's division, and reform and labour organizations took the other. The latter camp insisted that the influx of immigrants must be British to protect the nation's moral and social well-being. C. A. Dunning, Premier of Saskatchewan, explained: "We need to keep up our proportion of British stock as an insurance policy which will make it certain that British

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[11]CAR, 1923, 270.

[12]RG 76/C-4661/5/41. Montreal *Gazette*, 4 January 1923.

[13]CAR, 1923, 264.

ideals are maintained in this country."[14] Dunning and other prairie premiers were especially concerned about "foreign" workers since their provinces received the majority of these people. Colonel Dennis knew, however, that the prairie farmers' yearly need for immigrant harvesters overrode their aversion to the non-British. As always, shipping company representatives repeatedly called attention to Canada's small population and defined this as problem that Empire Settlement alone could not solve, especially since British farmers and farm labourers were not inclined to leave home.[15] Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King was inclined to see the immigration issue as transportation companies saw it, and had already begun to change regulations to meet the demands of large corporations. At the close of this conference Minister Robb announced the government's "open door" policy. British immigration was to have first priority, but Immigration and Colonization would continue to approve limited numbers of Continentals. The government had thus tried to strike a balance between the competing interests.

In February 1923, Mackenzie King's cabinet revised an order-in-council so that occupation rather than money became the determining factor in the admission of Continental immigrants. Under the new order-in-council, P.C. 183, the only eligible Continentals were bona fide farmers, farm labourers, and domestic servants, or dependents of people already in Canada. Determining whether an applicant was a bona fide farmer or servant was supposed to be based upon work experience. The "money

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[14]RG 76/C-10442/625/951760. Dominion-Provincial Conference transcripts.

[15]Ibid., 150, 155.

test," which required that a cash deposit be made before sailing, was abolished in favour of this more "effective and scientific" method. The department realized that the currency many Continentals brought with them had almost no value on the international money market, thus their savings were lost in the exchange.[16] Emphasis on immigrant self-reliance was traded for a program of limited assistance for immigrants, similar to Empire Settlement schemes. It was expected that poor Europeans, like Empire Settlement immigrants, would be absorbed successfully if placed in these job fields immediately upon arrival. Order-in-council P.C. 1203, barring enemy aliens from admission to Canada, was also lifted in 1923.[17] A new immigration commissioner, T. B. Willans, was sent to Antwerp to manage Canada's immigration service on the Continent.

Transportation companies, responsible for placement of all migrants they recruited, assured the government and the public that unskilled labourers would become the next generation of independent farmers and farmers' wives. Occupational requirements were still a hurdle for transportation interests, but it was one they often overcame without too much difficulty. Duplicating immigration department services was a method the railways adopted to prevent the law from having a profound effect on migrant traffic. The law in place, the companies maneuvered their own agents into positions where they had occasion to interpret the

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[16]Canada, Annual Departmental Reports (1923-24), Department of Immigration and Colonization, 6; and (1924-25), 29. The money requirement was not abolished for Asians, who were still expected to pay a head tax.

[17]Jane Brooks, Immigration Policy and the Railways, unpublished Master's Thesis (Concordia University, 1977): 12.

law. They worked according to their own definition of a bona fide farmer or domestic servant.

The inroads made by reform organizations into immigration bureaucracy threatened the decades-old partnership that the railways had established with the federal government. The safeguards that women's groups insisted upon, such as the intervention of conductresses and better medical inspections, risked cutting into transportation company profits; more regulations tended to slow down migrant traffic and increase operating expenses. The Empire Settlement loan and grant schemes ensured a small but steady flow from Britain, but the companies saw too little future profit in British migration to do much more than was required of them under Empire Settlement. Certainly, resource industries were not keen to invest a great deal of money and effort in British female migration schemes since these women would not be employed to lay track, clear land, or mine coal.

To bring shipping and railway companies into line with new rules, a meeting between company representatives and Immigration Commissioner J. O. Smith had taken place in 1919 before the women's division became a permanent feature of the department. At this meeting, Smith emphasized the moral concerns about women's migration at the expense of regulatory details.[18] As new situations arose, such as the granting of assisted passages and the increase in non-British immigration, the ambiguities of the department's policy invited challenges from transportation

[18]RG 76/C-466/5/41. Minutes of Meeting of Sub-Committee, 8 December 1919.

companies. They were able to resist, for example, the request that women whose tickets had been paid for by an employer (individual nominations) be brought under departmental jurisdiction.[19] Whatever had not been expressly required of transportation companies at the outset could not be demanded arbitrarily. It did not take the companies long to see that the authority of the women's division was tenuous.

Shipping and railway companies were less than enthusiastic about placing chaperones for women on ships and trains and the additional paper work demanded by the women's division.[20] The Canadian Pacific, Anchor Donaldson, Dominion, and White Star Lines all resisted hiring conductresses, but this soon became an area where the department and transportation interests arrived at a compromise. The companies accommodated the department's moral concerns by appointing chaperones, but because of the added expense and paper work this entailed, the department allowed a wide interpretation of the rules. Non-British women and those who did not travel third class did not have to be chaperoned or turned over to women officers upon landing.[21] J. O. Smith confronted shipping companies, however, when he discovered that some ships were circumventing the regulations entirely by taking British women to American ports before continuing to Canada, and then claiming that conductresses were not a requirement for these ships. Shipping companies charged that new regulations were bothersome because female

[19]RG 76/C-4777/114/22787. CPR, White Star, and Cunard Lines to Blair, December 1922.

[20]RG 76/C-4780/116/22787. F. W. Kerr to J. Wester, 9 August 1920.

[21]RG 76/C-7380/230/127825. Dennis to Burnham, 14 January 1924.

passengers needed not only chaperones but different landing cards, employer references and medical inspections.[22] The difficulties posed by the new regulations were probably negligible for these businesses, but complaining enabled their representatives to maintain a dialogue with the department. For the CCIW and the women's division, observing the bickering over conductresses and documents was a lesson in the give-and-take between the department and powerful corporations. This was one instance in which they saw their moral ideals first diluted and then translated into feasible policies.

The creation of the women's division challenged Canadian railway companies to organize their own women's branches within their colonization departments. To facilitate their operations, the CPR and CNR expanded their own sophisticated bureaucracies, a common strategy of many businesses in the age of monopoly capitalism. During the war, the CPR created its own Department of Colonization and Development with several sub-branches to facilitate land settlement and job placement. The new department, with J. S. Dennis as Commissioner, had its headquarters in Montreal and five offices in western Canada, as well as ten recruitment centers in the United States and fourteen in Europe.[23] The companies appointed female agents with the explanation that this was necessary to comply with the government's strict regulations. Miss Esther Mackie, director of the women's branch of the CPR, and Miss Mabel Durham,

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[22]RG 76/C-4661/5/41. Minutes of meeting between Smith and transportation company representatives, 8 December 1919.

[23]CAR, 1925-26, 170.

superintendent for the CNR, were appointed in the early twenties.[24] These parallel women's branches expanded concurrently with the official women's division and mimicked its services as much as possible. By creating the appearance of full compliance with the division, the transportation companies maintained a good measure of independence and kept costs lower. These women's branches competed with Ottawa's women's division. The companies placed several female agents throughout Great Britain in order to duplicate the services of the division, and to give the appearance to the British public that division employees and railway employees were on an equal footing. "Lady representatives" were instructed to keep a high profile and to recruit British women aggressively. The women agents of the CPR and CNR interviewed prospective emigrants and recommended their acceptance to the immigration department. Instructed by the Ottawa to recruit only bona fide domestic servants; that is women with some experience in paid housework, the railway agents interpreted regulations loosely. It was enough for the female railway company agents that prospective migrants expressed an interest in doing housework; actual experience was rarely a consideration. When the division attempted to place immigrants in homes, it was discovered that many women recruited by railway agents had employment experience only in factories or retail.[25]

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[24]RG 76/C-7380/230/127825. Canadian Pacific pamphlet, "Domestic Servants for Canada," 1924.

[25]RG 76/C-7811/262/216882. Burnham to Jolliffe, 22 September, 1925.

Supervisor Burnham had to enlist the help of male bureaucrats to obtain minimal compliance with her division's regulations. It did not escape her that the non-compliance stemmed from the transportation companies' failure to recognize her authority. During her first year as supervisor, she discovered that conductresses on the Dominion Line were doing placement work by giving immigrant women the names of employers and telling them to avoid reporting to Canadian Women's Hostels.[26] The CPR sent its female passengers to the hostels as required, but bypassed Burnham completely by establishing communication directly with the hostels. Censure from Commissioner W. R. Little discouraged these practices.[27]

The department was compelled to hold another meeting in January of 1924 to focus on regulations and procedure for women's migration. Mary Burnham and Colonel Dennis debated face to face at the second meeting, one of the few times they communicated directly; it was usual procedure for F. C. Blair or W. R. Little to moderate between Burnham and railway magnates. Burnham was assured that transportation companies would conform to her division's guidelines, although the male bureaucrats had to put pressure on Dennis to turn over all third-class British domestic servants to the women's division, rather than just "Empire Settlement girls."[28] Within the next two months, division officers were once again

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[26]RG/C-4778/115/22787. Burnham memo, September 1922.

[27]RG 76/C-7380/230/127825. Burnham to Waite and Burnham to Little, September 1925.

[28]Ibid., Dennis to Burnham, 10 January 1924; Burnham to Dennis, 10 January 1924; Dennis to Burnham, 14 January 1924.

accusing the company of non-compliance; the CPR's Miss Mackie was failing to screen applicants or obtain references. In February she had forwarded office clerks and an artist.[29]

There were several reasons why transportation companies were able to thwart official regulations so brashly. The workings of the Department of Immigration and Colonization were simply not a high priority for the Mackenzie King government. Members of Parliament criticized the lack of leadership in the immigration department and the government's failure to provide direction. The frequent turn-over of top-level bureaucrats was one concern. Throughout the 1920s, the department had several acting ministers and acting deputy ministers, not an unusual state of affairs but one that hindered the development of clarity and continuity in policy. When Mackenzie King finally appointed James A. Robb as Minister of Immigration and Colonization in 1923, the choice was not entirely satisfactory since he also had the Finance portfolio. Several Members of Parliament questioned James Robb's ability to devote enough attention to the all-important issue of immigration. These were not personal attacks on Robb, but on the government's failure to appoint good leadership. Criticism was also directed toward W. J. Egan who came from the Department of Trade and Commerce to replace W. J. Black as Deputy Minister. Egan's lack of experience with immigration, and his South African origin led the M. P.s to question Egan's knowledge of Canada's unique needs and concerns. Minister Robb defended his choice of Egan, explaining that he had brought in someone from another department

[29]Ibid., Burnham to Dennis, 6 March 1924; Muldrew to Burnham, 22 February 1924.

because the jealous commissioners in Immigration and Colonization "were not speaking to each other."[30] It appears that F. C. Blair expected to receive the appointment.[31]

Member of Parliament Alan Neill joined the chorus of criticism, but his objection centered on the influence that outside organizations, especially the railways, were exercising on the immigration department. He argued that the system was calculated to promote confusion with other government bureaus and with business, since outside interests were allowed to "dictate to the Minister what policy he shall adopt."[32] The department's cooperation with voluntary organizations and businesses had indeed become a major source of confusion. Permitting outside organizations to have a strong role in policy formulation and to take part in the delivery of services diminished bureaucratic authority. Burnham informed Blair in 1927 that her division worked with 119 outside organizations, and that she wanted to recreate some sort of semi-official body, similar to the defunct CCIW, in order to keep track of them all.[33] Burnham was by that time in the midst of her battle against the powerful railway companies, which had successfully moved in to occupy the authority vacuum. Immigration had become a community affair, and in the process the entire department, not just the women's division, had

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[30]Canada, House of Commons, Debates, 2 (1923): 1475; and 2 (1925): 207-208;

[31]Canada, House of Commons, Debates, 3,(1928): 3898.

[32]Canada, House of Commons, Debates, 2 (1923): 1193.

[33]RG 76/C-4778/115/22787. Burnham to Blair, 25 February 1927.

difficulty juggling all of the various services and schemes and dealing with issues of accountability.

Since its creation, there was no guiding principle around which the Department of Immigration and Colonization operated. The gates of admission were supposed to "open and close with the swing of the economic pendulum,"[34] but the many layers of bureaucracy could not respond quickly to economic fluctuations. The immigration department's lack of direction and groping, piece-meal approach to problems was due in part to Mackenzie King's "wait and see" attitude which had filtered down into the bureaucracy. Despite its solicitation of suggestions and opinions about immigration from various segments of society through conferences and government hearings, the Liberals did little with the information beyond generating reports. As the economy improved and more "non-preferred" types of people were permitted into the country, the gap increased between rhetoric and practice. Over and over, the department's official reports reiterated its commitment to British quality, but its commitment was questionable. How could the department justify its claim to be concerned about protecting the British character of Canada when foreign labour was pouring into the country? It appears that morale in the Department of Immigration and Colonization had become quite low by the mid-twenties, as it tried to deflect criticism directed at it not only in the House of Commons, but also in the British Parliament, and in the press.

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[34]Hedges, 358.

Minister Robb and Deputy Minister Egan inherited an immigration department plagued by jealousies, its effectiveness limited by a lack of direction. In contrast, the railway companies appeared confident and dedicated. They, at least, had clearly stated their long-term objectives as far as immigration was concerned. The CPR's President Beatty worried publicly that "Canada cannot afford to be without a definite and forward immigration policy much longer," and that the only governmental approach his company could decipher was one of "drastic restriction and positive discouragement."[35]

The railway companies pressured the Cabinet and Immigration and Colonization to move further away from hindrances to migration based on national origin, wealth, and ideas of moral suitability. Although Deputy Minister Egan would not permit deviance from the occupational criteria of P.C. 183, he at least allowed the railway companies to further extend their recruitment efforts into countries previously considered "non-preferred." F. C. Blair mentioned in a departmental memo that inspectors stationed in Germany and Hungary had already been approving significant numbers of migrants from these two countries, and that he had developed a favourable impression of these national groups.[36] In 1924, the CPR and CNR secured families "of the agricultural type" from Eastern European nations, notably Germany and Hungary, under supervision of the immigration department. To be considered, each family had to be able to afford ship's passage and possess an additional $500 to invest in a

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[35]*Agricultural and Industiral Progress in Canada*, vol. 4, 6 (June 1922): 104; and vol. 4, 7 (July 1922): 133.

[36]RG 76/C-10432/611/902168. Blair to Egan, 31 October 1923.

homestead. These requirements amounted to an extension of the money test which business interests understood had been abolished, and they were prohibitive for the vast majority of Eastern Europeans. Only a "handful" of migrant families took part in the scheme.[37] The meager results increased the ire of railway companies, convincing them further of the need to put an end to scheme-by-scheme recruitment.

In view of the women's division's difficulties securing domestics for western farms, there was pressure on the department to go further afield to find single women. This, of course, prompted the transportation companies to offer to use their European networks to secure more domestic servants. The fiscal year 1924-25 witnessed the arrival of more than 4000 non-British women to Canada, some to join husbands and others to take up domestic work, mostly under the auspices of the railway companies.[38] In October of 1923, Mary Burnham turned down a proposal from the White Star Line to bring some fifty Czech women to Canada "as a trial order." Burnham explained to Egan that she "did not consider that these peasant women would make suitable domestics for homes in the city of Montreal."[39] Egan, who evidently had western farms in mind as destinations, overruled Burnham and allowed the women to come forward. In order to protect her division's turf and its respectability, Burnham insisted that all foreign women recruited by transportation

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[37]Canada, Annual Departmental Reports (1924-25), Department of Immigration and Colonization, 7.

[38] Ibid., 49.

[39]RG 76/C-4778/115/22787. White Star Line to Burnham, 18 October 1923; Burnham to Egan, 20 October 1923.

interests undergo the usual medical inspections, but she refused them admittance to the Canadian Women's Hostels.[40] She might have regretted her decision not to handle the reception and placement of these Eastern European immigrants since in coming years the women's division would try without much success to bring foreign women under its tutelage.

By 1925, Colonel J. S. Dennis had run out of patience with Dominion immigration policy and the constant bargaining necessary to address his company's needs for labour and passenger traffic. Dennis initiated a dialogue with CNR Chairman Black with the intent to orchestrate a united push for change. In a letter to Black, Dennis outlined the shortcomings in federal policy and administration which hindered their respective companies and, therefore, national growth. One of Dennis' strongest arguments was that Immigration and Colonization had made use of the railway companies' European recruitment networks while simultaneously chipping away at the companies' ability to operate to their full capacity. It was the transportation companies, Dennis claimed, which had always located and transported the immigrants so indispensable for Canada's economy. The immigration department's refusal to expand its own European offices was an avoidance of its responsibilities and amounted to taking advantage of the transportation companies. Through their own colonization departments, the railways had consistently out-performed the government bureaucracy. If the CPR and CNR continued to shoulder

[40]Ibid., Burnham memo, October 1923; Canada, Annual Departmental Reports (1923-24), 50.

the expense of offices and recruitment, they must insist upon more influence and autonomy.[41]

Rather than wait for the government's open door promise to materialize, the company presidents jointly worked out a more detailed policy proposal for the Prime Minister. Dennis and Black sent a letter outlining their concerns to Mackenzie King in February of 1925.[42] After a perusal of the document, Mackenzie King forwarded it to Immigration and Colonization for the bureaucrats' reaction. Deputy Minister Egan received a copy of what he called the "pernicious" proposal in August. Most disturbing to Egan's was the demand that the government recognize railway agents as being on a par with immigration department officials. The companies requested the authority to certify immigrants as bona fide agriculturalists and domestics and thus put an end to the department's inspections. They asked further that the department's agents be required to issue visas to migrants whom the railways had chosen, almost without question. Egan complained to Robb that under the proposed agreement "our officers would have to function within limitations that would virtually make him [sic] nothing more than a rubber stamp."[43]

Other than the plan to turn immigration department agents into drones, Egan objected to the proposal because it contained no acknowledgment of the transportation companies' obligation to provide after-care or to pay deportation costs for immigrants deemed public

[41]Brooks, 43-44.

[42]Brooks, 59.

[43]RG 76/C-7811/262/216882. Copy of Railway Draft Agreement; Egan to Robb 26 August 1925.

charges. It appeared that they might be trying to circumvent the Immigration Act. The Deputy Minister proceeded to write his own draft of the agreement and sent it back to Dennis and Black. Egan was not entirely adverse to a railways agreement; in letters to Robb and to railway directors he praised the companies' recruitment and settlement initiatives. He believed some sort of formalized partnership between his department and the railways was necessary and perhaps inevitable, but he did not want negotiations to take place over the heads of his commissioners.[44]

After several months of wrangling between the railway companies and immigration bureaucrats, the government agreed to give the railway companies vastly increased latitude to select and transport immigrants for a two-year period. Under the Railways Agreement of September 1, 1925, the occupational requirements of P.C. 183 were still intact, but the railways now had the power to determine the qualifications of a bona fide farmer or domestic servant. In addition to the preferred countries, Canada was open to migrants from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Poland and Danzig, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Austria, Hungary, and Romania. The two railway companies placed a certificate issuing officer in each of these nations and instructed booking agents, who were often affiliated with steamship companies, to forward individuals to them. The officers were salaried employees of the railway companies without, it was asserted, a direct interest in the number of tickets sold.[45] To further

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[44]Ibid.

[45]RG 76/C-4779/116/22787. Conference of Canadian Council of Immigration of Women, Minutes, 27 February 1928, 16.

stimulate migration, Mackenzie King reinstated the bonus system for agents recruiting in Britain, offering to pay $15 for each immigrant traveling on the White Star, Cunard, or Canadian Pacific shipping lines.[46]

On September 10, Dennis, Black, and senior federal bureaucrats met to hammer out the final details of the new policy. Although the Immigration and Colonization agents stationed in Europe reserved the right to refuse "objectionable" cases forwarded by transportation companies, the immigration department agreed to accept at face value almost all occupational certificates issued by the companies.[47] They had little choice; it was Prime Minister Mackenzie King's will that the deal be done.

The railway companies had won Mackenzie King to their way of thinking through pleas and threats. In the early part of 1925, Edward Beatty and Sir Henry Thornton communicated their concerns about the shortage of harvesters for Canada's western farms, and asked for Mackenzie King's approval to lend their own colonization departments to this particular project. The companies were permitted to recruit 6,272 harvesters for the summer,[48] but Beatty and Thornton had wearied of asking for special clearance each time they wanted to import labour. The government's foot-dragging provoked Beatty to threaten that his company and the CPR would have to dismantle their colonization departments

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[46]Schultz, 159.

[47]RG 76/C-7811/262/216882. Blair memo 10 September 1925.

[48]Annual Departmental Reports (1925-26), Department of Immigration and Colonization, 36.

unless some changes favourable to the companies were forthcoming.[49] Alarmed, the federal cabinet met and considered the railways' proposals more seriously. In light of the recent nationalization of several major railways, the cabinet reasoned that a railways agreement could boost productivity of the new public corporation without alienating the CPR. The CNR's greater involvement in immigration would broaden its financial support base and lessen its dependence on tax dollars.[50] Finally, Mackenzie King had an upcoming election to consider, and failure to gratify big business could spell disaster for his campaign.[51] Economic conditions carried more weight in the cabinet's decision than social concerns.

Mary Burnham's position as a senior bureaucrat did not guarantee her an invitation to all pivotal departmental meetings; she was not asked to attend the September 10 meeting with Dennis and Black. A file containing the finalized deal was forwarded to her. The Railways Agreement, by its omission of specific guidelines regarding women's migration,[52] gave transportation companies free reign to determine British and foreign women's suitability for domestic service. All that was required for an occupational certificate were two letters of reference from members of the clergy or town magistrates stating that the women were

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[49]Avery, 100; and Brooks, 65.

[50]Brooks, 90.

[51]Ibid., 73.

[52]The most accessible copy of the Railways Agreement is found in: Canada, House of Commons, Select Standing Committee on Agriculture and Colonization, *Report* (1928): 733.

up-standing citizens; they needed no proof of work experience as a servant.[53] Potential emigrants had only to articulate an interest in becoming a servant and promise to accept this work. These recruitment methods were not uncommon when agents dealt with British women; however, their suitability for Continental European women was the issue in question.

According to the agents of transportation companies, all women could be considered bona fide domestics by dint of an assumed innate ability to do housework, and so they were recruited without regard to experience. Burnham's strenuous objections to recruitment practices were dismissed by J. Bruce Walker, recently promoted to Director of European Immigration, who agreed with the companies that female applicants should not be rejected if they demonstrated "the instinct of home-caring."[54] Implicit in his remark was the doubt that there was such a thing as a skilled houseworker. To male bureaucrats and shipping agents, the term "bona fide servant" was synonymous with "woman."

The reinstatement of bonuses for each migrant recruited under the new agreement was a serious setback in Burnham's estimation, and her sense of loss and damaged pride is evident in a memo to Blair: "I do not think it advisable to have suddenly relaxed regulations...It seems to me that it would have been advisable before such a drastic change in policy took place that the Women's Branch in Ottawa be consulted, and the

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[53]RG 76/C-7811/262/216882. Blair memo, 10 September 1925.

[54]RG 76/C-7368/217/94169. Immigration Conference 1927, Evans of Cunard Line; and Walker memo, 26 March 1927.

Supervisor's advice asked."[55] In her memos of complaint, which were numerous, Burnham described how the Railways Agreement had obscured her division's mandate. Her officers' work was being duplicated more than ever by transportation companies, including the work with British domestics under Empire Settlement loan schemes, territory that Burnham had understood to be entirely hers. Immediately after the Railways Agreement came into effect, it was evident that Burnham could not influence any control over single women recruited through transportation company auspices unless the male department heads fought for it on her behalf. A meeting between F. C. Blair and Mary Burnham in late September of 1925 was not encouraging. There was a good deal at stake for the women's division, and Burnham expected that Blair would reaffirm her division's status and authority. Since the women officers, like other immigration agents, had lost the power of selection, Burnham wanted assurance that her division would at least retain control over placement and aftercare. Burnham pointed out that the agreement made no provision to care for single foreign women, and that no one had suggested that her branch provide services to them. The railway companies' habit of bypassing the women's division had never been corrected, and the companies now appeared to believe they were above any and all division regulations. In spite of Burnham's concerns, Blair decided not to challenge the railways. He informed W. J. Egan of his position that the railways should maintain control over all the female immigrants they recruited. The women's division would no longer be the liaison between the railways

[55]RG 76/C-7368/217/94169. Burnham to Blair, 31 March 1926.

and employers, and nominations for domestics would be sent directly to railway agents who would find women to fill the positions.[56] J. Bruce Walker agreed; he notified Egan in 1926 that he had for some time been allowing steamship booking agents to forgo lengthy interviews of female immigrants to ease congestion. He added that he found most of Burnham's complaints to be "trifling."[57]

Blair, Egan, and Walker most likely arrived at their conclusions because they wanted to hold transportation companies responsible for placing immigrants successfully on farms or in homes as required under the Railways Agreement and the Immigration Act.[58] In deciding thus, the male bureaucrats significantly diminished any chance that the women's division might have had to expand the scope of its work. The Railways Agreement was a severe blow to the division, but bureaucratic initiative on the part of the men could have salvaged some of its authority. Male officials further defined the division's parameters, but not in its favour. For the remainder of the twenties, the Department of Immigration and Colonization engaged in a "war" with the CPR and CNR, much of it fought, in Blair's words, with the bureaucrats' "backs to the wall."[59] In coming years, male bureaucrats would not object to the women's divisions' work

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[56]RG 76/C-7811/262/216882. Blair to Egan, 23 September 1925.

[57]RG 76/C-7368/217/94169. Walker to Egan, 3 September 1926.

[58]According to the Railways Agreement and existing legislation, the transportation companies were responsible for placing those they recruited, moreover, if an immigrant was deemed unfit or became a public charge the companies had to pay deportation costs.

[59]RG 76/C-7812/263/216882. Blair to Egan, 15 June 1927.

with British immigrants, but programs for the welfare of single females did not rank high on the immigration department's list of priorities.

In the November 1925 issue of its monthly review, *Agricultural and Industrial Progress in Canada*, Canadian Pacific hailed the victory won through the Railways Agreement as a "recognition of the potency of the railway company as an energetic colonization agency, a tribute to the activity of its peculiarly developed settlement machinery."[60] The next issue assured the public that the agreement would "present no problem whatsoever to the Dominion, but work an unqualified benefit."[61] Some anxiety had surfaced among the public about the change in policy. The day after the agreement was signed, the government explained that its purpose was to help immigrants and do away with red tape rather than to give the railways *carte blanche* to import labour.[62] Labour organizations, however, expressed outrage. For instance, the Workers of Edmonton stated in a telegram to the cabinet that the agreement was "crushing the hopes of Canada's present workers."[63] A *Toronto Globe* editorial warned of "wholesale dumping of newcomers."[64] The immigration department's official statement to the press on 19 September claimed that the agreement did not represent "the slightest change" from the policy

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[60]*Agricultural and Industrial Progress in Canada*, 7, 12 (November 1925): 201.

[61]Ibid., 233.

[62]RG 76/C-7811/262/216882. Montreal *Daily Star*, "Says Immigration not Thrown Open to Railways" 2 September 1925.

[63]Ibid., Workers of Edmonton's telegram to Mackenzie King; see also Avery, 101.

[64]RG76/C-7811/262/216882. Toronto *Globe* editorial, 19 September 1925.

pursued in the early twenties; it was simply time that the government openly recognize the railway companies' vital interests in immigration and settlement.[65]

J. Bruce Walker, whose opinions were generally in accord with railway interests, appeared willing to make the best of the new situation. He reported from his post in England in October that the railways were faithfully following the agreed-upon arrangements.[66] But by the spring of 1926, when enough time had passed for the railways' recruitment patterns to become more clear, several officers, including Walker, were alerting Ottawa of breaches in the agreement. A cross-checking of federal records revealed that Europeans who had been rejected previously by Immigration and Colonization officers reapplied to railway or steamship agents and were speedily approved. The immigration department's grounds for rejection had been, in most cases, occupational, so the transportation companies' subsequent acceptance of these migrants was evidence of a disregard for occupational requirements. It also came to light that some steamship agents, as sub-agents of the railway companies, were extracting payments from migrants for information and papers, both illegal practices.[67]

Complaints also poured in from Immigration and Colonization agents stationed throughout Canada concerning the operations of railway

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[65]Ibid., Copy of official statement, 19 September 1925.

[66]Ibid., Walker to Egan, 30 October 1925. Other members of the Department had criticized Walker for his leniency toward the railway companies.

[67]Ibid., Blair memo, 16 January 1926; and transcripts of interviews with aliens by United States immigration officials.

companies and immigrant behaviour. A federal inspector notified Eastern Division Commissioner J. S. Fraser that the railway companies were making a profit by telling immigrants how to evade regulations. Under the Railways Agreement, the obligatory destination for most immigrants was Winnipeg, where their papers were stamped and they were instructed to take up farm work. Railway agents, however, were telling immigrants to go anywhere they pleased once their papers were stamped, and in many cases the agents immediately offered to sell them tickets back to Toronto or Montreal. Transporting immigrants to Winnipeg was a formality in many cases which cost immigrants dearly, cutting into the funds they needed to establish themselves. Clearly these newcomers were being discouraged from settling on the land or taking domestic work. Just as unscrupulous was the transportation companies' practice of bringing male immigrants to the West late in the autumn after the harvesting work was done. The men had to fend for themselves during the winter or turn to local relief agencies.[68]

With no ability to influence recruitment or placement of domestics coming forward under the agreement, Burnham scrutinized the railways' after-care procedures and used this as the basis of her protest. Inspectors and officers informed Burnham in the summer of 1926 that the railways were still making no effort to place or follow up on immigrant domestics. Upon questioning, many women migrants refused or were unable to produce the names of nominators, those being employers or relatives in Canada whom they claimed to have contacted before sailing. Burnham

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[68]Ibid., Wilcox to Fraser, 30 April 1926; Woods to Barnet, 30 November 1926.

convinced Blair to question railway executives, but when he did so they were evasive, saying that all female immigrants were well-settled as far as they knew. They knew very little; a CNR list of Continental domestics sent to Manitoba showed that thirty-five of forty-five women had lost contact with the railways soon after their arrival. J. Bruce Walker, by that time disillusioned by transportation company non-compliance, temporarily suspended the selection privileges of the CPR and CNR's women agents, who countered with a refusal to supply the names of women they had recruited that year.[69] The friction over the lack of follow up did not bring about any policy changes favouring the women's division; Burnham's concerns would wait until the entire Railways Agreement came under renegotiation in 1927.

There were many women among the approximately 185,000 central Europeans who came to Canada under the Railways Agreement between 1925 and 1930.[70] From 1919 to 1925, British immigrant women outnumbered foreign women by almost 26,000, but by the 1926-27 fiscal year the number of foreign women exceeded the British. This remained the case each year until 1931.[71] The "problem" of the non-British woman arriving in Canada, unguided and unguarded, had earlier captured the women's division's attention, but the disdainful attitude of the early twenties gave way somewhat to one of concern by 1926. Central and

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[69]Ibid., Burnham to Blair, 27 July 1926; Black to Blair, 31 July 1926; Blair to Burnham, 19 August 1926; Black to Burnham 27 January 1927; Black to Blair, 28 September 1926; Fraser memo, 3 December 1926.

[70]Avery, 101.

[71]RG 76/C-4779/116/22787. McFarlane memo, 20.

southern European immigrants presented a dilemma to the division. Presumptions of anglo-superiority meant that giving assistance to foreign women was distasteful to the officers who did not want to give the impression that they were welcoming such immigrants. Division reports described non-British women as unclean, untrustworthy, and prone to moral failings, a reflection of the division employees' anxieties about ethnicity and class.[72] However, concern about the division's diminishing authority and immigrant exploitation compelled the division to act. Canada's railway companies risked sending foreign women to their ruin, wiping out any chance they might have to become good citizens. Women officers fought two enemies at once; they made an effort to control foreign women and by doing so strike a blow against the railway companies.

Among the growing numbers of foreign women arriving after 1925 were thousands of Finns, Germans, Poles, and Ukrainians.[73] As part of the Division's strategy to obtain permission to oversee the after-care of these women, Burnham, her officers, and conductresses bombarded their superiors with memos about foreign women's actual and expected behaviour. The reports of one train conductress, Miss Leamy, were illustrative of attitudes toward non-British immigrants. Leamy classified foreign women as either "a real good class" or "scum," the latter being more common. She explained that it was difficult to keep many of these women from sharing bunks with men on trains, and went so far as to say

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[72]For examples see Annual Departmental Reports (1926-27), Department of Immigration and Colonization; also RG 76/C-7811/262/216882, Burnham to Bullock and McNairn, 31 March 1927, and Blair memo, 14 May 1927.

[73]Canada, Annual Departmental Reports (1926-27), Immigration and Colonization, 58-9; and (1927-28), 80.

she needed a gas mask when she came near them because of their bad hygiene.[74] Burnham too considered the "foreign girls" to be "a good deal of trouble," but stressed that with aggressive intervention of her branch, those of the better class might make decent servants.[75] Appropriate placement and follow-up procedures were crucial to prevent these women, especially the "weak-minded types" from drifting into other types of work or white slavery.

Immigrant women without definite pre-arranged domestic employment who made up the mass of bulk nominees took advantage of the Railways Agreement to join their families or to seek employment other than housework. Officials F. C. Blair and A. L. Jolliffe were sufficiently alarmed by reports of foreign women disappearing from trains and immigration halls that they recommended tighter supervision. Train conductresses realized that many of their charges had made alternate plans before coming to Canada, since "people speaking their own tongue[s], meet them at various points en route and endeavor to take them elsewhere."[76] Blair and Jolliffe, sensing the possibility of bad publicity, endeavored to gain control over the movement of foreign domestics.

Mary Burnham's new-found concern for foreign women and her suggestions for their guidance did not, once again, result in greater

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[74]RG 76/C-7811/263/216882. Blair memo, 14 May 1927.

[75]Canada, Annual Departmental Reports (1927-28), Immigration and Colonization, 58.

[76],Canada, Annual Departmental Reports (1926-27), Immigration and Colonization, 58.

authority for her division. While she was allowed to send follow-up letters and call now and again for a few investigations into special cases, the job of placing foreign domestics fell to Thomas Gelley, Commissioner in Winnipeg.[77] If the division had been assigned responsibility for foreign women, most destined for the West, the immigration department would have had to transfer women officers to Winnipeg or perhaps hire new ones. The staff of the women's division was in fact increasing, mainly due to Empire Settlement schemes,[78] thus there was no objection to hiring new officers and conductresses as long as the division did not go beyond the bounds of British immigration. We can conclude that the men in the department, to avoid the further diluting of their own power, checked Burnham's aspirations to place Continental women.

Because of its lack of enforcement power, other than recommending deportation, the division's follow-up efforts with Continental women fell flat. The division's success keeping track of British women was quite low, and Continental European women were no more inclined to remain for long periods in domestic service than their British sisters. Continental women tended to disappear. Conductresses feared their abduction into the white slave trade, but most likely the immigrants were "abducted" by family members or crossed the border into the United States.[79] More compliant women who maintained contact with the system and intended

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[77]RG 76/C-7811/262/216882. Jolliffe to Gelley, 9 February 1927.

[78]RG 76/C-4779/116/22787. McFarlane memo, 11.

[79]RG 76/C-7811/262/216882. Bullock to Burnham 31 March 1927; C-7812/263/216882. Unsigned letter to Black 11 July 1927; C-7813/264/216882. Burnham to Blair, 22 March 1929.

to work as domestics could be difficult to place. The immigration department had the problem of convincing Canadian women to employ these unusual immigrants in their homes. Burnham unwisely persisted in publishing unflattering descriptions of foreigners in her yearly division reports, dwelling on their supposed ill health and lack of obedience.[80]

The Railways Agreement was renewed for three years in September, 1927. From the lowest to the highest levels of its bureaucracy, the Department of Immigration and Colonization had recommended termination, citing a wide array of abuses by transportation companies.[81] Evidence of graft, fraud, and misrepresentation did not dissuade Mackenzie King's cabinet from renewing it. Rising unemployment in the West had induced the Prime Minister to suspend the agreement for the summer of 1927 with a warning to the CPR and CNR to improve their placement records. Western provincial politicians and immigration officials, including those of the Land Settlement Branch, asked for the suspension because of a labour surplus which had kindled the fear of unrest.[82] The railway companies contended that the harvest would be delayed without imported labour; this was apparently the argument that won the debate.[83]

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[80]Canada, Annual Departmental Reports (1926-27), Immigration and Colonization, 58; and (1927-28), 79.

[81]RG 76/C-7811/263/216882. See Blair to Black, 27 May 1927; Woods to Barnet, 18 May 1927. It appears that immigration officials on all levels took part in a protest campaign through letters and memos. They documented every type of transportation company transgression that they encountered.

[82]Ibid., Woods to Barnet, 18 May 1927, and Blair to Black, 27 May 1927; and C-7812/263/216882. Jolliffe to Blair, 9 July 1927.

[83]Ibid., Dennis to Stewart, 18 June 1927.

Although the transportation companies were granted an extension of the Railways Agreement, F. C. Blair expressed some satisfaction with the changes that had been made. The revised agreement was stricter, insisting upon adherence to occupational requirements and giving immigration officials a greater role in "assisting" the railways. Federal agents were still expected to issue visas to migrants chosen by the companies, but it appears that as a result of so many complaints, immigration officials were told to use a heavier hand in the final approval. The officials essentially recovered their powers of selection. Because the agreement was subject to cancellation at any time on a year's notice, transportation companies understood that their methods were being carefully scrutinized.[84]

There was little in the new agreement to please Mary Burnham. Most aspects of Continental female immigration remained out of the division's control. In the absence of support from male bureaucrats in Immigration and Colonization, Burnham turned to the voluntary organizations for support. Several groups, including the NCW and the IODE, approached Burnham in February 1927 with the suggestion to reconvene the Canadian Council for the Immigration of Women.[85] Through their travelers' aid work at ports and in train stations, the IODE, YWCA, and various missionary societies encountered foreign women and observed the effects of what they believed to be exploitation by transportation companies. They perceived that foreign women were ill-informed and ill-suited for Canadian life. Dr. Helen Reid, of the National Committee on Mental

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[84]Select Standing Committee on Agriculture and Colonization, *Report*, 732-33.

[85]RG 76/C-4778/115/22787. Burnham to Blair, 25 February 1927.

Hygiene, sent letters directly to the Minister of Immigration boldly suggesting that another advisory council of women be created immediately. According to Dr. Reid, women's voluntary organizations were more in touch with immigrants and with Canadian public opinion, making their influence all the more essential.[86] Her tone suggested that immigration policy left in the hands of men, especially captains of industry, could only be disastrous.

Mary Burnham was in favour of another meeting of the CCIW. Through its resurrection, she hoped to unify the efforts of social reform groups against business influences and pressure the government into clarifying its policy on immigrant women. Voluntary organizations did not wait for Burnham to seek permission to create another advisory body; several groups took the initiative and organized.[87] They had not forgotten the original agreement between the CCIW and the immigration department allowing the Council to reconvene if any important policy issue arose regarding women's migration.

The response of male bureaucrats to the proposal for a CCIW conference was lukewarm, evidence of a growing impatience with outside interest groups and their demands on the department. Charles Stewart, who took over as Acting Minister of Immigration after Robb left to become vice-president of the CPR's colonization department, did not see a need for the CCIW. "Personally," he wrote to Blair, "I was rather glad when this annual convention was discontinued. My experience was that the good

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[86]Ibid., Reid to Stewart, March 1927.

[87]Ibid., Burnham to Blair, 25 February 1927.

ladies had little to offer in the way of useful suggestion..."[88] As Stewart did not wish to decide on the matter, he allowed Egan and Blair to do so. Egan believed another conference might "clear the air," but he was concerned about the cost and the likelihood that many voluntary organizations that had not been represented on the original CCIW would clamour to be included. Egan and Blair permitted the CCIW to meet, but declined to pay delegates' transportation expenses and did not allow input from new groups. They also informed the organizers that the department planned to distance itself from the conference since no situation or problem had arisen, in their opinion, to make a meeting of the CCIW necessary.[89] The organizers were not deterred; they decided on a February conference.

Associations sending delegates to Ottawa believed "numerous problems" had indeed arisen that required their input, not only surrounding women but immigration "as a whole."[90] In the course of their discussions, they agreed to limit the conference agenda to issues affecting immigrant women and children. Their ensuing recommendations showed, however, that delegates were not in fact willing to separate these issues from general policy, especially when certain decisions, such as the Railways Agreement, infringed upon the women's division's work as they envisioned it. They wanted exclusionary,

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[88]Ibid., Stewart to Blair, 20 May 1927.

[89]RG 76/C-4779/116/22787. Canadian Council of Immigration of Women, Conference Minutes, 27 February 1928, 4-5.

[90]Ibid.

protective regulations to cover all immigrants, not only for the immigrants' benefit but also to protect Canada from an invasion of the non-assimilable.

The purpose of the conference, to "discuss and explain" immigration matters, allowed voluntary organizations to assess the immigration department's performance since the last CCIW assembly in 1922. Conscious of its merely advisory status, the CCIW avoided criticizing the department directly, especially because Egan had not requested its advice. The delegates made a point of questioning attending officials Egan, Blair, and the new Minister, Robert Forke, whose answers confirmed the extent to which the department had strayed from the reformist path of the early twenties. The commitment the department had expressed earlier for conducting its work along ethical lines had deteriorated, if it had ever been more than a mere flirtation with reform ideology. It was also evident to the CCIW, when department representatives explained the negotiation process for the Railways Agreement, that the policy originated at a higher level where reform ideology had not extended its reach. The department, rather than making a strong case to the cabinet for increased tutelage for migrants, had instead bowed to the demands of business.[91]

The CCIW conference minutes were filled with praise for the women's division officers and their work while they condemned the limits imposed on the division by superordinate bureaucrats, the cabinet, and business interests. Voluntary associations reorganized the CCIW because the women's division had failed to become a springboard for greater influence

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[91]Ibid., 16-17.

of social reform in the immigration department. The CCIW's brand of reform ideology was in danger of suffocating, confined as it was to the women's division and particular schemes within Empire Settlement. But the groups comprising the CCIW felt that they too were to blame; they had not been vigilant. They had been mistaken in the early 1920s to perceive the women's division as a culmination, an end to their hard work rather than a beginning.

The CCIW's conference resolutions embodied their disapproval of the turn that immigration policy had taken. First, delegates pointed out that the nomination system, especially as it operated under the Railways Agreement, did not demand enough responsibility from either the nominator or the migrant. The delegates wanted more assurances that nominations would be genuine and lawful so that the newcomers could be successfully installed in employment or placed on farms. They also cited the "moral dangers" facing foreign women and girls who were denied "protective measures" on their journey. Other resolutions asking the department to abolish misleading literature and to extend colonization schemes were nothing that Immigration and Colonization did not expect, but it was the last resolution that disturbed Egan and Blair. The conference did not "clear the air" as Egan had expected; the council resolved to meet every second year in order to assist its member organizations and the immigration department.[92] Despite F. C. Blair's assurances at the close of the conference that future meetings could be beneficial to the department, his correspondence over the course of the

[92]RG 76/C-4779/116/22787. Canadian Council of Immigration of Women, Conference Minutes, 40-41.

year stated otherwise. In November, after Burnham forwarded a suggested agenda for the next executive meeting of the CCIW, Blair replied that he was "not greatly impressed" with the plans.[93]

The new thorn in the immigration department's side was the outspoken executive committee of the Canadian Council for the Immigration of Women. Its president was Agnes Dennis of Halifax, wife of the late Conservative senator, William Dennis. She was also the vice-president of the National Council of Women. Like Dr. Helen Reid, on several occasions Agnes Dennis bypassed Mary Burnham, her liaison with the department, and communicated directly with the Minister of Immigration. She became more assertive as the influence of the CCIW waned; in 1931 she requested an audience with Prime Minister Bennett to bring the work of the council to his attention.[94] Agnes Dennis was joined on the executive committee by Charlotte Whitton, representing the Imperial Order of Daughters of the Empire. A prominent professional and feminist, Whitton was also the executive secretary of the Canadian Council on Child Welfare and an advisor to the League of Nations.[95] The CCIW also granted leadership positions to women representatives from Manitoba and Alberta, recognizing that Canada's western provinces received the bulk of immigrant settlers. The two remaining positions were given to Dr. Helen Reid of the Committee of Mental Hygiene and Mrs. H. P. Plumptre of the Red Cross. All members of the executive had experience in civil service

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[93]Ibid., Blair to Burnham, 11 December 1928.

[94]Ibid., Dennis to Forke, 29 March 1930; Blair to Cullen, 30 March 1931.

[95]Alison Prentice, et. al., *Canadian Women: A History* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988): 285.

or as leaders of voluntary organizations. Mary Burnham was an ex-officio member.

Whether or not Mary Burnham was disturbed by the assertiveness of the new CCIW executive is not clear, but there was no evidence found to show that she criticized its ambitious programme or the members' insubordinate behaviour. Her position was a delicate one, situated as she was between Immigration and Colonization, which employed her, and the CCIW, which incorporated her moral values. As the verbal sparring increased between the CCIW and male bureaucrats in 1928-29, Burnham remained detached, sending messages back and forth among the parties with little comment. She had, however, oriented herself more toward the CCIW because of her alienation within the department and her unwillingness to abandon reformist ideals. Perhaps she hoped that the knowledge and experience of the executive committee might save her division from decline.

The CCIW executive met twice in 1929, in March and September. Its recommendations bothered the men in Immigration and Colonization and brought out Blair's biting wit. He described the Council as "something like the League of Nations on a small scale, and. . .I think the best course to pursue now, with regard to some of their suggestions, is that of masterly inactivity."[96] That the department was closing ranks was clear from Egan's letter to the CCIW executive in which he stated that he would not consider adopting policy suggested by an "outside organization."[97] It was

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[96]RG 76/C-4779/116/22787. Blair to Egan, 30 March 1929.

[97]Ibid., Egan to Burnham, 4 April 1929.

acceptable for voluntary organizations to offer services to immigrants, but to attempt a direct influence on policy, as transportation companies had done, would not be tolerated. Undaunted, Helen Reid aggravated Blair with a demand that the CCIW be consulted in all matters concerning women's migration before the department made any policy changes affecting it. Blair complained to Minister Forke that the CCIW "...is like one of those appendages like a person's appendix that gives a good deal of trouble sometimes, especially when inflammation sets in, unless cured by a surgical operation. I think I would perform this surgical operation on the Canadian Council."[98]

The collective bad mood of the department also stemmed from the House of Commons Select Standing Committee on Agriculture and Colonization hearings which took place in the winter and spring of 1928. Mackenzie King called up the committee as a stratagem to create the appearance of concern and the willingness to make changes, but in fact few changes resulted. The committee's mandate was to "consider and report" on the Immigration Act and the regulations of Immigration and Colonization, placing the activities of top-level bureaucrats under scrutiny for several months. Criticism surrounding the numbers and origins of immigrants had swelled to a flood, and the department was inundated by it, as were the railways. Three department heads were called as witnesses; W. J. Egan spent days before the committee just explaining the byzantine immigration system and the schemes of voluntary organizations and businesses. Minister Robert Forke, who seemed to regard the immigration

[98]Ibid., minutes of executive meeting of the CCIW, 30 September 1929; Blair to Forke 26 October 1929.

portfolio as a curse, complained that the public's criticism was contradictory with nothing constructive in it.[99] The nature of the criticism reflected, in some ways, the nature of the department's policy.

The Select Standing Committee also took the railway magnates to task, obtaining admissions from the directors of colonization that their nomination and follow-up procedures were faulty and did not conform to the spirit of the agreement. The committee recommended significant modifications to the Railways Agreement, but this was not a vote of confidence for the immigration department since the line of questioning the committee took during Egan's testimony suggested that he, as one who helped frame the agreement, was lacking in judgment.[100]

The CCIW held its final convention in November 1929. The immigration department sent a strong message by refusing for a second time to reimburse delegates for their travel expenses. The CCIW, perhaps aware by now of its impending demise, made a last attempt to embarrass the department back onto the moral course. Delegates submitted another lengthy list of resolutions including a condemnation of the Railways Agreement which they said had taken discretionary powers out of the hands of "the proper authorities."[101] Transportation companies were singled out as serious offenders, but it was implied that the department's lack of moral commitment was the source of the corruption.

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[99]Canada, House of Commons, Debates (1928): 185; and Select Standing Committee, *Report*, 3.

[100]Select Standing Committee, *Report*, 518; x-xi; and 28-37.

[101]RG 76/C-4779/116/22787. Minutes of CCIW Conference, November 1929.

The council's latest resolutions struck Egan and Blair as outrageous. Along with its usual requests for a larger women's division and more funding for Empire Settlement, the CCIW went far beyond the subject of women's migration to condemn Mennonite immigration and western block settlement. This time, Egan and Blair did not dismiss the CCIW as a meddlesome group of ladies insistent upon over-dramatizing the immigration issue. Tom Moore, president of the Trades and Labour Congress (TLC), who had always occupied a seat on the CCIW, was elected CCIW vice-president in 1929. He was the first and only man to hold executive office, and his acceptance implies that the council was trying to strengthen itself by forging closer alliances. The TLC's own conference recommendations in 1928 were in keeping with its long-standing opposition to the importation of unskilled Europeans who, it charged, displaced Canadian workers as scab labour.[102] Nation-wide disapproval of the Railways Agreement, articulated by social reform organizations, labour, and nativist groups aroused concern in Immigration and Colonization. The CCIW, or "the organization with the big title" that Blair found so bothersome,[103] was exhibiting the potential to become a larger umbrella group incorporating elements of opposition to immigration policy. The department decided to sever all ties with it to avoid the appearance that it might be encouraging such a development.

The immigration department ended its relationship with the CCIW in 1930, and Burnham must have been instructed to discourage further

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[102]Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, Resume of Proceedings of the 44th Annual Convention, *Labour Gazette*, 28, 10 (October 1928): 1081.

[103]RG 76/C-4779/116/22787. Blair to Cullen, 30 March 1931.

meetings of the organization. President Agnes Dennis wrote a letter to Robert Forke to ask whether any recommendations of the CCIW had been adopted. The answer was no.[104] Blair circulated a memo which told of his plans to throw his copies of CCIW conference minutes away.[105]

The reform ambitions of the women's division and CCIW constituted a challenge to businesses with an interest in migration, a challenge that could potentially diminish the companies' long-standing privileges vis-à-vis the immigration department. Female bureaucrats and leaders of reform organizations were no match for corporate Canada and international shipping companies, which had a customary role in creating and implementing policies to encourage a steady stream of cheap labour. This chapter has outlined the corporate response to the reform impulse and has demonstrated that the government, despite dabbling in the reform movement, was committed to serving business interests above others. By 1929, the CCIW had lost any influence it once had, and reform ideology had been contained within a weakened women's division.

For high-level bureaucrats in Immigration and Colonization, the challenge was to hold onto their discretionary powers. Once the Railways Agreement was in force they were no longer willing to cooperate with outside organizations or to act as mediators between the irreconcilable moral and market camps. As part of their competition with each other, businesses and reform groups sought to erode bureaucratic authority; railway companies had done this in 1925, and an emboldened CCIW was

[104]Ibid., Dennis to Forke, 29 March 1930; and Blair to Dennis, 11 April 1930.

[105]Ibid., Blair memo, n.d.

poised to try in 1929. Due to the tendancy of prime ministers and cabinets to make abrupt and drastic changes in policy throughout the decade, it follows that Egan and Blair were disturbed if not threatened by the "new" CCIW.

Canadian corporations would have likely fought the forces of reform whether or not the reform agenda had been advanced by women. So how important was gender as a factor in the struggle between moral and market interests? The general acceptance of separate spheres ideology in this period oriented female bureaucrats toward working with women immigrants. While this was in line with the women's goals (it was after all the CCIW's reason for existence) separate spheres placed high barriers around the women's division, preventing it from increasing its influence or responsibilities. Although F. C. Blair considered the women's division to be "part and parcel of the department," the division staff were treated as junior members and Burnham was clearly not among the inner circle of supervisors. Left out of many departmental meetings, even those in which decisions were made affecting her branch, Burnham had to negotiate from a weakened position, and since she was a woman her opinions held less value. The different manner in which women officers and railway magnates were treated revealed the greater legitimacy given not only to economic concerns but to the opinions of men.

Some of the barriers around the women's division and CCIW were self-imposed. Burnham was, as we have seen, more hostile than her male colleagues to opening up immigration to non-preferred peoples. It was in part because of her outspoken dislike for Continental Europeans that her branch was limited to working with Empire Settlement cases. The racism

and class anxieties of female officers and CCIW members defined their work as much as prevailing notions of patriarchy.

Chapter Five

A Burden "too great for her shoulders"[1]: The Closing Years of the Women's Division

The women's division did not survive the Great Depression. It was gradually dismantled during the thirties as immigration dwindled, but there were other important factors which explain why it faded away, its programmes never to be resurrected even though female immigration increased again in the second half of the twentieth century. The women's division was ultimately a victim of financial retrenchment, as was the entire immigration department, but it is illustrative to examine how its demise had already begun by the late 1920s. Several years before the economic crisis necessitated a drastic reduction in government spending on immigration programs, the ideological support behind women's assisted migration had begun to dissolve.

This chapter considers how markedly the socio-economic environment in which the women's division operated had changed by the late 1920s. Less than ten years after it's creation, the women's division's programmes were no longer considered vital according to high-level male bureaucrats and the federal cabinet, and it had also lost much of its

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[1]RG 76/C-10287/395/56326. Unsigned letter to Jolliffe asking for more resources for the women's division and offering to coordinate relief efforts among voluntary organizations. The author was concerned that the burden on Canadian women officers was already too great.

popular support. On a practical level, the assisted migration programme for British women had failed to meet the need for domestic labour in Canada, and of the relatively few families that obtained British servants, a high number were dissatisfied with the maids' job performance. Moreover, debates surrounding Empire Settlement, the "ideal" migrant, and the role of anglocentric social reform values in government continued, with public opinion shifting toward a greater acceptance of non-British immigration. As we saw in Chapter Four, the government was experiencing pressure to retreat from its commitment to British migration, especially assisted migration. Even the reform element, which was losing much of its vitality by the late twenties, was abandoning anglo-superiority as one of its tenets.

The women's division and CCIW adhered to maternal feminism throughout the twenties and into the thirties, and these agencies' limited attempts to adapt to changing times were discouraged. Female officers and some leaders of voluntary organizations called for continued assistance for immigrant domestics in the thirties, claiming their women's work for disadvantaged women was more urgently needed than ever. Few were willing to listen at that point. The latter section of this chapter looks at the efforts of the women's division and CCIW to provide at least a modicum of assistance to unemployed women and deportees as Ottawa abandoned its support for the British immigrant.

The British general servant's lack of experience still plagued the women's division in the late 1920s. The British OSC and the SOSBW were in favour of "domestic science" training programmes and had frequently suggested such throughout the twenties, not least because Britain was also

experiencing a shortage of trained servants. By training working-class women for housework overseas, the OSC would ease the United Kingdom's unemployment problem and might steer dominion recruiters away from the dwindling pool of bona fide British domestics who could easily find work close to home.[2] The budget was another factor; year after year, the British government was embarrassed by its failure to spend the monies allocated for Empire Settlement.[3] The establishment of officially-sponsored training facilities was suggested as a method to increase expenditures and while showing that quality and job performance were also Britain's concerns.

The numbers of Empire Settlement immigrants was rising in the late 1920s, part of a general trend of increased immigration. The Canadian government abolished passage loans in 1926 under the Aftercare Agreement and replaced them with grants to simplify the system. The price of steamship tickets was reduced to two pounds for domestics to make the journey even more affordable. Although the women's division and voluntary organizations were pleased to receive more Empire Settlement domestics, they questioned the wisdom of simply reducing passage rates which encouraged a greater quantity of immigrants without respect to quality. Increasing the sheer number of female immigrants would do nothing to improve employer satisfaction. The division officers' close involvement with immigrants and employers made them vulnerable to criticism from both parties, and so they were in favour of training to

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[2]Blakeley, 439; and Gothard in Constantine, 83-84.

[3]Ian Drummond, *British Economic Policy and the Empire, 1919-1939* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1972): 95.

improve the household working skills of immigrant domestics and build a better reputation.

The women's division wanted to expand its training ventures after Britain and Australia opened a joint servant training facility in 1927. Located in England, the Market Harborough training hostel accepted women who wished to emigrate to Australia but who lacked experience in domestic work.[4] There was certainly an element of keeping up with the other dominions involved in the Canadian women's division's support for training programmes. In Canada, training for domestic servants was only occasionally available at some of the women's hostels, such as in Toronto where recent immigrants took lessons in Canadian cooking and cleaning methods. To give the lessons a professional, scientific tone, the instructors stressed the "theoretical" aspects of the job including, "Why tea should never be oversteeped" and the "Medicinal use of Lemonade."[5] Comprehensive training, however, had never been a large part of aftercare because immigrants were supposedly experienced servants. The women's division did arrange for servants to take oral examinations at McGill University for a brief period. Graded on a pass/fail basis, they were encouraged by the division in 1928 as a way to give domestic service a professional character. Very little mention was made of these tests; they may have been intimidating to immigrant women and apparently did little to impress employers.[6]

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[4]Plant, *A Survey of Voluntary Effort*, 107.

[5]RG 76/C-10248/338/356358. Domestic Science Lessons of the Toronto Women's Hostel, 1922.

[6]RG 76/C-4779/116/22787. Burnham memo, 1928.

Emigrant training programmes had been discussed at the Imperial Conference of 1923 but were not regarded by Canada at that time as a necessary or worthwhile investment. Funding for such ventures, as usual, was the major sore point between Britain and Canada. By 1928, however, senior bureaucrats Blair, Little, and Forke consulted with OSC Secretary G. F. Plant and were convinced that adding a training component to the Empire Settlement Agreement could be beneficial, provided that a joint funding plan was developed. Mary Burnham, who had for a long time wished to expand training programmes in "housewifery" was enthusiastic, but Deputy Minister Egan was harder to persuade. By October Egan was on side and drawing up plans for women's training hostels in England, Scotland, and Wales.[7] As far as Egan was concerned, the most attractive aspect of the training hostel proposal was Britain's willingness to provide the majority of the funding through the Ministry of Labour. Canada agreed to contribute twenty dollars for each trainee, of which fifteen was supplied by Ottawa and the remaining five by either Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, or Alberta.[8] To Immigration and Colonization, the hostels would serve another important purpose by screening out undesirable women. Burnham looked on training as a step which might bring some vigor back into her programmes and improve employer satisfaction with British servants.

In 1929, four Canadian training centres for women opened in London, Cardiff, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and Millersneuk near Glasgow. Gladys Pott of

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[7]RG 76/C-10249/340/359252. Blair and Little to Forke, 5 October 1928; Blair to Burnham, 24 February 1928; Egan to Blair, 4 October 1928; unsigned memo 1928.

[8]Canada, Annual Departmental Reports (1928-29), Immigration and Colonization, 62.

the SOSBW officially oversaw the hostels, but in fact it was local churches and emigration societies which ran them.[9] Unexpectedly, the administration of the hostels became a source of tension between the women's division and some members of British emigration societies. Two hostels were religiously based, the London hostel, run by Dominican nuns, and the Anglican Church Army's Cardiff centre, and the matrons were loathe to accept trainees who were not of their respective denominations. Immigration and Colonization requested to step in and take charge of the programmes, but unless Ottawa provided more in the way of funding it could not expect to extend much influence into training facilities across the sea.[10]

The value of the eight-week training programmes came into question as soon as the first parties of trained domestics landed in Canada. It was apparent that these women were not going to outshine those who came before them; their training had not, according to employers, prepared them for the specific working conditions in the Canadian household. As a quality control measure, Mary Burnham sent one of her officers, C. M. Charlesworth, to Britain to investigate hostel classes and trainee selection procedures. Charlesworth was dissatisfied by the hostels she visited, in particular at Cardiff because of the "free and easy" attitude of the teachers and trainees there. The hostel's matron was admonished to behave as if she were a stern Canadian employer and treat the girls "in the light of maids." Charlesworth also noted that kitchen equipment was in bad condition and

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[9]RG 76/C-10249/340/359252. Egan memo, December 1928.

[10]Ibid., Blair to Egan, 27 February 1929.

the cooking lessons lacked "Canadian content." Her concern about trainees' ignorance of salad making and cooking with fruit, two skills demanded by Canadian mistresses, revealed her belief that British and Canadian lifestyles were quite different. The most the visiting officer could do to improve the programme was to exercise her authority over selection, and she turned away numerous "doubtful" applicants recruited by the British NCW and churches. It was obvious, Charlesworth reported to her supervisor, that these British organizations were not committed to sending wholesome women to Canada, as evidenced by the number of lazy, bow-legged trainees taking up space in the hostels. In communication with the Ottawa office, she concluded that the hostels would probably not improve the quality of the British houseworker.[11]

Canadian employers of domestic servants agreed. Scathing criticism flowed in after employers received the trained "girls." A Regina resident complained that "The eight week course that these girls have taken seems a decided waste of time if none of them have gained any more knowledge than Mary and she is hopelessly slow." Another Westerner wrote, "...really the poor girl is as green as can be...she says herself they were not taught just told to do things."[12] The women's division had difficulty defending itself against these grievances even though it was not directly responsible for the quality of the trainees. After almost a decade of "careful" selection and tutelage, the division's assurances that the system was improving rang hollow. Employers were losing faith in the division and in Empire

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[11]Ibid., Charlesworth report, 22 August 1929.

[12]RG 76/C-10249/341/359252. Letters, 3 May 1929 and 14 May 1929.

Settlement in general, calling the programme a "farce." Another employer's claim that she preferred an untrained Canadian domestic "anytime" to a trained one from the Old Country left no doubt that being British in origin had little value on the servant market.[13] The sentiments expressed in these letters point to a suspicion on the part of employers that the issue ran beyond the women's division's regulations; perhaps the nub of the problem was a weakness in the British character.

Training hostels for domestics were among several training programmes under Empire Settlement. Ottawa had also agreed to provide a portion of the funding for British families and juveniles to learn homesteading. Quite popular at the outset, it was expected that these farming schemes, like servant training, could hardly go wrong. Advocates of Empire Settlement praised these initiatives as providing the piece of the puzzle which would finally make assisted migration the great success it was meant to be. Unfortunately, none of the training schemes fared well. The involvement of so many levels of government made for an extremely complex system with a tendency for administrative breakdown, resulting in the isolation of ill-prepared families on primitive farms. The highly-publicized farmer training schemes were plagued by problems of selection and placement, and by low retention rates on the land.[14]

The British immigrant in Canada was increasingly defined as a problem. As scheme after scheme foundered, English Canadians were concluding that the British were profoundly disappointing as newcomers.

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[13]Ibid. Letter, 4 May 1929.

[14]Schultz, 162-163.

Quite simply, they failed consistently to meet Canadian standards of the ideal settler, leading Canadians of British heritage to question their assumption of an enduring kinship between themselves and people of the British Isles. Farmers, resource industry brass, as well as employers of servants voiced their complaints to the immigration department, calling the British slow and lazy workers. Members of Parliament, in their frequent attacks on the Liberal's immigration policy, seized upon the seeming inability of British immigrants to succeed in Canada despite loans, grants, and extensive aftercare. Financial assistance had turned these so-called ideal migrants into "sissies or mollycoddles," incapable of "honest, plodding toil." Agnes Macphail, who had favoured the British preference policy in the early twenties, announced to the House in 1928 that "There is nothing as fine as an Englishman, but I think they have a high average of duds."[15] Senior bureaucrats in Immigration and Colonization were also growing more doubtful about the possibility of recruiting eligible emigrants through the department's British offices, and pinpointed changes in the character of the British people as a major hurdle. Because of the advances of unions and social legislation, the British expected steady wages and job security, and lacking these things, they expected the government to provide assistance. Deputy Minister Egan received a report from immigration department agents overseas stating that forty-two per cent of British men interviewed were asking, "How much is the dole in Canada?" In Egan's opinion, British men and women lacked the "steadfastness of purpose" necessary to be good servants or pioneer settlers, and so perhaps the policy of providing

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[15]Canada, House of Commons, Debates, 3 (1928): 3885, 3912.

assistance to the British should be reconsidered.[16] Prime Minister King's own 1928 Select Standing Committee on Agriculture and Colonization suggested that the results of Empire Settlement were meager in terms of the amount of effort and money spent on the programme.

The imperial government repeatedly assured Canada that it never regarded migration as a substitute for social assistance, but its assertive promotion of Empire Settlement betrayed its interests and put Canada on the defensive. Few Canadians objected to such initiatives as the 3000 Family Scheme, nor was importing domestic servants criticized in principle. However, certain schemes orchestrated by Britain in the late 1920s overstepped the boundaries Canada had set down in the 1923 agreement. An event that aroused a good deal of negative publicity was the harvester movement, or miners' scheme, of 1928. The plan originated with the British Ministry of Labour, always on the lookout for emigration opportunities for surplus workers. A total of 8449 men, mostly miners, were hastily recruited and sent to the Canadian West to help bring in the 1928 harvest. Mackenzie King did not agree to accept the men until Britain and transportation companies agreed to assume the full cost, including return fare to Britain if the migrants did not succeed. Ill-prepared for the task expected of them, the workers protested that employment conditions had been misrepresented, while Canadian officials labeled them as lazy ingrates or agitators who were unwilling to fulfill their obligations. Over seventy-five per cent of the migrants returned to Britain before the winter had passed.[17]

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[16]RG 76/C-4779/116/22787. Conference of the Canadian Council of the Immigration of Women, Minutes, 1928, 19.

[17]Canada, Annual Departmental Reports (1928-29), Immigration and Colonization,

The imperial government's last chance to prove that such a scheme could work had ended in dismal failure.

A 1929 British inter-departmental committee report revealed the extent of misunderstanding between Britain and Canada on the migration issue. The report claimed that Canada, a new country, had not yet undergone the process of labour specialization; therefore, "The man who will turn his hand to anything gets on." It also said that Canada lacked a poor law system like Britain's "...because she has never needed one." As long as Canada's western lands were unsettled and its demand for servants was so high, how could poverty be a serious issue? The committee reasoned that the barrier to the felicitous settlement of millions was Canada's prejudice against the British unemployed who were being unfairly deemed unfit migrants. As a first step to overcome this attitudinal barrier, the committee planned to educate Canadians about the Old Country's rigid social and occupational hierarchies which made changing jobs difficult for Britons, and convince them that emigration thus remained the only acceptable option for many people in difficult financial straits.[18] This approach represented a type of paternalism offensive to the dominions, and had the effect of increasing Canada's suspicions that Britain's emigration policy decisions were dictated primarily by internal economic and social considerations. It was true that Canada had always adjusted its immigration policy to meet its needs foremost, but as the receiving country

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5; W. A. Carrothers, *Emigration from the British Isles* (London: P. S. King and Son, 1929): 269; Schultz, 164-165.

[18]PRO/DO 57/103. Inter-Departmental Committee on Oversea Development and Migration, July, 1929, 2.

it insisted that its self-interested policy was normal and justified; Canada was, after all, taking on another country's cast-offs for the long term.

Canadians were bothered by what appeared to be another British character flaw. The tendency of some British immigrants, specifically the English, to put on a superior air touched a sensitive Canadian nerve. Whether this sense of superiority was really expressed or merely a figment of the Canadian imagination is arguable, but it was an important issue for Canadians who resented any suggestion that they were regarded as colonials. Native-born Canadians had endured English airs for over a century, but they were especially insulted when assisted, that is lower-class in their understanding, English immigrants appeared to harbour a sense of superiority. This behaviour was especially inappropriate for immigrant domestics. Several publications warned potential immigrants against acting in a supercilious manner or questioning Canadian ways, including Burnham's pamphlet, *House Work in Canada*.[19] Staff at the women's hostels noted that some English girls expected a fuss to be made over them upon their arrival, despite their humble origins and occupation. "I confess the difficulty we have in dealing with these English girls..." one hostel worker wrote, "[They] could not get along with anybody."[20] Employers too complained that their English servants were "overbearing" and "impudent." A prominent Kingston businessman told Burnham that he was "fed up with these Old Country girls...there seems to be no pleasing them."[21] It is

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[19]RG 76/C-10439/621/920675. See also Ella Sykes, *A Home-Help in Canada* (London: Smith, Elder and Company, 1912): 127, 177.

[20]Ibid. Hutchinson to Burnham, 19 September 1930.

[21]RG 76/C-7368/217/94169. Roussy de Sales to Blair, 3 November 1926; Vice President of the*Whig-Standard* to Burnham, 10 May 1928.

notable that the expectations and behaviour of these servants were interpreted as expressions of English egotism. The immigrants may have been registering their disappointment with the tutelage system or with working conditions in Canada. The realities of work and life in North America were quite often out of line with descriptions the emigrants had received from pamphlets and recruiters in Britain. In any case, hostel matrons and women officers were analyzing the issue in terms of class and the imperial relationship. Canadian women officers and mistresses were adamant that an immigrant's English ethnicity should not permit her to transcend class boundaries, at least while she was a servant.

In view of the women's division's connection with Empire Settlement, it is essential to examine English Canada's changing attitudes toward British peoples in order to understand the division's demise. Historian Howard Palmer identified the 1920s as the period in which the "melting pot" and "mosaic" metaphors of immigrant assimilation began to gain acceptance among English Canadians.[22] The objection to the influx of non-British peoples raised by the women's division, labour, and some reform organizations was rivaled by the opinion that part of the basis of Canadian nationhood, like American nationhood, was that immigrants of diverse origins had made positive contributions. The following section discusses how a greater tolerance toward European ethnic groups, along the lines of Clifford Sifton's views, grew among certain segments of Canadian society in

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[22]See Howard Palmer, "Reluctant Hosts."

the twenties, and how this took place concurrently with the public's disenchantment with the British immigrant.

As debates about Empire Settlement and the Railways Agreement raged, what occurred was a comparison of "success rates" of British versus foreign newcomers, especially in terms of their performance as western settlers. The image of the pioneering foreigner, long-suffering and appreciative of the opportunities given to him or her, contrasted sharply with that of the British harvester who all too willingly went on the dole, or so it was believed. These perceptions challenged accepted definitions of immigrant fitness. The Continental European's ability to make good in the Canadian West was documented in the *1926 Census of the Prairie Provinces.* A series of statistics showed that more Continental farmers owned their land than did native-born Canadians or immigrants from Britain or the United States. The British made up a higher proportion of agricultural labourers and tenant farmers than did Continentals. Finally, Continentals remained on the land longer as well, tending not to move to urban areas as quickly as other groups, and they retired at a later age on average than other farmers.[23] Important factors having a major bearing on success, such as the lack of farming experience of many British harvesters or the timing of arrival, were not given much consideration when immigrant groups were compared.

Such statistics diminished the concern that foreign immigrants posed a serious threat to the social and economic order. As long as foreigners were given a fair chance they exhibited an extraordinary tenacity and will to

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[23]Census of the Prairie Provinces, 1926 (Ottawa: Bureau of Statistics, 1931).

succeed that native-born Canadians admired and wished to consider as a basic component of the Canadian national character. The hopes that the host society had for the British immigrant were transferred to some extent onto the foreigner, particularly the Continental European. A new view of immigrants was emerging which allowed for the successful assimilation of foreigners as part of an evolutionary process to bring about a distinct Canadian ethnic type. No longer antithetical to British stock, the foreigner could blend into the whole. Whether this phenomenon was described in terms of a melting pot, mosaic, or new fabric woven from the threads of many nations, it points to a growing acceptance of European immigration as a necessary part of Canada's growth and prosperity.[24]

An interesting figure whose work displayed this attitudinal transformation was author and federal bureaucrat Robert Stead. While serving as Director of Publicity for the Department of Immigration and Colonization from 1919 to 1936, Stead turned out several popular works of poetry and fiction including *Grain*, a 1926 novel of prairie realism. We can examine the evolution of Stead's nationalist thought most easily through his volume of poetry entitled, *The Empire Builders*. As its name implies, *The Empire Builders* acknowledges the imperial tie, but its poems focus less on praising Britain and instead concentrate on the nation-building forces of Canada's unique geography and climate. Battling with the elements molded "haggard, huddled, [and] homeless" immigrants into Canadians.

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[24]P. M. Bryce, *The Value of the Continental Immigrant to Canada* (Ottawa, 1928); Foster, Kate, *Our Canadian Mosaic* (Toronto: Dominion Council of the YWCA, 1926). See also Robert England, *The Central European Immigrant in Canada* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1929); A. J. Hunter, *A Friendly Adventure: The Story of the United Church Mission among New Canadians at Teulon, Manitoba* (Toronto: United Church of Canada, 1929).

In the poem "The Mixer" Stead personifies Canada, who explains the supernatural process of race creation:

> "I mix 'em, mix 'em, mix 'em, though the gods may
> stand aghast
> As I turn them out Canadians--Canadians at last!

and:

> In the city, on the prairie, in the forest, in the camp,
> In the mountain-clouds of color [sic], in the fog-white
> river damp
> From Atlantic to Pacific, from the Great Lakes to
> the Pole
> I am mixing strange ingredients into a common
> whole;

It is important to note that in the pre-war edition of this poem, people of colour were excluded from the mixing process. In the 1923 printing, a new version allowed the "Black and white and many-tinted, brown and yellow/dark and fair" to undergo the "transformation in my fiery furn-/ace blast"[25] which denotes Stead's greater tolerance for ethnic and racial diversity. It was a bold departure to claim that even Asians and blacks, so reviled in Canada at the time, could be salvaged. In another poem, "The Mothering," Stead expands on the idea of Canadians as a distinct ethnic group. This piece describes the western settler as a lover and the Canadian wilderness as his beloved who must suffer the pangs of "race-birth," or the bringing forth of this distinct people.[26] To Stead, national unity came from the people's shared experience in Canada.

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[25]Stead, Robert, *The Empire Builders* (Toronto: Musson, 1923): 23-27. This volume first appeared in 1908, and went through revisions after World War I. Several poems were added, incorporating Stead's responses to Canada's aid to Britain in wartime and then his pacifistic visions for the post-war world.

[26]Ibid., 44.

Assisting foreign newcomers in the West was a calling of many Protestant reformers, especially after the Railways Agreement came into effect. These home missionaries, as they were called, were among the strongest advocates of a more inclusive view of Canadian nationhood, and because they worked directly with recent immigrants in rural and urban settings they were recognized as authorities on immigrant behaviour and belief systems. Home missionaries, many of whom were members of churches with representation on the CCIW, shared the concern that once foreigners were approved for sailing, they received less consideration than imported commodities. Careful selection meant little without aftercare which to them meant sustained, personal involvement for perhaps several years, not just a few days.

As "experts," these missionaries wrote numerous books aiming to introduce various immigrant groups in Canada to a popular audience. One of the earliest and perhaps best known of these books was *Strangers within Our Gates*, written in 1909 by James Shaver Woodsworth, a Methodist minister and settlement worker who was later elected to Parliament as a Co-operative Commonwealth Federation member. The works of other Protestant men and women were in the same vein, with many appearing after the formation of the United Church of Canada in 1925. The United Church had an active Board of Home Missions which sent members west and published their memoirs. Authors of the twenties built on Woodsworth's social gospel foundation and ascribed to many of his theories on ethnic differences, but they tended to put less emphasis on an ethnic hierarchy. They strongly believed in the superiority of British institutions, and this formed the basis of their Canadianization efforts. But the reform

movement's pre-1920s focus on anglo-superiority had been softened considerably, to the point where it was admitted that foreign immigrants had and would continue to make positive contributions to society, changing it as it changed them. Canada was founded upon strong British institutions which could accommodate a certain amount of diversity and remain intact. A United Church missionary stationed in Teulon, Manitoba, confidently argued that "The Melting Pot Melts Us Too."[27]

The emergence of the new Canadian ethnic type was not something to be left to chance. Home missionaries, who were joined in their Canadianization efforts by other public social workers and teachers, saw themselves as parental figures responsible for guiding this process so that immigrants' negative cultural traits might be suppressed while their positive ones were allowed to develop. They feared that ethnic peoples in close-knit rural settlements and urban ghettos were likely to remain in the clutches of Old World superstitions; Eastern Orthodox Catholics were believed to have this tendency. Missionaries disapproved of government encouragement of rural group settlement, since groups which "'hive up' in solid 'blocks'" remained isolated and culturally immature.[28] Finnish and Slavic communities presented another danger, as they were considered fertile ground for the "seeds of Bolshevism" to take root.[29] With careful application of Christian principles these scholarly and missionary "nation-

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[27]Hunter, 131.

[28]Foster, 128.

[29]Robert England, *The Central European Immigrant in Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1929): 39-40; also see Hunter, 39.

builders...apostles of the highest type of Canadian citizenship"[30] not only saved souls but fostered national unity and capitalist economic development. The Reverend F. W. Cassillis-Kennedy, Superintendent of Anglican missions to the Japanese in Canada, explained:

> If Canada could take a more personal interest in the peoples she receives from other lands, and adopt a more motherly attitude in her dealings with them, teaching, guiding and advising them, holding them by the hand, as it were, until they are able to walk alone, the immigration problem would become less of a nightmare to us. If only we have the wisdom to exclude henceforth all immigrants of inferior calibre, and to nourish properly those we do admit within our boundaries, Canada may be the scene of the greatest human evolution which the modern world has witnessed.[31]

Advocates of the melting pot ideology stopped well short of supporting an open door immigration policy. The above description of immigration as a "nightmare" attests to an enduring assimilation anxiety. One of their purposes in publishing, however, was to shift blame for unemployment and the slow pace of settlement away from foreign immigrants. Missionaries criticized the government and transportation companies for creating the nightmare by reneging on promises to give settlers a "square deal."[32] They were struck by the irony of having to serve as missionaries in their own country, but in the name of Christian duty and national progress they were willing to do the follow-up work that those responsible for immigration had neglected.

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[30]England, preface.

[31]Quoted in W. G. Smith, *Building the Nation: A Study of Some Problems Concerning the Churches' Relation to the Immigrants* (Toronto: Canada Council of the Missionary Education Movement and the Ryerson Press, 1922): 100.

[32]Smith, 77.

A not totally dissimilar attitude toward cultural pluralism in Canada found voice through the Native Sons of Canada, a fraternal association of professionals and businessmen which was founded in 1921 and grew to include local chapters across the country by the late 1920s. In her article on the Native Sons, historian Mary Vipond explained that this group based its nationalist thought as much on anti-British sentiment as on opposition to foreign immigration.[33] The Native Sons agreed with the perception of British immigrants as "dole-spoilt loafers."[34] They rejected anglo-superiority, focusing instead on gaining converts to their belief in an evolutionary process taking place toward "one great virile race -- CANADIANS."[35] Many members refused to identify with Britain because the imperial relationship kept Canada in a dependent position politically and hindered the development of this new race. Fed up with Canada's historic preoccupation with all things British, the association aimed to educate the public about Canadian history and literature, "Ere the phoenix of Canadian nationhood can rise new-born from the ashes of colonialism, provincialism and imperialism."[36] Vipond pointed out that the Native Sons were somewhat ambivalent toward European immigration; like the home missionaries they did not favour a huge influx of Europeans, but anticipated the "blending" of those already in the country. Membership in

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[33]Vipond, Mary, "Nationalism and Nativism: The Native Sons of Canada in the 1920s" *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* (1982): 81-95 *passim*.

[34]Native Sons of Canada, *The Beaver Canada First*, 7 June 1928, 1.

[35]Ibid., 84.

[36]*The Beaver Canada First*, 17 May 1928, 2.

the organization was not open to the British-born, but only to those born in Canada, a strong statement regarding the organization's anti-imperialist sentiment and its willingness to accept some ethnic (but not racial) diversity.[37] The nationalist thought of the home missionaries and Native Sons of Canada emphasized foremost the need for loyalty to Canada; they believed that a sense of allegiance to their own country had been retarded and diluted by the imperial connection. British immigrants who espoused anglo-superiority were considered to have as much troublesome cultural baggage as those of non-British heritage. The fact that foreign immigrants did not have a sentimental attachment to Britain or a belief in anglo-superiority made them worthy candidates for Canadian citizenship in the eyes of Protestant missionaries and the Native Sons.[38] More so than the British, Continental immigrants were culturally malleable because they did not wish to transform Canada into the nation(s) they had left.

In light of these attitudes, the women's division appeared to be an agency that was not changing with the times. While British preference was not entirely out of favour, the division's image was not helped by its close association with empire-building. It had been effectively locked into the Empire Settlement programme and was not able to branch out to serve non-British immigrants, unlike private or church-sponsored migration societies. After the British training hostel scheme flagged, the officers were nearly out

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[37]Ibid., 85.

[38]The term "citizenship" is problematic since there was in fact no such thing as legal *Canadian* citizenship until 1946. What is important here is that the term was used by such authors as Foster and England, and by women's division supervisor Burnham, indicating that the concept of a uniquely Canadian citizenship was gaining acceptance. See Palmer's *Reluctant Hosts*, 28, regarding foreign immigrants.

of options to improve their record. The government was not about to allow it to include large numbers of foreign women in its programmes, and in the meantime, voluntary associations such as the United Church had stepped in to work with the non-British newcomers. Prime Minister Mackenzie King, claiming he had known all along that assisted migration was doomed to fail, refused to consider any more Empire Settlement proposals from London.[39] The reform-era approach to immigration policy with its emphasis on British peoples, especially British women, as civilizers had been eclipsed by one similar to the laissez-faire policy of the Sifton era. Before the 1920s came to a close, the women's division had seen its day.

The devastating effect of the stock market crash of 1929 was a setback to the greater acceptance of non-British immigrants, but in the socio-economic climate of Canada in the 1930s it was just as disadvantageous to be a British immigrant as a foreign immigrant. The British in Canada were not treated with leniency; in fact, they were deported in far greater numbers than the non-British. The increase in British migration on the eve of the Great Depression indeed meant many immigrants were stranded in Canada without resources. Immigration and Colonization, with the exception of the women's division, showed little concern for the immigrants' plight. The department was absorbed in its own struggle to survive.

Immigration and Colonization had to perform a difficult balancing act to address the conflicting demands placed upon it in the 1930s. First, there was an increase in anti-immigrant sentiment as native-born

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[39]Schultz, 167.

Canadians closed ranks and complained that recent (and not so recent) arrivals had taken "their" jobs. Acute unemployment meant that many native-born Canadians were compelled to migrate within their own country, going on the move in search of work. In 1933, the worst year of the crisis, as much as 32 per cent of the nation's workers were unemployed, and many more were underemployed and barely making a living.[40] Even the demand for domestic servants had declined drastically. Many of the available domestic service positions were filled by Canadian women who no longer shunned such menial work, traditionally the domain of immigrants. It was evident by spring of 1930 that there was no longer a need to import labour, and admitting any immigrants other than those with capital would outrage the public. Provincial and municipal governments were among the loudest opponents of immigration since they were responsible for relief in the early years of the Depression. On the other hand, there was pressure exerted on the immigration department from reform organizations and churches, asking that recent immigrants who "came in good faith" be treated with fairness since hard times made victims of many.[41] This was also the opinion of the British government which, as we shall see, was not anxious to re-admit its nationals.

Soon after the 1930 Conservative victory, Prime Minister R. B. Bennett suspended the Empire Settlement Agreement, and cancellation of the Railways Agreement soon followed. The new Cabinet amended order-in-council P. C. 183, reinstating the monetary requirement for all immigrants,

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[40]Bryan D. Palmer, *Working Class Experience: Rethinking the History of Canadian Labour, 1800-1991* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1992): 241.

[41]RG 76/C-10288/395/563236. Dominion Council YWCA to Gordon, 13 June 1931.

and issued instructions to immigration agents and voluntary organizations in Europe to cease recruitment activities.[42] The department's *raison d'être* was evaporating and many of its agents had become redundant.

As one of its first cost-cutting measures, the department's emigration offices in Europe underwent staff reductions, and by 1931 several offices had closed. The women's division retained seven officers in Britain through 1930, but by 1931 only two remained. There was still a need for a small number of train conductresses since some women and children were permitted to join families that could afford to support them, but the number of conductresses was reduced from eleven to nine. Occasional small parties of single women who had pre-arranged employment before Bennett had ordered a halt to immigration were also permitted to sail.[43] Steamship companies, however, which hired and paid ship conductresses under agreement with the immigration department, decided unilaterally to abolish conductress positions in June, 1930. Burnham was outraged by this decision which, she said, damaged the public's confidence in the women's division. To be sure, it revealed to the public her almost total lack of authority, but she held that such a decision based entirely on financial considerations also reflected badly on the entire department. F. C. Blair brushed off her complaints, reminding her that cost-cutting was paramount for businesses as well as government, and the department could no longer require ships to provide chaperones for small parties of women.[44]

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[42]Canada, Annual Departmental Reports (1930-31), Department of Immigration and Colonization, 66 and 73.

[43]Ibid., 72-73, 82.

[44]RG 76/C-10671/604/889111. Joint letter from representatives of the CPR, White Star, Anchor-Donaldson companies to Immigration and Colonization, 16 June 1930;

An editorial in a 1933 edition of the Toronto *Daily Star* remarked that owing to the onset of hard economic times, the Department of Immigration and Colonization had almost "lost its job." It went on to heap sarcastic praise on officials for managing to shift focus and keep occupied by creating a "Department of Deportation."[45] There is no doubt that the immigration department feared for its own survival, and therefore directed its bureaucratic machinery toward identifying and dealing with "problem" immigrants to give the appearance that it's work was indispensable.

The immigration bureaucracy of the 1930s continued to be a site of conflict between male and female officials; this time, the struggle revolved around deportation procedures and their meaning for immigrant women. According to the women's division, SOSBW, and their affiliated social reform associations, reducing financial costs could only increase the moral costs of women's migration. This, they claimed, was evident after ship's conductresses were laid off; rumours were circulating that male passengers were molesting women and children.[46] Having lost its influence over the sea voyage portion of migration, the division concentrated on the urgent problem of aftercare for unemployed Empire Settlement women, many of whom had no kinship networks in Canada on which to rely. With so many women in dire financial straits, it was feared that they were more likely to fall victim to the white slave trader or engage in prostitution out of desperation.[47]

Burnham to Blair, 18 October 1933; Blair to Burnham, 20 October 1933.

[45]RG 76/C-10288/395/563236. Toronto *Daily Star*, 9 January 1933.

[46]RG 76, C-10671, vol. 604, file 889111. Burnham to Blair, 18 October 1933.

[47]Canada. Annual Departmental Reports (1930-31), Immigration and Colonization.

In the early thirties, the federal Cabinet allowed the women's division to continue its follow-up activities as established in the Aftercare Agreement of 1926. For the government to suspend follow-up work for women would have been unpopular and regarded as cruel. Unlike men, women were not expected to be economically self-sufficient, nor were they feared as violent radicals. Instead, immigrant women had to be protected from criminals as well as from themselves with the guiding hand of female officers. The female staff in Ottawa was reduced to only a handful of employees, but several were transferred to Toronto and Montreal to do investigative aftercare work. The division continued to cooperate with reform organizations and churches to locate immigrant women in difficulty. The Canadian Women's Hostels, Victorian Order of Nurses, and local offices of the Employment Service of Canada agreed to deal with many of the women who were defined as "minor problems." Women who lost their domestic service jobs or who fell ill came under the "minor problem" category and were looked after until new domestic service positions were found for them. "Major problem cases" were generally defined as those women engaging in an activity or living situation which could qualify them for deportation under the Immigration Act. Infractions included illegitimate pregnancy, court convictions, becoming a public charge, or "bad conduct" meaning a refusal to conform to social norms. Staying out all night or ingesting alcohol fell under the rubric of "bad conduct."[48] These cases were referred to the women's division which was then required to turn them over to

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[48]RG 76/C-10263/361/434173. File on "Houseworker Problems."

senior officials. Female officers were not authorized to take part in deportation hearings.

The immigration department's deportation methods have been studied in detail by historian Barbara Roberts, who illustrated how the department fine-tuned this unpleasant aspect of its responsibilities during the Depression. Fiscal years 1932 and 1933 saw the highest number of deportations, with over 7000 each year, compared to less than 2000 in 1929. The British made up at least 59 per cent of the total deportations for these years.[49] A memo from the immigration department to Bennett set the figure at 62 per cent.[50] The bureaucratic machine churned these cases through quickly and efficiently, often by deviating from the law and from it's own regulations. In order to begin the deportation process, officials creatively applied sections of the Immigration Act to "undesirables," usually the unemployed. Ottawa denied that immigrants were sent back to their countries of origin solely because they were unable to find work, but because they refused to work. The department also claimed that unemployed immigrants had transgressed the law earlier by lying about their job skills on their applications for admission to Canada. These charges frequently formed an erroneous basis for the department to ship out as many unemployed immigrants as possible.[51] A memo from an officer stationed in the West stated that his office was following orders to deport large

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[49]Barbara Roberts, *Whence They Came: Deportations from Canada 1900-1935* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988): 38, Table I, and 181.

[50]RG 76/C-10288/395/563236. Memo, 17 June 1932.

[51]Canada, Annual Departmental Reports (1931-32), Immigration and Colonization, 76; see also Barbara Roberts, *Whence They Came*, chapter 8, *passim*.

numbers of unemployed British and Continental Europeans. He explained that before the Depression he and his colleagues had been "...refusing to take action except where we considered the case a *genuine* one through some physical disability from which the migrant suffered, or some other condition which we felt warranted deportation being affected,"[52] (italics added) indicating that lately the charges had been contrived.

Roberts described how the department was able to get rid of many people who had already met the five-year residency requirement for legal domicile in Canada. Officials tacked medical conditions or moral infractions onto domiciled immigrants' cases to make deportation appear necessary and justified. They claimed that many individuals had entered Canada under false pretenses by concealing medical or "moral" problems years ago, and it was just now evident that these people would have been inadmissible under the Immigration Act's section 42 denoting "prohibited classes."[53] These cases attracted a good deal of media attention in Britain and Canada, in particular the decision to deport a woman with epilepsy who had resided in Canada for over ten years. In response to criticism, the Minister of Immigration agreed to personally review the cases of anyone who had lived in the country for five or more years.[54] The practice of deporting domiciled immigrants, however, did not cease, as the government

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[52]RG 76/C-10287/395/563236. Memo to Little, 18 August 1930.

[53]Roberts, *Whence They Came*, 104, 109.

[54]RG 76/C-10287/395/563236. Toronto *Daily Star*, 30 October 1930; Memo, 4 November 1930.

faced increasing pressures from municipalities in the prairie provinces to clear out idle immigrants.[55]

Canadian and British reform organizations were inclined by this time to see indigent immigrants as victims of government and big business, and they called the department's deportation process excessively harsh.[56] This concern was echoed in numerous newspaper editorials demanding a clarification on arbitrary deportation rulings. To improve its public image, Immigration and Colonization told the media and the British Oversea Settlement Committee, which was also alarmed by the number of deportations, that in many cases the decision to return home was freely made, thus the correct term for the phenomenon was "repatriation."[57] This type of discourse was common in the immigration department's public statements; for example, Immigration Minister Gordon explained to reporters that the department was not going after the unemployed, but rather the unemployable, and he did not elaborate on what the difference might be.[58]

The women officers' view of the problem immigrant, along with churches and voluntary organizations, was that deportation should be a

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[55]RG 76/C-10442/626/951760. "Prairie Governments to Confer on Immigration," *Calgary Herald*, 22 April 1930; "The Prairie Provinces and Their Unemployment," *Mail and Empire*, 24 April 1930. RG 76/C-10288/395/563236. Vegreville Chamber of Commerce to Gordon, 11 May 1931; McLaughlin to Stewart, 29 April 1931.

[56]RG 76/C-10288/395/563236. Letters from Social Service Council of Anglican Church in Toronto, 8 December 1930; Langford of YWCA to Gordon 13 June 1931 and 10 July 1931; Toronto District Labour Council 8 December 1930; Dickson of United Church General Conference to Jolliffe, 13 December 1932.

[57]RG 76/C-10288/395/563236. Little to Plant, 21 December 1932.

[58]Ibid., Ottawa *Citizen*, 14 February 1931.

last resort when aftercare efforts had failed. Because the women's division and Employment Service offices already had a job placement system in operation, sincere attempts were made to find domestic service positions for indigent women who contacted authorities or made their way to the urban hostels. If, however, immigrant women transgressed moral or legal boundaries, their cases were passed on to male officials who would likely deport them. It was required that hospitals, relief organizations, and mental institutions file form 67 to notify the government that they had located a deviant or public charge. If voluntary organizations offered any type of relief, such as a few nights of free lodging, they were obligated to report it. Officers and reform workers complied and did not mind doing so when an immigrant woman was deemed to be a major problem, but they disliked reporting women who "came in good faith," and whose only offense was accepting short-term relief.[59]

The women's division had no official role in deportation rulings, even those involving Empire Settlement women. The most it could do was write memos asking for leniency for individual cases. It also notified the SOSBW which offered services to women who were sent back to the United Kingdom. In an ironic reversal of procedure, the Canadian immigration department became the sending body while the British voluntary societies provided aftercare, helping deported individuals readjust.[60] The women's division and its affiliated voluntary organizations, having always based their activities on perceptions of gender difference, insisted that female deportees

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[59]RG 76/C-10288/395/563236. Langford of the YWCA to Gordon, 13 June 1931.

[60]RG 76/C-10439/621/920675. SOSBW Annual Report, 1930, 21-22.

presented a unique social problem that only women were qualified to manage. Groups interested in women's migration maintained that deportation put women in moral jeopardy, and since these "desperate" women might already be inclined toward moral weakness the decision to deport them could lead to disaster. In 1931, member organizations of the CCIW approached the Minister of Immigration to request increased powers for the women's division. Annie Langford, President of the Dominion Council of the YWCA, took up the issue with Minister Gordon. Langford thought that too many women were being deported who could be rehabilitated by the division with help from the YWCA. She requested an active role for the women's division in the deportation process to prevent needless expulsion of women, and in cases where expulsion was necessary, to lessen the moral risk faced by deportees. The minister refused all suggestions with the expianation that the women's division was not competent to deal with such questions of law and procedure. Not easy daunted, Langford continued to correspond with him and received sarcastic responses. In answer to her claim that the women's division was created for just such a reason as dealing with deportation cases, Gordon wrote that he was "surprised" to hear that he needed her to elucidate the purpose and functions of the division.[61]

Women were able to intercede for female deportees on occasion; a report on the Aftercare Agreement stated that the division and its affiliates were influential in having eighty deportation cases stayed between 1926

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[61]RG 76/C-10288/395/563236. Langford to Gordon, 13 June 1931 and 10 July 1931; Gordon to Langford 19 June 1931 and 21 July 1931.

and 1936.[62] As during the division's struggle with the railway companies, Mary Burnham did not directly challenge her departmental superiors on the deportation issue, allowing the members of the CCIW to engage them instead. With funding cuts and lay-offs putting her division's very survival at risk, Burnham may have believed it was less hazardous to allow voluntary organizations to step in and quarrel with her superiors than for her to do so. Burnham was also fighting a serious illness in the 1930s which accounted in part for her inactivity and her division's demise.

In the depths of economic depression, Empire Settlement had become a dead letter for Ottawa; not so for London. The belief in Canada's ability to absorb thousands, or even millions, of Britain's unemployed persisted and would keep a hold on the British mind far into the 1930s. The OSC, British reform organizations, and the press reinforced each others' high hopes that redistributing the white population of the Empire would mean a better life for all, and the public was also persuaded. These hopes turned to frustration as the economic crisis deepened. After a decade of propaganda, the imperial government found that it could not easily quell enthusiasm for assisted migration; the depression caused more people to latch onto the idea of emigration as a panacea. The Attorney-General of Ontario, William Price, who visited Britain in the early thirties told an *Ottawa Citizen* reporter that he was "amazed" at the stress the British placed on emigration.[63] The public reasoned erroneously that if sending people to

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[62]RG 76/C-10263/361/434173. Aftercare Agreement Report, 1936.

[63]RG 76/C-10290/398/567863. Ottawa *Citizen*, 28 August 1933.

the dominions had alleviated unemployment in the 1920s, why should the government not increase its efforts to promote migration when unemployment in Britain continued to rise?[64] This sentiment generated pressure on the British government to resuscitate assisted migration despite the dominions' suspension of their agreements. Earlier, the OSC, preparing for the Imperial Conference of 1930, submitted a strongly-worded memo criticizing Canada for hastily and selfishly abandoning Empire Settlement. The Committee also deplored Canada's strict deportation regulations which, it said, gave recent immigrants almost no chance to succeed.[65] Canada, however, would not consider re-opening any settlement agreements in the early and mid-thirties. F. C. Blair charged that Britain had regarded Empire Settlement as the solution to its unemployment problems all along, and O. D. Skelton, Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs, insisted in a memo to the Dominion Office that "migration is a symptom of prosperity rather than a cure for depression..."[66] English Canadians by this time were less willing to give credence to the notion of a kinship between Britain and Canada, and when jobs and funds were scarce, they acted on a distinction between themselves and the British without hesitation.

A scholarly study released in Canada in 1935 supported the new view that British immigrants were not necessarily ideal settlers for Canada. Lloyd Reynolds, author of *The British Immigrant: Social and Economic Adjustment in Canada*, rejected the notion that newcomers from the British

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[64]Garside, 5 and 7.

[65]PRO/DO 57/B-5892/155/2455. Memo on Oversea Settlement Policy, 1930.

[66]RG 76/C-10290/398/567863. Blair to Gordon, 15 February 1934; Skelton to MacDonald, 3 June 1936.

Isles had fewer adjustment problems than the non-British. A more quantitative study than had yet been compiled, Reynolds' charts and graphs spoke volumes about the experiences of British men and women. Placing British migration within the larger North Atlantic economy revealed that immigration did not result in a net increase in the number of people of British heritage in Canada because it was offset by out-migration to the United States and a decreasing birth-rate. He also pointed out that immigrants were navigating through an economy drastically different from that of pre-war days. On both sides of the Atlantic, rural populations were shrinking, cities were growing, and technology had altered the labour market. Reynolds concluded that labour skills and kinship networks had a greater bearing on success than ethnicity or language, and that Empire Settlement policy "...looks very much like an attempt to make water run uphill."[67] Canada would probably never be able to induce British farmers to emigrate to the West, as it would represent a decrease in their standard of living. Reynolds approved, however, of assisted migration of houseworkers which he believed benefited all involved. His analysis did not touch on changes in the domestic service industry, nor did he acknowledge working-class women's preference for other types of work.

By the mid thirties, Canada and Britain's opinions about the merit of Empire Settlement had diverged to the point where the issue put a strain on Canadian-British relations. A Member of the British House of Lords presented a view of Canada commonly held in the United Kingdom. He likened Canada to "...a gigantic skeleton; the bones are the great railway

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[67]Lloyd Reynolds, *The British Immigrant: Social and Economic Adjustment in Canada* (Oxford University Press, 1935): 271.

systems, Governments, hydro-electric schemes and so on: there is little flesh to connect and cover them", and he assumed this "flesh" must be British.[68] While the Canadian government regarded this as a somewhat accurate metaphor, it had always known that Empire Settlement was not as simple as balancing a scale. In Britain, however, migration was key to the public's attempts to understand the Great Depression. It did not escape notice that in the 1920s and 1930s the unemployment rate rose as emigration decreased. The belief was widespread that emigration had historically acted as a safety valve, preventing high unemployment and crime rates. People reasoned that closing off this valve must have been a major cause of the economic crisis, and therefore, stimulating emigration would result in a rapid empire-wide recovery. A pamphlet published by the Empire Industries Association, made up primarily of London businessmen, illustrated this concept well, saying: "The cessation of migration to the Dominions has been the prime factor in Dominion Depression. Restart the flow and recovery will come with the tide."[69] There was a proliferation of such migration promotion groups throughout the British Isles. The Empire Migration Settlement Group, one of whose founding members was a general in the Canadian Armed Forces, stated that "the objective of migration is to remedy unemployment, both in the United Kingdom and the Dominions..."[70] This group, whose motto was "The Empire Space for the

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[68]RG 76/C-10290/398/567863. United Kingdom, Parliament, House of Lords, *Official Report*, 90, 28 (London: HMSO, 1934): 899.

[69]RG 76/C-10290/398/567863. Empire Industries Association Circular (London: United Kingdom, 1935).

[70]Ibid., Empire Migration Settlement Group, "On Migration," 1 August 1935.

Empire Race," presented a recovery plan calling for half a million new British settlers to be sent to Canada, thereby making work for Canada's unemployed. The influx of people would necessitate the building of roads, schools, and homes, and for their part the immigrants would make fallow land productive and consume surplus manufactured and agricultural products. Some of these promoters, who were mainly of the upper classes, were in favour of compulsory emigration for Britain's poor.

The Canadian government was alarmed by Britain's refusal to let go of Empire Settlement. Officials had hoped that the imperial government would release decisive statements to discourage interested parties from pressing the issue. Instead, the British House of Commons adopted a motion calling for more assertive measures to redistribute the white population of the Empire, an action that Canada interpreted as provocative.[71] To make matters more complicated, it had come to light that monies allocated for Empire Settlement in the 1920s by both London and Ottawa had not been spent, leading to rumours that the governments were hoarding large sums that should be given to people in distress. Fearing public disturbances, both governments issued statements that no such money was available.[72]

In 1931, the dominions became independent countries under the Statute of Westminster and were placed on an equal footing with Britain in the Commonwealth.[73] Three years later the imperial government called

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[71]Ibid., Unsigned letter to O.D. Skelton, 1 February 1934.

[72]RG 76/C-10290/398/567863. Unsigned letter to High Commissioner of Canada, 29 November 1933.

[73]See Bayard Reesor, *The Canadian Constitution in Historical Perspective* (Scarborough, ON: Prentice-Hall Canada, 1992): 56-7. Reesor explains that Britain

together the Inter-Departmental Committee on Migration Policy whose report indicated how the new relationship between Britain and Canada affected the migration issue. Finally, the imperial government admitted that it had long assumed that the dominions were duty-bound to accept the Mother Country's human "surplus," an attitude no longer appropriate if it ever was. The committee's report reaffirmed the dominions' traditional right to set their own immigration policies according to their economic needs, social considerations, and national outlook. This did not put an end to the clamour in the United Kingdom to renew assisted migration, but Canada was appeased by Britain's concession that the concerns of the receiving countries must be paramount in any future migration schemes.[74]

In the fiscal year 1936-37, immigration reached its lowest point since statistics were collected; the total number of arrivals was only 11,103.[75] Seeing no need for an extensive bureaucracy to deal with so few immigrants, Mackenzie King, back in power since October 1935, dismantled the Department of Immigration and Colonization. The few remaining staff members were absorbed into the newly created Department of Mines and Resources where they formed an immigration branch, headed by F. C. Blair. Immigration would not come under a separate department again until 1950.

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could no longer pass laws applicable to the dominions without their consent, nor could it strike down their laws. Canada requested, however, that the authority to change the 1867 Constitution Act remain with Britain.

[74]RG76/C-10290/398/567836. Report to Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Migration Policy, August 1934, 22, 71.

[75]Canada, Annual Departmental Reports (1936-37), Department of Mines and Resources, 234.

The women's division had faded away by the late 1930s, and in the troubled environment of the Great Depression there was little or no resistance to its dismantling. While Mary Burnham, the SOSBW, and Canadian voluntary organizations expressed hope that women's migration would pick up again in the near future, they accepted that women's migration was no longer a priority. There were no more careers for women in the Department of Immigration and Colonization, except for those of a clerical nature. The remaining Canadian Women's Hostels were closed in 1935, and any government funds allocated specifically for women's poor relief or job training was directed toward Canadian women who were, not surprisingly, encouraged to accept domestic work.[76] Very occasionally, a few women served as overland conductresses for small parties of women and children, or as chaperones for female deportees on their way out of the country. They were part-time employees who worked for a short time during the summer months or on a case-by-case basis.[77]

Empire Settlement, the grand plan of managed migration, had effectively come to an end with the onset of the economic crisis, and despite attempts to spark interest in it during the late thirties and after World War II, never again did Canada show much enthusiasm for extensive settlement programmes. Although the results of the interwar efforts fell short of expectations, it was certainly not a total failure, especially when examined from the immigrant's point of view. Thousands of British people desiring to emigrate were given a chance they might otherwise not have had, and

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[76]RG 76/C-10439/621/920675. Blair to Heather, 29 September 1937.

[77]RG 76/C-10288/395/563236. Letter 30 April 1932; Canada. Annual Departmental Reports, I (1936-37) Report of the Auditor General, L-28.

many who went to Canada led productive lives, even if not according to the immigration departments' standards. Statistics collected by the imperial government showed that the majority of British emigrants chose destinations within the empire throughout the 1920s.[78] Of the approximately 405,000 assisted emigrants, as many as 165,000 went to Canada, including over 25,000 female domestics.[79] Historian Janice Gothard estimated that 80 per cent of Empire Settlement domestics chose Canada over the other dominions.[80] Migration enthusiasts had a harsher view; according to the Commissioner of Britain's Salvation Army, it was shameful to give the poor demoralizing dole payments at home rather than the dignified choice of emigration and, he imagined, self-sufficiency. Britain had thrown away "the most splendid of opportunities ever offered to any nation." The Salvation Army's lament appeared in the same newspaper edition as an article entitled "People Our Empire" which accused authorities of letting the Empire's future fall apart in a "fit of absence of mind."[81] John Schultz, in his article on Canada and Empire Settlement, accurately concluded that male bureaucrats in Ottawa had never shared the OSC's dream of strengthening the bonds of Empire through assisted settlement.

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[78]Constantine, 2; see also United Kingdom, House of Commons, Debates (1924-25), col. 206.

[79]Schultz, 168; Many more British women, declaring themselves to be houseworkers, arrived in Canada unassisted. An immigration department memo of 1944 found on RG 76/C-4779/116/22787 gives 82,000 as the total number of British domestics to Canada from 1919 to 1935. The figure 25,804 was given as the number of Empire Settlement domestics.

[80]Gothard, 89.

[81]RG 76/C-10290/398/567863. *Evening Standard*, 28 August 1935.

To Blair, Smith, Egan, and Walker, administering one failed scheme after another was less an inspiration than a tiresome chore.[82] As for women's division supervisors Jean Robson and Mary Burnham, they also appeared disappointed in Empire Settlement, but they never wavered in their defense of the policy since their division's existence depended greatly upon it.

Mary Burnham was no longer a permanent federal employee by 1938. Fighting a debilitating illness since 1930, Burnham took extended periods of leave almost every year thereafter and was eventually placed in a nursing care facility. Rather than replace Burnham, the immigration branch placed a clerk, Jessie Byers, in charge of the division's correspondence. From the hospital and then from the nursing home, Burnham continued to advise the branch on matters of women's migration, but there were no longer any decisions of importance to be made. In 1936, Burnham received the Order of the British Empire which she accepted on behalf of the entire women's division. She appeared on the King's New Year's Honour List along with other prominent Canadian feminists including Charlotte Whitton and Helen MacMurchy. No records could be found showing that the Canadian Council of the Immigration of Women or the women's division were ever formally disbanded; in 1944 a clerk composed a memo about their operations before the files were packed away.

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[82]Schultz, 168-69.

Conclusion

In her 1934 departmental report, Mary Burnham still insisted that "... there is much work that only a woman can do" in the Department of Immigration and Colonization. Her remaining officers were instructed "..to give cheer, help and advice to the discouraged and to confer with social agencies on problem cases."[1] Her basic approach to women's migration had not changed since her appointment as supervisor in 1921, but Canada's social and economic landscape had changed indeed. As the interwar period progressed, Canadians questioned the value of the imperial connection, subsidized immigration, and Burnham's definition of women's work.

The women's division was created precisely because women were considered different in terms of talent and need, but it was this difference which was later cited as justification for the curtailment of its services. By 1930, once valued "feminine" traits were regarded as detrimental in a department where mental toughness and an understanding of market fluctuations were essential. Burnham's male colleagues had decided that comforting the immigrant was not a federal officer's business, nor should the department have operated like a social service agency. Because the desire to nurture was still considered the wellspring of feminine ability, men reasoned that any women in upper level positions would likely remain

[1]Canada, Annual Departmental Reports, 2 (1933-34), Department of Immigration and Colonization, 87.

preoccupied with the misguided and expensive endeavor of caring for the individual immigrant.

The women's wing of the social reform movement had come to be identified with a stagnant, nostalgic imperial ideology. The women's division and CCIW, for pragmatic as well as ideological reasons, promoted the emulation of English society as the ideal. In the late 1920s and 1930s, however, English Canada's increasingly negative views of British immigrants and the popularity of groups such as the Native Sons suggest that a new Canadian nationalistic movement was gaining strength. It was accepted that Canada was built on a British cultural foundation, but in the New World context this heritage had grown into a unique culture, one that was perhaps better than British. Voluntary associations and the women's division, which had always fostered the link between government-sponsored migration and the preservation of Canada's British heritage, were thus drawn down by their staunch position on anglo-superiority. The women's movement had lost imperial sentiment as one of its pillars and as a justification for women's social reform work.

The Great Depression was disastrous not only to the division and its clients but to the immigration department as a whole. Economic issues and mass deportations aside, how should we judge the division's success in meeting its goals? More than likely, its programme did play a part in increasing the rate of female migration in the twenties. It is difficult to determine precisely how many women came to Canada under government assistance because Empire Settlement statistics were not rigorously collected, especially before 1926. A women's division memo estimated that 25,804 British domestics received passage assistance from 1923 to 1930. It is

difficult to say whether these women would not have emigrated without loans or grants, but looking at empire migration as a whole in this period, it appears that passage assistance had some effect in stimulating women's migration. The Oversea Settlement Office recorded 123,349 male emigrants and 103,792 female emigrants bound for destinations within the empire between 1923 and 1932, an improvement on the prewar male to female ratio of three to one.[2] Although Ottawa never considered assistance to be cost-effective, of the $428,000 in loans given out to immigrant domestics in the early twenties, as much as $380,600 was repaid, or eighty-nine per cent of the total loan amount, a not unacceptable rate.[3]

The number of women's division employees increased notably, from ten in 1920 to fifty-two in 1929, but this reflected the increase in Empire Settlement migration rather than any heightened influence of female officers in the Department of Immigration and Colonization. Due to the seasonal nature of immigration, some conductresses and recruiters worked only part-time in spring and summer. Many of the officers hired in the late 1920s dealt with extended aftercare programmes, including tracking down "problem" immigrants, and therefore the division's growth was not an indication of employer satisfaction or a higher demand for Empire Settlement domestics (as opposed to native-born or foreign maids).

The women's division did not perform well in terms of aftercare, its mission to ensure that each migrant was "definitely and satisfactorily settled."[4] Following the Aftercare Agreement of 1926, the agency improved

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[2]Constantine, *Emigrants and Empire*, 16.

[3]Aftercare Agreement Report, 1936.

[4]RG 76/C-10248/338/356358. Smith to Blair, 10 May 1920.

its record-keeping on the whereabouts of Empire Settlement women, allowing a more detailed analysis of what became of assisted domestics. The Aftercare Agreement Report of 1936 showed that in ten years, the division had kept track of 18,790 women. Of these, 2189 had married, 1356 had voluntarily returned to the United Kingdom, 402 moved to the United States, 877 were deported and 85 had died. The numbers were certainly higher in all categories except deportation, since the division had lost track of the remaining 13,881 women.[5] Interestingly enough, the women's division counted the disappearance of the majority of its clients under the "minor problem" category. Considering that the division's goals were to settle women in domestic service and help them adjust to life in Canada, the aftercare aspect of their programme was a failure despite the renewed emphasis on it after 1926. The division's placement and retention rates were not worse than those of other Empire Settlement programmes; family settlement and harvester schemes were also disappointing. However, officers and representatives of voluntary societies who assisted the immigrant by "...form[ing] an almost invincible chain around the girl"[6] had not expected their chain of protection and control to be so easily, often willingly, broken by the girl herself.

The additional aims of the division and CCIW, to raise the social status of the servant and thereby attract more working-class women to housework, were unattainable; the Empire Settlement initiative could not have changed age-old attitudes and traditions surrounding domestic

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[5]Aftercare Agreement Report, 1936.

[6]Shaw, 23.

service. It was not only the distasteful mistress-servant relationship and social stigma that steered women away from housework; economic opportunities had changed. Though still the most common field of employment for women, domestic service was steadily losing ground to factory and shop work because of the greater independence and higher pay these jobs provided.[7] Notwithstanding these changes in the labour market, we can question the division's actual commitment to its goal to make service more attractive. The division did little to improve working conditions, preferring instead to give the wishes of mistresses precedence over those of immigrant servants. Loyal to their own class, the officers, as well as members of voluntary societies, put the onus on servants to find pride in their work and be happy with their lot. As the previous chapters have shown, it was not only male bureaucrats and businessmen who hindered the division's success. Female officers placed boundaries around their own work because of their class bias and ethnic prejudice. Single-minded in their search for the right type of British domestic girl, they did not acknowledge that few women could live up to their requirements, and in the recruitment process they disregarded not only foreign women but also many British women who may have been willing to accept housework.

While domestic service was almost never a choice occupation, it did fit the needs of some young women starting out on their own. Finnish immigrants studied by Varpu Lindstrom-Best sought live-in work in order to meet their immediate needs for lodging and meals, and living with a family eliminated expenditures on kitchen utensils, furniture, and linens.[8] And

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[7]Horn, 171.

[8]Lindstrom-Best, 91.

although a position as a live-in maid could mean isolation and low wages, it was an acceptable way for some women to take advantage of assisted passage and thus escape abuse or poverty in their own homes.

For a recruitment booklet, "Sunny Ontario For British Girls," the Province of Ontario with the Department of Immigration and Colonization solicited letters from immigrant domestics and mistresses, with the intent to print positive accounts of service in the province. The letters reflected the varied experiences of maids, but of course the government printed letters from women in more pleasant situations. Newcomers were struck by the higher standard of living in Canada as evidenced by the prevalence of central heating and electric stoves, and the amount and variety of food available. Several letters offered proof that for a limited number of immigrants possessing some prior experience as a maid, the promise of higher wages became a reality.

That the whereabouts of so many Empire Settlement domestics were unknown by the 1930s points to their determination to work the system to their own advantage. The few letters from domestics preserved in the division's files reveal that some immigrants appreciated chaperones, the reception at port, and free accommodation at hostels. It can be reasoned that from the immigrant clients' perspective, the division's programme could be beneficial since it increased the chances for a more affordable and comfortable migration experience. It appeared that many women were aware their "promise" to remain in domestic employment for a year was unenforceable, but even if they rejected service they had the division and it's affiliated organizations to fall back on in case of job loss or illness. It

may be impossible to determine how many immigrants benefitted in the long term; for instance, many British women lived and worked for years in Canada, obeying the law and social mores, only to be deported during the Depression. But it is clear that immigrants generally did not accept the path laid out for them by Canadian women. This study has shown that individuals with little influence and few material resources were sometimes able to profit from assistance and tutelage in unexpected ways.

One can only wonder what Mary Burnham, ill and confined to a nursing home in the 1930s, thought about her career in the immigration department. Did she fear that there might be no future for women in government? Was she still committed to a belief in women's difference? If she could have witnessed how much women's participation in the civil service had grown by the end of the century, would she have seen herself as a trailblazer? What is certain is that the office environment is no longer an uncommon workspace for women. In spite of this, the problems that Mary Burnham, her predecessor Jean Robson, and their officers dealt with such as negative stereotyping and the limitations placed around their work, still plague working women.

This thesis has not completely rejected theories of gender difference; after all, this work has placed women in a separate category in order to study their experience. It has shown, however, that if women do have different values and behaviours, they may be the result of gender-based expectations placed upon them. Recent books and articles show that there is still a strong tendency to theorize women as kinder, more generous individuals who adhere to a stricter moral code than do men. For instance,

a recent article in the *New York Times* discussed the decision of the Mexican government to bring more women into law enforcement because women are supposedly more trustworthy.[9] Professor Raymond Fisman of Columbia University, a supporter of Mexico's policy, wrote that a growing body of research shows how "...women really are the fairer sex!"[10] in terms of their ability to make equitable judgments. Another striking example is anthropologist Helen Fisher's book, *The First Sex: The Natural Talents of Women and How They Are Changing the World* whose language and arguments are reminiscent of social reform monographs from the turn of the nineteenth century. In her chapter on women in government, Fisher writes, "Healing, nurturing: these are among women's callings",[11] and she predicts that women will soon "...sway governments to see the world their way."[12] Is this how women want to gain rights and responsibilities? Even though such beliefs might raise women's self esteem, the history of the women's division reminds us of the pitfalls encountered when women are held to a different standard. When faced with a long work day, the expectation to be more nurturing, kinder, and holier than one's male colleagues is a heavy burden indeed, and may not lead to advantages in the long term.

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[9] *New York Times*, "Week in Review," 15 August 1999.

[10] Raymond Fisman, letter to the editor, *New York Times*, 18 August 1999.

[11] Helen Fisher, *The First Sex: The Natural Talents of Women and How They Are Changing the World* (New York: Random House, 1999): 145.

[12] Ibid., 156.

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