

“Canada is no dumping ground”: Public Discourse and Salvation Army Immigrant Women and Children, 1900–1930

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From 1900 to 1930 approximately 200,000 immigrants came to Canada from Britain under the auspices of the Salvation Army. This group of immigrants was on one hand encouraged and welcomed because they fit into the desired racial and ethnic categories. On the other hand, however, they were frequently the target of criticism because some Canadians feared that the British were dumping the most poverty-stricken of their population in Canada. The experiences of 200 “pauper” children and 200 women intended for domestic work, all of whom were sponsored by the Salvation Army, contradict this perception. Despite the anxieties of many contemporaries, this group adapted and prospered in their new surroundings.

De 1900 à 1930, environ 200 000 immigrants sont venus au Canada de Grande-Bretagne sous les auspices de l’Armée du Salut. D’une part, ces immigrants étaient encouragés et invités à venir s’établir parce qu’ils correspondaient aux catégories raciales et ethniques souhaitées. D’autre part, cependant, ces gens faisaient souvent l’objet de critiques parce que certains Canadiens craignaient que les Britanniques ne se débarrassent des plus pauvres de leur population en les envoyant au Canada. L’expérience de 200 enfants pauvres et de 200 femmes destinées à servir comme domestiques, tous parrainés par l’Armée du Salut, contredit cette perception. Malgré l’inquiétude de nombreux contemporains, ce groupe s’est adapté et a prospéré dans son nouvel environnement.

CANADIAN HISTORIES of immigration have been shaped by a fundamental paradox. Immigration historian Irving Abella expresses the

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dilemma in these terms: “Peopled by immigrants”, Canada is a country “which hates immigration”.¹ This apparent contradiction, as well as the multiple messages about the kinds of people Canada “wanted” or “needed” to attract to populate its western provinces in the late nineteenth century and to meet the growing demands for an “industrial proletariat”² in the early twentieth century, has been the subject of many recent studies. In light of an increased interest in women, gender, and colonization, historians have demonstrated how desperately white British women were wanted on “the edge of empire”. Adele Perry argues that “white women were invoked as evidence of British Columbia’s transition from savage to civilized. Their presence legitimized the symbolic work of empire.”³ Encouraging white re-settlers or “pioneers”, either to take up land or to fill jobs, was one aspect of this imperial work, but, as Katie Pickles demonstrates through her study of the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire, this work also included establishing and reaffirming vows to the British Empire.⁴ Loyalty had to be reinforced, but “matrimonial immigration” with all its specific intentions rarely proved successful in creating a bourgeois society.⁵ Lisa Chilton’s assessment of British women’s immigration societies makes it clear that the failure of many of the schemes did not put an end to the desire or the effort to populate the colonies with white respectable women, preferably (but rarely) of middle- or upper-class origins.⁶ More common than the desirable middle-class British women were immigrant women and children from

1 Quoted in Barbara Roberts, *Whence They Came: Deportation from Canada, 1900–1935* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988), p. vii.

2 Donald Avery, *Dangerous Foreigners: European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896–1932* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1979; 1983), p. 37.

3 Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race and the Making of British Columbia, 1849–1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), p. 174. As Perry astutely concludes: “Each boatload of white women brought to British Columbia’s shores raised serious conflicts between competing visions of colonialism and was heralded as a failure by the local elite. Their dissatisfaction reflected the conflicts built into the colonial system and the deep chasm that separated imperial discourse from imperial practice. This gap was rendered especially obvious by the failure of working-class white women to behave in ways consistent with colonial discourse.”

4 See Katie Pickles, *Female Imperialism and National Identity: Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE)* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); “Empire Settlement and Single British Women as New Zealand Domestic Servants During the 1920s”, *New Zealand Journal of History*, vol. 35, no. 1 (April 2001), pp. 22–44; “Exhibiting Canada: The 1928 English Schoolgirl Tour of Canada”, *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, vol. 7, no. 1 (2000), pp. 81–96; and “Forgotten Colonizers: The Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE) in the Canadian North”, *The Canadian Geographer*, vol. 42, no. 2 (Summer 1998), pp. 193–204.

5 A. James Hammerton, “Gender and Migration”, in Philippa Levine, ed., *Gender and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 156–181.

6 Lisa Chilton, “A New Class of Women for the Colonies: *The Imperial Colonist* and the Construction of Empire”, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 31, no. 2 (2003), pp. 36–56.

working-class backgrounds, and more “troublesome” were those categorized as “pauper” immigrants.⁷

This study considers 200 single women who immigrated to work as domestic servants and 200 children, girls and boys who came to Canada unaccompanied by adults. All of these newcomers arrived from Britain between 1911 and 1927, under the auspices of the Salvation Army. Their history is worth recounting not only because we can gain a glimpse into the daily lives of British immigrants in Canada, but more importantly because these narratives illustrate that, contrary to popular belief at that time, the majority of the Army’s immigrants successfully and independently adapted to life in Canada. While labour demands, gender, race, and ethnicity became conflated to produce the ideal type of immigrant in Canada during the first three decades of the twentieth century, at the same time the class backgrounds of these particular immigrants aroused fear and accusations about “dumping the submerged tenth” or “shovelling out the paupers”. Ross McCormack recognizes the double-edged tension felt by English immigrants who were at once glad to affiliate with their English kin but were also, as he maintains, somewhat alienated: “Because of the association in the public mind between the Salvation Army or Barnardo Homes and the deportation of paupers, many immigrants from large cities were stigmatized.”⁸ Sedef Arat-Koc

7 Marilyn Barber, “Sunny Ontario for British Girls, 1900–1930”, in Jean Burnet, ed., *Looking into My Sister's Eyes: An Exploration in Women's History* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1986), p. 71. Barber’s research has focused on domestic servants from Britain. Through an analysis of several case studies, Barber concludes that inherent in domestic work was the problem of social isolation, and, to overcome this, domestics often turned either to institutions such as the Women’s Hostels or the YWCA, or to family members who were nearby. See also the very illuminating article, Lorna R. McLean and Marilyn Barber, “In Search of Comfort and Independence: Irish Immigrant Domestic Servants Encounter the Courts, Jails and Asylums in Nineteenth Century Ontario”, Marlene Epp, Franca Iacovetta, and Frances Swyripa, eds., *Sisters or Strangers? Immigrant, Ethnic, and Racialized Women in Canadian History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp. 133–160. On women immigrants and government policy, see Barbara Roberts, “‘A Work of Empire’: Canadian Reformers and British Female Immigration”, in Linda Kealey, ed., *A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada, 1880s–1920s* (Toronto: Women’s Press, 1979), pp. 185–201.

8 Ross McCormack, “Cloth Caps and Jobs: The Ethnicity of English Immigrants in Canada, 1900–1914”, in J. Dahlia and T. Fernando, eds., *Ethnicity, Power, and Politics* (Toronto: Methuen 1981), p. 41. McCormack argues that English immigrants were an observable ethnic group with a collective identity that was often displayed by men wearing cloth caps. McCormack’s thesis goes against the more traditional view that the English were the easiest to assimilate and the first to become Canadianized. Instead, he points to chain migration, endogamy, and the use by English migrants of English-operated boarding houses and British institutions such as the Church of England and Friendly Societies to prove that English immigrants were very much an ethnic group unwilling to sacrifice completely their cultural baggage for assimilation. In fact, many were able to use their English connection to their advantage in finding employment. One woman recalled, “Eaton’s was very partial to old-country people... I don’t think they ever turned anybody down.” Quoted in McCormack, ed., “Cloth Caps and Jobs”, p. 41, citing William Stephenson, *The Store that Timothy Built* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1969), p. 63. For a full variety of

also acknowledges the extent to which race trumped class in the experience of British immigrants, yet she makes clear that the class backgrounds of many newcomers continued to haunt them:

Being of the desirable racial/ethnic stock was also not necessarily experienced as a privilege by the 80,000 British children who were brought in as indentured farm and domestic help to Canadian farms. Between 1868 and 1925, concerns with imperial nation-building and the health of the British race led to efforts for emigrationists to remove working-class children from urban slums and rescue homes in Britain and place them in the good environment and the “healthy family life” of colonial farms. At a period when changing conceptions of childhood and approaches to child labour were already affecting working-class children favourably in Britain, these children were not only exploited as workers but sometimes shunned for potential criminal tendencies and moral and physical degeneracies.⁹

Skin colour, or “race” politics, allowed for the migration of the children and women featured here. Their connection to the metropole often meant that they would be accepted by Canadian immigration officers, and their pleas for support at local Salvation Army offices usually were greeted with offers of temporary loans. They would join the thousands of other children, including the much-studied Barnardo children, in their quests for better lives overseas. As Joy Parr notes in *Labouring Children*, these youngsters were “unusually vulnerable, powerless and alone”, a conclusion echoed by Kenneth Bagnall, who argues that the young children were placed in a “chilly emotional world”.¹⁰ Like many other newcomers, these child immigrants and the women domestics had high hopes for better living conditions. Nonetheless, Salvation Army immigrants were often greeted in Canada with suspicion and opposition. Their histories are interesting because they tell a story that differs from the predicted outcomes.

The Salvation Army began to keep records of its immigrant children in 1911, the year it embarked on its separate child migration scheme. The “history sheets” kept on each child reveal the children’s degree of

immigrant experiences, see Franca Iacovetta, ed., with Paula Draper and Robert Ventresca, *A Nation of Immigrants: Women, Workers, and Communities in Canadian History, 1840s–1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

9 Sedef Arat-Koc, “From ‘Mothers of the Nation’ to Migrant Workers: Immigration Policies and Domestic Workers in Canadian History”, in Veronica Strong-Boag, Mona Gleason, and Adele Perry, eds., *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women’s History* (Toronto: Oxford, 2002), p. 289.

10 See Joy Parr, *Labouring Children: British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada, 1869–1924* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), p. 82; Kenneth Bagnall, *The Little Immigrants: The Orphans Who Came to Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1980; 2001), p. 218. A popular treatment of the Barnardo migration scheme is offered in Gail H. Corbett, *Nation Builders: Barnardo Children in Canada* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997).

adaptation and their pattern of settlement. These records were usually updated after each biannual visit by a Salvation Army inspector. Once they reached 18, the young adults were left to make their own arrangements beyond the scrutiny of the Army.¹¹ For the purposes of this study, 200 sheets, or every sixth record, were examined. The Army was also responsible for transporting at least 2,000 domestics to Canada between 1923 and 1927. Biannual reports were written for most of these women for the first three to five years of settlement. Like the children’s history sheets, these reports provide sufficient information to draw conclusions about the progress of the settlers. Again, 200 records, in this case every tenth one, were examined.¹²

While the Army’s “history sheets” allow the historian insight into the adaptation process, the ironic nature of these records must also be noted. The Salvation Army saw itself as a philanthropic movement concerned with the poor and dispossessed. Its goal was to “lift up” and save those who felt that they were at the very bottom of society, “the shipwrecked souls”. Its immigration work was carried out with this motivation as well. The cost of maintaining a system that transported people from England to Canada, however, was high. Therefore, the Army assisted passengers on the understanding that fares would be repaid once the aided individuals were financially able to do so. In essence, the Army was in the business of money-lending. To recoup these loans, the Army sent officers to the homes of those assisted to collect what was owed. Most often, especially in the case of the domestic servants, repayments were made on an instalment plan. When collecting these loan payments the Army officers were also able to catch up with those whom they had assisted.

The system of collection, inspection, and record-keeping or “surveillance” has meant that life histories that might otherwise have been lost are now available to the historian. Of course, like the similar Salvation Army archival materials used by Mariana Valverde in her history of the Canadian Army’s moral reform work, these sources must be approached with caution. “The Salvation Army collaborated with the state,” aptly notes Valverde, “and indeed obtained both funding and official powers from it; but it also made it clear that it was different from and more benevolent than the state. At the same time, Army benevolence had an insidious regulatory effect in stressing subjective feeling (witness the compulsory cheerfulness of rescue-home women) and not merely behavioural conformity.”¹³ The “compulsory cheerfulness” served to reinforce

11 Social Service Council of Canada, *Canada’s Child Emigrants: Annual Report of the Committee on Immigration and Colonization* (January 1925), p. 32.

12 The extensive “history sheets” or reports do not appear to be available at the Salvation Army Archives for men over the age of 18.

13 Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885–1925* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991), p. 154.

the “good job” being done by the Army. The records could be used as evidence to bolster the government’s financial support of the Army’s programmes and to keep up morale among the Army officers who were carrying out inspections and writing reports. The Army was quite consciously writing the first draft of its own history, and those involved were particularly aware of its reputation as dumper of “the submerged tenth”. Their notion of “successful settlement” has to be placed in this context. Also, while we can hear some echoes of the children’s voices from these sources, for the most part the record is one-sided. Finally, history records were maintained for women and children, but not for single men during this period, perhaps because the former were viewed as being more dependent and economically vulnerable.

The Army’s efforts at moral reform and its place in the religious history of Canada have attracted the attention of historians, yet its immigration records have largely been ignored, despite an optimistic prediction made in 1922 by Brigadier Southall of the emigration office in Toronto, who wrote in *The War Cry*, “With improved machinery and more efficient personnel we shall accomplish even greater things, and in the mighty nation which is destined to acknowledge the land of the Maple as its heritage, history will accord the grand old Salvation Army no small place in respect to its achievements in this regard.”¹⁴ Southall was wrong, however: the role of the Salvation Army in transporting British immigrants to Canada has until recently been largely a hidden history.¹⁵

14 *The War Cry*, October 7, 1922. For the historical context of the Salvation Army, especially from a gendered perspective, see Andrew Mark Eason, *Women in God’s Army: Gender and Equality in the Early Salvation Army* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2003); Lynne Marks, “The ‘Hallelujah Lasses’: Working-class Women in the Salvation Army in English Canada, 1882–1892”, in Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde, eds., *Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women’s History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), pp. 67–118.

15 Desmond Glynn discusses the Salvation Army along with other charitable organizations which undertook immigration work. See Desmond Glynn, “‘Exporting Outcast London’: Assisted Emigration to Canada, 1886–1914”, *Histoire sociale/Social History*, vol. 15, no. 29 (May 1982), pp. 209–238. See also Michele Langfield, “Voluntarism, Salvation, and Rescue: British Juvenile Migration to Australia and Canada, 1890–1939”, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 32, no. 2 (2004), pp. 86–114, and “A Chance to Bloom: Female Migration and Salvationists in Australia and Canada, 1890s to 1939”, *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 17, no. 39 (2002), pp. 287–303. See also Myra Rutherford, “Scrutinizing the ‘Submerged Tenth’: Salvation Army Immigrants and their Reception in Canada”, in Philip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis, eds., *Canada and the British World* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006), pp. 174–197. This essay traces the evolution of the relationship between Salvation Army immigrant officials and the Canadian federal government’s immigration branch in the years from 1903 to 1930. Marjory Harper has published extensively on Scottish immigration to Canada and has included in her work information on the Salvation Army schemes. See, in particular, Marjory Harper, *Emigration from North-East Scotland*, vol. 1: *Willing Exiles* and vol. 2: *Beyond the Broad Atlantic* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988).

From Paupers to Migrants: Childhood Movement from England to Canada

In 1980 Brigadier David A. Bridges of Niagara Falls, Ontario, sat down to record his past experiences with the Salvation Army. In this biography, Bridges recalled that, at the age of 14, he began to work for the Overhead Railway in Liverpool, where he developed a desire to learn about and emigrate to Canada. One lunch hour his curiosity led him to the Canadian Government Office, where he was referred to the Salvation Army Emigration Office. Having convinced his father that chances for improvement were limitless in Canada, David and his two brothers soon found themselves at the Salvation Army's Hadleigh Training Farm for a six-week course in agricultural methods.¹⁶ In May 1927, at the same time as Charles Lindbergh was flying the first non-stop flight between Chicago and Paris, David and his brothers sailed from Liverpool to Quebec. Upon arrival in Quebec City, they were greeted by Salvation Army officials who advised them to hop a train headed for Woodstock, Ontario.

Demand for farm help was so high that farmers awaited their arrival at the Salvation Army receiving lodge. David was placed on a farm in Bright, a few miles from Woodstock, and, as he recalled, “I slowly learned the difference between a weed and a turnip, I found it harder to harness the horses, and eventually learned to milk a cow.” But David did not adapt to the food, and within a few months he was back at the lodge, recovering from an illness.¹⁷ Fortunately, a job that entailed daily maintenance tasks developed at the lodge. For David, one highlight of this job was learning to drive the Salvation Army's Model T Ford. He became responsible for transporting the lodge superintendent to the Salvation Army Church to attend meetings. In 1928 David enrolled in the Salvation Army and began proudly to display his soldier's uniform. A few days after David's conversion, he received word from the emigration office that he was required to move to Quebec to become an emigration agent.

“My task”, David recalled, “was to meet all the passenger boats that had booked through the Salvation Army Immigration Department. I usually had some information about their arrival beforehand, and would issue railway tickets to them, then see them safely on the train to their destination.”¹⁸ In his capacity as emigration officer, David crossed Canada several times. After three years of emigration work, he entered the Salvation Army Office Training College in Toronto.

16 Toronto, Salvation Army Heritage Centre Archives [hereafter SAHCA], Brigadier David A. Bridges, *The Land of Opportunity and the Salvation Army*, pp. 1–3.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

David Bridges was just one of the approximately 200,000 British immigrants who came to Canada between 1903 and 1930 under the auspices of the Salvation Army.¹⁹ He settled and had a long and successful career in the Salvation Army. But, like thousands of immigrants who came to Canada in the early twentieth century or who have come since, the Salvation Army immigrants were often the target of criticism. Canadian government immigration officials, leading citizens, and the general public frequently spoke out against immigration in general and immigrants sponsored by the Salvation Army in particular. “Pauper children”, as David Bridges was perceived to be in the 1920s, were one of the main sources of anxiety.

What to do with pauper children had long been a concern for British philanthropists. In 1883 Samuel Smith, a leading British philanthropist and polemicist, wrote to *Nineteenth Century* to suggest that paupers be sent to Canada. He provided statistics to prove that the “pauper class” cost Britain £20 million annually and asserted that paupers were responsible for most of the crime in Britain, which cost the country £5 million a year. Therefore, the paupers made an annual demand of £25 million. If the country could emigrate 100,000 children a year at £15 per head, Smith argued, the state would save £15 million annually.²⁰ Smith went on to state:

I am well aware that no such visit scheme is possible at present, but there can be no harm in presenting in a striking manner the economical aspect of this great question. State officialism, however, must not conduct this experiment; it is the humanizing influence of loving hearts that alone will make it successful. All that I ask the state to do is to remove vexatious restrictions and to give some encouragement. By arrangement with the Canadian government, a system of pauper emigration may be carried out with adequate inspection to prevent abuses.²¹

Smith was pleading for a *laissez-faire* approach to pauper migration, but, even before his article appeared, Maria Rye, a leading philanthropist in England, had already sent 10,000 children to Canada.

Apart from the economic argument for transporting paupers to the colonies, there were those whose religious convictions convinced them that emigration was the best solution. Christian philanthropists felt that institutionalized children without families would “grow

19 Even among Salvation Army historians, there is debate on the exact number of immigrants who came to Canada under the Army’s auspices. In R. G. Moyles, *The Blood and the Fire in Canada* (Toronto: Peer Martin Associates, 1977), the figure is 250,000 (p. 262), whereas in Major Arnold Brown, *What Hath God Wrought: The History of the Salvation Army in Canada* (Toronto: Salvation Army Printing and Publishing House, 1912), the figure is 200,000 (p. 117).

20 Samuel Smith, “Social Reform”, *Nineteenth Century*, vol. 12 (January 1883), p. 906.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 906–907.

in evil” to “dread and hate those who ought to be nearest them”.²² Child-savers also appealed to what they saw as the “moral conscience” of the nation to convince the British public that emigration to farming areas in Canada was the best solution to the problem of pauper children. As Joy Parr clearly illustrates in *Labouring Children*, “[T]he association of rural life with morality and city life with corruption ... gained new force in Britain.”²³ In Salvation Army propaganda, for example, Canada was described as a garden where nature could “smile away all the sorrows of many hearts” and where the “clear and invigorating climate ... encourages health and activity”.²⁴ These images of regeneration were far more appealing than East London, where the children had little chance of success or improved health and living conditions. For economic, religious, and moral reasons, emigration became an acceptable way to solve the problem of child pauperism in Victorian and Edwardian England.

This is not to say that Canadians were in favour of this solution. J. S. Woodsworth, a Methodist minister in Winnipeg and later founder of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, did not hesitate to speak out against pauper immigration: “Children from such surroundings with inherited tendencies to evil are a very doubtful acquisition to Canada. We must express the fear that any large immigration of this class must lead to the degeneration of our Canadian people.”²⁵ These views were expressed with a growing frequency between 1900 and 1930. Despite the opposition to child migration, the Army and other organizations carried on their work with the belief that they were doing what was in the best interest of the children. Between 1868 and 1927, 85,000 children came to Canada as juvenile immigrants; 33 per cent of those were aided by Dr. Barnardo’s organization, whereas 20 per cent were aided by the Salvation Army.²⁶

Pauper children were not the only targets of criticism. The Army itself also came under attack. For example, in April 1921 J. Obed Smith, the Canadian Commissioner of Immigration in London, wrote to the Minister of Immigration and Colonization that “without a solitary exception, the whole of our staff in the British Isles, male and female, including all our Immigration Agents, have no confidence, or at any rate not enough confidence to warrant anything but the closest supervision of all [Salvation Army] operations”.²⁷ Smith was concerned that the quality of the Salvation Army immigrants was so low that they would inevitably fail upon arrival.

22 Quoted in Parr, *Labouring Children*, p. 37.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 45.

24 *The War Cry* [London], March 9, 1907; “Canada from Within”, *All the World*, 1905, p. 598.

25 J. S. Woodsworth, *Strangers Within Our Gates* (1909; Toronto: University of Toronto, 1972), p. 54.

26 Mrs. J. Breckenridge McGregor, *Several Years After* (Ottawa: Canadian Council on Child Welfare, 1928), p. 10.

27 Library and Archives of Canada [hereafter LAC], RG 76, vol. 105, file 17480, part 1, Smith to Calder, April 27, 1921.

He feared that the Army was sending only the “submerged tenth” to Canada. This belief had been expressed before, particularly during the economic depression of 1907–1908.

Such claims forced the Salvation Army to defend its immigration work publicly. Commissioner David Lamb, who was in charge of the Salvation Army Emigration Office in London, toured Canada in 1926 and observed that the public was ignorant of “the true nature of our migration and settlement work and of the quality of our migrants. We found in many quarters that ought to be informed a survival of the old idea that it was the ‘submerged tenth’ being dumped.”²⁸ Both Lamb and other Salvation Army emigration officers repeatedly pointed out that less than 1 per cent of their immigrants had to be deported.²⁹ The Salvation Army officials also took every possible opportunity to provide examples of their successful immigrants. These success stories frequently appeared in the Army’s publications such as *The War Cry*, *The Social Gazette*, and *All the World*.³⁰ *The War Cry* of March 9, 1907, described one woman from East London destined for Canada to meet her husband, who had already obtained work. “All the fifteen years of our married life,” she maintained, “we couldn’t save £5 — and my husband’s teetotal. There was no work for him in the winter, and what we saved in the summer wasn’t enough to keep us right through the winter. But when I land in Halifax I shall have more than £5 in my pocket, and it’s all my husband’s saving.”³¹ A similar story about a widow and her five children who migrated to Canada in 1910 appeared in *All the World* in April 1913. Mrs. K. and her five children, ranging in age from 13 to 20, settled in Ontario. Previous to her immigration, Mrs. K. had to rely on a small amount of weekly outdoor relief and the paltry income of her three oldest children. Before Mrs. K. arrived in Ontario, the Salvation Army had arranged for positions for her and her children. Her three eldest daughters were offered situations, and Mrs. K. planned to go out to a domestic service job that paid \$2.50 a day. “It seems strange,” said Mrs. K. to one of the Salvation Army emigration officers in Canada, “but in my old age I am going to know what it is to be comfortable. I thought it would be a struggle to the end....”³²

Salvation Army immigrants who received financial support or employment counselling wanted to leave England because cities like London and Liverpool could not absorb the unemployed. For those who could

28 David C. Lamb, *Our Heritage: The Empire* (London: Salvation Army, London International Headquarters, 1926).

29 LAC, RG 76, vol. 105, file 17480, part 4, Blair to the editor of *The Daily Sun*, February 11, 1927. For an excellent study of the history of deportation, see Roberts, *Whence They Came*.

30 As early as 1904 *The War Cry* and *The Social Gazette* combined had a British circulation of 450,000 weekly (LAC, RG 76, vol. 105, file 17480, part 1, Smart to Preston, February 5, 1904).

31 *The War Cry* [London], March 9, 1907.

32 *All the World* [London], April 9, 1913.

secure work, it was often seasonal and low-paying. Canada was perceived to be the land of opportunity where one's prospects were bright if one was willing to do hard work. For the most part, this was true except in times of economic depression like 1907–1909 and 1922–1924. During these periods when the economy was in a downturn, critics against immigration were particularly vocal. Despite the Army's defensive statements, some members of the public refused to be convinced that the Salvation Army immigrants were making a positive contribution to Canadian society. Remarking upon Canada's immigration policy, one *Toronto Star* reader expressed what he felt to be the view of most Canadians:

Why does Canada spend so much time trying to induce people to emigrate to this country; often to have them to keep when they get here. There have been too many men brought in for a mere nothing to work on farms who drift to the city in a short time, too many women welcomed as domestics who have no intention of taking a place for more than a month or two till settled... Canada is no dumping ground.³³

These fears were based on the view that British immigrants, especially those aided by a charity society like the Salvation Army, would either end up as public charges or take jobs away from Canadians. Nonetheless, popular and church newspapers continued to boast about Canada's prosperity and to portray it as the land of abundance for newly arrived immigrants.

On March 9, 1907, *The War Cry* heralded the departure of a steamer specially chartered by the Salvation Army carrying “1,200 souls” to the land of opportunity. “On board we see the merry children,” the reporter proclaimed, “transferred from bare tables, fetid slums, and almost certain poverty to a land of abundance ... and certain independence.”³⁴ The objective of the child migration scheme was “to remove from these [children] the stigma of a workhouse upbringing.”³⁵ The Salvation Army began a more consistent child immigration programme in 1911, and for the years until 1924, 1913 and 1914 appeared to be the Army's busiest for child migration. Based on this sample, 17.5 per cent came in 1913 and 21.5 per cent in 1914, compared to much lower figures of 2 per cent in 1911 and 2.5 per cent in both 1916 and 1924.³⁶ The average age of the group was 13, and the majority of 149 were boys while 51 were girls. This ratio between boys and girls of three to one was typical of the entire child migration movement, not just the Salvation Army's effort. Organizations justified this by claiming that girls required

33 *Toronto Star*, January 31, 1927.

34 *The War Cry* [London], March 9, 1907.

35 *Pictures of Joy and Sorrow* (London: Salvation Army Printing Works, 1913–1914), p. 44.

36 SAHCA, Immigration Ledgers, Children's History Sheets, 1910–1930s.

more protection on their voyage to Canada, a separate receiving home, and more after-care supervision and inspection by the organization in charge.³⁷

That Salvation Army officers believed emigration was the solution to the problem of pauper children is indicated on the history sheets. Of the 200 cases analysed, 167 indicated the reason for emigration. Typically, the phrase “Emigration arranged in child’s interest” was inserted in the space designated to explain why each child was selected.³⁸ In 26.5 per cent of the cases, the child had been deserted by one parent, and the other parent was either in the workhouse or unable to care for the child; 41 per cent of the children had been deserted by both parents and turned over to the Poor Law Authorities and Industrial Schools. The death of both parents accounted for another 6 per cent of the emigrations. Interestingly, 9 per cent of the children emigrated voluntarily with their parents’ consent, contending that they “desired to improve their condition”, meaning that parents believed their children’s chances for economic and social improvement were better in Canada than in Britain. However, the majority of children came to Canada after having been deserted by parents and shifted around from Poor Law Authorities to Industrial Schools. Before they arrived in Canada, their home life had been very unstable, and generally the majority of their experiences had been gained in institutions.

The success of these child immigrants depended on several factors. Basically they had similar backgrounds, but they did not all begin their Canadian lives under equal conditions. One of the most crucial factors for their success was the family with which they were placed. The arrangement between the Salvation Army and the families was that the children must attend school and church until age 14, when they were to be apprenticed for small wages either as domestics or farm labourers. When the children reached 18, the Salvation Army was to hand over their accumulated wages, and the children would be on their own.³⁹ The homes where children were placed were very important because they could provide stability, often for the first time in these children’s lives. Bert Allen was 14 when he arrived at his new Ontario farm home in 1921. Bert continually progressed, and on all inspections he was well dressed and healthy. Five years later he was being paid \$150 a year and intending “to go on to make a good farmer”.⁴⁰ Another boy, 18-year-old Charlie Burton, was

37 Committee on Immigration and Colonization, *Report of the Overseas Delegation to Canada, 1924* (Social Service Council of Canada, January 1925), p. 83.

38 SAHCA, Immigration Ledgers, Children’s History Sheets, 1910s–1930s.

39 Committee on Immigration and Colonization, *Canada’s Child Immigrants: Annual Report of the Committee on Immigration and Colonization to the Social Services Council of Canada* (Social Services Council of Canada, January 1925), p. 33.

40 SAHCA, Immigration Ledgers, Children’s History Sheets 1910s–1930s, Child no. 18, 1921. To protect the anonymity of all the Salvation Army immigrants, I have given them fictitious names in my research. I numbered the children from 1 to 200 and recorded the year of their arrival.

placed in Oak Lake, Manitoba, in 1920. “Charlie is still with me,” wrote his master after nine months. “He is giving good satisfaction. As you know he came out absolutely inexperienced. I have started him at \$25 a month with board and washing. He is willing and useful and with practice I shall make a good man out of him.”⁴¹ Becky Clark emigrated to Lindsay, Ontario, when she was 10 years old. By the time she was 14, she had obtained honours in school and was hoping to become a school teacher. The family who ultimately adopted her “treated her as their own”. In the fall of 1929 she went to North Bay to train to be a teacher.⁴² All of these children were fortunate to be placed with families who seemed to take a sincere interest in their future. Of course, not all were so fortunate.

Cindy Dickens arrived in Canada in 1922 when she was 11 years old. Between 1922 and 1929 she moved nine times. In May 1924 she returned to the Salvation Army Lodge “in rather bad condition, her boots were too small and she said she did not have a bath while there”.⁴³ Cindy was transferred from master to master, and in 1929 at age 18, as the Army inspector discovered, she was pregnant and married. Tommy Ellis moved four times between December 1916 and November 1918. This 12-year-old was a good boy who “unfortunately got into some bad places”.⁴⁴ Once he returned to the lodge with stories that he had been improperly treated, which often meant being either overworked or physically abused.

Within the first few years after arrival, it was not unusual for a child to be moved to three different homes. Children often demonstrated their initial dissatisfaction by running away from their homes. At one time or another, 11 per cent of the children ran away. Although 13-year-old Alfred Downey was “doing exceedingly well at normal school”, he ran away from his Hamilton home for no apparent reason, but his mistress was willing to give him another chance.⁴⁵ Sixteen-year-old David Fairchild ran away from his Brantford farmhouse in 1921 because he wanted to live in Toronto. He kept in touch with the Salvation Army and was quite content “working at a steady job and learning the carpet-weaving business”.⁴⁶ One of the boys ran away from his Manitoba farmhouse and into Brandon to get a job at a tailor’s shop where he was paid \$12 a week and room and board. He refused to go back to the farm, where he found the work too hard and the hours too long.⁴⁷ Children either ran away or requested to be transferred if they were unhappy in their situations. Those who did run away were placed in new

41 SAHCA, Immigration Ledgers, Children’s History Sheets 1910s–1930s, Child no. 66, 1920.

42 *Ibid.*, Child no. 130, 1921.

43 *Ibid.*, Child no. 71, 1922.

44 *Ibid.*, Child no. 65, 1916.

45 *Ibid.*, Child no. 99, 1912.

46 *Ibid.*, Child no. 141, 1920.

47 *Ibid.*, Child no. 121, 1921.

homes or, like the two boys discussed above, they found jobs on their own. In many cases, children went through a difficult period of transition when they first arrived in Canada, and thus their initial situations were not always satisfactory. The two children mentioned above, for example, could not adjust to farm life, but this did not mean that they were not successful settlers. They did not end up as public charges despite the fact that they did not stay on the farm.

For other children, the period of transition meant that they had to adapt to family life and grow accustomed to Canadian culture and food. Since most of the children had been institutionalized, they had not necessarily been taught formal social customs, including table manners and family responsibilities, and many of these children were unaccustomed to individual attention. The children were occasionally described as untrustworthy, deceitful, bad-tempered, and restless, but even many of these children ultimately settled and adapted. Occasional complaints were voiced by masters who expected the children to work harder than they were physically able to do.

Physical ability was often a contentious issue between masters and children, since 12.5 per cent of the children were described as either too small for their age and work requirements or very weak. When Ernest Hawkes was 14, he complained to Salvation Army inspectors that he was not satisfied because he was “required to do the work of a girl around the house”.⁴⁸ Ernest was “too small for farm requirements” and as a result, at 15, he could only command a wage of \$4 a month. Eventually, when Ernest was 17, he settled with a fruit-grower who paid him a more substantial wage of \$150 a year. Doris Carson was described as “very small for her age” when she was 15. Two years later the inspector was again surprised by her size, remarking, “Doris is now seventeen, but her present physical condition is like a girl of fourteen years old. The Reverend Lake is doing all he can to build her up.”⁴⁹ Another boy, George Fox, was also too small for farm work. Nevertheless, he did what work he could, and his master thought well of him. Aware that his size would impede his success in farm work, at 19 George went to business school to take a course in book-keeping, typewriting, and shorthand.⁵⁰ Although these children were physically incapable of the work that they were expected to perform, they were able to overcome their insufficient size either because the families lessened requirements or because they took less physically demanding jobs. Again, they did not become public charges, whatever their size or strength.

The Salvation Army placed a high priority on children’s school and church attendance. Under the *Ontario Education Act*, all children up to

48 *Ibid.*, Child no. 10, 1914.

49 *Ibid.*, Child no. 7, 1920.

50 *Ibid.*, Child no. 107, 1914.

the age of 14 had to attend school, and the Army expected the families with which children were placed to send them to Sunday school. If Salvation Army inspectors learned that a child was missing school or church, they would investigate the case.

In October 1918 a Salvation Army inspector visited 13-year-old Harold Jones on his master's farm just outside Orangeville, Ontario, and was informed that Harold had not been attending school. The inspector wrote that Harold “has not been attending school lately, [because he has been] busy on [the] farm but he will return shortly and attend all winter”.⁵¹ Obviously Harold's master was more interested in his farm work than Harold's education. Another problem was that often children lived on isolated farms that were too far from the nearest church or school. In April 1924 an Army inspector noted that Ian Kilpatrick was not attending Sunday school “regularly during winter weather [because the] distance [was] too far, [he] promised to attend from this date forward”.⁵² Ten-year-old Elizabeth Darling did not attend school due to bad winter weather as well, but she received “lessons at home and is ahead of [her] class. Her foster parents are very attached to the child.”⁵³ The inspectors were especially proud of children who achieved distinction in their class or went on to complete high school and study at college. Faith Henry of Leamington, Ontario, attended normal and high school, and she also took weekly music lessons. At age 18 she entered nurse's training.⁵⁴ Georgina Jackson, a Grade 5 student in Holstein, Ontario, also made good progress at school. As the Army inspector observed, “[T]his little girl has been first in her class for the last twelve months.”⁵⁵ Another achievement of which the Army was particularly proud was a child's participation in a church choir. John Lund not only was a good high school student, but learned to play the piano and cornet. In May 1918 the inspector boasted, “[L]ast Sunday [John] sang in the [Leamington] Methodist Church.”⁵⁶ Although the Army insisted that children go to church, only 16 per cent of the children attended, and only 5 per cent of the total belonged to the Salvation Army. Not surprisingly, the Army preferred to discuss these success stories to counter arguments against child migration.

Despite the fact that most children successfully settled, some did not adapt, and they were often the ones who attracted public attention. Of the 200 children examined, eight (or 4 per cent) had been arrested. These arrests involved one case of child abuse, one case of assault, three

51 *Ibid.*, Child no. 51, 1913.

52 *Ibid.*, Child no. 128, 1922.

53 *Ibid.*, Child no. 165, 1915.

54 *Ibid.*, Child no. 108, 1914.

55 *Ibid.*, Child no. 113, 1913.

56 *Ibid.*, Child no. 106, 1913.

cases of theft, one case of stowing away, and two cases of vagrancy. Of these, one child, who had been arrested and sentenced to two months in prison in Brandon, Manitoba, was deported by the government.⁵⁷ Eighteen-year-old Derrick Lamb was arrested by harbour police during his effort to get on a boat to England. Because of his expressed desire to return to England, the Salvation Army allowed him to go, but the boy paid his fare from the wages he had saved.⁵⁸ The boy who was arrested for assault had to pay a fine, and eventually he settled down to work in Manitoba. Jimmy Barker was arrested in Detroit on a vagrancy charge, but, after receiving assistance from the Salvation Army and the Jewish Institute of Detroit, Jimmy was able to find work. One year later a Salvation Army inspector reported that Jimmy was “working steadily with the Burroughs Adding Machine Company in Buffalo”.⁵⁹ The Army was always inclined to forgive those children who claimed to be sorry for their crimes and willing to start other jobs. In relative terms, the percentage of children who were arrested was low. Of the eight who were arrested, the Army records indicate that two went back to Britain; one was replaced on a farm until he turned 18, when he moved to Toronto for work; two served jail terms of from three to six months; one was located in Detroit and one went to work in Buffalo; another found work in Brandon. Even of this group, who represented the worst examples of pauper immigrants, very few became public charges. In cases like these, the Salvation Army officers doubled their efforts to reform and re-establish the children.

Of the 200 children in this study, 46 of the boys (24.3 per cent) would have been eligible to enlist for military service, and 11 did so. The average age of enlistment for these boys was 17, which indicates that some lied about their age. This is not surprising, since British Canadians were eager to join the military forces, determined to fight for their mother country. Another 4 per cent of the children ended up voluntarily returning to Britain. Fifteen-year-old Lisa Mills had made excellent progress with her Canadian family, who grew very attached to her over a period of three years, but in December 1916 it was reported that Lisa “returned to England in order to keep house for her father and little brothers”.⁶⁰ Although Kelly Marks had “developed into a fine boy” and had attended both church and high school, at age 18 he decided to go back to England.⁶¹ Because of “homesickness”, 17-year-old Blake Kennedy used the \$150 that he had earned to return to England,

57 *Ibid.*, Child no. 193, 1922.

58 *Ibid.*, Child no. 135, 1922.

59 *Ibid.*, Child no. 186, 1920.

60 *Ibid.*, Child no. 73, 1913.

61 *Ibid.*, Child no. 131, 1922.

“without the knowledge or consent” of the Salvation Army.⁶² Another girl, Emily Brookins, was 14 when she settled in Aylmer, Ontario. Her first financial arrangement with her mistress was that she would be paid \$12 a month to do domestic work, and when Army inspectors visited she always seemed content. But when Emily turned 18, one inspector reported, “[S]he is anxious to go back to England and is not satisfied with a wage of \$12 a month.”⁶³ Although some children did return to Britain for various reasons, all of them had achieved a relative degree of success in Canada.

Emily Brookins’s disappointment over wages is significant. It reveals the entire question of whether pauper children were used by Canadians as cheap labour. In 1928 an investigation into pauper immigration was conducted by the Canadian Council on Child Welfare. Social worker Mrs. J. Breckenridge McGregor was responsible for the investigation. Based on her interviews with 311 children, she concluded that most families took pauper immigrants into their homes purely for economic reasons:

It is a mistake to suppose that employers in applying for the children are actuated by altruistic motives. There is no more reason why this should be expected of them than of the businessman who applies for an office boy. In each case he wishes someone to ease his burden, not to add to it and in each he may or may not be the sort of person who would take a personal interest in the child’s welfare and whose sympathetic guidance would be of more value than the actual wage. This system then resolves itself almost entirely into a labour question and should be treated as such from a business standpoint.⁶⁴

Based on the fact that some families were very insistent that the children go to church and school, and in 3 per cent of the cases to college, it can be shown that these observations were not true for all Salvation Army cases. For the most part, however, the pauper immigration was actually an apprenticeship system. Between 1871 and 1921 the proportion of the Canadian population in rural areas had fallen from 80 per cent to 50 per cent. The rural exodus of young people, combined with the pattern of newly arrived adult immigrants to settle in urban areas, created a need for labour in agricultural areas that was filled by pauper children. These conditions were particularly prevalent in rural Ontario, which is why well over 90 per cent of the Salvation Army children were placed there. Farm mechanization in the late nineteenth century and the movement

⁶² *Ibid.*, Child no. 92, 1915.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, Child no. 24, 1923.

⁶⁴ Breckenridge McGregor, *Several Years After*, p. 27.

towards mixed fruit and vegetable farming meant that children could be employed to do what adult hired men had once done.⁶⁵

When children reached age 14, they entered an economic agreement with their families arranged under the supervision of a Salvation Army inspector, who would do his best to secure a maximum annual wage. There was no government standardization or fixed wage rate for pauper children. Often a child's wage was determined by such factors as his or her size, experience, and intelligence. Sixteen-year-old Martin Peabody was returned to the Salvation Army Lodge in 1914 because the Valentia (Ontario) farmer said he "was too small and not taking any interest in his work".⁶⁶ Martin was next placed with a Mr. Bishop, who agreed to pay him \$100 for one year, but the Salvation Army was rather sceptical about Martin's future, describing him as "not of very brilliant intellect".⁶⁷ In 1926 17-year-old Bill Star of Wyevale, Ontario, was described as "a fine fellow who could be trusted" and a "strong healthy lad" who was working for an annual wage of \$175.⁶⁸ Generally, the boys' annual wages for farm work ranged from \$50 to \$250, the average being around \$150. Each year an Army inspector would renegotiate the boys' wages with a view to an annual increase. Fourteen-year-old Paul Evans of Aylmer, Ontario, was placed on an annual wage of \$48 in January 1917, and by April 1918 his progress had been so noticeable that his wages were raised to \$84 a year. On a visit to Guelph in May 1919, Paul managed to secure a better-paying job working for the Soldiers' Re-establishment Commission in the Dairy Department of the military hospital for a wage of \$40 a month. Indeed, the boys' wages were low, even when room and board are considered. The system was also open to abuse, as Breckenridge observed in her investigation, "There were cases where the employer has underestimated the value of the child's services and over-estimated the value of his contribution to the child."⁶⁹ Despite the fact that, for at least four years, while boys were between the ages of 14 and 18, some farmers had a source of cheap labour, many of the boys chose to continue in farm work after they turned 18. Only 98 records out of a possible 149 indicated what boys did once they turned 18; of these, 46 boys stayed on the farm and 52 chose to do other work, including railroading, lumbering, and office work. One boy secured a job in Toronto's T. Eaton department store. Two became sailors, and three went to Western Canada on the annual harvest excursion. Though the work and wages varied, the Salvation

65 Parr, *Labouring Children*, p. 88.

66 SAHCA, Immigration Ledgers, Children's History Sheets, 1910s-1930s, Child no. 90, 1913.

67 *Ibid.*

68 *Ibid.*, Child no. 69, 1914.

69 Breckenridge McGregor, *Several Years After*, p. 28.

Army officers attempted to ensure that all the boys had some form of work before they left their farms.

The girls also became responsible for their own arrangements when they turned 18. Between the ages of 14 and 18, they were apprenticed as domestics, and their wages varied from \$8 to \$15 a month. Of 51 girls, six went to college: two to become nurses, one to teacher's college, one to the Salvation Army Officer College, and two to business college. Another girl worked at a munitions factory, one at a blanket factory, one at Simpson's department store in Toronto, one at Bell Telephone, and two as hospital ward maids. Because there was such a high demand for British domestics after the war, most of the Salvation Army girls either stayed with their original families or took other domestic jobs. It appears that all the scepticism surrounding child migration to Canada was based on fear and a stereotypical view of pauperism and youth. In the end, only 1 per cent of the children were deported and perhaps 2 per cent became public charges. The great majority either stayed on the farm or went into cities to work.

The public outcry against child migration was even more pronounced in the 1920s. In the winter of 1922 a child immigrant who had been placed in Saskatchewan died under “questionable circumstances”, and the following winter three immigrant children committed suicide. These deaths prompted the Canadian and British governments to appoint a delegation to examine the system of child migration and settlement in Canada. The British committee, chaired by Miss Margaret Bondfield, travelled throughout Canada to meet with child immigrants and their families in the fall of 1924. The final report of this committee made several suggestions, which included the recommendation that children not be transported to Canada until they reached 14, the age of leaving school in Britain, and that the sex distribution be changed to increase the proportion of girls. Generally, however, the committee found the child migration system was quite adequate:

We have no doubt that the prospects in Canada for the average boy or girl are better than they would be in the United Kingdom. The boy who is prepared to take farming seriously can with thrift and determination look forward to becoming an independent farmer in due course. We visited many which were owned by men who originally came to Canada as child migrants.... A large number of boys prefer to take up some other calling than farming after reaching the age of eighteen. We came across a considerable number of cases in which boys had secured good positions for themselves in the towns. As regards the girls, the majority of them, marry and settle down satisfactorily in the country as farmer's wives or in the towns.⁷⁰

70 Margaret Bondfield, in *Report of the Overseas Delegation to Canada*, p. 83.

Bondfield's committee found that most children were not only able to adapt to Canadian life but also to procure a successful living. A similar inquiry appointed by the Canadian Council on Child Welfare in 1927 concluded on a like note: "That for children who are physically and mentally sound, industrious and ambitious, and have developed normal moral stamina and self-control, life in Canada offers greater opportunities than in Great Britain at the present time...."⁷¹

Children had a far greater chance to succeed in Canada than would have been the case had they stayed in Britain. When 18-year-old Jack Cooper decided to stay on the farm, he wrote to tell the Salvation Army inspectors, "I am satisfied here. I know where there is lots of work here and the best of health and food. I will be down to see you about April to send some money home to my parents as I have promised to do."⁷² Ultimately, most of the Salvation Army children were satisfied in their positions, and, based on their initial experiences in Canada, they had made good starts toward successful settlement.

Women and the Domestic Servant Schemes

The 1907 edition of the Salvation Army's *New Settler* described what it called the Canadian "servant girl problem", claiming that women who came to Canada would find "not only the demand for their services great, but that the privileges given them in most families are abundant while the good and the willing cannot only command the best wages, but the high esteem, nay often the love of her employer".⁷³ Indeed, the demand for domestic servants in Canada was high. Between 1900 and 1930, 170,000 British women came to Canada intending to do domestic work. More Canadian-born women were choosing to work in factories, shops, and offices, leaving a gap in the supply of domestics that was filled by British women. In the early twentieth century, the Canadian government preferred British domestics over other nationalities and openly encouraged their immigration.

The Salvation Army Emigration Office became involved in assisting women who wanted to move to Canada for domestic work. As early as 1904, the Army proudly boasted that it had sent 65 domestics to Canada from Britain. As the demand increased and the Canadian and British governments became directly involved in encouraging imperial settlement, the Army's number of domestics increased. In 1923 the Canadian and British governments passed the *Empire Settlement Act*, created with the intention of reducing fares and lending money to immigrants interested in settling in

71 Breckenridge McGregor, *Several Years After*, p. 32.

72 SAHCA, Immigration Ledgers, Children's History Sheets, 1910s–1930s, Child no. 123, 1921.

73 *The New Settler*, 1907.

Canada.⁷⁴ Women who intended to become domestics were eligible for these loans or reductions. Apart from the *Empire Settlement Act*, in 1923 the Immigration Branch lent the Salvation Army \$20,000, 90 per cent of which had to be repaid within two years, to recruit 2,000 domestics in Britain. Another loan of \$100,000 was made so that the Army would be able to lend settling money to domestics; again, 90 per cent of this had to be repaid to the government. The government gave the Army \$35,000 in 1923, \$45,837.60 in 1924, and \$25,000 in 1925 and 1926 to assist its general emigration work. No other British emigration society received such government subsidies, but neither did any other society have such an extensive organization in Canada.⁷⁵ In Britain, the Salvation Army advertised Canada in its weekly publications, and Army officers travelled throughout the United Kingdom presenting lectures and promoting Canada as a destination. The Army acted as a booking agency as well as an employment agency. The Army emigration officers saw their parties safely on board their ships, and on the cross-sea journey officers would be on board to ensure the comfort of those passengers travelling under Army auspices (Figures 1 and 2 depict Salvation Army emigrants aboard the *SS Vancouver* and *SS Kensington*). Upon arrival in Canada, passengers were greeted by Army officers, and, if not escorted to their destinations, they were given instructions on how to get there. After the immigrants had settled, the Army sent inspectors to determine the satisfaction of both the new employee and the employer.

All of these factors made the Army a particularly attractive agency with which to book passage to Canada, especially for young single women. The average age of the 200 women examined here was 23; 170 of the women were placed in Ontario and 28 in other provinces, including Manitoba and British Columbia. The demand for domestic servants in southwestern Ontario can be explained by the fact that it was the most prosperous region in Canada in the early twentieth century. Most of the domestics came to Ontario hoping to prosper and collect higher wages than would be paid in Britain.

Economic incentive was not the only reason that single women came to Canada. Another attraction was suggested in the Salvation Army's December 1912 issue of *All the World*. The writer of an article entitled “A Christmas Party in the Great Dominion” discussed a party held in

74 For more on the gendered nature of the *Empire Settlement Act*, see Pickles, “Empire Settlement”; Janice Gothard, “‘The Healthy, Wholesome British Domestic Girl’: Single Female Migration and the Empire Settlement Act, 1922–30”, in Stephen Constantine, ed., *Emigrants and Empire: British Settlement in the Dominions Between the Wars* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 72–95.

75 For more details about grants from the federal government and the relationship between the Salvation Army and the federal Immigration Branch, see Rutherford, “Scrutinizing the ‘Submerged Tenth’”.



Figure 1: Emigrants — *SS Vancouver*, 1905. With permission of The Salvation Army Archives, Canada and Bermuda Territory.

the Salvation Army domestic lodge on Jarvis Street in Toronto. The lodge was described as a “home from home standing as it were with opened arms. It offers shelter, protection, welcome and comradely intercourse. Designedly it is a social centre. Young women on their afternoons or



Figure 2: Commander Cadman conducting a Salvation Army meeting of immigrants aboard the ship *SS Kensington*, date unknown. With permission of The Salvation Army Archives, Canada and Bermuda Territory.

evenings off come here to meet the friends they made during their voyage over, to receive a word of cheer from the motherly officers, or to do their washing.” On this particular day, a Christmas party was the event that attracted the women to the lodge. The reporter observed, “[M]any of the domestics were engaged; some were on the eve of marriage, none need remain single; but instinctively some hugged their freedom.” Although it is impossible to prove that some women came to Canada to meet a mate and marry, it does seem telling that 15.5 per cent of this group of domestics married within the first two years of settlement in Canada. Twenty-four-year-old Sarah Dunlop arrived in Toronto from Airdrie, Scotland, in June 1926. She lasted one month as a domestic, and in July she was reported to be “working in Woolworths. She is well and happy.”⁷⁶ Only seven months later she was happily married and living in Windsor. Jean Billington arrived in Toronto in August 1925 and had held two domestic jobs before the Salvation Army learned in January 1926 that she “had left three weeks ago to get married, she having answered an advert in the paper and without ever seeing the man went out to [Saskatchewan] to marry him”.⁷⁷ In April Jean was reported to be healthy and happy. Twenty-five-year-old Evelyn Hall, who was placed in domestic work in London, Ontario, married three months after her arrival in Canada.⁷⁸ Eighteen-year-old Jean Billings, who was reported to be “doing very well in her position and very happy”, married exactly one year after arriving in London, Ontario.⁷⁹ Margaret Cox from Glasgow was also doing well in domestic work, earning a high wage of \$25 a month, when the Army heard that she had married 11 months after her arrival. Her husband had steady work at Cassidy’s Wholesale China Company, and the Army officer maintained that Margaret “looked very smart and clean, husband in regular work, says she is very happy and does not regret getting married”.⁸⁰ Generally, the Army approved of the women being married except in cases like that of June Nettles, who married two years after her arrival in Canada. The Army inspector believed that June “has not done very good since coming to Canada and has not done much better by marrying a returned soldier who does not work regularly”.⁸¹ If a woman’s husband was “working regularly”, the Army was not critical of her decision to marry. The Army placed a high value on employment and expected immigrants to do the same. If the Army were to continue its immigration work, it

76 SAHCA, Immigration Ledgers, Domestic no. 60.

77 *Ibid.*, Domestic no. 138.

78 *Ibid.*, Domestic no. 66.

79 *Ibid.*, Domestic no. 132.

80 *Ibid.*, Domestic no. 111.

81 *Ibid.*, Domestic no. 43.

was necessary and in its own best interest that all the immigrants who came out under its auspices be either employed or otherwise taken care of. Most of the women who married did not continue to work, but if their husbands had regular work this was acceptable.

Apart from economic and marital considerations, some women were attracted to Canada because they had relatives and family connections there. In the group of Salvation Army domestics, 16 per cent of the women either had relatives in Canada when they arrived or were joined by relatives who left Britain after they did. Jenny Curtis was placed in a Toronto home in April 1927, but she was not satisfied with her position. In June she moved to Hamilton, where she found a job at a laundry, boarded with her cousins, and was described as “doing well and happy”.⁸² Because Jenny had relatives in Canada, she did not feel compelled to stay in an unsatisfactory position. Only four months after her arrival and first placement in Toronto, Barbara Tomalty from Belfast left to live and work as a domestic in the home of her aunt in Niagara, Ontario.⁸³ Relatives could serve as useful connections in securing employment. Nineteen-year-old Mabel Clark worked as a domestic for 11 months until her sister, who also lived in Vancouver, was able to arrange a position for her in the store where the sister worked.⁸⁴ Relatives could also be a burden, however, as Janet Jenkins told one Salvation Army inspector. Janet had worked for a very short time as a domestic when she came to Canada in March 1925 until she found a job at a steel company in Toronto. She settled with her mother at the beginning, but by May 1926 she left her home because, she maintained, “her mother was hard on her and never gave her a cent of her own earnings”.⁸⁵ It was usually an advantage to have relatives in Canada, either because they provided moral support and a home away from home on holidays or because they could act as connections in finding work that offered better wages.

Much like their male cohort, women who immigrated to Canada under the auspices of the Salvation Army during the first three decades of the twentieth century sought to enhance their opportunities. Indeed, many of the women left domestic work when the opportunity presented itself. For a group of 179 women, the average time spent as a domestic was 11 months. During this time it would not have been unusual for a woman to move two or three times. Nancy Peters settled in Toronto in April 1925, but by January 1926, when the Army inspector went to visit her, he found that she had left her home and the lady had no idea of her whereabouts. When she was located, the officer described her as “doing

82 *Ibid.*, Domestic no. 129.

83 *Ibid.*, Domestic no. 144.

84 *Ibid.*, Domestic no. 172.

85 *Ibid.*, Domestic no. 19.

very nicely and in good health”, but again in February 1927 she was discontented and complained that “she does not get proper food and intends leaving for another place”.⁸⁶ Nora MacDonald left Glasgow in July 1926 to work as a domestic in Toronto. By November 1926 she had quit two domestic jobs and had found a position at York Knitting Mills. In March 1927 she was interviewed by an Army inspector who said she was “working as a waitress, getting along well and in good health”.⁸⁷ Twenty-year-old Gladys Craig arrived in Toronto in November 1926. Nine months later it was reported that she was leaving her position and going to another “where she will be getting more money”.⁸⁸ Ida Ferguson arrived from Scotland in the spring of 1926. The detail on her history sheet suggests the occupational mobility experienced by many of the women sponsored by the Army:

23:6:26 This girl is in a good position and is quite happy. 8:9:26 this girl was in domestic work five years before coming to Canada. She is satisfied with her position and she has every intention of staying in homework. 18:6:27 Ida has left domestic work and is now in the Canadian National Carbon factory. 22:3:28 Girl is getting along well and is quite happy working at the major department store, Eaton’s.⁸⁹

Within two years, Ida had moved from working as a domestic servant to a factory job, then took a position at Eaton’s. Women were free to move around in their careers, and they did not seem to have much trouble finding work during the 1920s. Like men, they wanted to exploit whatever economic opportunities were available.

One area of gender difference was in the Army’s close surveillance of women’s social behaviour and moral turpitude. Men of the same age cohort would not likely have been so carefully guarded. As Sedec Arat-Koc astutely observes, “The sense that white British domestic workers were ‘privileged’ must be moderated by the knowledge of their subjection to extensive social control.”⁹⁰ According to the Army’s inspectors, women’s morality ranged from the very epitome of respectability, which in their view included hard work and church attendance, to the very opposite, which included laxity and “loose” behaviour. The Army inspectors were particularly pleased when the women were in “good positions” and doubly happy when they attended church. Hilda Black from Birmingham was described as “very happy in her place ... comes to the

86 *Ibid.*, Domestic no. 15.

87 *Ibid.*, Domestic no. 88.

88 *Ibid.*, Domestic no. 126.

89 *Ibid.*, Domestic no. 85.

90 Arat-Koc, “From ‘Mothers of the Nation’ to Migrant Workers”, p. 289.

lodge every week”.⁹¹ Another, Helen Peel, was reported to be in a “good place and is very happy ... attends temple corps”. Much more troublesome was a woman like Donna Wall, who seemed to slip up in a very short period of time:

29:1:28 Donna is doing very nicely and is quite happy. Mistress is pleased with her. 26:4:28 Girl is very unsatisfactory and fond of cheap jewelry. 19:9:28 Girl has promised to do better in future. Had been keen of keeping questionable company and was rather concerned about her habits.⁹²

Despite Donna’s fondness for “cheap jewelry”, she managed to redeem herself in the eyes of the Salvation Army inspectors by promising to try to improve herself. She had not, like some others, committed the ultimate moral transgression, which was becoming pregnant. In total, of the 200 women examined, seven became pregnant “out of wedlock”, one of whom was expecting a child upon her arrival in Canada. In each of these cases the Army inspectors tried to help the expectant mothers with an eye to keeping them off the list of “public charges”. Twenty-year-old Dawn Skee arrived from Belfast in August 1926, and by December of the following year she was reported as being pregnant: “Mrs. Hardy informed me Dawn was pregnant. She has no money and over four weeks board — the party responsible is Owen Smith of 4 Sackville Street. She says he has promised to marry her. He also promises to pay the expenses of the hospital.” In this case the Army inspector stayed in close contact with Dawn, and in the end the couple married.⁹³ Another young woman from Glasgow, Judith Capson, fell in love with a Roman Catholic man and changed her faith in preparation for marriage, only to learn that she was pregnant and that her fiancé had deserted her. The Army intervened to help Judith secure her old job once the baby was delivered and to help find a boarding home for the baby while Judith worked.⁹⁴ The Army’s goals were clear: to ensure that, even when a moral transgression had been committed, the transgressor did not have to suffer the process of deportation. At the same time, Army officers were concerned with their organization’s reputation for attracting immigrants who were above the “submerged tenth” and who did not end up as public charges. They watched carefully over those who, it seemed, could not hold down jobs, and they also expressed concern when women became too sick to work. One woman, Edith Rose, was reported sick in bed in March 1926; even though she had slightly recovered by

91 SAHCA, Immigration Ledgers, Domestic no. 131.

92 *Ibid.*, Domestic no. 37.

93 *Ibid.*, Domestic no. 65.

94 *Ibid.*, Domestic no. 76.

October, the Army inspector was still somewhat unsure about how much she could work: “Miss Rose still has indifferent health but has worked a little more regularly ... rather slow in paying on loan.” there was some concern that her lingering health problem would lead to deportation:

20:1:27 The girl has been in Grace Hospital under observation ... has been so sick it was impossible to leave her room. She has now been transferred to General Hospital and will likely become a public charge which means deportation. 4:2:27 [H]ad operation for appendix and is getting along well. Brought her to lodge. Doctor thinks she should be ready for work in three weeks.⁹⁵

The Army inspectors kept a close watch over Edith and made sure she had lodgings after her operation with time to recover before going back to work. Luckily, in this case deportation was averted by an appendectomy.

Conclusion

While altogether only one woman out of 200 was actually deported, the Army was very conscious of its public image as well as the reputation it had with immigration officers. Although the Army was thought to be engaged in dumping potential deportees, this case study proves that the children and women who came to Canada appeared to be exercising some degree of agency. These immigrants saw Canada as a place where they could find work and better themselves. They were willing to work as farm labourers or domestic servants, but many kept their eyes open for more rewarding work opportunities. Many of their experiences, of course, depended on the kinds of individual and family circumstances that greeted them upon arrival. These could make a critical difference. For the most part, the immigrants in this study did not appear to have come to Canada with the intent of becoming public charges, but their own perceptions did not prevent the intense scrutiny they experienced. In the end, the public response to Salvation Army immigrants did not match the reality in terms of the lives of the women and children who came to Canada under the Army’s sponsorship.

Although these newcomers to Canada faced hostility, they at least possessed the right skin colour, according to the values of the day, and their migration was eased by the fact that they were moving from the imperial centre. Conscious of this imperial connection, the Salvation Army’s Commissioner of Immigration, Colonel David C. Lamb, maintained in 1926 that it was important for British immigrants to be sent out to parts of the British Empire: “it is our duty to keep people in, and for the Empire, and to keep our empire for them.”⁹⁶

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, Domestic no. 16.

⁹⁶ Lamb, *Our Heritage: The Empire*.

His desire was juxtaposed with the fact that Canadians continued to believe that the Army was actually doing a disservice by aiding immigrants, since they were bound to become public charges. Women domestic servants, not unlike the child migrants studied by Stephen Constantine, often faced grim futures in Britain and criticism in Canada. According to Constantine, they were in double jeopardy. They found themselves “ejected” from England and “rejected” in their new countries:

British child migrants who were sent to Canada and later to Australia were undoubtedly victims of other people’s agendas. They were first constructed by child migration societies as the deprived or depraved in need of salvation by emigration. Overseas, often, they were instead constructed as infectious, to be quarantined or excluded. More recently, they have been reconstructed, their suffering revealed but their positive contribution to society asserted.⁹⁷

Certainly, it is important to recognize that the women and children who migrated were, at times, victims of social, economic, and political circumstances, but also to show, as this study suggests, that they were active agents in their own lives. It is obvious from this sample of 400 immigrants that Salvation Army case records demonstrate histories of struggle and adaptation. Against the reality of their lives stood the consternation of Canadians who felt that their arrival would prove disruptive to the country as a whole. It did not. Despite the way in which they were constructed under the often harsh gaze of the host society, most of these children and women made successful lives as self-sufficient new Canadians.

97 Stephen Constantine, “Children as Ancestors: Child Migrants and Identity in Canada”, *British Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 16 (2003), p. 156.