

# *Childhood and Charity in Nineteenth-Century British North America\**

by Patricia T. ROOKE\*\* and R. L. SCHNELL\*\*\*

*Dependent children in early nineteenth-century British North America were viewed as part of the general pauper population and treated without differentiation. The emergence of specialized facilities in the form of orphan asylums marked a significant shift in sentiment towards and treatment of dependent child life. The transplanted British institutional patterns and ideas were modified by the exigencies of Canadian circumstances. Such institutional developments are particularly noteworthy since they were national and uniform in scope. Orphan asylums embodied three principles of protection, separation and dependence that are intrinsic to child rescue.*

*Dans les premières décennies du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle les enfants dépendants en Amérique britannique du Nord étaient assimilés aux miséreux au sens large et traités comme les adultes. L'apparition d'institutions conçues pour les enfants, comme les orphelinats, traduisit un changement important dans la sensibilité et le comportement à l'endroit de l'enfance. D'origine britannique, ces modèles et ces institutions furent adaptés aux réalités canadiennes, de façon uniforme à l'échelle nationale. En séparant les jeunes du monde des adultes et en leur assurant protection et prise en charge, les orphelinats ont ainsi mis en pratique les trois lignes de conduite qui s'imposent au secours à l'enfance.*

From six in a bed in those mansions of woe,  
Where nothing but beards, nails and vermin do grow,  
And from picking of oakum cellars below,  
Good Lord, deliver us!<sup>1</sup>

In *Children in English-Canadian Society*, Neil Sutherland argued that the transformation of attitudes and institutions that came to characterize modern child welfare had occurred by the 1920s. It will be demonstrated in this paper that Sutherland's focus on the period 1880-1920, with a look at

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\*\* Department of Educational Foundations, University of Alberta.

\*\*\* Department of Educational Policy and Administrative Studies, University of Calgary.

<sup>1</sup> Joseph A. CHISHOLM, ed., *The Speeches and Public Letters of Joseph Howe*, 2 vols (Halifax: Chronicle Publishing Co., 1909), 1: 67.

the 1870s as an introduction and the 1920s as a conclusion, placed severe constraints on the possibility of an adequate historical understanding of the development of modern, scientific and professional child welfare in Canada.<sup>2</sup> It will be argued further that child welfare underwent several substantial and influential changes between 1800 and 1900 and that a careful examination of the establishment and transformation of that most Canadian of child-rescue institutions, the nineteenth-century Protestant Orphans' Home, provides a useful means of explicating those changes.

In an earlier article based on trans-Atlantic studies, one of the authors formulated a theoretical framework for analysing the development of the concept of "childhood", which demonstrated that it entailed the criteria of protection, segregation, dependence, and delayed responsibilities. It was further argued that childhood as a concept implied rescue and restraint, that is, child rescue and childhood are synonymous.<sup>3</sup> The four criteria will be used to map the history of child rescue sentiment and institutions by examining their manifestations in provisions for dependent and neglected children and youth in British North America. In order to establish the colonial and imperial context out of which late nineteenth-century Canadian child welfare developed, the Old World background and implementation of poor relief in the New World will be examined.

The paper consists of three parts. The first part is an explication of the dominant themes of pre-Victorian child rescue in Great Britain. Although customarily acknowledging the influence of Victorian evangelicals on social action in the slums of Great Britain, the United States and Canada, scholars less frequently note the institutional development of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that provided the base for Victorian activism.<sup>4</sup> The arguments behind the establishment of these early orphan asylums, schools and houses of industry, and other charitable institutions and the debate over boarding-out and general policies of relief, intervention, and prevention in trans-Atlantic anglophone communities will introduce the study. The second part describes the mixed forms of relief and rescue available in British North America in the early nineteenth century.

The third and most developed section will demonstrate, that, contrary to Sutherland, the first significant shifts in Canadian sentiment toward dependent child life had occurred well before the 1880s and that the transformation is best understood by examining the establishment and growth of children's homes.

<sup>2</sup> N. SUTHERLAND, *Children in English-Canadian Society* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976).

<sup>3</sup> R. L. SCHNELL, "Childhood as Ideology", *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 27 (February 1979): 7-28. Also see P. T. ROOKE, "The 'Child-Institutionalized' in Canada, Britain, and the United States", *Journal of Educational Thought*, 11 (August 1977): 156-71.

<sup>4</sup> Kathleen HEASMAN, *Evangelicals in Action* (London: G. Bles, 1962); Carroll Smith ROSENBERG, *Religion and the Rise of the American City* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1971); and SUTHERLAND, *Children in English-Canadian Society*.

## I. — BRITISH MODELS OF CHILD RESCUE

The eighteenth-century charity school movement was a major extension of ideas concerning character development to the children of a class deemed a potential threat to the civil and religious stability of British society. As children's institutions, the schools were the first substantial "modern" attempt to use formal education to instruct children in a protective environment, and as means of child rescue they were the prototypes of nineteenth-century pedagogical experimentation that culminated in the common schools.<sup>5</sup>

The charity schools with their concern for children were supplemented by older mixed forms of relief such as houses and schools of industry that included adults and children and the worthy and unworthy poor. Aware that indiscriminate association of inmates was "destructive of industry, order, and decency", the acting governors of the Dublin House of Industry in 1798 sought to classify them according to age, qualities, conduct and abilities so that a "class of merit" — based on superior industry, moral conduct and obedience to House rules — would be lodged and fed separately from their less worthy fellows.<sup>6</sup> The belief in the value of employment and the danger of idleness was succinctly put in 1756 by the founders of the Ladies' Charity School (Bristol), who observed that "when youth, idleness, and poverty meet together, they become fatal temptations to many unhappy creatures."<sup>7</sup>

In *An Essay Toward the Encouragement of Charity Schools*, Isaac Watts asserted that it would "be a great and unspeakable advantage to these Schools ... if ... some methods whereby all the children of the poor might be employed in some useful labours one part of the day" could be contrived. Watts recommended that children sufficiently instructed and improved should "be placed out, and fixed either in country-labours, in domestic services, in some inferior post in a shop, or in mechanical trades, that so they may not run loose and wild in the World."<sup>8</sup>

The insistence on useful employment and religious training as fundamental elements in the rescue of children and adults is a major theme in the reports of all the societies. In 1813, the Edinburgh Society for the Suppression of Beggars argued that its object required that "a great portion of their attention must be devoted to the education of the children of the poor in habits of morality and industry". In one of the earliest discussions of the contamination of children by their parents, the Edinburgh Society cited the expense of residential care and hoped that, given a proper day school, "the injury they will sustain from the society of their parents will not be so great

<sup>5</sup> M. G. JONES, *The Charity School Movement* (London: Frank Cass, 1964).

<sup>6</sup> *An Account of the Proceedings of the Acting Governors of the House of Industry* (Dublin, 1798), p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> *The State of the Ladies' Charity School Lately set up in Baldwin Street, in the City of Bristol, in Teaching Poor Girls to Read and Spin* (Bristol, 1756), p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Isaac WATTS, *An Essay Toward the Encouragement of Charity Schools* (London, 1728), pp. 8-9.

as is apprehended". Although much of the interest in schools and houses of industry was aroused by the presence of sturdy beggars and other undeserving objects of charity, tract writers and philanthropists were equally attracted by the educational cure for pauperism promised by institutionalizing and instructing children. The schooling provided children lodged in houses of industry was in most cases very limited. The 1759 rules of a house of industry in Suffolk required a school "where all children above three years of age shall be kept till they shall be five years old, and then set to spinning and such other proper and beneficial work as they are able to perform."<sup>9</sup> The Ladies' Charity School (Bristol), much affected by the danger of idleness, had said little about learning and much about spinning.

It is not until the nineteenth century that the more subtle possibilities of education were recognized by those seeking to promote a spirit of independence or self-reliance among the poor. Charitable institutions were to be an essential means of impressing on them that "it is upon their own exertions, habits of economy, and prudent foresight alone, that they and their families, must depend for their comforts, as well as their daily bread." That the poor were not unaware of such possibilities for self-help is shown in the complaint of the Bath Society that when "the children can earn something for themselves exclusive of clothing, and contribute towards defraying the expenses [of the school], they are taken away by their parents." Such calculative self-interest, later observed in Canada also, was not the kind of self-reliance that the patrons of the poor had in mind. Many societies such as the St James School of Industry, limited parental visits to Sundays to diminish family influence over the children, a practice followed in nineteenth-century Canada.<sup>10</sup> The Shrewsbury House of Industry sought to prevent the children of depraved families from "inevitably imbib[ing] the contagion by a total and complete separation of [children and youth] from the abandoned and depraved [that would] place them out of the way of temptation, and prevent the fatal contagion of profligate discourse, and vicious examples."<sup>11</sup>

The conditions that had given rise to the eighteenth-century efforts at child-saving continued into the nineteenth century. In 1846, a Manchester committee originally formed to found a ragged school established instead the Manchester Juvenile Refuge and School of Industry. The society aimed "to rescue a large class of destitute and neglected children

<sup>9</sup> *Society for the Suppression of Beggars; for the Relief of Occasional Distress and the Encouragement of Industry Among the Poor Within the City and Environs of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1813), pp. 13-14; Andrew GAIRDNER, *A Looking Glass for Rich People and People in Prosperity* (Edinburgh, 1798); and *Rules, Orders, and Regulations ... the House of Industry ... in Suffolk* (Ipswich, 1759), p. 9.

<sup>10</sup> *Hints Toward the Formation of a Society for Promoting a Spirit of Independence Among the Poor*, 2nd ed. (Bristol, 1812), pp. 16-17; and *Plans for the Sunday Schools and Schools of Industry, established in the city of Bath* (Bath, 1789); and *Rules, Orders and Regulations in the Parish School of Industry in King Street* (London, 1792).

<sup>11</sup> I. WOOD, *Some Account of the Shrewsbury House of Industry* (Shrewsbury, 1791), pp. 3, 8 and 33.

from the paths of vice, misery, and degradation, and to train them to honesty, industry, and virtue". Rejecting confinement as an inadequate means of reformation, the committee stressed prevention through an education that would "render them better fitted to endure and overcome the necessary hardships and temptations of a poor man's lot". The required education included three elements: first, reading, writing, and arithmetic, which were both useful and an excellent means of keeping the mind engaged; secondly, moral and religious training which were pre-eminently suited to exercise a "purifying, restraining and elevating influence" on children; and finally, industrial training to prepare the boys for a self-supporting occupation.<sup>12</sup> Unlike earlier emphases on habituation as a means of ensuring a decent life in the midst of appalling poverty, the new view saw education as a double rescue from immorality and incompetence. On the other hand, the Aberdeen industrial schools organized in 1841 saw the protection of children from their "debased" families in terms of separating them and binding them in order that they might have the advantages of family life while ensuring that they be made dependent through such surveillance.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to private philanthropic ventures, the poor laws provided a wide variety of indoor and outdoor relief. With the 1834 Poor Law Act Amendment, the process of unionization and rationalization of public charity created the reformed workhouses as the central institution of relief. The new workhouse allowed, at least theoretically, the classification and provision of special facilities for inmates. Education and other services for children offered the possibility of depauperization of future generations; the 1850s, however, witnessed the controversy over the results of institutionalization and the effectiveness of workhouse schooling. Advocates of boarding-out, drawing on Irish and Scottish experience, argued for the superiority of rearing poor law children in families over the stultifying atmosphere of the workhouse.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, with those precedents, sentiments and attitudes toward dependent children clearly established in Great Britain by the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, such institutional models and ideas were often transplanted by reformers involved in Canadian efforts at child rescue.

<sup>12</sup> *Manchester Juvenile Refuge and School of Industry* (Manchester, 1846), pp. 2, 4, 5 and 6.

<sup>13</sup> Alexander THOMSON, *Industrial Schools* (Aberdeen, 1847), pp. 7-8 and 11-16.

<sup>14</sup> Ursula R. Q. HENRIQUES, *Before the Welfare State* (London: Longman, 1979); Derek FRASER, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State* (London: Macmillan, 1973); and Maurice BRUCE, ed., *The Coming of the Welfare State* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1968). For contemporary discussions of boarding-out versus the congregate system, see Mary CARPENTER, "What Shall We Do With Our Pauper Children?", Social Science Association (Dublin) pamphlet (London: Longman, 1861); *Reports on the Boarding-Out of Orphans and Deserted Children and Insane belonging to the City Parish, Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1872); and Henry F. AVELING, *The Boarding Out System* (London, 1890).

## II. — BRITISH NORTH AMERICAN CHILD RESCUE

Information about the care of children who were neglected, abandoned or destitute is spotty in early colonial records; however, it seems clear that protection, segregation, dependence, and delayed responsibilities were not generally part of child life. The care of these children was considered part of the general provision for the poor.

The Atlantic colonies of Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island were typical of the extension of poor law ideas and practices to the New World. In Newfoundland, public relief was distributed on a casual basis by commissioners of public roads, who provided minimal funds during the colony's periodic and endemic seasons of distress. Nova Scotia, the most progressive and prosperous colony, had a flourishing number of private institutions and societies to relieve the misery of its inhabitants as well as a system of poor relief. New Brunswick also closely approximated the earlier British model in both its system of poor relief and religiously connected orphan asylums. Prince Edward Island with its predominantly rural population and parsimonious ruling class resembled a rural English parish.<sup>15</sup>

The Halifax Orphan House, established in 1752, which bound out its older orphans and engaged the younger ones in carding and spinning of wool, the picking of oakum and "other little offices" around the garden and hospital, was an initial, largely unsuccessful, attempt at a public-supported specialized facility in British North America. According to the earliest nineteenth-century records it was in disarray within a short time and the young public charges were provided for in the Poor Asylum along with aged, diseased, infirm, and degenerate adult paupers.

An inquiry into New Brunswick provincial institutions in 1857 expressed dismay at the young male offenders between ten and under eighteen years incarcerated in the penitentiary for crimes of the "most trivial kind". Since these boys were "without parents or friends to instruct and guide them, and without homes to attract and improve them", the report observed that they were "thrown into circumstances of exposure and temptation, and thus become an easy prey to vice". It recommended a separate

<sup>15</sup> Useful information is found in three typescript studies held by the Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University of Newfoundland: Stuart R. GODFREY, "Introduction to Social Legislation in Newfoundland" (1979); Barbara SMITH, "The Historical Development of Child Welfare Legislation in Newfoundland from 1832 to 1949" (1971); and Richard URQUHART, "A Survey of the Policies of the Newfoundland Government Towards Poor Relief, 1860-1869" (1973). NEWFOUNDLAND, *Journal of Assembly* (1848-49), pp. 446-54, Report on the Lunatic Asylum; (1862), pp. 408-11, Rules and Regulations for the Management of the St. John's Poor Asylum; and (1885), pp. 471-72, Report of the Superintendent of Poor Asylum; Public Archives of Nova Scotia, MG 20 214, House of Refuge, Proceedings of Committee (Halifax 1853-57); LEGISLATURE OF NOVA SCOTIA, *Report on Public Charity* (Halifax, 1900); Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, MAL (1853-1963), Saint John Almshouse; NEW BRUNSWICK, *Journal of House of Assembly* (1857), Appendix, pp. DXLIX-DLXI; Provincial Archives of Prince Edward Island, 236/8, Prince Edward Island Poor and Work House Minute Book (1869-1880).

facility to be called a "Reformatory School" with a special keeper in charge where the lads would be taught the elementary branches of education for several years instead of the prevailing custom of months, so that "real improvement" could be achieved. This would be done under the 1855 and 1857 acts that provided for juvenile offenders. Young females were recommended to be placed in a segregated section of the almshouse. Similar concerns were being expressed elsewhere about the necessity of segregating and protecting dependent young people.<sup>16</sup>

The 1822 plan of Captain Robert Parker Pelly, the Governor of Assiniboia, for the care of "half breed" children whose parents had died or deserted them was part of the general concern for safety of the trading posts if men with large families were discharged and left in "an uneducated and savage position" to "collect across the country" without "proper superintendence". Using arguments almost identical with Isaac Watts', Pelly concluded that "it will therefore be both prudent and economical to incur some expense in placing these people where they may maintain themselves and be civilized [and] instructed in religion." The expense was only temporary since once the boys had been trained for agriculture and the girls for industry they could be apprenticed. Children were merely part of a larger problem of an unsettled population and were not given any special treatment.<sup>17</sup>

As in the case of the Society for Promoting Education and Industry among the Indians and Destitute Settlers in Canada in 1828, schools of industry were to combine economy and industry along with elementary education and a knowledge of agriculture and the mechanic arts. At Quebec City, for example, "children [were] engaged in some useful branch of labour half of each day, which [the Ladies' branch conceived] ought to be the case in all schools which may be opened for the children of the poor." The plan for a school of industry at Montreal, intended for "the amelioration of the poor and the establishment of honest industry", offered employment for those able to work, instruction in some useful branch of work for the unskilled, relief of the helpless poor in their own dwellings, and instruction in reading to the illiterate.<sup>18</sup>

Although the school of industry was intended primarily to relieve adults, the Society's agent, T. Osgood, on "seeing a number of orphans and poor children out of employment, destitute of bread and the means of instruction", placed them under the care of the superintendent and provided them with bread and clothing in return for their labour. Moreover the agent brought into the institution the blind and the lame who with the help of cheap machinery were employed in sawing and boring holes in

<sup>16</sup> Public Archives of Nova Scotia, CO. 217, vol. 18, Report of the State of the Orphan House (circa 1753); NEW BRUNSWICK, *Journal of House of Assembly* (1857), Appendix, pp. DXLIX-DLXI.

<sup>17</sup> Provincial Archives of Manitoba, MG2 A5, Pelly Documents, 1816-23.

<sup>18</sup> *The Second Annual Report of the Central Auxiliary Society for Promoting Education and Industry Among the Indians and Destitute Settlers in Canada* (Montreal, 1829), pp. 17, 12 and 38.

stone. The Montreal Society freely mixed the objects of its charity in the school of industry.<sup>19</sup>

Canadian institutional arrangements under the poor laws in the Maritimes and the modified legislation of Ontario, as well as the orphan asylums that sprang up in the second half of the century, were dissimilar in several ways from those of Britain. While using much of the same rhetoric and seemingly transplanting institutional models, the houses of industry and of refuge, even before the segregation of their child inmates, never became the huge, impersonal and architecturally pretentious buildings of the new 1834 British poor laws. These buildings were mainly showpieces while certainly older buildings like Westminster Asylum for Female Orphans, or the London Orphans' Asylum, could not have been designed with the needs of children or of adults in mind. As bleak as life must have been for the Canadian dependent poor compelled to remain in their parish and municipal "almshouses", they retained more the appearance and organizational patterns of earlier models and bear a striking resemblance to the American colonial buildings discussed by David Rothman in *The Discovery of the Asylum*.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, while being parsimoniously governed, the Canadian poorhouses were frequently ordinary, although decrepit and cheerless, "homes" or farmhouses, and did not exude quite the same forbidding aspect of Britain's "pauper palaces" and congregate systems.

The Toronto House of Industry, founded by a private committee in 1836, aimed at "the total abolition of street begging, the putting down of wandering vagrants, and securing an asylum at the least possible expense for the industrious and distressed poor". Supported in part by a parliamentary grant and the City Council, the House in its first year had relieved 857 persons of whom 638 were children and had 46 inmates of whom 26 were children. By 1853, the House of Industry was giving its "most anxious attention ... to making permanent provision for orphans, deserted children, and those whose parents have rendered themselves liable to legal punishment". A system of apprenticeship was devised by which a "large number of children were placed out with respectable persons in the country" whereby they were removed "from the temptations and vices to which they are exposed in a large city". To encourage training of children in habits of industry and sobriety that "will prepare them for usefulness and competency through life", the House of Industry received children whose parents and friends were unable to support them, placed them at school, and cared for and protected their morals and persons, until suitable country homes could be found.<sup>21</sup>

Still, by the 1850s the need to separate and distinguish children from adults was not general. An interesting example of mixed categories occurred in 1856 with the City of Toronto's purchase of a tract of land to be

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>20</sup> David ROTHMAN, *The Discovery of the Asylum* (Boston: Little Brown, 1971).

<sup>21</sup> Metropolitan Toronto Library (hereafter MTL), MS 385(2), Toronto City Council Papers, 4 May 1837; MS 88(1), Baldwin Papers, 11 July 1837; *Report of the Trustees of the House of Industry* (Toronto, 1853), pp. 5-6.

used as an industrial farm "where offenders (particularly juveniles) may be classified and reformed, while punished, but also where many of the infirm and maimed might be made to assist, in some way, to their support".<sup>22</sup>

Kingston provides a powerful example of the shift in the concept of childhood, which included the growing recognition of children as a special class with particular needs such as protection and segregation. The central charitable institution was the House of Industry founded in 1814 and not closed until 1916. The details of this institution, which are well preserved, give all the appearances of the workhouses under the English poor laws.<sup>23</sup> Children, who were abandoned, orphaned, or destitute, were received by the House which acted *in loco parentis* with regard to placing them out or employing them in household chores. Children remained part of the House of Industry until the Orphans' Home and Widows' Friend Society opened its first building in 1857. Citing the degraded habits, predisposition to idleness, and the dubious health and morality of inmates as an undesirable environment for the young, the Society charged that the children were not "cared for, supervised [or] protected from the vice and degradation" of an institution that offered "no humanizing influences".<sup>24</sup>

Between 1830 and 1860 the first institutionalized care for dependent and orphaned children began to emerge in the form of the Protestant Orphans' Homes in Montreal, Kingston, Toronto and Halifax, to be followed soon after in London, Ottawa, Victoria and Winnipeg. None of these ever sheltered the many hundreds of children at a given time as did the British orphan asylums.

Moreover, although unable fully to create the domestic atmosphere and family spirit their directors idealized, the Protestant Orphans' Homes were able to approximate it more closely than their British counterparts. First, most orphan asylums in Canada were modest undertakings with populations ranging from merely a score or so as in Victoria to several hundred at their height in Toronto, Winnipeg and Saint John.

Secondly, the Canadian institutions exercised remarkable control over the selection of their clients by careful admission procedures which articulated the implicit assumptions made by the ladies' committees regarding who were the "worthy" and "unworthy" poor. In fact, since these institutions largely received custodial cases for nominal fees rather than full orphans, they did not admit the most alarming or desperate situations or the chronic poor as was the case in the large British institutions and the North American Roman Catholic ones. The open-door policy of British homes such as Ashley Down in Bristol, the National Children's Homes, and the Barnardo Homes, was shared in Canada by the Roman Catholic orphanages which subsequently were more crowded.

<sup>22</sup> *Report of the Trustees of the House of Industry* (Toronto, 1857), p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> Queen's University, Coll. 604, *Kingston House of Industry, 1814-1916*.

<sup>24</sup> Queen's University, Coll. 94, *Kingston Orphans' Home and Widows' Friend Society, Annual Report* (1882).

Thirdly, the debates that resounded in Britain over the psychological consequences of institutional life — the lack of spontaneity and initiative on the part of children — did not apply in the same degree to Canada although in the twentieth century such arguments would be used to advocate fostering practices. True, a matron and superintendent might be harrassed by too many children, too many tasks, too little money and too small a domestic staff, but there is little sense of the barracks-like discipline and the anonymity of a militaristic atmosphere that later critics suggested were prevalent. Statements in some annual reports that “regular methodical habits” and “cleanliness, order and good management” were enforced, and that “a spirit of docility and subordination testified to good management” must be interpreted cautiously since the minutes of many asylums testify that such management was not as mechanistically induced or as impersonally imposed as the rhetoric suggests. Indeed, some homes seem as much arguments for confusion and nonchalance as for orderliness and inflexibility and as reflections of the various temperaments of the matrons themselves as any institutional plans.<sup>25</sup>

Finally, repressive religious fervour and the excesses sometimes associated with evangelical enthusiasm as a means to disciplining young and suggestive minds are surprisingly missing, given the “Protestant” origins of the homes, in the Canadian records. Interdenominationalism, even if on pragmatic and economic grounds rather than on principle, it seems, had a neutralizing effect on such fervour. In sum, there appears to be a dissonance between the rhetoric (a rhetoric almost identical to British sentiments) expressed at annual meetings and fund-raising functions, and in annual reports, and the actual conduct, the physical arrangements and the clientele of the Protestant Orphans’ Homes.

If these were the differences between the British congregate systems and the Canadian homes, then what were the similarities? Four aspects seem worth noting: (1) the application of the new awareness for the peculiar needs of children that resulted in actual institutional environments which rendered them objectively and psychologically dependent upon those maintaining them while assuring the inmates of maximum protection and segregation; (2) the ultimate segregation of children from undesirable adult influences by controlling the inmates, *in loco parentis*, even to the point of interfering with parental access by binding children out if fees had not been forthcoming; (3) the segregation of various classes of children from each other, that is, the distinction between “dependent” and “delinquent”; and (4) the training of children into menial occupations through indentures and the regimens of the homes.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., *Annual Report* (1859, 1871). Certainly one is never intimidated by such order and industry in the records of the Victoria home founded in 1888. Provincial Archives of British Columbia, British Columbia Protestant Orphans’ Home (1888-1942). For a discussion of this aspect of institutionalization, see Patricia T. ROOKE and R. S. PATTERSON, “The Delicate Duty of Child Saving, Coldwater, Michigan 1871-1896”, *Michigan History*, 61 (Fall 1978): 195-219.

The following section will examine these aspects by a survey of the rise of the Canadian Protestant Orphans' Homes as a conscious and concrete articulation of the concept of childhood whose origins can be discerned in the debates and practices of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

### III. — THE RISE OF PROTESTANT ORPHANS' HOMES

In 1854, the Reverend Mr William Bond preached an edifying sermon before the ladies' committee of the Protestant Asylum for the Aged and Infirm, which included children among its residents. Pointing out that the home was the only institution in Montreal that accepted children who had not lost both parents, the future Anglican bishop warmed to his subject by praising the ministrations of womankind — "her softening, elevating, purifying, gladdening influence; her fond companionship in the seasons of joy, her devoted tenderness in the hours of sickness". His remarks were intended as a salutary reminder that those ladies who had organized themselves into benevolent societies to found houses of refuge and orphan asylums were gentlewomen of means and respectability with virtues peculiar to their sex and entirely suited to such philanthropic endeavours.<sup>26</sup> Largely through the efforts of such women the first segregated institutions for children were organized. Even in those cases where gentlemen's committees founded such institutions or retained official governance, it was through the ladies' committees that actual management and control were directed.<sup>27</sup>

Founded in 1857 to train "poor, uncared-for, destitute children" in "the habits of virtue and regularity", the Kingston Orphan Asylum reported two years later the condition of many of these children was "more desolate than that of children left wholly orphans, as the very circumstances of their having a parent living prevents their adoption into families that would gladly receive an orphan". The ladies of the Women's and Orphans' Friend Society had decided that a separate institution for children was necessary when their attention was drawn to the numbers of them living in the overcrowded house of industry without suitable supervision and being placed out as household drudges without proper circumspection. From the beginning, fee-paying children who required residential accommodation in times of need or emergency were admitted along with whole or part orphans. To control the admission of children who had guardians, the Kingston Asylum in 1862 stipulated that parents had to agree not to remove their children without consent of the Society or to prevent them from taking a situation if a good one occurred.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> MTL, BR(S) 361.75 B58, Sermon Preached before Ladies Benevolent Institution in St. George's Church, Montreal, 9 April 1854.

<sup>27</sup> Fully discussed by the authors in "Protestant Orphans' Homes as Women's Domain (1850-1930)", presented to the Berkshire Conference on Women's History, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., 18 June 1981.

<sup>28</sup> Queen's University, Coll. 94, *Kingston Orphans' Home and Widows' Friend Society, Annual Report (1859)*, p. 5; *Constitution (1862)*, rule 16.

As with the Kingston institution, the Toronto Protestant Orphan Home and Female Aid Society (founded in 1851) received children from the house of industry, which had been founded to provide "for the industrious and distressed poor". In that year alone, the house listed in its registry 638 children in addition to 37 deserted women, 87 widows, and 95 ill and unemployed. In 1853, the Toronto Protestant Orphans' Home noted that it assisted mothers in service by caring for their children for a minimal fee and provided a custodial service for the poorer members of society as well as for the widowed and orphaned. Fee-paying children were usually returned to their living parent or to relatives rather than being adopted or indentured as happened with the first clients of the Toronto Girls' Home and Public Nursery in 1859. Sarah and Mary Anne Kingwood, aged five and three years, the first entry in the register, were duly adopted because their father was dead and their mother was in a penitentiary. In the case of the Toronto institution, the number of runaways suggests that for fee-paying children the ties of kinship were strong enough to induce them not to remain in the institution.<sup>29</sup>

Managed by males but superintended by women, the Newfoundland Church of England Orphans' and Widows' Aid Society of St. John's was established in 1855 as a thanksgiving for the departure of cholera from the city. John Tunbridge, its first honorary secretary, acknowledged the orphanage's debt to the "deadly pestilence" whose chief victims had been the poor. "It scarcely entered a dwelling of any other class" and its "desolatory presence ... bequeath to us, as it were the widow and the orphan." From the outset, however, the majority of inmates proved to be not full orphans but the children of the fatherless whose mothers were "incapable of providing for them". During its decades, the home received somewhat more unusual objects of charity than elsewhere. Among those of "affecting and interesting circumstances" were children who lost their fathers in the 1855 Sealing Disaster and the survivors of the 1863 shipwreck of the *Anglo-Saxon*. The Methodist Orphanage of St. John's, founded in 1888 but whose first official residence was not purchased until 1901, received mostly the children of the widowed and deserted. The poverty in Newfoundland, particularly in the outposts, was more general, constant and dire than anywhere else in British North America and the dependence of many candidates on the various Protestant and Roman Catholic asylums was frequently the result of tubercular mothers or fathers who had died of this disease which proved an unremitting scourge throughout the colony's history.<sup>30</sup>

Both the Methodist and Anglican homes remained relatively small — the Methodist never having over forty-two girls and the Church of England

<sup>29</sup> MTL, MS 88(1), Baldwin Papers, 11 July 1837; and Toronto Girls' Home and Public Nursery, Register, 22 June 1859.

<sup>30</sup> Anglican Archives, St John's, Newfoundland, *Church of England Orphans' and Widows' Aid Society, 60th Annual Report* (1914), p. 5, and *First Annual Report* (1855), p. 3. Clayton W. PUDDISTER, "The United Church Orphanage", in *The Book of Newfoundland*, ed.: J. SMALLWOOD (St John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1937), p. 308.

averaged between seventy and eighty for both sexes at its height. Given the appalling destitution in Newfoundland and the constantly inadequate provisions for relief, such small numbers of children from working-class families are astonishing; however, the rates of child mortality and the frequency of disaster and disease suggests that a calloused colonial administration had such problems repeatedly alleviated by what often amounted to a grim "final solution". Children whose mothers remarried were customarily returned to them, but those whose mothers did not wish to receive them, either through circumstances or through choice, remained in the homes which continued to receive the orphan grant allowed institutions by the commissioners of the poor.<sup>31</sup>

The Halifax Infants' Home is another example of an institution whose function was as useful as it was benevolent. Although infants were received free of charge owing to parental inability to pay for a child's board, many were actually boarded by mothers who visited and nursed their babies, or in cases of weaned children, visited and clothed them, paying for their maintenance and thus using the home as a residential custodial institution. In 1884, the new physician, Dr Oliver, recommended that it would be preferable for the child if the mother were actually boarded with it and that in order to ensure the character of the home and preserve the privacy of the infants the home ought not to accommodate by the day the children of women who were in daily service.<sup>32</sup>

An interesting small select orphanage, the Wiggins Home for Boys at Saint John, New Brunswick, founded and generously endowed in 1867 for the sons of lost and deceased mariners, also provided similar facilities. The sons of deserted wives and widows were received until their parents were able to provide for them.<sup>33</sup>

The Saint John Protestant Orphan Asylum, founded in 1854, admitted five classes of children which were usually included in the rules of other orphans' homes. In the case of the New Brunswick home, the orphaned were generally in the minority. The majority of inmates consisted of poor and indigent children; children, both or only one of whose parents were dead, insane, inebriate, helpless or confined to penitentiary; children deserted by either or both parents; and destitute children. The orphanage was typical in its exclusion of delinquent youngsters and those with contagious diseases. It admitted children as "nominal boarders or by voluntary surrender" and claimed custody if the terms of the contract were disregarded

<sup>31</sup> Anglican Archives, St John's, Newfoundland, *Church of England Orphans' and Widows' Aid Society, Annual Reports* (1855-1929); United Church Archives, St John's, Newfoundland, *Methodist Orphanage, Minutes, Annual Reports, and Correspondence* (1855-1952).

<sup>32</sup> Public Archives of Nova Scotia, MG 20 177: 13, Halifax Infants' Home, Minute Books (1875-1949).

<sup>33</sup> Saint John City Archives, Wiggins Male Orphan Institution, Minute Book (1891-1901), and The Act Incorporating the Governors and Wiggins Male Orphan Institution, 10 June 1867.

for over three months after notice had been given to relatives or guardians.<sup>34</sup>

In the founding years of the Protestant Orphans' Homes, these modest schemes were obviously the expressions of a self-indulgent benevolence. Anomalies in admissions sometimes merely reflected the private patronage of members of the ladies' committees as in the case of the deserted Mrs Stewart who, in April 1860, wanted her three children admitted to the Kingston home. Although her situation was so desperate that she was voluntarily entering the house of industry, the committee decided against the admitting of the children "as both parents were alive". The Stewarts were clearly perceived of as part of the unworthy poor. When Mary Moore's mother, now "remarried and very comfortable", was unwilling to take her home, the ladies' committee acknowledged that the girl was "a favourite with the matron and agreed to keep her at one dollar a month". Such inconsistent policies were common in the first decades of their operations when the institutions are appropriately seen as an extension of the individual women and reflecting their preferences and prejudices. In the face of increasing urban problems, even in relatively small Canadian cities, individual eccentricities diminished and admission became standardized to meet the demands of all types of poverty.<sup>35</sup>

Through its history, the Ottawa Protestant Orphans' Home reflected more faithfully than most institutions the "philanthropic mode". Women such as Lady MacDonald and the wealthy Mrs Bronson, first and second directresses respectively, seemed impervious to the visible demands of public poverty. Founded in 1865 by the Ladies' Protestant Benevolent Association, the home received widows and women out of place although full and part orphans were seen as "the proper objects for the cure of the institution". In the first months of its mandate eleven ladies were elected to "search for destitute children", which suggests careful selection. Indeed, a year later only twelve orphans were enjoying the ladies' assiduous solicitude. Illegitimate children were not received, as a desperate Mrs Armstrong of Brockville discovered in 1866 when she was obliged to produce her marriage certificate before her three children were admitted. While the girls assisted in the housework, the ladies' committee was quite cheerfully sending the boys to work in Mr Bronson's mill during the summer of 1869. One-half of each boy's wages was paid to the home and the other half put aside for the boy's future benefit. The first choice of girls as domestic servants and boys as apprentices was always given to subscribers of the

<sup>34</sup> Saint John City Archives, Max G. BAXTER, "New Brunswick Protestant Orphans Home", typescript (1965). The New Brunswick Survey conducted by the Canadian Council on Child Welfare noted as late as 1928 that the home was still claiming the "exclusive and complete control and custody" of such children as if they had been totally surrendered in the first instance. During the previous year only 20 of the 227 children admitted had lost one or both parents while most admissions were the result of unmarried parenthood and desertions (Public Archives of Canada, MG 28 I 10, vol. 38 (1928-29), file 167).

<sup>35</sup> Queen's University, Kingston Protestant Orphans' Home, Minutes, 10 April and 18 November 1860.

society or to others recommended by the ladies' committee. This policy of first choice was obvious and consistent in all homes examined. The exclusive admission policies of the Ottawa institution did not alter until the late 1890s when it began to receive "transients" from the newly-organized Children's Aid Society. Just as the children of various Sunday schools had not been considered suitable companions on picnics and outings, the original Children's Aid Society cases were judged as being unfit to mix with the Protestant Orphans' Homes children.<sup>36</sup>

The results of epidemics such as ship fever, cholera and typhoid frequently spurred middle-class efforts to found orphanages, refuges and houses of industry in the nineteenth century. The Montreal Protestant Orphans Association, founded in 1822, felt compelled by "an unfortunate, ill-directed immigration from Ireland" to hire a house on William Street for immigrant children. In 1847 during another epidemic, ninety-five children were taken from the ships. Of these, ten died, fifty-four were placed or reclaimed, eight returned to the fever sheds at Point St Charles, and twenty-three refused to remain in the home. In 1832, the Montreal Ladies' Benevolent Society, organized to counteract the effects of the "most awful visitation of asiatic cholera", founded a refuge for widows and the fatherless.<sup>37</sup>

As early as 1854-56, the Toronto Protestant Orphans' Home publicly appealed to carpenters, joiners, and other members of the working class for aid in adding another floor to its building since the prevailing epidemic caused it to be short of space. The working class responded "nobly, kindly, and cheerfully" with each shop contributing a half-day's free labour to the enterprise. Again in the 1870s, typhoid nearly doubled the number of admissions.<sup>38</sup>

Periodic economic dislocations, by pushing many families into destitution, made the problems of admissions and institutional funding more acute. The depression of the 1890s aggravated poverty and distress and contributed to new problems of indigence and pauperism. The Boys' Home in Toronto placed out many of its children between 1893 and 1896 because relatives could not make support payments and the depression caused a drop in donations for the support of the home. The annual reports lamented "the scarcity of work" and "the hard times" which forced the institution to rescue little ones under the usual required age of five, and that compelled "many unfortunate parents to part with their boys ... until

<sup>36</sup> Public Archives of Canada, MG 28 137, vols 1-3, Ottawa Protestant Orphans' Home, Minutes, 18 January 1865, 28 November 1867, 26 April 1869, 28 August 1871, 24 February 1896 and 30 March 1896.

<sup>37</sup> *Montreal Protestant Orphan Asylum, Constitution* (1852); *Philanthropy: Care of our Destitute and Criminal Population* (Montreal, 1857); *Historical Sketch of the Montreal Protestant Asylum from its Foundation ... 16th February 1822 to the Present Day ...* (Montreal, 1860), p. 9; and *Montreal Ladies' Benevolent Society, 76th Annual Report* (Montreal, 1909), pp. 2-3.

<sup>38</sup> MTL, L30 PCH(E), Toronto Protestant Orphans' Home, Letters and Papers (1854-56).

they can take them home again". Preventive help was offered to another class by the Toronto Boys' Home that, beginning in 1861, provided a temporary refuge and lodging for working lads who might otherwise have been convicted of vagabondage. These and many "friendless little orphans" were rescued not only from want and misery but also from being put "among vagabonds, thieves, and burglars — the pests and the curse of the city" in the deplorably squalid city jail. Judging by newspaper accounts five years later the problem of "young thieves and beggars" in Toronto was far from resolved for some of the public was agitating for a law to be passed to round them up and bind them out as the Protestant Orphans' Home and house of industry did, or establish a ragged school to educate them.<sup>39</sup>

Even during good times, the need for day-care facilities that would allow working mothers to leave their children in decent surroundings was apparent in the major cities. Had there been more crèches, day nurseries, and settlement houses, fewer parents would have been compelled to resort to orphanages. The Girls' Home of Toronto had included a public nursery in 1856 but four years later this home began to provide resident services on both a permanent and a daily basis and by 1868 day care was abandoned.<sup>40</sup>

Protestant groups, often working in conjunction with the homes, established lying-in and after-care for unmarried mothers and their infants as well as job placement bureaux with some training for domestic service. The assistance given to this class of needy women was in part a crude attempt to counteract the pernicious effects of "baby farming", which later was the object of the 1914 Ontario Maternity Boarding House Act. The babies of these women were often given over to the orphans' or infants' homes in some cities. The Christian Women's Union of Winnipeg confronted the resentment of inmates of their home by requiring a nine-month stay after confinement. Although there was an insistence on time for "repentance", the stay guaranteed the necessary nursing care for infants before weaning. Without this, the lives of babies were in constant jeopardy unless immediately adopted. Some mothers, not wishing to have their infants adopted, paid a monthly fee of four dollars while they sought employment and a suitable home for themselves and their child. Children remaining in the Winnipeg home past their third birthday became the "property" of the institution.<sup>41</sup>

The Women's Refuge and Children's Home of London, Ontario, required a twelve-month stay during which the mother was to be trained for

<sup>39</sup> MTL, *Boys' Home for the Training and Maintenance of Destitute Boys not convicted of Crime*, 33rd Annual Report (1893), p. 6; 36th Annual Report (1896), p. 6; and 2nd Annual Report (1861), pp. 5-6; *Daily Globe*, 4 January 1866, "The Arabs of the Street".

<sup>40</sup> *Protestant Children's Homes of Toronto Milestones (1851-1951)* (Ottawa: Canadian Council on Social Development, 1951), p. 6.

<sup>41</sup> *Christian Women's Union, 21st Annual Report* (Winnipeg, 1903); Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Greenway Papers; also, MG10 B24, Children's Home of Winnipeg, Minutes, Correspondence and Annual Reports (1885-1937); RG5 G2, Box 4, Health and Welfare, Welfare Supervision Board, Files 1916-45.

a "gainful situation, or at least be religiously improved". Four years after its opening in 1876, thirty-two infants under two years were part of its clientele. The London Orphans' Home, which included the aged and friendless when founded in 1874, excluded children under two years. This Protestant Orphans' Home, however, kept mothers and children together on occasion as in 1875 when it maintained Mrs Noodes and her two little girls for three months while she saved enough money to buy a sewing machine.<sup>42</sup> All the homes were reluctant to receive infants and most stipulated ages of admission over two years because of the dangers to the lives of the very young children, their vulnerability to even the mildest contagion, and inadequate nursing staff.

The reluctance of most homes to receive illegitimate children might be understood as more than punitive moralizing when it is recalled that most of them would be infants. The problems, of course, were where could the unmarried mother go during pregnancy and labour and where could the child be placed once the mother had to seek employment? A deputation from the Christian Women's Union of Winnipeg to the Manitoba legislature in 1890 stated the problem when they pleaded for funds for their essential social service — a female refuge. The refuge was to enable unmarried or recently widowed women "to keep their infants with them until they are old enough to do without a mother's care when they are admitted into the Children's Home or otherwise provided for". The deputation pointed out that infant mortality in institutions was high and the use of wet-nurses unsatisfactory.<sup>43</sup>

In the first year of the Halifax Infants' Home, the managing committee bought "cheap thin cotton" to be made into shrouds. Several months later with scarlet fever in the home, the committee requested from the commissioners of the Poor Asylum the use of their hearse in order to save the expense of cab-hire for funerals. In the three summer months of 1875, thirteen babies died. The home averaged twenty-two boarded children during the time. In 1875, the death rate was thirty-five percent and as late as 1890 it was twenty-six percent.<sup>44</sup>

Some institutions hired women to live in as wet-nurses. At times, a wet-nurse was guaranteed temporary relief for herself and her children. The desperation and poverty that forced women into homes to engage in an occupation, which traditionally had been delegated to the meanest classes and one which was no longer a common practice, need no elaboration. In 1875, the Halifax Infants' Home required wet-nurses wishing to have their own infants with them to pay three dollars a month for the privilege. Its first wet-nurse was a girl taken from the Poor Asylum.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Margaret JOHNSON, *The First One Hundred Years, 1874-1974* (London: Women's Christian Association, 1974); Caroline L. CONRON, *Merrymount Children's Home — A Century in Retrospect, 1874-1974* (London: Merrymount Children's Homes, 1974); University of Western Ontario, VF640, London Protestant Orphans' Home, Minutes, 23 April and 30 July 1875.

<sup>43</sup> Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Greenway Papers, 1890.

<sup>44</sup> Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Halifax Infants' Home, Minutes, 7 September 1875 and 5 March 1877; *Halifax Herald*, 3 February 1890.

<sup>45</sup> Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Halifax Infants' Home, Minutes, 2 March 1875.

In addition to the humiliations suffered by these women, regular fee-paying parents customarily had to meet a variety of institutional demands. With wages barely covering their own subsistence, widows, unmarried women, and deserted wives paid nominal fees to keep their children clothed, sheltered and fed in the homes. The fees usually ranged from one to five dollars a month, depending upon the number of children admitted or the actual financial circumstances of parent or guardian. Domestic service often required women to live in, and other occupations took up long hours during which children were unsupervised. The fees were often meagre but the homes found them essential for their survival because of the parsimony and slowness of provincial and municipal grants and unreliable private funding.

An example of the compromising positions in which both parents and the institutions found themselves is provided by Dr Wishart's demand in 1891 that he be provided with a "perpetual grant of children" from the Toronto Girls' Home for medical demonstrations every Saturday morning. These children, he argued, were "callous both morally and physically and therefore not to be compared with other children". The ladies' committee reluctantly agreed when the good doctor threatened to withdraw his medical services, given gratis to the home and worth \$400 per annum. A month later, an irate mother objected to her children being used in this manner and forced the home not to refuse the doctor's demands but to decide instead that only orphans would be used!<sup>46</sup>

The Children's Home of Winnipeg, founded in 1885 by the Christian Women's Union, had been "formerly an adjunct of the maternity hospital but its doors were opened to any destitute child". It finally became of so much importance as to require a board of management and a charter of its own. This Protestant home, the first in the west, was officially separated from the Christian Women's Union in 1887 although the women always retained a special interest in its affairs and management. Initially it included fourteen mothers and children but within four years it housed forty-eight children with a few adults. Although many children were reclaimed by parents once they had established themselves, the indenture rates of children were extraordinarily high as were the delays on the part of employers in finally signing adoption or indenture papers. While all Protestant Orphans' Homes had incidents of legal action over the binding out or adoption of children, which were informal and arbitrary processes before the passage of provincial legislation controlling custody and adoption in the 1920s, the Winnipeg home was particularly beset by such problems until the 1912 Manitoba Children's Act gave the custody of deserted children to the superintendent of neglected and dependent children.<sup>47</sup>

Although the homes usually preferred orphans because rights over them were clearly defined, part orphans and destitute children constituted a large proportion of their inmates. All the homes under discussion stipulated

<sup>46</sup> MTL, Toronto Girls' Home, Minutes, 3 November and 1 December 1891.

<sup>47</sup> Provincial Archives of Manitoba, MG10 B24, Children's Home of Winnipeg.

that older children, usually those over six or seven years, were not to be given out for "adoption" because this frequently was a cloak to use the children as cheap labour without the safety clauses of indenture which included schooling, minimal conditions of food, clothing, and shelter, as well as some remuneration. Until modern legislation, such "adopted" children could not claim the rights of a family member with regard to inheriting property or money. Many "adopted" children were returned sometimes after several years for trivial reasons such as foster parents going on holiday or for irresponsible ones such as a child requiring medical treatment. The wages under indenture, which were always below prevailing rates for usual apprentices, were divided between the institution and an account at the home which was to be given the child at the expiration of the apprenticeship.

Not all parents willingly signed over their children for either indenture or adoption and many objected strenuously to the automatic abdication of parental authority as a result of merely handing their children over to the homes or by failing to pay maintenance fees. Usually such protests were ignored and few incidents ended in litigation. If poverty resulted in children being placed in institutions, it was unlikely that their parents would have the money for a court case. A widely publicized case, *Robinson vs. Pieper*, occurred when Mrs Robinson, after having placed her infant daughter Alice in the Toronto Girls' Home in 1883, sought to have her returned to her when she was apprenticed with Mrs Pieper of Owen Sound in 1892. The verdict, upheld in 1896, in the Divisional Court, did not recognize parental rights.

The learned judge can find no reason whatever for holding that the mother is entitled to have this indenture set at naught and the child returned to her. She was clearly a child having the protection of the Home, when she was apprenticed; her mother was, and had been for years an assenting party to her being at the Home, and under its protection and made no application for her return until she ceased to be helpless.<sup>48</sup>

All the Protestant Orphans' Homes insisted that their rights of *in loco parentis* included not only the wardship of children in the homes but also the right to indenture children at an appropriate age. Since all homes had set ages for demission and since many claimed an absolute wardship, many refused to return children to their families when they reached the age of demission. Indeed, in most cases the homes saw family interest in older children as evidence of greed and self-interest. In 1873, the secretary of the Montreal Ladies' Benevolent Society remarked that twenty-two girls had been reclaimed that year. The girls had been spirited away or blatantly taken by relatives and placed for "the scarcity of servants made them valuable acquisitions to some who had entirely neglected them in their helpless infancy". In 1894, the corresponding secretary of the Toronto Girls' Home decried the too common occurrence of girls absconding from their places to join their mothers and expressed profound suspicion of "maternal tendencies" that were so "suddenly revived" after several

<sup>48</sup> MTL, Toronto Girls' Home, Minutes, 12 November 1895.

years of "neglect". Although the annual reports cited assistance to all classes as a major aim, the home viewed with a singular lack of sympathy the reuniting of its inmates with their lower-class families. Parents requesting the return of their children were usually identified as part of a certain unscrupulous class of dependent poor willing to fob off their familial responsibilities onto charity.<sup>49</sup>

There can be no doubt that some parents reclaimed their children at the age of indenture when they had rarely visited or paid the slightest attention to them previously. The literature of rescue societies, boy brigades and asylums, all mention the problem. The English child emigration societies wanted to separate children from disreputable families by sending them to Canada. As a result children rescued from potential exploitation by parents or relatives were often subject to actual exploitation by strangers. The enforcement of school attendance laws, which forced poor families to forego additional income needed to maintain family-integrity, led to an increased number of children being admitted to charitable institutions.

Although endeavouring to protect the autonomy of their institutions, Protestant Orphans' Homes directors routinely petitioned provincial and municipal governments for funds. Believing in the advantages of private philanthropy with governmental assistance, the ladies of the homes were committed to ideas that saw private philanthropy as the superior means of securing financial support for public charities. At a public meeting of the Ottawa home in January 1887, the Governor-General praised Canadian philanthropic efforts. He told "a large and fashionable audience" that unlike the poor-rate system that perpetuated Old World pauperism such efforts were spontaneous, private, "and almost entirely unaided by the State".<sup>50</sup>

The approval given by the ladies of the homes to such sentiments was matched by civic leaders and Canadian child savers who advocated a policy of private prosperity and public parsimony. In 1894, the Toronto City Corporation, rejecting amalgamation of various charities and any suggestion of a common budget assisted by rates, opposed the city taking over the "entire management of all the different classes of our dependent poor" because the financial burden would fall "upon the rate-payers and private benevolence would be withdrawn".<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> *Montreal Ladies' Benevolent Society, 40th Annual Report* (Montreal, 1873), p. 6. Those attitudes about parental exploitation of similar children in Britain are found in the records of various child-rescue societies who exported juvenile immigrants to Canada. This and the psychological problems of child abandonment and family separation are fully discussed by the authors in "The King's Children in English Canada: A Psychohistorical Study of Abandonment, Rejection and Colonial Response", *Journal of Psychohistory*, 8 (Spring 1981): 387-420.

<sup>50</sup> Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa Protestant Orphans' Home, "Clippings", vol. 4 (1884-89), 19 January 1897.

<sup>51</sup> MTL, L30 PCH(6), Toronto Protestant Orphans' Home, "Miscellaneous (1895-1915)". The authors have discussed the relationship between the professionalization of charity and the shift from child rescue to child welfare, emphasizing Charlotte Whitton's contribution in "Child Welfare in English Canada, 1920-1948", *Social Service Review*, 55 (September 1981): 484-506.

Writing in the English *Charity Organization Review* of August 1900, J. J. Kelso, Ontario's first superintendent of neglected and dependent children, supported a central associated charities bureau for Toronto while discouraging any tendency to fall back upon charity as typified by British poor law unions. Observing that "there is, unfortunately however a class who, from inherent laziness will not work or make any effort to improve the condition of themselves or their children", Kelso denounced the ticket system of the Toronto House of Industry which provided outdoor relief. Although such schemes assisted families to stay together, which was a prime goal of the new generation of Canadian child savers, Kelso was unable to resolve the basic contradiction in public responsibility for maintaining family stability when it required public funds.<sup>52</sup>

Although the Protestant Orphans' Homes did not share such delicate feelings about family integrity in their efforts to rescue children from pauperism and immorality, such attitudes did not ensure that conservative English Canadians would support the homes as superior to out-door relief schemes. Mr Goldwin Smith, addressing the fortieth annual meeting of the Toronto home, heartily condemned the "mischief" done by philanthropists. He protested that their very existence removed parental responsibility and that "in many instances this interference tended to have the parents neglect their children so that they could get rid of them or see them reared with greater possibilities than they could furnish."<sup>53</sup>

Throughout the previous discussion it can be seen that the protection of child life from the contaminations of adult improvidence and vicious example was effectively ensured by segregation in specialized asylums. Moreover, in their treatment of children and parents, the Protestant Orphans' Homes represented a transition from the policy of indiscriminate mixing of sexes and ages common in the houses of industry to the growing twentieth-century Canadian commitment to keeping children within a family if not their own. They also represent a significant transformation in British North American child rescue.

No matter how unclear the original policy on eligible subjects for the institutions, the homes soon restricted their inmates to children and their mothers. In time, most of them became segregated institutions for orphaned, abandoned and destitute children between two and fourteen years of age. By removing children from the companionship of degraded adults and inadequate care, which were two common criticisms levelled at houses of industry and other charitable institutions, and by claiming that they exercised a control *in loco parentis* over their inmates, the Protestant Orphans' Homes sought to regulate contacts between children and their parents and kin, and thus reinforced in an extreme manner the criteria of protection, segregation and dependence. Since, other than in exceptional situations, most homes admitted many more non-orphans than orphans, they were compelled to modify their policy with regard to the surrender of parental rights. For those parents and guardians who were able to pay

<sup>52</sup> *Charity Organization Review*, 7 (August 1900): 89-93.

<sup>53</sup> Queen's University, *Kingston Protestant Orphans' Home, Annual Report* (1875).

boarding fees, the right to withdraw children was clearly recognized; economic hardship and illness, however, often made even nominal fees a heavy burden, particularly on single parents. Consequently, such children were frequently reduced to a status identical with those who had been surrendered to the homes.

The final criterion of the concept of childhood — “delayed responsibilities” — is less clear in nineteenth-century child rescue. This criterion is best associated with the creation of a new category of childhood, namely “adolescence”, which in turn was extended and even objectified through the legal compulsions of schooling for all children in the twentieth century.<sup>54</sup> Before the vertical extension of compulsory schooling, however, the majority of working-class children and those of the dependent poor in Britain and Canada were excluded from this last entry into the world created by a modern concept of childhood.

Nowhere is this denial of entry clearer than in the institutions under discussion, as their attitudes toward indenture along with specific attitudes towards the children and work within the home itself indicate. The children were to assume responsibilities regarding household tasks in the homes and to earn their keep through indentures and apprenticeship, bearing in mind that such responsibilities were directly related to their future employment and status in society. It was thought that the children were peculiarly suited to menial occupations both by social status and by disposition. In this respect, although they were protected, separated, and made dependent in a manner that was more concrete and rigidly enforced than their working-class peers “outside”, the expectations regarding their tasks and duties as children and their future roles in the work force were identical with middle-class expectations of the lower class generally.

Keeping such an assumption in mind, we can appreciate the 1875 Kingston report that advocated the “systematic apportioning of household duties” with even little girls being “admitted into the circle of usefulness” as an essential benefit to the children. In the following year, the British Columbia Protestant Orphans’ Home insisted that, as an important part of their education, the children were to be taught how to do dishes, wash clothes, scrub floors, attend young children, and do all domestic work.<sup>55</sup> At the Halifax home for the first two decades from its founding, the children did all domestic chores without outside help.<sup>56</sup> The Winnipeg Children’s Home perhaps summarizes all those comments made uniformly by the Protestant Orphans’ Homes throughout their history regarding such an urgent matter. The ladies’ committee agreed that the public was inclined to over-indulge the children with too many “treats” and that in the long run it would spoil them “for their future life”. It was strongly urged that

<sup>54</sup> SCHNELL, “Childhood as Ideology”, pp. 17-23.

<sup>55</sup> Provincial Archives of British Columbia, *British Columbia Protestant Orphans’ Home, Annual Report* (1886), File 7, p. 2.

<sup>56</sup> Public Archives of Nova Scotia, *Halifax Protestant Orphans’ Home, Annual Reports* (1858-77).

“the children be taught to work, and to understand that they have to look forward to work, and that they be made to do it”.<sup>57</sup>

#### IV. — CONCLUSION

Charity children of the last century were not permitted the luxury of forgetting their antecedents or their prospects and were made to bear the burden of their poverty and dependence. The delaying of responsibilities for lower-class children, thus including them in a universal application of the concept of childhood in Canada, was to be postponed until the first decades of the twentieth century.

In his pioneering study, Neil Sutherland suggests a rapid acceptance of the concept of childhood and its consequences by middle-class Canadians between 1880 and 1920. His discussion of child life in the seventies and eighties fails to account for the sentiment and practices during the previous thirty years. By the 1850s a substantial number of children's homes had appeared in the major centres of British North America. These institutions, soon to be copied in the Canadian West, ensured for their inmates the beginning of a modern childhood, that is, protection, segregation and dependence.

The debate regarding the appropriate care and control of these children prepared the way for the extension of all aspects of childhood to children in the twentieth century. In particular, Sutherland's excellent explication of the “new education” demonstrates the coming victory of the common school that provides all normal children with a “childhood”. In the case of dependent and neglected children, the final triumph of the Canadian consensus had to wait for the beginnings of the welfare state in the decades following 1945.

<sup>57</sup> Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Children's Home of Winnipeg, Minutes, 2 July 1908.