

**“A Very Special Service”
Day Care, Welfare and Child Development
Jost Mission Day Nursery, Halifax
1920-1955**

by

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Abstract

The history of day care in Canada has generally been approached by scholars as a means to understand the position of, and attitude toward mothers and wives in the labour force. Only recently has attention been focused upon the internal workings of daytime nurseries for working mothers and the developments that these institutions underwent as part of Canada's expanding welfare network. This case study of the Jost Mission Day Nursery in Halifax examines these internal changes between 1920 and 1955, a period in which expert, scientific advice about the care of pre-school children had a profound impact on child welfare initiatives. Importantly, the Jost Mission represents a site at which the growing authority of these scientific developments can be examined alongside the persistence of more traditional, religiously centred approaches to child welfare. The local focus of this study also allows an opportunity to assess how the negative public and professional attitude toward working mothers impacted the provision of day care.

Abbreviations

DPWDNA	Dominion Provincial Wartime Day Nurseries Agreement
CNCMH	Canadian National Committee on Mental Hygiene
ICS	Institute of Child Study (Toronto)
JMAR	Jost Mission Annual Report
JMC	Jost Mission Committee
MSSW	Maritime School of Social Work
NCWC	National Council of Women of Canada
PANS	Public Archives of Nova Scotia
SPC	Society for the Prevention of Cruelty
SSI	Social Service Index (Halifax)
VON	Victoria Order of Nurses
WCH	Welfare Council of Halifax

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Introduction

In 1944, Dr. William Blatz, one of Canada's foremost child psychologists, published his sixth work on child development and education, *Understanding the Young Child*. Written to serve those who, "with far too little training, had to participate in caring for children in wartime nurseries," it described the "Meaning and Importance of Childhood" in the following manner:

We are at last beginning to realize that "nature" uses the period of youth to good advantage. We, the highest form of life, have neglected – nay, we have exploited – this period. Whatever the purpose of living, the management of youth in the past has been unintelligent, if not worse.... It only remains to decide what is the "best upbringing possible."¹

Determining the "best upbringing" for the young child was not the exclusive concern of Dr. Blatz. In the first decades of the twentieth century, growing professional interest in early childhood development, as well as the popularity of social reform movements, eugenics, and the devastating impact of the First World War, all added pressure to the movement to protect and train the nation's children for productive adulthood.² As J.G. Shearer, the Secretary of the Social Service Council of Canada explained in 1920, childcare was of "inestimable value to every social activity."³ Indeed, the study and care of young children achieved an exalted

¹ William Blatz, *Understanding the Young Child* (New York: 1944), vii, 26-7.

² See Cynthia Comacchio, *Nations are Built of Babies: Saving Ontario's Mothers and Children, 1900-1940* (Montreal and Kingston: 1993); Veronica Strong-Boag, "Intruders in the Nursery: Childcare Professionals Reshape Years One to Five, 1920-1940," in *Childhood and Family in Canadian History* (Toronto: 1982), 160-178. For a discussion of the eugenics movement in Canada, see Angus McLaren, *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945* (Toronto: 1990).

³ Cited in Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, *A Full Orbed Christianity: The Protestant Churches and Social Welfare in Canada, 1900-1940* (Montreal and Kingston, 1996), 123.

status after World War One, and the interests of the child became closely aligned with the interests of the nation itself.

With very few exceptions, however, the majority of experts and reformers who concerned themselves with child welfare considered day nursery care for the children of working mothers to be a marginal and even undesirable service for children. Dr. Blatz himself, while ostensibly promoting a limited form of day care through his nursery school program, drew a very sharp distinction between pre-school *education* and day nurseries for working mothers. Majority consensus stressed, in fact, that the best of all possible places for a child to be raised was in the home with his or her mother. It was repeatedly emphasised that a woman's ultimate physical and spiritual attainment lay in motherhood, and that the bond between mother and child was essential for the optimal development of the individual. Advice on child rearing which intended to construct this relationship did not necessarily reflect child-rearing practices in the majority of Canadian homes. While it is difficult to know what practices were employed by parents, it is nevertheless possible to determine from the content of the advice what was considered to be "good mothering." The popularity of the advice literature examined in this instance also underscores a degree of familiarity, on part of Canadian parents, with the ideal of family life.⁴ Popular childcare advice delivered to Canadians created a model for the perfect family around the image of a woman devoted to caring for her home and children, while her husband supplied consistent and ample

⁴ See Jay Mechling, "Advice to Historians on Advice to Mothers," *Journal of Social History* 2 (1975-76), 46-63; Katherine Arnup, *Education for Motherhood: Advice for Mothers in Twentieth Century Canada* (Toronto: 1994), 8, 123-125.

financial support. As historian Denise Riley has written, this conception of motherhood and family “effectively rendered invisible the needs of those working mothers with children.”⁵

This omission on part of the experts clearly did not reflect the reality of life for thousands of Canadian families. Separation, divorce, desertion, widowhood and economic necessity forced many mothers to seek work outside of the home, leaving their children to the care of family members, neighbours, or in some cases, at charitable day nurseries which were established and administered by local church groups across the country. Unfortunately for many families, however, day care centres for working mothers were not a common attribute of most urban centres in the early decades of the 20th century.⁶ Halifax’s Jost Mission, in fact, was the only such service in Eastern Canada for several decades. Established in 1867 by a local Methodist businessman, Edward Jost, the mission building located on Brunswick Street initially was used for prayer meetings, Sunday school classes, sewing classes for young women, and religious services.⁷ In 1915, the Jost Ladies’ Committee, made up of representatives for the Methodist churches in the city, was appointed to administer both an employment bureau for working class women, and the day nursery, which had been in operation since approximately 1910. As with other nurseries of its kind in Canada, the employment bureau at the Jost operated as a clearing house, directing local

⁵ Denise Riley, *War in the Nursery: Theories of the Child and Mother* (London: 1983), 7.

⁶ While many Canadian women did run small child care operations out of their homes, day care centres such as the Jost were not numerous, and tended to be located only in the largest urban areas in the country, including Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, Victoria B.C., and Ottawa. See Donna Varga, *Constructing the Child: A History of Day Care in Canada* (Toronto: 1997), 17.

⁷ The original Mission building was torn down in the early 1970’s to make way for the Halifax Metro Centre.

women to available jobs, the majority of which were in domestic or laundry services. For a nominal fee, the Mission then provided day care to those working women with small children. The nursery was open from eight A.M. to six P.M. on weekdays, and in the early years it accepted anywhere from ten to sixty pre-school aged children a day. Between 1930 and the early 1950's, this number generally fluctuated between twenty and forty children per day.

The religious foundation of the Jost was a significant component shaping its operation and development after the First World War. The women who administered the centre, in fact, operated out of what Christina Simmons has described as a “charitable Christian concern of the well-to-do for the poor” of the city of Halifax.⁸ Along with the persistence of their religious orientation, and despite day care’s marginal position in expert discussions about child welfare, between 1925 and 1955 the Jost Mission exhibited a clear interest in providing the children of working mothers with the benefits of ‘modern’ and scientific childcare practices. The present work proposes to examine the effects which this amalgamation of spiritual and scientific methods had on the development of day care at the Jost, by determining how they were interpreted by the individuals providing the service between 1920 and 1955.

The growing importance of the “scientific” at the Jost appears to be part of the larger process of secularisation in Canadian society. In this context, ‘secularisation’ does *not* refer to a decline in personal belief. Rather, it signifies a broader aspect of the development of

⁸ Christina Simmons, “Helping the Poorer Sisters: The Women of the Jost Mission, Halifax, 1905-1945,” in *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History*, Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita C. Fellman, eds. (Toronto: 1991), 287.

Canadian culture, in which the religious establishment became increasingly irrelevant to the growth and administration of welfare services. Christianity, once the very essence of social reform, was gradually replaced by 'professional' and scientific methodology, reflecting the "ideological currents and popular attitudes that equated science with efficiency, progress and modernity"⁹ in the early decades of the century. As it related to child care, secularisation involved an increased preoccupation with the *psychological* health of the pre-school aged child, and a concurrent decline in the earlier emphasis on spiritual health and religious understanding. Experts and scholars studying early childhood development focused their efforts on the recognition of natural patterns of mental and physical growth which would help them to formulate solutions to the common difficulties of childhood and prevent future pathologies in the individual. As the majority of experts stressed, the pre-school years in a child's life were critically important to his or her future mental health and ability to function normally in society. In the records of the Jost Mission, mounting concern over the mental well-being of the nursery's children is most apparent in the gradually increased use of psychologically diagnostic vocabulary, and a greater reliance on local mental health clinics for the care of the 'abnormal' residents of the nursery.

In her recent history of Canadian day care, Donna Varga has suggested that this greater emphasis on psychological diagnosis occurred as part of the widespread adoption by both nursery schools and day nurseries of the curriculum developed by Dr. Blatz and his colleagues at the University of Toronto's Institute of Child Study (ICS), established in

⁹ Comacchio, *Nations Are Built of Babies*, 9. See also Marlene Shore, *The Science of Social Redemption* (Toronto: 1987) and Sara Z. Burke, *Seeking the Highest Good* (Toronto: 1996).

1926.¹⁰ Between approximately 1925 and 1940, she argues, charitable nurseries across the country were exposed to the new theories of child development and psychology promoted by the research staff at the ICS, and came to view these developments as ‘advanced’ and ‘improved’ over the methods of care given in previous decades. In fact, the ICS has been identified by several historians as the “epicentre” of change in Canadian childcare practices.¹¹ The influence of the centre is not surprising, in fact, as Blatz combined the latest theories of child development to a program which also made use of the most popular practical methods for ensuring advanced learning and psychological health.

Varga’s emphasis on the influence of Blatz and the ICS also is based upon the contrast between the ICS’s focus on children’s needs, and the day nurseries’ greater emphasis on services to the children’s mothers. Before 1920, charitable day nurseries in Canada had concerned themselves primarily with the supervision and physical well-being of children and infants in order to enable their mothers to maintain their families’ economic independence. As expressed by the Montreal Day Nursery in 1890, its intention was “to enable *struggling and deserving women to help themselves*, by taking care of their children by the day.”¹² As

¹⁰ An important distinction is made between the terms “day nursery” (interchanged here with day care centre) and “nursery school.” The former refers to those centres whose main purpose was to provide day time care for the children of parents who were obligated to work outside of the home or who were unable to care for their children during the day. Nursery schools, on the other hand, were institutions whose mandate focused upon pre-school education and training of children. They were often the preserve of wealthier Canadians who could afford the tuition costs, and they usually operated on a half-day basis. See Donna Varga, *Constructing the Child*.

¹¹ See, for example, Christie and Gauvreau, *A Full Orbed Christianity*, 127, Strong-Boag, “Intruders in the Nursery,” 167-173, Varga, *Constructing the Child*, and Jocelyn Moyter Raymond, *The Nursery World of Dr Blatz* (Toronto: 1991).

¹² Cited in Varga, *Constructing the Child*, 16. Emphasis in the original.

a result of their efforts to implement the ‘modern’ techniques promoted by the experts such as those at the ICS, however, charitable nurseries in the early twentieth century began to abandon social services that previously had been central to their operation. In the inter war years, employment bureaux ceased operation, and the “Mother’s Meetings” and other social events sponsored by the centres for the general edification of the women they served also were cancelled. According to Varga, these activities gradually and deliberately were phased out, and the day nurseries developed into institutions not unlike the nursery schools. They “adopted the [curriculum] of the Institute’s nursery school,” she states, “and in doing so their primary concern for the needs of mothers was superseded by a concern for the developmental supervision and management of children.”¹³

Varga’s work clearly demonstrates the general process by which the activities and pursuits of the ICS affected Canadian day care centres at the level of daily practice. What this present study will demonstrate, in addition to this, is how these new ideas of child development and care were grafted onto older elements of day nursery management. The adoption of current scientific methods of childcare did not necessarily eliminate the importance of older, religious aspects of this essentially charitable service. These elements, in fact, had a strong impact on the Jost’s development for much of the period under examination, not only in terms of how the nursery administration applied new theories of childcare in the nursery, but also in how it dealt with mothers and the wider community.

Concentrating on day care at the local level also highlights the fact that the advice of the experts was not the only, or even the most significant factor affecting the evolution of day

¹³ Varga, *Constructing the Child*, 14.

care in Canada. What seems of far more consequence was day care's status as a charity service specifically engineered for the city's poor. Unlike the patrons of centres such as the ICS, women retaining the services at the Jost arrived there out of necessity, not choice. Awareness of this, on part of both the donors and the recipients, ensured that to a certain extent day care continually carried the stigma of welfare. Moreover, as Nancy Fraser's work suggests, negotiation over the very provision of such welfare services was inherently political.¹⁴ Defining the needs of a particular social group and administering the services that resulted from that definition, were not processes which caregivers or experts conducted in a neutral manner. Because caregivers defended their conception of a particular service based on their own class interests and personal beliefs, it is important to consider not only the broader definitions of day care, but also the interests of those who were ultimately responsible for its administration. Importantly, in the case of the Jost, the women who used the day nursery did not directly define, defend or administer childcare for working mothers. This authority rested instead with the middle and upper class women of the Jost Ladies' Committee and the nursery's matron. What they said about the rights and needs of children was not only influenced by modern trends in childcare; their religious beliefs, their social superiority, and their desire to gain and maintain a prestige for this service in the city, impacted the day to day operation of the nursery with equal force.

The importance of maintaining a degree of prestige for the Jost cannot be understated. Examining day care at the local level, in fact, demonstrates that the social and political

¹⁴ Nancy Fraser, "Struggle Over Needs: Outline of a Socialist-Feminist Critical Theory of Late Capitalist Political Culture," in *Women the State and Welfare* (Madison, Wisconsin: 1990).

atmosphere of a particular community must be another prominent feature in any attempt to account for change in the service's orientation. Opinions about the viability of this service, particularly given national concerns about inferior childcare and 'good' mothering, affected not only public sentiment, but also the effectiveness of fundraising, and the support of the professional social work community. Even the endowed Jost Mission depended on such community support. Susan Prentice's study of day care in Ontario, in fact, has illustrated the controversial nature of the service, and shown that the socio-political climate of a given place and time could, and did, have a serious effect on the ability of a day nursery to function. In this instance, shifting political and ideological circumstances in the early 1950's allied the cause of day care with that of Communism, making attacks upon the viability of the service and its supporters both easy and effective.¹⁵

As also becomes apparent from the existing literature on day care, changes in the practices of day care centres in one part of the country did not necessarily affect change across the whole. In 1942, for example, the federal and provincial governments entered into an unprecedented cost-sharing arrangement known as the Dominion Provincial Wartime Day Nurseries Agreement (DPWDNA) in order to provide publicly subsidised day care for working mothers. This plan, however, was adopted not because of a massive change in public opinion about working mothers, but because of the wartime 'emergency'. It was established in order to, "secure the labour of women with young children for the war

¹⁵ Susan Prentice, "Workers, Mothers, Reds: Toronto's Post-War Daycare Fight," in *Studies in Political Economy* 30 (Autumn, 1989), 115-141.

industry,”¹⁶ and maximise the production potential of the war industries.¹⁷ Federal funding ceased almost immediately following the end of the conflict; in the absence of the war ‘emergency’, the expense was indefensible.

Although Patricia Schultz has suggested that, “the war made childcare a national rather than just an individual need,”¹⁸ it is clear that the DPWDNA was far too limited to effect any substantial change in either the private, charitable provision of care, or the general attitudes surrounding the service itself. Only three of ten provinces signed on, Ontario, Quebec and Alberta, and the latter province did not make use of the plan, despite loud protests from parent and teacher organisations in both Calgary and Edmonton. In Quebec, only five nurseries were in operation, all of them in Montreal, and in Ontario, twenty-eight nurseries comprising only nine hundred spaces were opened, despite the fact that by 1944, the proportion of married women in the female labour force had risen to approximately thirty-five percent.¹⁹ Provincial governments in Atlantic and Western Canada declared that

¹⁶ E.M. Little, Director of the National Selective Service, cited in Ruth Roach Pierson, *They're Still Women After All: The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood* (Toronto: 1986), 53.

¹⁷ For a discussion of the wartime set-up of publicly funded day nurseries, see Patricia Schulz, “Daycare in Canada, 1860-1962,” in K. Gallagher-Ross, ed., *Good Daycare: Fighting for It, Getting It, Keeping It* (Toronto: 1978), 149-153; Pierson, *They're Still Women After All*, 49-60; Alvin Finkel, “Even the Little Children Cooperated: Family Strategies, Childcare Discourse, and Social Welfare Debates, 1945-1975,” *Labour / le Travail*, 36 (Fall 1995), 92-96; Ruth K. Abbott and R.A. Young, “Cyclical and Deliberate Manipulation? Childcare and the Reserve Army of Female Labour in Canada,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 24, 2 (September 1989), 26-27.

¹⁸ Schulz, “Daycare in Canada,” 149.

¹⁹ Pierson estimated that the number of women working full-time in 1944 was between 1 and 1.2 million, with approximately 800 thousand women working part-time. This leads to an estimate of between 324,000 and 384,000 married women working, both full and part-time, across the country. See Pierson, *They're Still Women After All*, 9, 216.

they were insufficiently industrialised to warrant the expense of the day nurseries.²⁰ Moreover, in the records of the Child Welfare Council of Halifax's Welfare Council, the DPWDNA is mentioned only once.²¹

Understanding the reception of day care in Halifax, therefore, is a vital part of understanding the nature of the service, as well as the institution's very survival during a period of obstinately pro-natalist and home-centred child welfare initiatives. The charitable ethic of its administrators, their ability to articulate this mandate in an agreeable manner, as well as the centre's singularity in the city itself, make the centre's persistence as a day nursery understandable. However, the Jost's gradual yet conscious conversion to modern standards of care, particularly in a region of Canada that traditionally has been envisioned as both socially and politically conservative, is striking.²² Indeed, the Jost's successful incorporation of modern methods emphasises the need to consider the effects not only of changes in the national context of child care theory, but also of local community politics.

Not surprisingly, then, assessing how the positions of, and attitudes toward working mothers in Halifax may have affected day care service is another important component of this study. While such a focus may seem unnecessary in light of the emphasis given here to the manner in which day care providers approached *children*, these children were rarely

²⁰ Schulz, "Daycare in Canada," 150; Pierson, *They're Still Women After All*, 116.

²¹ Public Archives of Nova Scotia (hereafter PANS), MG 20 Vol. 408, #6.1, Welfare Council of Halifax, "Nursery School Training Course."

²² The issue of 'Maritime Conservatism' in the historiographical record is discussed in Ernie Forbes, *The Maritime Rights Movement, 1919-1927: A Study in Canadian Regionalism* (Montreal: 1979), ix-x; Robert J. Brym, "Political Conservatism in Atlantic Canada," in Robert J. Brym and R. James Sacouman, eds., *Underdevelopment and Social Movements in Atlantic Canada*. (Toronto: 1979).

judged autonomously from the social or economic situation of their parents, or more precisely their mothers. The users of the day nursery were considered objects of charity who required help because they had somehow failed to live up to the standards set by their social and economic superiors. At the Jost, this attitude was not reserved for the treatment of the mothers alone, but also was applied to the child care services. While the increased use of psychological authority and evaluation defined children as ‘normal’ or ‘abnormal’, the persistence of middle class charitable vocabulary also positioned them as hapless victims of parental failings. This latter perception is clearly analogous to the religious, charitable assumptions of pre World War One nurseries, but documentation on the Jost indicates that it is one that persisted well into the post-war period, accompanying the application of more ‘objective’ approaches to child care. Moreover, this confluence of the ‘charitable’ and the ‘objective’ forms the basic foundation for the shape of day care in Halifax between 1925 and 1955. Indeed, the discourses of charity and science employed at the Jost were not merely representations of the beliefs of the administrators. Rather, they were “acts and interventions”²³ which established the authority of the management and regulated the behaviour of the clients by conferring or withholding entitlement to assistance.²⁴

Chapters Two and Three of this work cover these developments at the Jost, and are divided chronologically, roughly corresponding to the tenure of two of the centre’s most prominent matrons, Lillian White and Edna Pearson. The affinities between popular, expert

²³ Fraser, “Struggle Over Needs,” 204.

²⁴ My use of the term ‘discourse’ in this instance does not merely refer to the formal utterances of the centre’s Ladies’ Committee and matron, but also includes the cultural assumptions revealed by the actions carried out at the institution.

advice and the changes and continuities of the curriculum are examined, as are local attitudes toward day care and working mothers, the status of the service among the wider social work community, and the effects of the employment pattern of local women on the centre's operation. Sources for this study incorporate the records of the Jost Mission and its Committee which are extant for the 1920 to 1955 period, as well as several interviews conducted by Christina Simmons, the minutes and reports from the Halifax Dartmouth Welfare Council, and news reports in the local press. Before the evolution and effect of new definitions for the care and training of children can be understood in this local context, however, it is necessary that an examination of the popular child psychology of this period be considered. As Chapter One illustrates, these theories of child development not only restricted the boundaries of the relationship between mother and child, but they also interpreted day care as an unsatisfactory, and potentially dangerous service.

Chapter One:
Childcare of "A Scientific Type"
Psychology and the Pre-School Care of Canadian Children

In this scientific age hit or miss methods in anything from raising poultry to building a radio are frowned upon as ignorant and wasteful. Even the raising of babies has eventually become reduced to a science.... And science is now gravely turning her attention to the mental and social adjustment of the child to see if a decrease cannot be made in the appalling number of misfit adults for which society has to suffer and care.¹

Following the First World War, Canadian mothers were deluged to an unprecedented extent with expert advice concerning the best way to raise their children, from proper methods of feeding and discipline, to the most efficient ways to toilet train and enforce bed times. In part, the movement grew out of a reaction to the devastating impact of the war on the country's population, and the heightened awareness it brought of the problems of 'feble-mindedness' and the poor health of the country's children. According to one author in the Canadian Medical Association's journal, "The large percentage of defectives revealed by the late war... awakened not only our profession, but all thoughtful minds to the necessity for a more careful medical oversight of all children during their early years of growth."² While the war may have acted as a catalyst, the proliferation of advice which resulted was the culmination of a movement for social reform that had preceded the war by several decades, involving women's groups, urban reform movements, and medical and social work

¹ Dora Smith Conover, "The Nursery School in Canada," *New Outlook*, 20 April 1927, cited in Raymond, *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz*, 69.

² R.E. Wodehouse, cited in Arnup, *Education for Motherhood*, 19. See also Dianne Dodd, "Advice to Parents: The Blue Books, Helen MacMurphy, MD, and the Federal Department of Health, 1920-34," in *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 8 (1991), 205; Veronica Strong-Boag, "Intruders in the Nursery," 160.

professionals.³ What distinguishes the post-World War One period, however, is the extent to which those concerned with child welfare were able to assert their authority in a definitively secular and professional manner. This professional status set them apart from the apparently amateur and inefficient, ‘moral crusaders’ of the past, and also made their authority appear virtually infallible. Thoroughly ‘modern’ and ‘scientific’, these university trained social workers and childcare experts laid claim to a supposedly objective purpose, and an efficient methodology that would bring the “destructive human traits” exhibited by society during the recent war under control. In effect, the ills of Canadian civilisation would be ‘scientifically’ amended.⁴

The first step in achieving this goal was improving the conditions of life for Canada’s young. To this end, child care experts, including social workers, medical practitioners and pre-school educators focussed their efforts not only on the improvement of the physical well-being of young children, but also on their mental, emotional and social adjustment. Mothers who had once concerned themselves only with normal physical development, were now to concern themselves with assuring that their little ones developed “well-adjusted personalities.”⁵ As this chapter illustrates, however, the clinical studies of child development, and the resulting theories and advice delivered to Canadian mothers between

³ Dodd, “Advice to Parents,” 205. Social reform movements in Canada are also discussed at length in Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada, 1914-1928* (Toronto: 1973); Sharon Anne Cook, “Through Sunshine and Shadow”: *The Women’s Christian Temperance Union, Evangelicalism, and Reform in Ontario, 1874-1930* (Montreal and Kingston, 1995); and Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: 1991).

⁴ Comacchio, *Nations are Built of Babies*, 130.

⁵ Celia B. Stendler, “Psychologic Aspects of Pediatrics: Sixty Years of Child Training Practice,” *Journal of Pediatrics* 36, 1 (January 1950), 125.

1920 and 1955 were coloured by class and gender bias, as well as political ideology. Within the advice there remained an emphasis upon a domestic model which set low income families and working mothers outside of the desirable norm, effectively rendering them failures or deviants from the system's ideal. The result was the perpetuation of an atmosphere in which the provision of day care fell far outside of the mandate of mainstream child welfare efforts. The solutions to the problem of raising mentally and socially well-adjusted children were found in a campaign for maternal education, a reliance on experts, and the maintenance of the nuclear family. Day care for working mothers, however, was regarded as an expensive and potentially damaging service which was, as a result, left to the realm of 'charity' welfare efforts.

The contrast made here between 'charity' and 'professional' welfare efforts is both deliberate and necessary. Following the Great War, the associations made by social workers between their present efforts and methods of reform and those of the previous generation changed significantly. Over the course of the 1920's, disciplines such as social work and developmental child psychology, both closely involved in pre-school care, underwent a dramatic period of professionalisation, emerging as legitimate scientific enterprises. In large part, this emergence was a direct result of the deliberate efforts of the experts themselves to assert their authority and secure an active role in the developing state.⁶ Traditionally, social reform efforts, including those directed at children, had been centred in voluntary, religiously

⁶ See Doug Owsram, *The Government Generation: Canadian Intellectuals and the State, 1900-1945* (Toronto: 1986), for a discussion of the influence of trained social work professionals in Canada. The rising influence of the medical profession is discussed by Comacchio, *Nations are Built of Babies*, 99-104, and C. David Naylor, *Private Practice, Public Payment: Canadian Medicine and the Politics of Health Insurance, 1911-1966* (Kingston: 1986).

motivated organisations such as the YMCA and the various churches. While the churches did not lose their social impact or importance altogether, formal religion was declining in importance after World War One, to be replaced by a new secular orientation in Canadian society. The new generation of socially conscious reformers was composed of specialists whose training and expertise, they argued, made them far more qualified for their work, and importantly, separated them from the supposed 'amateurism' of the past efforts of religious organisations and philanthropic reformers. Indeed, even among the private charitable organisations, where efforts were conducted from a religious and spiritual perspective, there was a growing emphasis upon the importance of professional expertise.⁷ In effect, the experts claimed that the religious compassion and personal charity of volunteers, while uplifting in intent, were no longer sufficient or efficient enough to deal with the enormity of the problems facing Canadian society; professional training and a secularised outlook on the country's problems were requisite in order to cope with the practical elements of social improvement.⁸

While both the training and influence of expert practitioners were important in the emergence of a secular reform movement, so too was the widespread belief in the potency of scientific methodology. 'Scientific' approaches to charity, and 'scientific' understanding

⁷ Owram, *The Government Generation*, 132-3; Comacchio, *Nations are Built of Babies*, 3-4. The gradual decline of the importance of the Protestant churches is discussed in David B. Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith: Canadian Protestant Clergy and the Crisis of Belief, 1850-1940* (Toronto: 1992). Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau present an alternative thesis in *A Full Orbed Christianity*, in which they argue that in many areas, the churches continued to hold sway well into the late 1920's and 1930's.

⁸ Raymond, *The Nursery World of Dr Blatz*, 37; Owram, *The Government Generation*, 122-3; James Pitsula, "The Emergence of Social Work in Toronto," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 14, 1 (1979), 37.

of the causes of social problems offered not only uncompromising objectivity, but also a conviction that social ills could be dealt with efficiently and effectively.⁹ Thus, placing responsibility into the hands of professionals, and applying scientific principles to the study of child development ultimately would lead to solutions for problems caused by the improper care of Canada's young.¹⁰ According to social worker Peter Bryce, the removal of child welfare efforts from the hands of well-intentioned religious reformers was immensely beneficial to the entire nation. "At one time," he wrote, "Child welfare had its source in the ministering spirit inculcated by religion, then in the natural impulses of human sympathy. Now it is part of the defensive foresight of citizens who would protect the future of the state."¹¹

As Doug Owram has noted, the ultimate result of the "professional distinctiveness" cultivated by the new generation of experts was a growing distance between those who associated themselves with the "professional, secular, and social scientific approach to welfare" and those involved in "religiously based volunteer movements."¹² In Canada, childcare experts were actively involved in a developing professional community which supported the scientific principles of social work, and pre-school educators were a prominent addition to this body of professionals.¹³ Throughout this period, in fact, their insistence upon

⁹ Comacchio, *Nations are Built of Babies*, 9; Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts' Advice to Women* (New York: 1979), 69, 75; Raymond, *The Nursery World of Dr Blatz*, 33; Owram, *The Government Generation*, 132-3.

¹⁰ Donna Varga, *Constructing the Child*, 39; Strong-Boag, "Intruders in the Nursery," 160-162, 166-7.

¹¹ Cited in Owram, *The Government Generation*, 124.

¹² Owram, *The Government Generation*, 124.

¹³ Strong-Boag, "Intruders in the Nursery," 166.

the benefits of nursery school education, and their efforts to promote their work through publication and association with the country's universities resulted in a prestige not unlike that held by medical experts and social workers. Just as professional social workers and doctors distanced themselves from the 'amateur' philanthropists, so too did pre-school educators use the clinical and psychological basis of their training to distance themselves from the 'amateur' efforts of charitable day care administrators. The result was a definitive separation between perceptions about these two services; while nursery schools were considered acceptable places of scientific study and childcare, day nurseries were considered a 'necessary evil'. Frances Lily Johnson, a frequent contributor to *Chatelaine*, discussed Blatz's nursery school in 1928, and made the popular distinction between 'professional' and 'amateur' childcare patently obvious. Initially, she wrote, Dr. Blatz's school received a poor reception in the community, as "[i]t was viewed as another institution making inroads on the home; or a species of day nursery, where the women of leisure could leave her child, thus ridding herself further of family responsibility."¹⁴

Despite their growing popularity during this period, nursery schools were only a small part of the growing infrastructure devoted to child welfare in Canada. The Child Welfare Division of the Federal Government's Department of Health, for example, began publication of Dr. Helen MacMurchy's immensely popular "Blue Books" series which gave information on the "Canadian way" of housekeeping and childcare.¹⁵ Most provincial governments

¹⁴ Frances Lily Johnson, "Where A Child Can Be A Child," *Chatelaine* (March 1928).

¹⁵ Raymond, *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz*, 32; Dodd, "Advice to Parents," 203-6. As Dodd notes, the Blue Books did not contain "original thought," but "reflected an amalgamation of ideas from diverse sources," which, in the 1920's and 30's, were surprisingly uniform in the advice they delivered (see 211-212). Topics covered by the

across Canada had also established Children's Aid Societies that, while privately administered and partially supported by charitable giving, were also publicly funded and regulated organisations. Alongside this rapidly expanding public health bureaucracy, one of the most prominent organisations was the Canadian Council of Child Welfare which was founded in 1920. The Council, a voluntary organisation that was partially funded by federal grants, acted as a national clearinghouse for both private and public organisations concerned with child welfare.¹⁶ Their efforts and publications on behalf of the nation's children emerged alongside those of the Canadian Medical Association, the Victorian Order of Nurses (VON), the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC), local women's groups and the Canadian Red Cross Society.¹⁷

Nova Scotians do not appear to have been any less progressive than other Canadians in their efforts on behalf of children. In Halifax, the first 'public' impetus behind child welfare came in 1880, when the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty (SPC) was given the obligation of caring for children under the age of sixteen. By 1888, two-thirds of all cases that the SPC became involved in dealt with families and children, and the society began to press for the establishment of a separate organisation for these cases. In 1905, the Children's

series included pre and post-natal care, routines for feeding and sleep, nutrition, sex education, maternal health, housekeeping, and household management. Several in the series were also directed toward immigrant families, with instructions on how to 'fit in' to Canadian society.

¹⁶ Tamara K. Harevan, "An Ambiguous Alliance: Some Aspects of American Influence on Canadian Social Welfare," *Histoire Social/Social History*, 3(April 1969), 91-92. The development of the Canadian Welfare Council is also discussed in " 'Making the Way More Comfortable': Charlotte Whitton's Child Welfare Career, 1920-48," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 17, 4 (Winter 1982-3), 33-45.

¹⁷ See for example, Arnup, 24-28; Comacchio, *Nations Are Built of Babies*, 3-4, 43-51; Strong-Boag, "Intruders in the Nursery," 160-161.

Aid Society of Halifax County was established to cover these services. The society was incorporated and the first Children's Protection Act was passed by the legislature in 1906, and a separate Children's Aid Society was established for the city of Halifax itself in 1920.¹⁸ As with other institutions and individuals across the country, Nova Scotian child welfare professionals were keenly aware that their efforts on behalf of children were of vital importance to the entire nation. According to M. E. MacKenzie, the superintendent of the province's Nursing Service in 1927, "We realize very fully that the race marches forward or backward on the feet of little children. If the world is to progress, each successive generation must be better than the last."¹⁹

A great deal of the effort put forth by these professional and government organisations was directed toward various aspects of the physical health of children, including everything from proper nutrition and exercise to growth measurement and disease control. Despite the emphasis on physical care, however, or perhaps because of its effectiveness in controlling many of the illnesses which afflicted young children, childcare

¹⁸ Prior to the activities of the SPC in the area of child welfare, the infrastructure for such services was entirely dependent upon private philanthropy. This included institutions such as the Jost Mission, as well as several other homes for orphans and unwed mothers in the city (for example, The Halifax Infant's Home (1875), Saint Patrick's Home for Boys (Roman Catholic, 1885), The Protestant Orphan's Home (1910), and the Nova Scotia Home for Coloured Children (1921). The latter of these institutions is the subject of a recent study by Charles R. Saunders entitled *Share and Care: The Story of the Nova Scotia Home for Coloured Children* (Halifax: 1994)). 1914 saw the Children's Aid Society come once again under the administration of the SPC, which also held "the powers of a Children's Aid Society in any town or municipality where no Children's Aid society existed." See Stan Fitzner, *The Development of Social Welfare in Nova Scotia; A History* (Halifax: 1967), 48-50.

¹⁹ "Report of the Superintendent of Nursing Service," in Nova Scotia, Department of Public Health, *Annual Report 1927*, 19.

experts began to accentuate the psychiatric health of Canadian children: *quality* child care emerged as the ultimate goal.²⁰ A significant part of this growing predominance of psychiatric care lay in the belief that the early years of a child's life were vital to his or her future social and emotional development. Without proper parental management, care and training, children could become irrevocably damaged by the time they reached school age. According to Frances Lily Johnson, "science has found that many, if not all, salient character traits are developed during the years of infancy," and in order to avoid dysfunction, parents were to "make a scientific study of their children" to understand the proper methods for ensuring mental health.²¹ Similarly, Charles M. Hincks of the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene (CNCMH), argued that such 'scientific studies' had revealed that, "[d]uring the early years there are established ways of thinking, feeling and acting that have a profound effect in shaping the adult personality."²² Careful direction of pre-school development, therefore, was vitally important, not only for the individual, but also for the nation. Pre-school children required preparation for good citizenship as much as they did for good health, so parental responsibility for the mental health of their children was defined as a matter of national importance.²³ "The advantage of special training of our young mothers," wrote M.E. Mackenzie, "should help to enable them to give their children the best possible

²⁰ Light and Pierson, *No Easy Road*, 167, 170; Arnup, *Education for Motherhood*, 45; Dodd, "Advice to Parents," 220.

²¹ Frances Lily Johnson, "Where a Child Can Be A Child," 28.

²² C.M. Hincks, "Preface" to *Mental Hygiene of Childhood; A series of lectures delivered in Toronto and Montreal... February and March, 1928* (CNCMH, 1928), np.

²³ Comacchio, *Nations are Built of Babies*, 10-11. See also Strong-Boag, "Intruders in the Nursery," 160-162.

opportunities of becoming normal, healthy citizens.”²⁴ This attitude was echoed throughout this entire period. In 1944, child psychologist and nursery school educator William Blatz, one of Canada’s most prominent childcare specialists, wrote that,

Democracy can survive not through legislation or wishful thinking, but only if the integrity of the individual is preserved. In the past, the early years of a child’s life were left to the haphazard training of parents... [and the] wonder is not that democracy has been slow to evolve but, rather, that it has evolved at all!²⁵

What democracy required for survival, according to the overwhelming majority of professionals after World War One, was rigorous scheduling of virtually every aspect of a child’s life. In scheduling, so it was argued, lay the key to habit formation, and in habit formation, “the most important factor in the life of the child,” lay the key to ultimate future success. In 1928, F.L. Johnson argued that,

Wherever or whatever we are by accident of birth, the way in which we eat, speak, sleep, meet situations, fit into society or business, in effect, whether we are successes or failures, depends almost entirely on the habits of thought and action with which we have equipped ourselves or to which we have been trained. Whether these [habits] shall be desirable or undesirable depends on the training which the child receives, and birth is not too early to start building.²⁶

This so-called ‘rigid’ method of child rearing focused on regulating habits of physical function and emotional response in order to facilitate the development of sound social and mental habits. These habits would, in turn, enable children to adapt easily to society’s

²⁴ M.E. MacKenzie, “Report of the Superintendent of Nursing Service,” 19.

²⁵ William E. Blatz, *Understanding the Young Child* (New York: 1944), 12. Interestingly, Blatz made these observations following a critical discussion of the policies and practices of Adolph Hitler.

²⁶ Frances Lily Johnson, “Psychology and Child Study: The Making and Breaking of Habits,” *Chatelaine*, (June 1928), 37.

demands. Conformity to existing social norms, in fact, was a significant characteristic of training for good citizenship in this period. As Dr. Blatz noted, “unless we are willing to chance disaster for our children we must train them to fit into our human society without friction.... We must train them in two codes of behavior – good manners and lawful activity.”²⁷ Along with these latter elements of training, childcare experts also had in mind the improvement of the ‘productivity’ and ‘efficiency’ of the nation’s future citizens. Just as systematisation and regularity had improved industrial production, so too would they improve ‘citizen production’. The principles of scientific management applied to the factory floor were applied to the home as well, and each activity in a child’s day, from eating, playing and ‘elimination’ was consistently timed and scheduled. The home, in essence, was a factory, the clock was the most important tool, and the child was trained to become a “little machine.”²⁸ The benefits of habit training, in fact, were compared “to that of electrical appliances in the home. As a time and labor saver [they are] invaluable.”²⁹ Certainly, this method of child rearing did not preclude humanitarian impulses on the part of professional childcare workers. Nevertheless, as Cynthia Comacchio has noted, the consistent use of vocabularies “grounded in economic principles of cost and investment” is striking. “It was reasoned,” she argues, “that saving children would more than repay public expenditure by redoubling the prospects of turning out a productive and worthy citizenry.”³⁰

²⁷ Blatz, “Your Child Can Go Wrong,” *MacLean's* (1 March 1946), 50.

²⁸ Cited in Arnup, *Education for Motherhood*, 86.

²⁹ Frances Lily Johnson, “The Making and Breaking of Habits,” 38.

³⁰ Comacchio, *Nations are Built of Babies*, 11. See also pp. 116, 126-132, and Arnup, *Education for Motherhood*, 85; Daniel Beekman, *The Mechanical Baby: A Popular History of the Theory and Practice of Child Raising* (Westport, Connecticut: 1977), 113.

Discipline was another central concept that the childcare experts stressed during this period, and as with the methods recommended for establishing regular habits, good discipline was best developed through regulation, not corporal punishment. Spanking was condemned, and parents who employed such methods were censured; resorting to physical punishment was considered a sign of uncivilised behaviour, and its very conception arose, “out of primitive mysticism,” and was “inconsistent with advancing civilisation.”³¹ Instead, parents were encouraged to help their child understand the rationale behind correct behaviour so that they would see proper conduct as a benefit to all concerned. When the process of good habit training did break down, isolation was the recommended course of action, in order that parents might impress upon their child that he or she could “derive no satisfaction from repeated offences against the standards of the community.”³² Moreover, it was important that a parent endeavour to uncover the *cause* of the discipline problem, as poor behaviour was thought to be linked to some underlying physical and/or mental trauma. Writing for *MacLean's* in 1928, Mable Crews Ringland argued that,

It is not enough to treat a particular piece of behaviour wisely; we are expected to look into the future – to seek the cause and adjust it, as well as the results. Much as a doctor, after giving a dose of medicine for immediate relief, attempts to find the cause of the complaint.³³

³¹ Blatz, *Understanding the Young Child*, 66-7.

³² Cited in Strong-Boag, “Intruders in the Nursery,” 166. See also Comacchio, *Nations are Built of Babies*, 126.

³³ Mabel Crews Ringland, “To Spank or Not to Spank,” *MacLean's* (1 April 1928), 82. See also Strong-Boag, “Intruders in the Nursery,” 165. Celia Stendler’s study of changing patterns of child rearing advice given in three American women’s magazine’s between 1890 and 1948 notes a very interesting ‘secularising’ trend with respect to discipline. Between 1890 and 1910, between 15 and 20 per cent of all articles dealing with discipline recommended that the mother “Invoke divine aid.” This had dropped to zero percent by 1920, and remained so through to 1948. In the

While social conformity was clearly of great importance in this scheme of discipline, experts were careful to point out that *self-control* was the ultimate objective, and not “slavish, unintelligent obedience.”³⁴ The rise of totalitarian states in Europe made this element of child training all the more significant in the late 1920’s and 1930’s, and as Dr. Blatz expressed it, blind obedience was considered to be “the fundamental basis of fascism.” Instead, discipline was to teach a child to *respect* the rules and to *wish* to conform, “within the approved limits.”

A plan of training, he emphasised,

must... provide an opportunity for non-conformity, also within approved limits. Any plan which succeeds in obtaining blind obedience to its rules might be satisfactory to the director (a dictator), but such a plan would develop an unhealthy resentment in the “obeyor,” leading ultimately to rebellion.”³⁵

The popularity of habit training was part of a growing if not smooth transition in childcare literature which gave greater credence to the influence of environmental factors on child development, as opposed to biological ones. Childcare experts drew explicit links between early experiences and future dysfunctional behaviour, with a concurrent decrease in the “easy optimism which had seen human perfectibility as a simple biological problem.”³⁶ Only with an established routine of habit training, it was argued, could a child become a secure, responsible, and independent member of society. One of the most influential proponents of this argument was American psychologist John B. Watson, who insisted that

same period, advice which recommended that parents “Look for the cause and plan accordingly” rose from zero percent (in 1890-1910) to 84 percent by 1948. See Stendler, “Psychologic Aspects of Pediatrics,” 26.

³⁴ Cited in Comacchio, *Nations are Built of Babies*, 132.

³⁵ Blatz, *Understanding the Young Child*, 57.

³⁶ Comacchio, *Nations are Built of Babies*, 130.

psychology restrict itself to the objective study of observable human behaviour. This school of thought, known as behaviourism, explained human conduct solely in terms of the stimulus-response reaction, discounting all but environmental factors in the development of personality.³⁷ The ‘trick’ for those interested in training children was to uncover the basis of the stimulus-response relationship, and accustom the child to the best methods of reacting in any given situation. The process was not a haphazard one, however, as Watson emphasised that “Parenthood... is a science, the details of which must be worked out by patient laboratory methods.”³⁸ Every aspect of a child’s deportment, appearance and personality was a direct result of the methods applied by the caregiver to his or her training. In order to ensure that children developed “normally” he insisted, the “mawkish and sentimental” methods of the past had to be abandoned, and children were to be treated “as though they were young adults.”

Dress them, bathe them with care and circumspection. Let your behaviour always be objective and kindly firm. Never hug and kiss them. Never let them sit in your lap. If you must, kiss them once on the forehead when they say good night. Shake hands with them in the morning. Give them a pat on the head if they have made [an] extraordinarily good job of a difficult task.³⁹

³⁷ Watson had claimed, “Give me a dozen healthy children and my own world to bring them up in and I will guarantee to train anyone of them to become any kind of specialist I might select – doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant, chief. And even beggerman or thief.” (Comacchio, *Nations are Built of Babies*, 129) William Blatz echoed these ideas when he wrote, “I repeat, there is no child who, under constant [training] cannot be made into an adult acceptable to society.” (Blatz, “Your Child Can Go Wrong,” 10.

³⁸ Cited in Peter J. Miller, “Psychology and the Child: Homer Lane and J.B. Watson,” in Patricia T. Rooke and R.L. Schnell, *Studies in Childhood History: A Canadian Perspective* (Calgary: 1982), 75.

³⁹ Miller, “Psychology and the Child,” 76.

Watson's theories, and their influence on childcare practitioners,⁴⁰ led to what one historian has described as a "relentless physical and psychological program of infant development" which ignored individual differences between children.⁴¹ It was at the same time, however, an immensely popular set of ideas among many middle-class Canadians who concerned themselves with social reform and the improvement of the race. The Canadian mental hygiene movement promoted these behaviourist principles, for example, insisting that understanding the basic principles of behaviour would make "the elimination of social abnormalities incalculably easier."⁴² Through informed and regulated child rearing practices, a scientific solution for the promotion of 'normality' and the prevention of insanity could be developed. Ironically, organisations connected with mental hygiene, such as the CNCMH, were proponents of eugenic methods for improving the mental health of the nation. The early intent of the mental hygiene movement in Canada, in fact, was to curb the incidence of feeble-mindedness through restricted immigration, school segregation, and the forced sterilisation of any Canadian deemed 'unfit' by medical experts.⁴³ Despite this, there were those within the movement who recognised that information on the process of early childhood development was the solution to the problem of securing a healthy citizenry. Among these were William Blatz⁴⁴ and his colleague Helen Bott. "Mental hygiene with

⁴⁰ As Katherine Arnup notes, despite the fact that Watson is not mentioned by name in Canadian advice literature his influence was unmistakable in "virtually every publication produced during the interwar years" (See *Educating Motherhood*, 85).

⁴¹ Hardyment, *Dream Babies*, 165.

⁴² Strong-Boag, "Intruders in the Nursery," 166.

⁴³ Angus McLaren, *Our Own Master Race*.

⁴⁴ Blatz was the Research Director of the CNCMH from 1925 to 1935 (Raymond, *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz*, xiii).

prevention as its aim,” they wrote, “is no longer to be conceived as meaning various therapies designed for end stages and extreme forms; its first and fundamental interest is to understand *normal processes* of individual adjustment and their variations at all stages in life, extreme cases being merely special instances.”⁴⁵

These methods, then, both in relation to discipline and habit training, were those advocated by Dr. Blatz and his colleagues at the University of Toronto’s Institute of Child Care (ICS) and its affiliated nursery school, St. George’s, both established in 1926. In keeping with the ‘majority rule’ of childcare advice, Dr. Blatz’s program advocated a scheduled, regulated day which was thought to promote the acquisition of proper habits among children. Meals, snacks, nap times and ‘elimination’ times were all set in a carefully laid out schedule which was followed on a daily basis (see Appendix 1). Importantly, however, Blatz firmly believed that individuals took an active part in their social and emotional adaptation. The result was a conscious effort on the part of Blatz and his staff to ensure an element of individual choice within the daily program. Each individual child’s needs were to be evaluated, he argued, and despite the precision of the daily schedule, free playtimes were relaxed, and each child was given leave to choose his or her own activity.⁴⁶ The remaining regularity and discipline of the day’s schedule was to ensure a sense of serenity and well-being in the children. Serenity, Blatz maintained, was “a *sine qua non* of

⁴⁵ William Blatz and Helen Bott, *Parents and the Pre-School Child* (Toronto: 1928), 6. Emphasis original.

⁴⁶ See Raymond, *The Nursery World of Dr Blatz*, 20-3, 32-3, 145-6. This outlook of Blatz’s theory is in large part a result of his education at the University of Chicago, an institution and faculty long associated with this school of thought. The influence of the University of Chicago on Canadian social work is examined by Marlene Shore, *The Science of Social Redemption*, (Toronto: 1987).

any well conducted nursery school,” particularly as the children under his supervision were “mostly *only* and hence *lonely* children.”⁴⁷ Serenity formed a fundamental part of Blatz’s theories, as he believed that not only was healthy social and emotional development dependant upon it, but that it inevitably would increase the efficiency of the modern home. A sense of serenity was accomplished through the acquisition of habits, because habits allowed the individual to develop a sense of self worth, and, in later life, avoid the “anarchy and misrule” which afflicted the modern home where people were “groping for new principles of regulation and control.”⁴⁸ The person whose life did not “fall into well-regulated habits,” he wrote,

is merely wasting conscious effort that might be set free for better uses, Life to-day is more complex than formerly, and it is the more important that our children learn to economise conscious effort and reduce the excess of mental strain through proper organisation of their lives.⁴⁹

The expert advice around which Blatz structured the curriculum of the nursery school was not only responsible for the contour of pre-school care for Canadian children. It also situated Canadian mothers in a standard and idealised role as the primary caregivers of the

⁴⁷ Cited in Raymond, *The Nursery World of Dr Blatz*, 56.

⁴⁸ William Blatz and Helen Bott, *The Management of Young Children* (Toronto: 1930), 5. Blatz’s final work, *Human Security, Some Reflections*, an exposition of his ideas on serenity, was published posthumously in 1966. His emphasis upon serenity may also be connected to his belief that fear and anger were the two basic emotions felt by children, and that structured days, which fostered serenity, would teach children to “govern [these] emotions, rather than [let them] rule.” If these emotions were not controlled, he maintained, they would “cripple the adult character as effectively as a shortened leg would cripple the body.” (See Blatz, “Your Child Can Go Wrong,” 49). In keeping with this belief, observable “emotional episodes” at the ICS referred only to displays of *negative* feelings of fear or anger, while more positive displays of excitement, joy, or pleasure were “not under regular observation.” (See Raymond, *The Nursery World of Dr Blatz*, 83).

⁴⁹ Blatz and Bott, *Parents and the Pre-School Child*, 79.

nation's children. Motherhood was not merely a biological function for women, but a socially constructed category of existence that the majority of childcare professionals saw as crucial for normal child development.⁵⁰ According to the experts, the best way to access the potentials of mental and physical health of the future generation was to reinforce traditional gender roles, placing women at the focal point of the childcare initiative. The health of the child depended almost exclusively upon a woman's acceptance and skill in her "natural" and "destined" duty of motherhood. For example, Dr. Benge Atlee, the head of the department of obstetrics and gynaecology at Dalhousie University, wrote in the *Canadian Home Journal*, "I am asking women to tear the blinkers from their eyes and face reality. I am asking them to fit themselves for their chief work in life, the work that only they can do – child bearing... [It is time] for women to definitely realise that their destiny is a different destiny from the male."⁵¹ As Joan Sangster and Veronica Strong-Boag have illustrated, the post-World War Two period saw a continuation, and in some cases, an intensification of these ideas. Full time motherhood was a woman's natural vocation, and those who avoided or rejected it were categorised as abnormal or selfish.⁵²

⁵⁰ See, for example, Arnup, *Education for Motherhood*, 3-5; Denise Riley, *The War in the Nursery*, esp. chapter 1.

⁵¹ Benge Atlee, "The Menace of Maternity," *Canadian Home Journal* (May 1932), 9. Atlee, who was writing under a pseudonym, attempted to soften the blow of his pronouncement in the conclusion to his article, writing, "Is it given to man in all his lordiness to be a baby-machine and produce a Christ, a Socrates, a Joan of Arc, an Einstein? Are all the automobile factories in this world of more value to the human race than one single womb that can bring forth a psalm-making Hebrew King or a play-writing bard out of Stratford? O blind, bemused woman!" (12). See also Comacchio, *Nations are Built of Babies*, 65-66.

⁵² Joan Sangster, *Earning Respect: The Lives of Working Women in Small-Town Ontario, 1920-1960* (Toronto: 1995), 102-3; Veronica Strong-Boag, "Home Dreams: Women and the Suburban Experiment in Canada, 1945-60," *Canadian Historical Review*

The reception of this vision of motherhood had been encouraged by a post-World War One resurgence of maternalism, which saw women's groups, as well as medical and social work professionals, challenge the country's declining birth rate, particularly among middle class families. It was believed that young women were becoming disillusioned with their roles through lack of understanding about their 'true calling', and thus, were turning away from parenthood altogether. Maternal ignorance about the fundamentals of child-rearing methods, as well as expanding opportunities for women in the professional world, appeared to be threatening not only the mental and physical health of children, but also the very basis of the social order. Dr. Woods Hutchinson, writing for *MacLean's* in 1920, described the failings of young women as ranging from physical incompetence and vanity, to an ambition "for independence and public recognition," which resulted in the neglect of "the duties of her home." The result was that,

the management of her children is remarkably injudicious, [and] she has no idea of discipline [so that] they are spoiled and pampered and allowed to grow up without any respect for their elders.... partly by the weakness of her own nerves and partly by the unnatural and unwholesome conditions of food, housing, dress, and social habits, under which she permits her children to grow up, she is impairing the stamina of the race and undermining the future.⁵³

In opposition to these alarming trends, "[p]ress, pulpit, clinic, and school," began to reaffirm the benefits and honours of motherhood during the inter-war years.⁵⁴ This situation had not

LXXII, 4 (1991), 474-479.

⁵³ Dr. Woods Hutchinson cited in Comacchio, *Nations are Built of Babies*, 108.

⁵⁴ Strong-Boag, "Intruders in the Nursery," 161; Comacchio, 65, 108-9. See also Light and Pierson, *No Easy Road*, 159, in which a prize winning essay of May, 1945 (*National Home Monthly*) describes the author's future hopes for her daughter: "I know she will be a woman," she writes, "And unless she is unnatural she will want to be a wife and mother."

changed by the post-World War Two period. In fact, the decade of the 1950's has been distinguished as "the most profoundly pronatalist of the twentieth century."⁵⁵ The *Canadian Mother's Book* of 1949, for example, declared that, "The birth of a baby is the most glorious achievement in the life of a woman, for, in becoming a mother, she completely fulfils the special purpose of her existence as a woman."⁵⁶ Mothers were expected to sacrifice all other interests and activities in the interests of maintaining their home and family. Those who were unwilling or unable to do so were considered poor, and even dangerous mothers. As Dr. John Bowlby, an internationally renowned British doctor and child psychologist pronounced, the level and quality of care required to raise *normal* and *healthy* children was, "possible only for a woman who derives profound satisfaction from seeing her child grow from babyhood, through the many phases of childhood, to become an independent man or woman, and knows that it is her [care] which has made this possible."⁵⁷

The importance attached to women's 'ideal purpose' in motherhood was enhanced by an overwhelmingly uniform assumption in popular advice literature that the atmosphere of the mother-child relationship was the finest environment in which to raise healthy, well-adjusted children.⁵⁸ So narrowly defined was this environment, in fact, that virtually all of the responsibility for the raising of children rested on mothers, with scant reference to the child's father. "It is from the mother, most especially" wrote Dr. Alan Brown of Toronto,

⁵⁵ Arnup, *Education for Motherhood*, 9.

⁵⁶ Ernest Couture, *The Canadian Mother's Book* (Ottawa: 1949).

⁵⁷ Bowlby, *Maternal Care and Mental Health*, 67.

⁵⁸ Arnup, *Education for Motherhood*, 39. See also Nancy Pottishman Weiss, "The Mother-Child Dyad Revisited: Perceptions of Mothers and Children in Twentieth Century Child Rearing Manuals," *Journal of Social Issues* 34, 2 (1978), 29-45.

“that... guidance will come.”⁵⁹ The father, instead, was a figurehead, whose duties were decided by a predetermined image of his role as the family’s primary breadwinner. As much as childcare experts had asserted their authority over a mother’s ability to raise her children, so too had they usurped the father’s role as an active partner in the process of child rearing.⁶⁰ His emotional support of his wife was acknowledged, however, and as Bowlby wrote in his immensely influential study of maternal deprivation, “In the child’s eyes father plays second fiddle and his value increases only as the child’s vulnerability to deprivation decreases [after ca. age 5].”⁶¹ The majority, but not all of the childcare experts, accepted this essentially passive role for Canadian fathers. By contrast, Mabel Crews Ringland argued that a father’s experience and understanding of the business world could be most advantageously employed in the training of his children for future responsibilities. Men’s “complete experience” of the business world, she maintained, actually made them better suited to the task than women. If the country’s future was to be improved, the father’s skills also had to be applied in the home in a modern, scientific manner. “It has taken us a long time to realise,” she wrote,

that a badly reared child is of more potential danger to society than a poorly driven automobile, a badly run business or an inefficiently operated or antiquated machine. And if human nature is ever going to advance in proportion to the improvements in industry, science and business... it will be because the fathers, as well as the mothers, regard their job of parenthood as a science for which some intelligent preparation is required, just as it is for any other skilled occupation.⁶²

Whether or not child care experts agreed on the *degree* of involvement necessary from

⁵⁹ Alan Brown, *The Normal Child* (Toronto: 1932), 205.

⁶⁰ Comacchio, *Nations are Built of Babies*, 139.

⁶¹ Bowlby, *Maternal Care and Mental Health*, 13. His study held only that the father’s economic and emotional support of his wife was to “assumed.”

⁶² Mabel Crews Ringland, “What About Father?” *MacLean's* (August 1, 1928).

fathers, it is clear that their presence and support, financial or otherwise, was considered indispensable in the life of a child. “[A]s the *illegitimate* child knows,” Dr. Bowlby emphasised, “fathers have their uses, even in infancy.”⁶³ In forging the familial ideal for Canadian society, therefore, the professional ranks made the implicit assumption that both single mothers and unemployed fathers were a threat to normal child development. What was required, they insisted, was a securely grounded nuclear family, organised along patriarchal lines.

The clearest way for the professional ranks to promote and maintain this family model, retain their authority in the realm of child welfare, *and* improve the health of children, was to focus their efforts on educating women (and, to lesser degree, men) in their duties as parents. Even through his role as a pre-school educator, in fact, William Blatz maintained a parent education program at the ICS, which was as important to his agenda as child study itself. The purpose of the program was, “to educate parents in the newest, scientifically based ways of raising children.” Parents (the majority, if not all of which, were mothers) were given assignments and book reports, and encouraged to keep a journal noting various aspects of their child’s behaviour. One enthusiastic account of these classes claims that they “became a way to make motherhood a stimulating challenge and enliven domestic life by making it an enterprise of efficiency and merit.” As well, the classes were intended to help mothers “develop more enlightened ways of viewing children.”⁶⁴ Thus, it was not only

⁶³ Bowlby, *Maternal Care and Mental Health*, 13.

⁶⁴ Raymond, *The Nursery World of Dr Blatz*, 71 (pages 68-73 and 85-87 cover in greater detail the contents of the parents’ education classes); see also Northway, “Child Study in Canada: A Casual History,” in Lois M. Brockman *et al.*, (eds.) *Child Development: Selected Readings* (1973), 12.

children who required training, but their parents as well. In 1928, *Chatelaine* columnist F.L. Johnson remarked that, “[i]ntelligent parents realize that they need training for the most important job in life, that they cannot afford to approach this all absorbing problem of child training without adequate preparation and they are eagerly grasping the opportunities offered them in training courses.”⁶⁵

The insistence upon the importance of maternal education was more than one columnist’s or pre-school educator’s opinion; throughout this entire period, in fact, child care experts overwhelmingly supported efforts to educate mothers, claiming that they were a virtual ‘cure-all’ for the problems facing the nation’s children. Providing education and training plans was “the first step in the education of the young and oftimes ignorant mother, for our system of education has left largely to chance that women be instructed in this most important duty.”⁶⁶ Moreover, maternal education was seen as the best way to ensure that mothers were able to teach their children the importance of responsible citizenship. “The advantage of special training of our young mothers in the responsibilities of parenthood,” wrote Nova Scotia’s M.E. MacKenzie, “should help to enable them to give their children the best possible opportunities of becoming normal, healthy citizens.”⁶⁷ As several historians have noted, this reliance upon maternal education significantly altered women’s positions

⁶⁵ Frances Lily Johnson, “Where a Child Can Be A Child,” 28. J.B. Watson was equally certain that parents required education, as he claimed that, “No one today knows enough to raise a child. The world would be considerably better off if we were to stop having children for twenty years (except those raised for experimental purposes) and were then to start again with enough facts to do the job with some degree of skill and accuracy.” Cited in Miller, “Psychology and the Child,” 75.

⁶⁶ Arnup, *Education for Motherhood*, 45.

⁶⁷ M E. Mackenzie, “Report of the Superintendent of Nursing Service,” 19.

within their own homes; no longer was ‘maternal instinct’ or advice from older women and female relatives sufficient. New ‘scientific’ techniques were far superior, and many experts deplored any other sources of information as amateur, old-fashioned, and at times, dangerous. A prominent advertisement for Phillip’s Milk of Magnesia that appeared in the *Halifax Mail* in 1934, for example, declared that, “Every day, unthinkingly, mothers take the advice of unqualified persons – instead of their doctors’ – on remedies for their children. If they knew what the scientists know, they would *never* take this chance.”⁶⁸ Similarly, Bengé Atlee lamented that because of a mother’s unwillingness to accept expert advice, “the home today is the poorest run, most mismanaged and bungled of all human industries... Many women running homes haven’t even the fundamentals of house management and dietetics. They raise their children, in the average, by a rule of thumb that hasn’t altered since Abraham was a lad.”⁶⁹ The prestige once accorded women on account of their reproductive roles thus was transferred to the realm of the doctor and psychologist whose professional training conferred the unquestionable authority of medical science upon their advice.⁷⁰

While medical professionals knew all that was required to raise healthy, well-adjusted children, and endeavoured to make this information available to mothers, the ultimate *outcome* of any effort to raise a child was judged to be a consequence of a mother’s skill:

⁶⁸ *Halifax Mail*, (29 September 1934), 4. The advertisement features a large photograph of a mother poised with one hand on the telephone, and the other around her young daughter.

⁶⁹ Atlee, “The Menace of Maternity,” 9. See also Strong-Boag, “Intruders in the Nursery,” 161; Jane Lewis, “‘Motherhood Issues’ in the Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” in Katherine Arnup, Andrée Levesque and Ruth Roach Pierson, (eds.), *Delivering Motherhood: Maternal Ideologies and Practices in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (London: 1990), 1-19; Comacchio, *Nations are Built of Babies*, 10-11.

⁷⁰ Comacchio, *Nations Are Built of Babies*, 109.

failure in the child was caused by failure in the parent. Evelyn Seely, writing in 1936, emphasised that “your child mirrors you and your home: if your child is a problem child, probably you are a problem mother.”⁷¹ Expert opinions in the post-World War Two period were equally certain that faulty maternal behaviour resulted in psychologically damaged children; whether domineering, overprotective, or neglectful, a mother’s failings were the result of her inability (or unwillingness) to accept and apply professional advice.⁷² In large part, this was the result of the growing popularity of theories which connected maladjustment to maternal deprivation. These were far from ‘new’ ideas at this time, but their influence reached an unprecedented level of acceptance through the work of John Bowlby. Indeed, columnists for *Chatelaine* cited him as an “authority beyond challenge,” and the results of his work were considered by many to be infallible.⁷³ His seminal report prepared for the World Health Organisation in 1949 was the outcome of extensive research into the mental health and development of homeless children who had lived out their childhood in institutional settings or group homes. While the nature of the test group was certainly an important element in the outcome of his studies, Bowlby’s work nevertheless implied, and was widely construed to imply, an application to the healthy mental development of *all* children, inside or outside of institutions. “Among the most significant developments in psychiatry during the past quarter of a century,” he wrote, “has been the steady growth of evidence that the quality of the parental care which a child receives in his earliest years is of

⁷¹ Psychologist Ellaine Elmore cited by Evelyn Seeley, “Debunking the Mother Myth,” *Chatelaine*, (February 1936), 4.

⁷² Arnup, *Education for Motherhood*, 150-151; Comacchio, *Nations are Built of Babies*, 127-8.

⁷³ Light and Pierson, *No Easy Road*, 174.

vital importance for his future mental health.” Importantly, the essential element of this parental care was that the child,

should experience a warm, intimate, and continuous relationship with the mother (or permanent mother substitute) in which both find satisfaction and enjoyment... a child is deprived even though living at home if his mother ... is unable to give him the loving care small children need. Again, a child is deprived *if for any reason he is removed from his mother's care.*⁷⁴

Separation from mothers during childhood, it was argued, led to guilt, depression, acute anxiety, a powerful desire for revenge, and an excessive need for love. All of these emotions were far too strong for the “immature means of control and organisation available to a young child,” and thus, had “grave and far-reaching effects” on a child’s personality development and future mental health.⁷⁵

Bowlby’s work had a powerful impact, in large part, because it gave professional, “scientific” proof of what ‘everybody’ already knew – that a mother’s constant presence in the home was absolutely necessary for the future well-being of her family, and consequently the country itself. Women were warned against working in the paid labour force and were strongly encouraged (and expected) instead, to embrace motherhood as a full time occupation. “[T]he mother love which a young child needs,” Bowlby wrote, “is so easily provided within the family, and is so very very difficult to provide outside it.”⁷⁶ The direct

⁷⁴ Bowlby, *Maternal Care and Mental Health*, 11-12, 67. My emphasis. Ironically, while constant care from the mother was promoted, it was also stressed by several prominent child care experts, that too much attention, or ‘improper’ mother love would smother a child. See Pottishman-Weiss, “Mother, the Invention of Necessity: Dr. Spock’s *Baby and Child Care*,” *American Quarterly* 24 (Winter 1977), 519-46.

⁷⁵ Bowlby, *Maternal Care and Mental Health*, 12.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 67; see also Alvin Finkel, “‘Even The Little Children Cooperated’: Family Strategies, Childcare Discourse, and Social Welfare Debates, 1945-1975,” *Labour / le Travail* 36 (Fall, 1995), 109, n. 81; Arnup, *Educating for Motherhood*, 149.

assumption made from this popular view was that working mothers, by virtue of their daily absence from the home, threatened the psychological health of their children. Moreover, it was believed that working mothers were directly responsible for the perceived increase in rates of juvenile delinquency in the country. "Working Mothers," according to Reverend James Mutchmor, a moderator of the United Church, were "sowing the seeds of teenage drinking, carousal, gambling and sexual promiscuity."⁷⁷ The NCWC, while officially condemning any discrimination against married women, also endorsed these views, and encouraged mothers to stay home in order to protect the country's future citizens from the lure of criminal activity. In 1946, the Council's national president, Laura Hardy, addressed a gathering of women in Winnipeg declaring that,

With juvenile delinquency on the increase, it is high time we took a firm stand in placing the cause right where it belongs. Bad housing conditions may contribute but all juvenile delinquents do not come from such surroundings... Why not a crusade to maintain to women who are mothers that their greatest contribution to their country is the training of children for loyal Canadian citizenship and Christian living...?⁷⁸

In promoting full time motherhood as the only means by which the well-being of the nation's children could be ensured, child care experts and groups like the NCWC effectively labelled working mothers who made use of day nurseries as inadequate caregivers. While some recognised that nurseries were a necessity for some families, others assumed that most women worked outside of the home in order to "shirk their responsibilities in caring for their children," and to "boost what is already an equitable income."⁷⁹ This irresponsibility and

⁷⁷ Cited in Light and Pierson, *No Easy Road*, 174.

⁷⁸ Cited in Finkel, "Even the Little Children Cooperated," 105.

⁷⁹ *The Globe and Mail*, cited in Prentice, "Workers, Mothers, Reds," 117. One government official in Ontario is quoted in this article as saying, "We believe that a

greed, moreover, was thought to result in the development of mental problems in the child.

In a 1951 article published in *Chatelaine*, for example, one mother wrote,

I won't send my child to a nursery school because to me this is like plucking a plant before the buds are properly formed in the home soil, and he may never regain an adequate sense of security... [the school might] completely smother his individuality and stunt the natural growth of his powers to think for himself.

While this author did acknowledge that day nurseries, were “an absolute necessity for the working mother in this industrial age,” she clarified that, “this doesn't in any way justify the rash of privately operated and community run nursery schools which are spreading across the land. Many a modern mother is only too anxious to shift her responsibilities.”⁸⁰

As reflected in this woman's arguments, day nurseries in Canada were regarded as places of ‘last resort’ for low-income families, and importantly, they were classified as entirely distinct from nursery schools. In large part, this distinction was made by nursery school educators themselves, and evolved out of their concerns that the conditions under which many nurseries operated were potentially damaging to children. Dr. Blatz was very critical of the “amateur” administration of day nurseries in Canada, in fact, and believed that a bad nursery was as dangerous as a bad home. He was also disparaging of the day nurseries' long hours, and when discussing the hours of the war time nurseries in England (which were equivalent to those at day nurseries such as the Jost), he remarked that, “Except for the present emergency, these hours would be inexcusable. These children have no opportunity

child should be brought up in the proper environment of its own home, when possible.” (p. 117).

⁸⁰ “I Won't Send My Child to a Nursery School,” *Chatelaine* (November 1951), 12-13.

for family life except over Sunday.”⁸¹

It was not merely the criticism of expert childcare professionals like Dr. Blatz that segregated nursery schools and day nursery centres; the two services also were structurally and functionally distinct from one another. While day nurseries were used almost exclusively by working class families, the clientele making use of the nursery schools was comprised of middle or upper class parents who could afford to pay the tuition fees. At St. George’s, the majority of the parents were connected with the University of Toronto, the CNCMH, or the local medical establishment. They were, “well-educated, in fairly comfortable circumstances, and a trifle adventurous in choosing ‘modern ways’ over accepted practices.”⁸² Similarly, the schools were not merely centres providing alternatives to home care for these parents, but places where their children were given a superior start on life. The training received at the nursery school was believed capable of giving their children the skills necessary to maintain or advance their social positions in life.⁸³ Moreover, centres such as St. George’s were used as much for child *study* as they were for the education of pre-school children. Blatz’s Nursery School opened early in 1926, having received its initial funding through a grant from the Laura Spellman Rockefeller Foundation and the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. This grant was set out to fund two nursery schools “of a scientific type,”⁸⁴ one at the University of Toronto, and the other at McGill in

⁸¹ Blatz, *Understanding the Young Child*, 273; Raymond, *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz*, 193.

⁸² Raymond, *The Nursery World of Dr Blatz*, 56. See also Strong-Boag, “Intruders in the Nursery,” 167.

⁸³ Strong-Boag, “Intruders in the Nursery,” 172; Light and Pierson, *No Easy Road*, 205.

⁸⁴ Dr. C. M. Hincks cited in Strong-Boag, “Intruders in the Nursery,” 167.

Montreal.⁸⁵ The ICS in Toronto was affiliated with the University's department of psychology, and Dr. Blatz's 'adult students' received much of their training within the nursery itself, observing and working with its inhabitants. According to Blatz,

In the nursery school division a controlled environment is possible and the behaviour of the child in such an environment, particularly under the influence of the members of the group, can be observed and recorded. The child is not "experimented with" in the sense that some critics dread. He is furnished with abundant material to stimulate his varied interests and his activities are noted.⁸⁶

The program and method established by Blatz and his colleagues dominated the child study movement and the development of day nurseries in Canada, "with no obvious rivals for public attention or official recognition," for several years.⁸⁷ In 1951, Dora Conover wrote of his influence in *Saturday Night*: "After 25 years, the 'radical' theories of Dr W. E. Blatz [here given the title "Child Care's Bad Boy"] and his Institute of Child Studies are now the accepted keys to happy child and parent training."⁸⁸ Students of Dr. Blatz who had studied directly under him at the ICS also went on to establish nursery schools after the fashion of St. George's in all parts of the country, including the Maritimes, where Miss Vi Ord established Eastern Canada's first nursery school in Halifax in the late 1930's.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ The McGill experiment operated on a limited scale, and by 1930 the school had closed. As Veronica Strong-Boag has noted, "[t]he collapse of the McGill experiment in 1930... indicated how far from convinced of the superior benefits of such a program were many Canadians" ("Intruders in the Nursery," 167).

⁸⁶ Cited in Mary L. Northway, "Child Study in Canada," 12. See also Raymond, *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz*, 66-69. The rooms in the nursery were equipped with screens so that Blatz's students could observe the children unnoticed.

⁸⁷ Strong-Boag, "Intruders in the Nursery," 169; Varga, *Constructing the Child*, 13-15.

⁸⁸ Dora Conover, "Dr. Blatz: Child Care's Bad Boy," *Saturday Night* (8 December 1951), 12.

⁸⁹ Northway, "Child Study in Canada," 18.

Blatz and his associates were not only adamant that nursery schools were far superior to day nurseries, but they also saw nursery schools as an integral part of Canada's expanding child care network. These institutions, they argued, were an absolute necessity for the normal mental development of the child, and his or her preparation for the future. In his 1944 publication, *Understanding the Young Child*, Blatz proclaimed that just as doctors, dentists and social workers assisted parents in their responsibilities, so too did the nursery school:

Today the nursery school must be looked upon not as a charitable institution, nor as a convenience for parents, but rather as a necessary adjunct to childcare and training.... The nursery school is an additional aid for helping the mother and father to prepare their children for a democratic way of living. The nursery school is for neither the privileged nor the underprivileged, but for both. *The nursery school is not a luxury, it is a necessity.*⁹⁰

By contrast, Dorothy Millichamp, herself a nursery school educator and colleague of Dr. Blatz, spoke of the closure of the war time day nurseries in 1946 as a welcomed occurrence: "Professionally, we didn't want to see daycare bloom.... We never felt it was the right answer unless it was absolutely necessary [as] we felt [it] was for emergencies, not just for every child."⁹¹

Blatz's insistence upon the vital importance of nursery education placed him in a minority position in Canadian society. Despite his own institution's prestige, in fact, and the growing acceptance of nursery schools among certain sectors of society, the 'idea' of pre-school education did appear to disrupt the sanctity of the home, allowing the opportunity for

⁹⁰ Blatz, *Understanding the Young Child*, 240. My emphasis.

⁹¹ Cited in Prentice, "Workers, Mothers, Reds," 119.

mothers to relieve themselves of their duties.⁹² Indeed, Dr. Blatz went to great lengths to demonstrate that his program of nursery and maternal education, “instead of being an excuse for neglecting their offspring,” was a “stimulus to greater interest and understanding” for Canadian mothers. “What the nursery school has done,” he insisted, “is to demonstrate the inadequacy of the methods of training commonly employed in homes,” and to train mothers in the same principles of child management employed at St. George’s.⁹³

The ease with which the campaign for child welfare allowed experts to place responsibility so firmly upon a mother’s shoulders had another implication for the construction of the ideal, ‘modern’ family in Canadian society. Not only did it define women’s highest function as motherhood and establish the home as the optimal environment for child development, but it allowed the professional ranks to turn a blind eye to other, more substantial problems being faced by Canadian families. As Katherine Arnup has suggested, it was “inexpensive and convenient”⁹⁴ to blame mothers for the physical and mental dysfunction of the nation’s children, rather than to examine or attempt to remedy the impacts of poverty, inadequate housing, untreated illness, and malnutrition on a child’s development. This economic motivation behind the maternal education campaign also had ironic echoes within the advice literature itself. While seeking to minimise the costs of administering child welfare by placing responsibility for it in the home, childcare professionals effectively placed the remedies for maladjustment and poor physical health far beyond the reach of many

⁹² Northway, “Child Development,” 14; Light and Pierson, *No Easy Road*, 205; Raymond, *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz*, 51.

⁹³ Raymond, *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz*, 60; Blatz and Bott, *Parents and the Pre-School Child*, 57.

⁹⁴ Arnup, *Education for Motherhood*, 42. See also pp. 31-41.

Canadian families. The advice delivered to parents, in fact, was based upon a middle-class, English Canadian familial ideal which made tacit assumptions about the family's ability to provide the minimum standard of housing, furnishings, diet and income required for healthy child development. It was not merely these physical aspects of childcare which were prohibitive, however, as many families did not have adequate funds to answer to professional insistence that they make regular visits to doctors and mental health clinics.⁹⁵

This orientation in the child welfare campaign also had political overtones; while several prominent professional groups and individuals put a great deal of *public* effort into the campaign to help improve Canada's children, their attitude toward state intervention was ambivalent. Reflecting common anxieties about the spread of Communism, any attempt to intervene too directly into the private life of the family was avoided, including the provision of publicly funded day care. There was more at stake than "freedom from the burdens of parenthood for a few hours," according to an editorial in the *Globe and Mail*. "What is ultimately to be determined is the degree to which the state will be allowed to usurp the functions of the home."⁹⁶ Similarly, it was argued in the *Public Health Journal* that, "The duty of bringing up children does not belong to the state, but rather to the mothers, and whatever we do, we must not be too ready to relieve them of their responsibility."⁹⁷ Communism was not the only threat presented by government intervention. In the late

⁹⁵ Dodd, "Advice to Parents," 213; Arnup, *Education for Motherhood*, 117, 145; Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in Canada, 1919-1939* (Toronto: 1988), 146.

⁹⁶ *Globe and Mail*, 1 March 1949, cited in Prentice, "Workers, Mothers, Reds," 128. See also Arnup, *Education for Motherhood*, 25; Comacchio, *Nations are Built of Babies*, 4.

⁹⁷ Charles A. Hodgetts, Chief of the Division of Statistics and Publicity, cited in Arnup, *Education for Motherhood*, 117.

1930's and 1940's, in keeping with growing concerns about the fascist states of Europe, childcare experts also expressed concern that child rearing techniques not promote totalitarian behaviour. According to William Blatz, "The state may *suggest* standards, may *arrange* safeguards, may *institute* plans, but these are only to assist the parents, never to replace them... the parent is the keystone of the social structure. Any attempt to usurp this function destroys a free society and substitutes, in its stead, fascism or slavery."⁹⁸

While the economics of 'modern' child rearing may have been out of the reach of many Canadian families, it was nevertheless a program which validated the beliefs that professional child care experts held about the society in which they lived, and the society which they hoped to improve. Their insistence upon maternal responsibility and their program of education for motherhood reflected, on the one hand, a belief in the fundamental importance of the nuclear family and a woman's role as a primary caregiver for her children. On the other, it mirrored their desire to improve the efficiency of the industrial system and promote the development of a healthy citizenry through solid training and mental health. As it affected pre-school care in Canada, this system upheld an inflexible boundary between the acceptable "norm" of professional nursery schools, and the unacceptable, or "emergency" system of care for working class parents. Expert advice, in fact, rarely referred to the existence of day care centres except to offer such criticisms as might promote their own personal mandates and methods. As the Jost example will illustrate, however, day care was not entirely isolated from the influence of professional childcare advice, nor did its administrators envision their services as anything but integral to the social welfare system.

⁹⁸ Blatz, *Understanding the Young Child*, 9.

Nevertheless, as day nurseries were centres that answered to a variety of social needs for working class Canadians, their adoption of expert advice was necessarily defined by their wider awareness of the community in which they worked.

Chapter Two:
Respectable Progress in “This Corner of the Master’s Vineyard”
Jost Mission, 1925-1939

In March of 1924, a reporter from the *Evening Mail* paid a visit to the Jost Mission Day Nursery, situated below Citadel Hill at 91 Brunswick Street in Halifax. “A single visit,” he wrote, “is sufficient to make a profound impression upon even the most indifferent, and it is surprising that so many Haligonians are quite unaware of what is being achieved.” The workers at the Mission, he maintained, were “hiding their light under a bushel” by depriving the public of any knowledge of the important “nucleus of settlement work” conducted there. “Working in a quiet, unostentatious, but tremendously effective way, there is no organization that is doing a finer work than the Jost Mission.”¹ The praise given the Mission and its workers in this feature article was not undeserved. From the mid-1920’s to the late 1930’s, the Ladies’ Committee managing its administration, as well as the staff hired to work there, laboured under economic conditions which were often extreme, and a social atmosphere which was not consistently hospitable to their work, despite the impressions given by the *Mail’s* reporter. It is distinctly apparent, however, that its staff possessed a keen awareness of the importance of their work in the city. In keeping with the nation-wide trends discussed in the previous chapter, they specifically geared their operation toward the improvement of their community through the amelioration of living conditions for the women and children who came under their care. To this end, they maintained the day nursery service and an employment bureau for local women (many of whose children stayed at the nursery during the day), as well as sponsoring meetings, classes and social events for local women and girls,

¹ *Evening Mail*, 31 March 1924, 6.

and providing material and financial relief to several local families.

While the Jost's services in this inter-war period were an important part of the emerging network of welfare services in the city of Halifax, its staff did operate under a mandate which was defined as much by their own vision of the community as it was by the needs of the community itself. Moreover, their circumstances were complicated by a conflict between expert advice on childcare and the practical concerns of the day to day administration of the nursery. Thus, while they did not reject all progressive interventions or innovations in the field of social work and child care in this period, they did not uniformly adopt them either. The Mission's development in these two decades was shaped, instead, by an elaborate combination of motivations and circumstances to which the service and its administrators adopted, at times willingly, at times because they were compelled to. Their efforts on behalf of local women were often influenced by attitudes consistent with the patriarchal ideal of the family promoted by the medical and social work professionals. Altering the program of the day nursery simply to suit the standards established by the experts, however, would have significantly hindered the Jost administration's ability to answer to what they saw as the most pressing needs of their clients during the inter-war years.

One of the most crucial elements influencing the efforts of the Jost Mission after World War One was the local economy. While the Mission was a privately run institution, it was also a service catering to working class families, and in particular, working mothers. The conditions and patterns of employment affecting this class of people, therefore, had a profound effect upon the design of the Mission's programs. Altogether, the interval between

the wars in Halifax was characterised by a chronic and often severe economic depression that affected the entire Maritime region. The rapid economic growth of the early twentieth century had ended and the industrial structure of the Eastern provinces, while well-equipped to operate under conditions of expansion, was ill-prepared to compete with central Canadian interests in the relatively stabilised economy of the 1920's. Practically every aspect of the region's economy, comprising the steel industry, mining, lumber, pulp and paper, shipbuilding, agriculture, fishing, and manufacturing, entered a period of acute decline after 1919. Many of the causes of this crisis were beyond the control of Maritime Canadians.² Political developments in Ottawa, however, also conspired to worsen the economy; in particular, federal policies regulating railway and tariff arrangements, which were of critical importance to industrial development in the region, were adjusted to favour central Canadian interests. The political influence of Atlantic Canadian politicians in Ottawa, as well as the agitation of the Maritime Rights Movement, failed to effectively remedy these circumstances.³

Interestingly, the Maritime Rights Movement has become a significant component

² Finkel notes that these included the disruption of traditional trading patterns by the war, an international trend toward protectionism, and a relative decrease in the efficiency of Maritime industry. Ernest R. Forbes, *The Maritime Rights Movement, 1919-1927: A Study in Canadian Regionalism* (Montreal: 1979), 54.

³ Forbes, *The Maritime Rights Movement*, 54-72; see also S. A. Saunders, *The Economic History of the Maritime Provinces* (Saint John: 1984), 37-44. The campaign for Maritime Rights involved businessmen, professionals, politicians, farmers, labourers and fishermen in an attempt to reach region wide organisation and agitation for change. It was a spontaneous expression of both the social and economic frustrations of the Maritime Provinces, whose demands included increased federal subsidies, the encouragement of more international trade through the Atlantic port cities of Saint John and Halifax, and improved tariff protection for the coal and steel industries of the region.

in the historiographical debate over the purported “conservatism” of the Maritime region. Comparing the Atlantic Provinces’ efforts to effect change through traditional political parties, to the non-partisan ideas of the “Progressive” movement of the Western Provinces, historians have tended to see the Eastern Canadian protest as a conservative, idiosyncratic regional reaction against changes which threatened the *status-quo*. Western protest, on the other hand, is portrayed as being “consistent with the frontier tradition of self-sufficiency and independence.”⁴ However, as Ernest Forbes has argued, the Maritime Rights Movement was closely connected to the continent-wide *progressive* reform ideology of the early twentieth century. There was certainly no absolute or unified definition of what ‘reform’ entailed, but right’s activists believed that practical, efficient, and co-operative regeneration in the realms of legislation and education would assist in the creation of an improved and ‘efficient’ social order.⁵ For example, despite Richard Allen’s contention that social gospel had “virtually no impact” in the Maritimes, the major Protestant denominations in the province did embrace the ideals of the movement, accepting the possibility of societal regeneration through the application of ‘practical’ Christian principles.⁶ In 1920, moreover, the *Halifax Citizen*, speaking for organised labour, proclaimed that “the masses of people,” disgusted with the conditions of the past and present, were forging new ideals and methods,

⁴ Walter Young, *Democracy and Discontent: Progressivism, Socialism and Social Credit in the Canadian West* (Toronto: 1978), 111. See also Forbes, *Maritime Rights*, 201-202, n. 1.

⁵ Forbes, *Maritime Rights*, 30-33, 38-39.

⁶ Richard Allen, *The Social Passion*, 110; Forbes, *Maritime Rights*, 31; Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto: 1985), 174-6; E.R. Forbes, “Prohibition and the Social Gospel in Nova Scotia,” *Acadiensis* 1, 1 (Autumn, 1971), 11-36.

...determined that a better world shall be constructed and a better opportunity given to their children... The world as we knew it before the war has collapsed. The past with its greed and corruption, its racial and religious prejudices, its poverty, penury and unemployment for the large masses of the population, must end with the past and must not be carried over to the new civilisation, now in the course of Reconstruction.⁷

The effort to implement reform at the provincial level required an increase of both governmental intervention, and expense. However, the economic situation in Nova Scotia, and the entire region, hindered the reform process significantly. Unable to maintain an adequate standard of living, many families began to migrate to central Canada and the United States, with the result that between 1921 and 1931, the Maritime population increased by only 0.9 per cent. The province of Nova Scotia suffered an actual decline, and the population of Halifax remained virtually stagnant at just under 60,000 people. As a result, while demands for increased governmental services and social welfare programs were mounting, resources available for funding such services had dramatically declined.⁸ In the 1930's, Halifax's population did begin to increase, but expansion of public services remained obstructed by the continued economic depression which stretched over that entire decade.⁹

Economic privation in the region also left many more of Nova Scotia's residents at the mercy of local welfare and charitable institutions. According to A. C. Pettipas of the City

⁷ *The Citizen*, 28 May 1920, 5.

⁸ Forbes, *Maritime Rights*, 65-66; Saunders, *Economic History of the Maritime Provinces*, 31; *Canada Census* 1931, v.2, 31.

⁹ The only major expansion of public welfare in Nova Scotia during this period was the adoption of the Provincial Mother's Allowance Act in 1930. In the late 1930's, when the Welfare Council of Halifax began pressuring for an expansion of the act, they were informed that "because of financial reasons it is impossible at the present time to consider any extensions of the Act." PANS MG 20 Vol. 414, Minutes of the Council of Social Agencies, 20 April 1939.

Health Board, if not for the efforts of local organisations such as the VON, the St. Vincent de Paul Society or the Welfare Association, “the living conditions of the poor in Halifax would baffle description.”¹⁰ In many instances, however, these institutions seemed ill-equipped to meet the demands on their resources. In January of 1925, the *Evening Mail* reported on housing conditions for the poorer classes, describing them as “Dark, inevitably filthy, rookeries unfit for habitation by animals, much less human beings, much less children.” More importantly, it was noted, it was under these conditions that “disease is being bred.... [and] criminals and ne’er do wells are being produced.”¹¹ The *Citizen*, a newspaper which stood “four square for the interests of the workers and the poorer classes,” also made note that “*Damp walls, leaky roofs, broken floors, low ceilings and general dilapidation are most common among the houses that many of our working people have to rent.*” In reference to the low wage rates in the city and the consequent difficulty which people had in improving their own positions, this editorial stressed that, “*People under present economic conditions have to live in surroundings fixed by their incomes.*”¹² The situation faced by welfare agencies in Halifax was aggravated further by conditions during the Great Depression. Income levels in the province, which even at their peak in the 1920’s did not reach the level to which the richer provinces sank in the depths of the Depression, fell even further in the 1930’s. In 1936, relief payments in the city of Halifax were the second

¹⁰ *Evening Mail*, n.d. Clipping from PANS MG 20 Vol. 532, #1, The Halifax Relief Commission (hereafter HRC) Scrapbook, 1922-1929. The article probably appeared in November or December of 1924.

¹¹ *Evening Mail* 8 January 1925, 1. Several articles relating to poor housing conditions are contained in PANS MG 20 Vol. 532, HRC Scrapbooks.

¹² *The Citizen*, 2 January 1925, 1. Emphasis original.

lowest in the entire country at just under nineteen dollars a month for a family of five. Moreover, according to James Struthers, public relief in Nova Scotia “remained governed by Dickensian nineteenth-century principles” which insisted that relief must not compromise the work ethic.¹³ The problems faced by the city’s poor were the main concern of Don MacPhail, the General Secretary of the YMCA, when he launched an attack on the churches and organised charities in 1931. In response to their failure to organise and manage the relief services in the city, he declared that “if that’s Christianity, we had better get rid of our churches and charities and let some cold blooded official at City Hall look after it.”¹⁴

The women at the Jost appear to have dealt relatively well with the demand from needy families for their services. Admittedly, their “chase for the elusive dollar” was sometimes unsuccessful, and the Jost was forced to cancel traditional annual events for the women and children at the centre.¹⁵ Over the course of the 1920’s and 1930’s, however, the Jost Mission was able to continue to provide material relief in the form of clothing and food for the poorer families in their neighbourhood, if not always to the standards they wished. They also appear to have become ‘sponsors’ for entire households, as was the case in 1930, when one breadwinner was struck with an illness, and the family was “badly in need of

¹³ James Struthers, *No Fault of their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914-1941* (Toronto: 1983), 49. Saint John N.B. had the lowest level of relief, but was only sixteen cents below the rate for Halifax. The next highest relief payment was in Quebec City at approximately twenty-seven dollars, and the highest level was received by the residents of Calgary, who were given just over sixty dollars (221).

¹⁴ *Evening Mail*, 18 September 1931.

¹⁵ PANS MG 20 Vol. 1411, Jost Mission Committee (hereafter JMC), Minutes of 29 September 1925. All minutes and Annual reports for the Jost Mission cited hereafter are located in PANS MG 20 Vol. 1411.

assistance.” The matron made daily visits to the family for a week, and through co-operation with the local Goodfellows Club, they were “well looked after,” and the Mission continued to provide them with milk each day.¹⁶ Following an appeal to the city in 1931, the Committee also was able to raise just under \$4,000 to expand the nursery and make extensive repairs and renovations to the building. The most difficult problem experienced by the Jost in this decade, in fact, appears to have been the provision of employment for the ever-increasing number of women who appeared at their doors. “As the number of Mothers who must become the bread winners [sic] is ever increasing,” it was remarked in 1938, “the task of distributing the work is quite arduous.”¹⁷

High levels of unemployment for the men of Halifax meant that many of their wives were forced to enter the paid labour force. According to the Halifax *Evening Mail*, if local women were unable to find work, described in this instance solely as domestic employment (washing, scrubbing and cleaning), “it would mean the breaking up of their homes. Their children and they would have to become public charges [and] this would be most undesirable both from a social and an economical standpoint.”¹⁸ Not all women entered the paid workforce in Halifax because of their husband’s ‘temporary’ unemployment; physical disability or illness left many men permanently unemployed, and in many occupations the wages received, however steadily, were simply not adequate to support a family. As well,

¹⁶ JMC Minutes, 18 February, 18 March 1930.

¹⁷ Jost Mission Annual Report (JMAR) 1938, 4. These references are particularly common in the Annual Reports of the 1930’s. Unfortunately, it is difficult to assess actual numbers of women employed by the Jost for much of this decade, as the extant minutes from the JMC are present only for the earliest and latest years of the decade.

¹⁸ *Evening Mail*, 31 March 1924, 6.

the dismal economic conditions in the city forced many men to search for work elsewhere, leaving their wives to tend to the home and children in Halifax. Separation, divorce, widowhood, and single motherhood also left many women as the sole supporters of their families, and in 1928, the Welfare Bureau highlighted the problem of the “poor man’s divorce,” or desertion, “a condition which is rapidly becoming a serious one in Halifax.” Significantly, the members of the Bureau dealing with the problem placed the blame for desertion squarely upon the woman’s shoulders. “[T]he incompetence of many women in the matter of housekeeping and care of the home is largely to blame,” they claimed, and “our education system should provide more adequately than it does for practical training along these lines.”¹⁹ While the arguments of the Bureau seem dubious in retrospect, the problem of desertion seems to have been real enough. Between 1921 and 1941, the Canada Census recorded that women headed approximately sixteen percent of all households in the city of Halifax.²⁰

Taking in boarders and extra laundry work were partial solutions to economic difficulties for many women in the city. One local woman, Ellen Blackwood, also earned extra money by serving hot lunches to stevedores and shipyard employees out of her home, before the birth of her third child made the work too difficult.²¹ Many married women,

¹⁹ *Evening Mail*, 7 September 1928, 15. A similar assumption was made by administrators of the Mothers Allowance Act in Ontario. See James Struthers, *The Limits of Affluence: Welfare in Ontario, 1920-1970* (Toronto: 1994), 29.

²⁰ *Census of Canada*, 1921, Vol. 3, table 26, p. 88-89; 1931, Vol. 5, table 93, p. 1246; 1941, Vol. 5, table 21, p. 306-307.

²¹ PANS, Ac 2134-2136, Christina Simmons Collection, interview with Ellen Blackwood [pseudonym], conducted 21, 22 November, 1982. Five interviews conducted by Christina Simmons in the early 1980’s have been used throughout this thesis, and in each case, the

however, including Blackwood, were obligated to take up employment in the paid labour force. For the majority of these Haligonian women in the inter-war years, this meant work in domestic service. Between 1921 and 1941, domestic service was the largest employer of women in the city, averaging between twenty-eight and thirty-nine percent of the female waged labour force (see Appendix 2).²² Not surprisingly, some of the busiest months at the Jost nursery coincided with the cycle of domestic work, being the most active around Easter, for spring cleaning. September through December was also a busy time, when many mothers took up paid employment to earn extra money for the Christmas season.²³ Despite domestic service's near monopoly on employment opportunities for women, work of this type was notoriously unpopular across the country. The intensity of the work was certainly part of the reason for this, as was the sense of social inferiority attached to it.²⁴ Domestic service also was among the lowest paying occupations for women, and where a woman was her family's primary breadwinner, wages from this work were frequently insufficient. In the city of Halifax, wages for occupations classified as "domestic and personal service" were the lowest

name of the interviewee has been changed to protect their privacy.

²² *Census of Canada*, 1921, Vol. 2, table 40, p. 202-207; 1931, Vol. 5, table 43, p. 267-277; 1941, Vol. 6, table 9, p. 251-255. In 1921, the percentage of married women in the female workforce was just over seven per cent. In 1931, this had risen to ten per cent, and in 1941, the level reached just over twelve and one half percent.

²³ The monthly meeting of the Ladies' Committee received regular reports from the matron as to the number of children who had been cared for each month. See the Minute Books of the JMC, 1919-1931, *passim*. Such fluctuation in the need for day nursery care caused by maternal employment patterns was a common feature of charitable day nursery services across the country. See Simmons, "Helping the Poorer Sisters," 294; Varga, *Constructing the Child*, 32-33.

²⁴ PANS, Mf 136 #18-19, Christina Simmons Collection, transcript of interview with Betty Smith [pseudonym], conducted 25 May 1983, p. 1-2.

in the city, ranging from only \$5.85 per week in 1931, to just over six dollars for “charworkers and cleaners,” in 1941. Workers classified as general “domestic servants” in 1941 received only \$3.80 per week.²⁵

A major impediment to women’s employment in Halifax, whether they worked in domestic service or not, was the unavailability of childcare in the city. Indeed, as late as 1950, the Jost claimed that they were “the only day nursery not only in Halifax, but east of Montreal.”²⁶ The Jost was not accessible to all mothers in the city, however, for some because of its location and for others because the Mission was simply not equipped to take every child in need of care. In the early 1920’s, as many as sixty children a day were brought to the nursery, and the staff, “[o]wing to limited space and workers in this department,” were eventually forced to limit the number of admissions to forty per day. For many women, the administrators acknowledged, this meant the loss of a day’s work and wages, and “[t]his we regret, but it can be readily understood that two workers, no matter how capable and willing, cannot care for more....”²⁷ Without access to nursery facilities, mothers often relied upon family members, friends and neighbours for childcare, and in some cases, young children were left to the supervision of their older siblings.²⁸ Mothers also made use of local orphan asylums and children’s homes, boarding their children out by the week in order that they

²⁵ *Census of Canada*, 1931, Vol. 5, table 17, p. 35; 1941, Vol. 6, table 7, page 236. See also JMAR 1930, p. 5. The average wage of all occupations in the city was approximately \$11.65 per week in 1931, and \$12.00 per week in 1941.

²⁶ JMAR 1950; *Halifax Mail*, 18 November 1943, p.7.

²⁷ JMAR 1923, p. 4.

²⁸ As Dodd notes, compulsory school attendance laws made it much more difficult for mothers to enlist to the help of older children in caring for their young siblings. See “Advice to Parents,” 222.

might take up employment without worrying that they were neglecting their offspring. Betty Smith, a local woman who spent her days at the Jost Nursery in the early 1920's, recalled her own mother making use of local children's homes for her and her older brother and sister, "so we could have three meals a day and care... because she was working day by day and she couldn't cope with it."²⁹

Without access to the job market, little other aid was available to mothers in the city of Halifax, or indeed, the province itself. Mothers' allowances, for example, were not instituted in Nova Scotia until October of 1930, despite the study and recommendations made by the Nova Scotia Commission on Mothers' Allowances nearly a decade earlier. Moreover, the amount of relief given was the second lowest in the entire country,³⁰ and the eligibility requirements were exceptionally strict. Impoverished widows were the only category of women who were considered "unquestionably deserving" by the 1921 Commission, and as mothers were expected to be able to support at least one child without public aid, only those widows with two or more children received the benefit. It was

²⁹ PANS, Ac 2138, Christina Simmons Collection, interview with Betty Smith conducted 25 May 1983. See also Patricia Schulz, "Daycare in Canada, 1860-1962," in K. Gallagher-Ross, ed., *Good Daycare: Fighting for It, Getting It, Keeping It* (Toronto: 1978), 145. In Halifax and the surrounding area, the Halifax Home for Girls, the Protestant Children's Orphanage and the Nova Scotia Home for Coloured Children were three institutions which appear to have taken in the children of working mothers, who often visited their children on the weekends.

³⁰ Saskatchewan gave the lowest level of mother's allowance relief in the country, with a maximum of thirty dollars per month for a family of any size in 1929. Over ten years later (1942), the average amount given to a Nova Scotian woman with three children was \$34.67 per month. See Veronica Strong-Boag, "'Wages for Housework': Mothers' Allowances and the Beginnings of Social Security in Canada," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 14, 1 (Spring, 1979), 27; Harry Cassidy, *Public Health and Welfare Reorganization: The Post War Problem in the Canadian Provinces* (Toronto: 1945), 411.

suspected that giving support to families of disabled men “would be open to abuse,” and while the claims of women whose husbands were in prison or mental hospitals had “merit,” the Commission stressed that these cases were of “more or less doubtful character, particularly as prison labour with remuneration for the wife and dependants is being strongly advocated... and seems the more reasonable remedy.”³¹ Not surprisingly, given the Welfare Bureau’s opinion on the issue, deserted wives were also excluded from the mothers’ allowance legislation. Instead, it was recommended that legal procedures be strengthened so that the absent father would be compelled to fulfil his “natural obligations to his family.”³² Besides the restrictions of family structure upon eligibility for benefits, it was also required that applicants be British subjects, and have had at least three years residency in the province.³³ More importantly, the Mother’s Allowance Act reflected a belief that respectability in a woman, manifested in everything from her public behaviour, to her moral and sexual conduct, to the cleanliness of her home, was an indispensable prerequisite of motherhood. The Act, therefore, would only assist those women who were, “in every respect... fit, proper and suitable [people] to have the custody and care of [their] children.”³⁴

³¹ *Journal of the House of Assembly (JHA)*, 1921, Appendix 34, “Report of the Commission on Mother’s Allowances,” 12-13. The recommendations of this Committee remained virtually intact in the 1930 legislation. See: Nova Scotia, *Statutes* 1930, ch. 4, “An Act to Provide for the Payment of Allowances towards the Maintenance of the Dependent Children of Certain Mothers.”

³² *JHA*, 1921, Appendix 34, p. 14.

³³ An article which appeared in the *Evening Mail* on 1 March 1933, also indicated that, to be eligible, a woman was also required to have been a provincial resident at the time of her husband’s death (which had to have occurred in the province), and he himself was required to have been a provincial resident for at least three years prior to his death.

³⁴ *Statutes*, 1930, ch.4, s.1. This same requirement was present in the Ontario legislation, and as both James Struthers and Suzanne Morton have noted, the result was a system in which

The nursery and employment services provided by the Jost Mission were part of a concerted and sincere effort on part of its administrators to alleviate some of the difficulties faced by working women in the city. Between seven and eight o'clock each morning, local mothers would arrive at the Mission with their children, where "a clean attractive sitting room is provided for [them] to wait for word from some employer."³⁵ The majority of calls made to the Mission from employers during this period appear to have come from private homes in search of domestic servants, although the Employment Bureau did receive requests for factory workers (particularly at Moirs, a nearby candy factory). Not all women were able to secure a day's employment through the Mission, however, and in many instances, the demand for work outstripped the supply. For those women who did receive work, either for the day or in a more permanent position, their children were left in the nursery until the end of the working day, generally between five and six p.m.

The Jost Mission's matron was responsible for overseeing the work of both the Employment Bureau, and the nursery service. While she did not have any direct role as a caregiver in the Nursery (this work being carried on by two nursery maids), the matron was in daily contact with the children, and their mothers. Between 1925 and 1939, Mrs. Lillian White, a widow and former schoolteacher, arrived from Saskatchewan to take up the position of matron at the Jost Mission. White clearly was not impressed by the condition of the Jost,

personal opinion and prejudice could often result in the refusal, or withdrawal of benefits. In some instances, reports and rumours from neighbours were used as 'evidence' to disqualify women from receiving benefits. See Struthers, *The Limits of Affluence*, 34; Suzanne Morton, "Men and Women in a Halifax Working-Class Neighbourhood in the 1920's," Ph.D. Thesis, Dalhousie University (1990), 142-3.

³⁵ *Evening Mail*, 31 March 1924, p. 6.

however, and at her first board meeting she threatened to resign, declaring that if the Committee “put up a sign CHILDREN HERDED... I can stay because that is honest, but day nursery isn’t.”³⁶ A strong love for children, as well as a powerful sense of her duty as a Christian, however, kept White at the Nursery for the remainder of the inter-war period. While she was “not [a] folded-hand, devout eyes-to-heaven Christian,” her religious beliefs were a powerful motivator in her work at the Jost, where she operated on “faith and a shoe-string.”³⁷ White’s sense of Christian duty, in fact, appears to have suited the needs of the Jost perfectly. She approached her faith, like her work, with a great deal of practicality, envisioning the physical labours at the Mission as a form of worship in themselves. She possessed many of the characteristics associated with advocates of the Social Gospel movement, whose efforts were directed at the amelioration of society’s problems through hard work, charity and a resilient belief that the condition of human existence could be improved.

Importantly, both Lillian White and the Jost Committee were motivated in part by her desire to ensure that the women they served were able to live with respectability. This sense of respectability, in fact, permeated every aspect of their work, from their own administrative evolution, to their dealings with their “poorer sisters,” to their efforts to provide for the children in the Nursery. Indeed, the quest for ‘respectability’ as a motivating force in the Mission’s evolution cannot be over-emphasised. It was the touchstone of a woman’s

³⁶ Biography of Lillian White by her daughter, Lillian Frances White Preston, September 1984, in the possession of this author. Thanks to Christina Simmons for providing me with a copy of this document.

³⁷ *Halifax Chronicle*, 16 July 1940.

authority and the very definition of womanliness, affecting every aspect of her life, from her dress, language, public behaviour and sexual conduct, to her skills as a housekeeper and caregiver for her children. Respectability was a virtue that “resided in the self image of women as mothers and homemakers [and] also formed their sense of their rights and responsibilities beyond the domestic sphere.”³⁸ Thus, respectability was not only a quality of femininity that regulated women’s conduct, but it was also a routine of behaviour which could affect the opinions of people with whom the Jost staff had to work on a daily basis. Maintaining their status and their sense of respectability was of great importance for the Ladies’ Committee, both because of the Mission’s dependence upon donations for its survival, and also because the ladies themselves had entwined their own identities with the activities at the Mission.³⁹ Providing paid employment for mothers, and giving out-of-home care for their children at a time when the majority of professional and expert opinion was directed against such practices, placed the Jost administrators in a vulnerable position. Maintaining a ‘respectable’ public status was therefore essential.

A large part of the Jost’s public image was linked to its efforts on behalf of the city’s working class women. Therefore, in addition to providing employment and child care, the

³⁸ Joy Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950* (Toronto: 1990), 105. See also Joan Sangster, *Earning Respect*, 110-113.

³⁹ Attempts to maintain respectability at the Jost do not appear to have been lost, or necessarily appreciated by other local residents. According to a former nursery worker, the Mission was located near a “bawdyhouse” where “no respectable people went.” On garbage days, “the residents there brought their barrel of liquor bottles down and set it out at the Mission property,” although the worker had no idea why. PANS, Ar 2367, Christina Simmons Collection, interview with Mary Carr [pseudonym], conducted 15 March 1982.

administrators saw it as incumbent upon them to educate these mothers in matters directly linked to their 'respectability' as women. Monthly classes, or mother's meetings, were held to accomplish this, and topics such as hygiene, sewing and modern methods of childcare and nutrition were important elements of the curriculum.⁴⁰ As studies of mothers' allowances have shown, a woman's character and her ability as a parent were often judged not only on the basis of her public conduct, but also by the condition of her home and the quality of her housekeeping.⁴¹ Therefore, classes offered to women by the Jost Ladies in these areas were connected closely with efforts to 'improve' the character of the women who used the Mission's services. While helping mothers in these 'earthly' matters was becoming increasingly more important after 1920, an earlier emphasis on the maintenance of the women's faith also persisted, and the Committee frequently invited local clergy to speak at the meetings. Entertainment and refreshments were provided at these gatherings, and the Committee also attempted to provide other forms of recreation for the women. Summer picnics were held, and on a few occasions, local businessmen (some of them the husbands of committee members) took the mothers for automobile rides along the coastline. "To many of these women," the Committee claimed, the meetings and picnics were "the only entertainment or social gathering ever attended" during the year.⁴²

⁴⁰ Mothers Meetings were held on a weekly, and later a monthly basis, as were meetings for younger girls who were instructed in sewing, and were well attended through the entire period.

⁴¹ Investigators on behalf of the government used this 'evidence' to assess both a woman's eligibility for benefits, and her skill as parent. See Struthers, *The Limits of Affluence*, 34-37; Strong-Boag, "Wages for Housework," 28.

⁴² JMAR 1923, p. 5.

As the records related to the employment bureau indicate, the working mother's respectability, and by consequence, the Mission's, was closely linked to her competence and acceptability as an employee. Lillian White expressed great concern in 1925, for example, over her inability to place women "who were not capable of giving a good days work; yet who came day after day and thought they had been mistreated." Conversely, White was also troubled by the idea that the *type* of employment given to the Mission's mothers could damage their reputations. She advised women who took work assignments from the Jost that they were to leave their placements if they were uncomfortable with the surroundings or suspected that illegal or immoral activities were taking place. According to Ellen Blackwood, who took domestic work through the Mission's job placement service in the 1930's, Mrs. White instructed the women that it was their "right to come back" if they thought the situation was "not right."⁴³

Encouraging respectability among the youngest of the Jost's clients, the children in the nursery, meant ensuring that they were clean, properly clothed, and well-behaved. In this, the Jost's needs were clearly complemented by modern child-rearing methods, and the affinity between expert theory and the practice in the Mission's nursery was quite strong. The popular child-rearing theories of John Watson brought the weight of science to this connection between appearance and respectability; a child's every habit, be it of deportment

⁴³ PANS, Ac 2134-2136, Christina Simmons Collection, interview with Mary Simpson, conducted November 21, 1982. According to Simmons, the "relative impersonality" of the placement service at the Jost "tempted two brothels on Morris St. to request day workers in the 1930's." Ellen Blackwood was employed at one of these, and despite Lillian White's instruction that she leave if it were a "bad place," she stayed on because she needed the wages.

or dress, reflected the training received, and thus, the quality of the child's caregiver. The connection between disgraceful children and a failure of feminine dignity was easily made. As the Jost Mission's staff and Ladies' Committee was acting as a primary caregiver for these children, efforts to ensure good behaviour and cleanliness were therefore not only beneficial for the children, but also for the reputation of the Mission itself. Upon arrival in the morning, the children were dressed in clothes owned by the nursery, "rompers for the little boys and... a straight little overall dress for the little girls... with bloomers."⁴⁴ While this change was made in part to protect the condition of the children's own clothing, it also ensured a greater degree of control over their appearance than would have normally been the case. Concern for the appearance of the children at Sunday School was of particular concern in 1930, for example, when the "necessity of fitting out the children with proper clothing" was noted. It was also advised "to have the clothing kept at the Mission, to be given out on Saturday and returned on Monday so that the clothes [could] be kept fit for Sunday."⁴⁵

In keeping with the contemporary discourse of expert child care, the Jost Mission's reports carefully emphasised that the work carried on with respect to the appearance and manners of the children was part of a conscious program of habit training. In 1927, it was noted that "[i]n this Nursery these children are taught habits of health and hygiene, that will remain with them through life." Again, in 1938, the Annual Report emphasised that, "[t]he

⁴⁴ PANS, Ar2367, Christina Simmons Collection, interview with Mary Carr conducted 15 March 1982.

⁴⁵ JMC Minutes of 9 April, 1930. In several of the Annual Reports, donations of clothing to the Nursery were praised for their beneficial effects on improving the cleanliness and appearance of the children.

training they receive through patient teaching is a real factor in their lives.”⁴⁶ Indeed, the daily routine at the Nursery was not unlike the program advocated by Blatz at the ICS. There were regularly scheduled meal times, rest periods, story hours and indoor and outdoor play periods. Blatz’s emphasis upon ensuring freedom of choice at play as a means of developing habits of independent thought was also achieved at the Jost; the children had free access to a wide variety of toys, books, craft materials, and tricycles, as well as a sand box, teeter-totter and swings in the yard. The children’s sense of serenity may also have been supported by the fact that the nursery staff was forbidden to discipline them through the use of corporal punishment. This aspect of their method, in fact, was a source of great pride for the nursery workers. In an interview with Christina Simmons, a former nursery maid commented that “we weren’t there for that... we never had anything like that go on. We weren’t that kind of people.”⁴⁷

Like the ICS, the Jost Mission Committee and the matron also saw education as a principal part of their duty toward the nursery’s children. For one to two hours every afternoon, the Mission engaged a teacher to conduct a kindergarten class for approximately twenty children aged four and five years. The students received instruction in singing, basic reading, and mathematical skills, and this training, according to the Mission’s teacher in 1929, had prepared “many of [the children] ... for the second grade when they start Public

⁴⁶ JMAR, 1927, p. 4; JMAR 1938, p. 4.

⁴⁷ PANS, Ar2367, Christina Simmons Collection, interview with Mary Carr, conducted 15 March 1982. Betty Smith did recall one nursery maid in the early 1920’s who was “quite rough” and used to slap the children, but after having been reported to the matron, then a Methodist Deaconess, she was “let go.” PANS, Mf 136 #18-19, Christina Simmons Collection, transcript of interview conducted 25 May 1983, p. 19.

School work.”⁴⁸ In 1924, a local health clinic also provided a weekly health class for the kindergarten students, “which will prove of great value to them, not only at present, but in later years.”⁴⁹ Education was also important outside of the kindergarten, and the Ladies’ Committee noted with great pride the expansion of the children’s library of the “choicest books” on the premises, and the story hour consequently held each afternoon. One local woman in particular, Mrs. S. O. Hogg, went to great lengths to donate both books and pictures to the nursery, which were a “great education,” and had been “carefully selected by her with the object of training the child mind to appreciate the beautiful.”⁵⁰

In accordance with the nation-wide trends emphasising the need to improve the health of Canada’s children, the Jost Day Nursery also was keenly interested in providing for the physical well-being of the nursery children. A local doctor, Charles S. Morton, acted as a “Medical Advisor” for the nursery during the entire inter-war period, and in co-operation with a health centre in the city, the Welfare Bureau and the VON, regular visits also were made to the nursery by public health nurses who inspected the children, occasionally recommending them for treatment at various clinics in the city. The children appear to have been taken to the clinics by the staff at the nursery or other volunteers, and parents were not regularly involved. Parental involvement was indicated in only one instance, in fact, when

⁴⁸ JMAR 1929, p. 4. See also PANS Ac 2134-2136, Christina Simmons Collection, Ellen Blackwood interview conducted 21 November 1982.

⁴⁹ JMAR, 1924, p. 4.

⁵⁰ See JMAR 1929, 4, and JMAR 1930, 3. Mrs. Hogg was the wife of a prominent member of St. Matthew’s United Church, and although she does not appear to have been directly connected with the Mission through the Ladies’ Committee, she purchased an extremely generous sixty dollars worth of books for the nursery in 1930.

it was recorded that after an inspection for head lice, the nurse had “left cards for mothers when necessary.”⁵¹ Whether or not parents resented this intrusion is unknown. In some cases, it is likely that the services provided were appreciated, as the costs for medical treatment, which included everything from the provision of eyeglasses to the removal of tonsils, appear to have been covered either by the Mission itself, or some other local charitable organisation. The concern for health and well-being may well have been frustrating for some women, however, as the nursery occasionally closed its doors to prevent the spread of various infectious diseases, including whooping cough, measles, and scarlet fever. While such actions taken by the Committee and the matron were clearly responsible ones, they nevertheless left as many as twenty to thirty women without child care services each day.⁵²

Visiting nurses also made the staff aware of possible deficiencies in the children’s diet. In 1928, a visiting nurse reported that the children were not receiving enough milk, and the Ladies’ Committee consequently established a fund to help alleviate the problem. “Proper” nutrition was of great concern at the Jost, as it was argued that “an undernourished body is not conducive to an active brain,”⁵³ and the daily meals appear to have been a very popular aspect of the nursery day. Betty Smith’s recollections about the meals at the nursery were clearly some of her happiest memories of the entire Mission experience. “In the lunch

⁵¹ JMC Minutes, 20 October 1925. A more ‘typical practice’ is described in the Annual Report for 1924 which states, “from time to time the children are examined, and as necessary, [are] conveyed by car to the Dental Clinic where they receive any needed attention.”

⁵² JMC Minutes, 1920-1931, *passim*, and JMAR, 1921-1938, *passim*.

⁵³ JMAR 1929, p.4.

hour,” she said, “we had beautiful bowls of lovely home made soup and lovely pudding, like rice pudding and tapioca pudding. At four o’clock in the afternoon big trays of bread and molasses used to come around and we used to have that... and they always gave us apples.”⁵⁴

While connections between the methods of care used at the Jost and those used at ‘modern’ nursery schools are clear, the Jost Mission’s program also included an element of religious training absent at these other institutions. Christmas parties, for example, were often attended by a local pastor who gave “fitting remarks” to the gathering, Grace was a feature of every meal, and the children’s participation in Sunday school was an obvious concern for the Ladies’ Committee. Moreover, while Betty Smith did not recall that any hymns were taught as part of the kindergarten program, it is notable that when the *Mail* reporter visited the Jost Nursery in 1924, the children “insisted upon entertaining the visitors by singing lustily ‘Jesus Loves Me’.”⁵⁵ As Christina Simmons has indicated, however, overt efforts to instruct children in religious matters, or to convert them to the Protestant faith, had declined appreciably after 1920.⁵⁶ While efforts to improve the moral character of the children remained undiminished, the emphasis in the 1920’s had shifted considerably. According to the annual Report for 1925, the Ladies’ Committee “earnestly hope[d],” that they were “helping to raise the standard of Canadian citizenship.”⁵⁷

⁵⁴ PANS, Mf 136 #18-19, Christina Simmons Collection, transcript of interview conducted 25 May 1983, p. 13.

⁵⁵ *Evening Mail*, 31 March 1924, p. 6; Mf 136 #18-19, Christina Simmons Collection, transcript of interview conducted 25 May 1983, 13.

⁵⁶ Simmons, “Helping the Poorer Sisters,” 294-5. As Simmons has noted, the majority of children attending the nursery in its first years were Roman Catholic.

⁵⁷ JMAR, 1929, p. 4.

The co-existence of both the 'religious' intent to improve the moral character of the children, and the 'secular' intent of preparing them for the responsibilities of adulthood is not surprising in the setting of the Jost. Professional social workers and childcare experts deliberately had promoted 'secular' means and methods of childcare, but the mandate of the Jost Mission, and its links to the city's religious community, precluded any separation of their efforts from a 'religious' intent. As J.M. Bliss has illustrated, in fact, the leaders of the Methodist Church in Canada closely associated the values of Christianity with the goals of Canadian citizenship.⁵⁸ The same links were made by the Jost's administrators, and in the day to day functioning of the Mission, the provision of these ostensibly secular welfare services was consistently interpreted as a religious enterprise. Between the matron and the Ladies' Committee, however, Christian discourse fulfilled a diverse set of needs and religious sentiment was interpreted and articulated in a variety of ways.

For the Ladies' Committee, religious imagery was a substantial component of their institutional defence, a particularly important consideration given that they were serving the needs of working mothers. Evidence suggests, in fact, that the employment of married women and mothers was not uniformly accepted in Halifax. As Suzanne Morton has noted, despite the relatively small proportion of married women employed in the city, the hostility with which they were greeted made the perception of their numbers much higher than was actually the case.⁵⁹ In a letter to the *Citizen* of 6 May 1927, for instance, "An old Citizen"

⁵⁸ J.M. Bliss, "The Methodist Church and World War I," *Canadian Historical Review* 49, 3 (September 1968), 213-33.

⁵⁹ Suzanne Morton, "Men and Women in a Halifax Working-Class Neighbourhood," 187.

declared that, “we have a real fad now in Halifax, and I think this should be put a stop to; that is married women working; nearly every second one that marries holds her job, with husbands having good salaries coming in.” The concern that married women were pulling in unnecessary income, thus denying employment to those men who ‘really’ deserved the work, was an even greater concern during the years of the Great Depression. Married women in Canada were often fired from their jobs, in fact, on the pretext that they should be supported by their husband’s wages. In 1934, an unemployed stenographer in Halifax “Score[d] Married Women” in the local workforce for this very reason. “Why does a woman work after she is Married?” she asked, “Can not Gerald, Ed, Tom, Jack or Fred whomever he may be, support her? If this is the case, why does she marry him?”⁶⁰ Antagonism toward working mothers also was reflected in the promotion of the home and nuclear family in the city of Halifax. As a meeting of the city’s children’s aid society proclaimed, “the home is the ‘unit’ of national strength [and] the hope and strength of the country lie in safeguarding the home, and every intelligent adult knows it is true.” In order to achieve this, it was “necessary [that] the activity of good people, wise as well as zealous [be] directed toward making of the Home the place it should be and making it possible for the child to remain in the home environment which is the normal and best environment for it.”⁶¹

Under the auspices of the Mission, however, working mothers were not a social

⁶⁰ *The Halifax Mail*, 3 October 1934, p. 3. On October 6th in the same paper, a reaction to this girl’s letter was printed, and while the author in this case singled out working married women *without* children, he strongly implicated all married women as a “CAUSE OF DEPRESSION.” He protested, in sum, “the employment of married women where the husband is in receipt of a substantial income” (*Halifax Mail*, 6 October 1934, p. 8).

⁶¹ *Evening Mail*, 23 November 1922, p.3

problem, or a threat to their children's well-being, but objects of Christian charity. The Jost was not encouraging mothers to abandon their responsibilities for child rearing by providing employment and day care, but assisting the women in their efforts to maintain the economic independence of their families, and their personal dignity. As the Jost administrators saw it, their work was conducted with "Faith and Courage, knowing He who heeds the sparrow's fall will not forget these Little Ones."⁶² By emphasising the absolute necessity of their service, and articulating that emphasis in language which made reference to their charitable, religious purpose, the Jost women avoided any criticism which may have arisen out of the public antagonism toward working mothers. In their appeal to the *Wesleyan*, for example, they wrote,

Dear fellow workers, could you but see with us the picture, where lack of a day's work means no fuel, a group of hungry children, you would understand the reason for our appeal... [we] are reminded by constant object lessons that little kiddies must be clothed, fed and warmed, while the brave mother goes forth to her daily task of helping to keep together her little brood.⁶³

The use of religious discourse to sustain a defensive position for the Mission does not preclude the existence of personal religious motivation on part of the Committee members. In a prominent expression of the importance of religion in their lives and work, for example, each of their monthly meetings was opened and closed with prayers and scripture readings. There appeared in their public appeals, as well, clear evidence that they considered their work to be inspired by their religious beliefs. "To a very large extent," they wrote, "the work of the Jost Mission is carried on by Faith.... How do we Carry On? simply because the Lord

⁶² JMAR 1929, p. 6.

⁶³ *The Wesleyan*, 21 October 1925, p. 6.

of the Harvest sends forth reapers and the prayers of the Jost Mission are answered by His disciples.”⁶⁴ Not surprisingly, perhaps, *Reports* from those years when economic conditions were especially harsh appear more religiously oriented than any others. In 1930, the Annual Report stated that,

We are not able to say, “it has all been good, and bright and beautiful,” but we are able to say that in spite of the dark days, and the seeming failures, or maybe because of these, by contrast, we have had enough of the vision beautiful revealed to us to make us more willing and anxious to keep on trusting and working and at the same time praying, that as the Master opens new ways and methods of working, we may be quick to take advantage of them and thus make 1930 count large in His plan of things, and nearer His desire that His kingdom be in the midst of us.⁶⁵

This particular conception of Christianity’s role in the life of the Jost is much closer to that articulated by the matron. For Lillian White, faith was firmly connected to the practical elements of providing charity and welfare to needy families who approached the Mission, and the efforts undertaken by the Jost, she believed, were part of “real Missionary work” in the city. In their praise of Mrs. White’s activities, for example, the Ladies’ Committee stated that, “[w]e have been impressed with the spirit of Cheerful Christian patience with which she has met and overcome cases that to many of us would be unsolvable.” This impression is strengthened in the *Annual Report* for 1930, which read that “Mrs. White has carried on her great work for the Master’s sake, and with His help has seen great things done.”⁶⁶ Thus, while her work was inspired and maintained by her faith, the work itself became her means of religious expression. Caring for the children so that

⁶⁴ *The Wesleyan*, 21 October 1925, p. 6.

⁶⁵ JMAR, 1929, p.6.

⁶⁶ JMC Minutes, 18 December 1928; JMAR 1930, p. 7.

mothers who “are compelled to earn their own living... may see their sons and daughters and know they are safe until their task is over,” was “practical Christianity of the highest order.”⁶⁷

Because of White’s attitude, religion became more, rather than less relevant to the Jost, while the surrounding society became more secular. Her application of secular methods in the nursery did not decrease the religious direction of the centre, but instead assisted it in improving its Christian, charitable purpose. The integration of modern methods of habit training, for example, was not a sign of a growing ‘secular’ purpose, but the means by which the nursery provided the best care for the children. The Jost also co-operated with several other welfare organisations in the city in an effort to make their efforts more effective, and efficient. Such inter-organisational co-operation, in fact, was precisely what professional social workers and reformers proclaimed as necessary for improved social welfare services. Members of the Committee, including Mrs. White, often were present at meetings of the WCH’s Child Welfare division, and the Mission also was affiliated with the local Council of Women. The Social Service Index also approached White in September of 1934, and again in January of 1935, and after they “explained the way the index operated [she was] most willing and anxious to co-operate.” It does not appear that White found the Index of particular usefulness, however, as the executive of that body noted in September of 1935 that she had not been in contact with them for many months.⁶⁸ Despite White’s reluctance in this particular instance, the Jost’s efforts more often were complemented by the combination of

⁶⁷ *Halifax Chronicle* 16 July 1940, feature article on Lillian White presented as part of a series of “Interviews with Leading Women.”

⁶⁸ PANS MG 20 Vol. 414, #2.1, 3.18, Minutes of the Social Service Index, 24 September 1934, 2 January 1935, 15 September 1935.

'religious' and 'secular' affiliations that they maintained. In 1932, it was noted that, "[w]e profit greatly by the sympathy and co-operation of our Churches, Institutions, and Charitable Organisations. The Welfare Bureau is most willing to help in any way possible."⁶⁹ The Jost Committee was also keenly aware of the importance of keeping their methods at the Nursery up to date, and on two occasions Mrs. White was given leave and funding to attend the National Conference of Day Nurseries in New York City. After each of these visits, White returned convinced that the Jost "compared very favourably with the larger nurseries," and she "felt justified in reporting... that we are doing a greater amount of work at the Mission in proportion to its size, than the Nurseries visited." The committee and the Nursery staff, she stated, had "every reason to be proud of the work being done at Jost's Mission."⁷⁰

However modern their efforts may have been, the administration at the Jost remained fully aware that the children under their care were the children of working mothers; this awareness was not without its effect on the progress of the services provided. While professional childcare workers emphasised the importance of maintaining low child to staff ratios, for instance, the Jost's main concern was their ability to provide spaces for all of the children who arrived at their doors. As a result, their child to staff ratios were quite high,

⁶⁹ JMAR 1932, p.6. The Jost Mission also had ties with the local chapter of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire, the local Council of Women, the Association for the Poor, the Goodfellows and Good Samaritan Clubs, the Junior League, the YWCA, and the Red Cross Society. In one instance, the 'charitable' focus of the Jost Mission appears to have worked against the administrators. In 1924, following the dismissal of their matron Mrs. Traylor, the Committee contacted a social work graduate at Dalhousie University about working at the Mission. The women, however, "thought perhaps this would not be real social service work and feared perhaps she might not be capable of filling [the] position" (JMC Minutes, 19 February 1924).

⁷⁰ JMC Minutes, 21 May 1929, 17 April 1931.

ranging anywhere from 15:1 to 25:1. These ratios were not set by standards of child study, but by the maximum number of children a worker could handle. Indeed, accepting the standards promoted by the experts in this instance would have severely limited the Jost's ability to fulfil their intended function, to be "a boon" to "mothers who are obliged to be the bread winners for the family." They held a constant hope, in fact, that they would eventually be able to expand the Mission building and its staff, in order that "all who seek admission may be taken in and cared for."⁷¹ In their desire to serve working mothers, the Jost also extended their services to provide hot suppers and after-school supervision for school-age children. "These children have outgrown the Nursery," they confessed, "but with Mother away, and no hot dinner at home, the committee decided that to give something nourishing to these bigger children was worth while work."⁷² Similarly, the Mission also extended care to children whose illnesses might otherwise have prevented mothers from going to work each day. A "Convalescent Room" was established for this purpose, and "[a] limited number of these little ones are cared for, day and night, until they regain health, and it is safe to place them again with their families."⁷³

Awareness of the material constraints on working class children's leisure opportunities also made recreation a high priority of the program at the Jost Mission. The Committee members frequently enlisted the help of the city's wealthier residents and service clubs in order to provide "special days" for the "little ones," which they may not otherwise

⁷¹ JMAR 1930, 5; JMAR 1924, p. 4.

⁷² JMAR 1927, p. 4.

⁷³ JMAR 1938, p. 6.

have had the opportunity to experience. In the summer months, picnics, car trips to the area beaches, and visits to the Public Gardens and Citadel Hill (occasionally chauffeured by local fire trucks) were scheduled for the children. The most significant social event planned for the nursery inmates was the annual Christmas Party. Each year, current and former residents of the Jost, occasionally numbering over 100 children, were invited to a special dinner at which they received presents, clothing, fruit and candy from Santa Claus. A tree and decorations also were donated to the Nursery each year, which did not seem to fail in “gladdening the hearts” of the children and “bringing joy to so many little lives.” Indeed, ‘bringing joy’ to the children was one of the most important goals of the Jost Committee, and became a part of their appeal for public assistance. The *Evening Mail*’s lengthy article on the Mission printed in 1924, for example, was accompanied by several photographs of children at the Mission, which are distinctly gloomy in appearance. In none of the photographs, in fact, are the children pictured with smiles on their faces. Instead, the dark background and notably grim facial expressions and postures appear deliberately posed to elicit sympathy and emphasise the needs which the Jost was attempting to meet.⁷⁴ (see Appendix 3) A similar image was recalled by the daughter of a former long-time committee member, who remarked that “some of the children looked sort of woebegone and sad and, well, just sort of neglected to a point.”⁷⁵

⁷⁴ This article appeared in a special section of the paper dedicated to the city’s children. In contrast to the photos of the Jost children are several portraits of brightly smiling children, notably “middle-class,” indicated by their elaborate clothing and the fact that their names are given, preceded by “Miss. --” or “Master --.” The names of the Jost children are not given. *Evening Mail*, 31 March 1924.

⁷⁵ PANS Ar 2724, Christina Simmons Collection, interview conducted 14 July 1983.

Fortunately for the children who were cared for at the Jost, these images appear to have been more presumed than real. By most accounts, the experience of the nursery was an extremely positive one and the children were well fed and cared for by the Mission staff. "I can't think of anything bad that ever happened at that Jost Mission," recalled one former resident, "There was always a friendly... nice feeling... It was always there. And there was never any person that I can remember being dirty or not being looked after."⁷⁶ Keeping the children under their care in good spirits and health was instrumental in ensuring that the members of the Jost Committee maintained their own personal sense of respectability and self-worth. They considered their work with the nursery children the most satisfying of all the services provided, so that the work in the nursery was "of first importance." The Annual Reports frequently contained invitations for the general public to visit the Nursery, "so that they may see how interesting and vital is this care of the children." In the early 1930's, it also was suggested that the Employment Bureau be closed down, perhaps because the service was duplicated elsewhere, and in her support of this motion, Lillian White "wished to be reported as being firmly convinced that the best for Jost Mission could not be accomplished while the E. B. [sic] was conducted in connection with the other branches of the work."⁷⁷

The manner in which the Ladies' Committee of the Jost was left to administer their work also was dependent upon the maintenance of a particular status and credibility within the community. While they did receive funding from the Board of Directors of the Jost Bequest, for example, this source of funds was rarely adequate to cover the month to month

⁷⁶ PANS Ac 2761-2763, Christina Simmons Collection, interview conducted 3 May 1982.

⁷⁷ JMAR, 1929, 4; JMC Minutes, 19 November 1930.

expenses of the nursery, particularly when renovations or repairs to the building were required. The Ladies' Committee eventually set up a monthly collection among themselves to help raise funds, but they also depended upon donations from the community, in both cash and kind. The *Annual Reports* contain long lists of the names of both individuals and corporations whose contributions ranged from cash, to furniture, clothing, toys, books, and food, including several firms who made daily donations of bread or milk. The personal judgements of these benefactors could have seriously affected the Mission's ability to function on a daily basis. While carrying out their duties, therefore, the Ladies' Committee strove to maintain a level of public credibility that would preserve the favour of these patrons. Letters of thanks and public acknowledgement of services rendered were clearly part of this process, and on several occasions they also referred to the importance of their 'higher cause' in service of the community. In thanking their benefactors, for example, the *Annual Reports* frequently state, "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of these my little ones, ye have done it unto me." Similarly, they declared that, "Those of you who wish for an opportunity to serve can find no better place than this corner of the Master's Vineyard."⁷⁸ It is also evident that the Ladies' Committee attempted to conduct themselves in the matter of fund-raising with a level of dignity which they felt befitted their enterprise. While they arranged for fund-raising events such as musical teas or evening concerts at the local churches, the Committee members were not anxious to engage in anything so 'public' as tag days until the later years of the 1930's. Similarly, while they rented rooms within the

⁷⁸ *The Wesleyan*, 21 October 1925, 6.

Mission building to local workers (including the Mission's staff), they maintained a strict "girls only" policy when selecting tenants.⁷⁹

The Jost Mission also attempted to ensure that the women they served were truly 'needy' of assistance. As Mary Simpson recalled, women arriving at the Mission were interviewed by Mrs. White, who would "try to find out what your circumstances were, you know, and what your husband done and all of this."⁸⁰ While Simpson was unsure as to the purpose of the interview, and did not feel that it was intrusive, it appears that it was conducted in order to assess the degree of need in a particular family. Mrs. White's occasional use of the Social Service Index was very likely for the same purpose, as when work was scarce, she was compelled to "make calls to find out who were the most needy." At times, visits were made by the matron to the homes of various women, and the Ladies' Committee also called upon the local chapter of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire to conduct home visits on behalf of the Mission's matron.⁸¹

Despite efforts to maintain a level of dignity and efficiency at the Mission, the Committee occasionally did encounter friction in the community which, surprisingly, was generated by the city's religious atmosphere. In 1925, for example, a local charitable organisation (which remained unnamed by the Committee) had refused to work on behalf of the Mission because "they had heard that both Catholics and Protestants were helped here,

⁷⁹ During World War Two, the Mission relaxed this policy, renting rooms to naval officers and their wives. On occasion, single sailors also rented rooms, and assisted in the general upkeep of the building, including carpentry work and plumbing.

⁸⁰ PANS Ac 2134-2136, Christina Simmons Collection, interview conducted 21 November 1982.

⁸¹ JMC Minutes, 16 November 1920.

and they preferred to work for Protestants [sic] Missions.” In their efforts to understand their own position in the matter, the committee launched an investigation, and asked Mrs. White to “report on the number of Roman Catholics among the women.” While the Mission’s administrators did not appear to hold any religious prejudices with respect to their clients at any other time, when the report was received at the next Committee meeting, it was noted with relief “that not more than three families in the Mission were Roman Catholic.”⁸² Later during her tenure, Mrs. White also encountered resistance from the Committee members themselves. She had been caring for a set of Roman Catholic twins at the nursery, whose father was reportedly abusive toward them. However, the Ladies’ Committee believed that the “Romans had adequate facilities to care for their own,” and so the mother was sent elsewhere. This particular case suggests, in part, that religion did play a role in deciding eligibility for service in the Nursery. Given the financial pressures under which the centre was operating, such ‘filtering’ of potential clients, while contemptible in hindsight, is nevertheless understandable. It emphasises, moreover, the gap that often exists between the actual need for a service, and the perception of that need on the part of the providers. It is important to emphasise, however, that the records existing for this period do not indicate that

⁸² JMC Minutes, 20 October, 17 November 1925. Religious tensions in Halifax also appear to have been linked to social class. Ellen Blackwood’s stepson Ed Taylor [pseudonym], for example, recalled of St. Paul’s Anglican Church that the rich and poor were spatially divided during Sunday services. The wealthy “all had their own pews.... Of course, us poor little people, we would go in there... and they would not let us sit down the front. We had to go up and sit up top. I have never forgotten that. I will never forget that, because to me, that wasn’t right.” PANS, Ac 2761-2763, Christina Simmons Collection, interview conducted 9 July 1982.

any mother or child was refused service by Mrs. White because of their religious beliefs. “There was no such thing as race prejudice,” either, according to one former resident, and the nursery cared for “coloured [and] white children,” as well as Jewish children. Betty Smith also stated that, “we were treated, all of us, Catholic, Protestant, coloured, white, it didn’t matter, we were all treated the same there.”⁸³

The unprejudiced acceptance of children and mothers of all ethnic and religious backgrounds is a notable element of White’s administration. In accordance with ‘modern’ social welfare techniques that sought to promote objectivity and rationality in social work, she assessed each case based on the individual needs of the families. Importantly, however, the ‘objectivity’ which may seem inevitable in such a system was impaired by the administrators’ personal beliefs and expectations of the world in which they lived. Their vision of society was clearly rooted in a sense of feminine, middle-class respectability, which saw charitable Christian service for the less fortunate women and children in their midst as an integral part of their own identities and responsibilities. Their duty was not to challenge the *status quo*, but to help working-class mothers better meet their obligations within it. When dealing with employers, for example, the Jost Mission made no attempt to set or improve the wages received by the mothers, despite recognition that many women simply could not earn enough to support their families. Instead, they provided childcare and

⁸³ PANS, Ac 2761-2763, Christina Simmons Collection, interview with Ed Taylor, conducted 9 July 1982; Mf 136 #18-19, transcript of interview with Betty Smith, 15 June 1983, 8. There appears to be some confusion as to when black children were admitted to the Nursery. While Smith remembers them being present in the early 1920’s, Mary Carr did not.

material relief as a supplement.

As with many middle-class women's charitable organisations in this period, the Jost Ladies' Committee shared in the patriarchal vision of the Canadian family, and their efforts were often inclined to encourage the standards of this institution. The services provided were not meant to encourage 'alternative lifestyles' for mothers through employment and out-of-home child care, but to help the less fortunate and 'deserving' members of the Halifax community fulfil their obligations in society. In 1927, the Ladies' Committee emphasised this intent, reporting that "attendance in our nursery is smaller, and this is where we feel encouragement in our work. Our problem is not to fill the nursery with children, but to aid and teach the mother, so she may be able to care for her own children at home."⁸⁴ Thus, an important feature of the Jost Committee's intent was to "help the mothers help themselves," and despite their attempts to cross the boundary of class through social gatherings and entertainments, the Committee members encouraged acceptance of the social system. In 1929, for example, Mrs. Dyer, a local woman who had been in India working with the Women's Missionary Society, was invited to speak to the mothers at the Jost. She "showed to our mothers, some of whose lives are hard and uninteresting, that there are others in far parts of the world whose lot in life has even less of happiness than theirs."⁸⁵

The Committee clearly intended to assist the city's working women to the best of its ability. Their constant affirmation of the social and economic plight of their clients,

⁸⁴ JMAR 1927, 4.

⁸⁵ JMAR 1929, 4-5.

however, and their assertion that they provided services as part of a religious and charitable vocation, tended to build a hierarchical relationship between the providers and recipients of the services. The Mission's clients were not equals, but objects of charity. It is difficult to assess from the extant records of the inter-war years, whether or not any local women may have avoided the Jost because of this relationship. For many women, indeed, other options may simply not have been available. The 'conservatism' of the Jost administration, however, can be overstated. During the inter-war period, the Mission provided an essential service for working class mothers in Halifax, in a manner that was progressive, both in terms of the 'modern' quality of care given to the children, and the extent to which new attempts were made to apply the principles of modern social work to each case. The services' roots in more traditional charitable and religious foundations, moreover, appear to have been of more help than hindrance to the Mission's development. In fact, the Jost Mission achieved a remarkable balance in this period, adapting, promoting, and 'modernising' their own financial and structural abilities to meet the needs of the community, while maintaining their strong personal sense of Christian responsibility and respectability. Indeed, their 'old-fashioned' attitudes did not preclude any assumption on their own part that they were participating in the training of Canada's future citizens. That their methods did not uniformly correspond to those promoted by professional childcare experts is not symptomatic of stagnation, however. Instead, it strengthens the notion that local conditions, both economic and political, played as much a part in the evolution of social services as the persuasions of any number of professionals. After 1940, in fact, and the hiring of a new

matron, the trends toward 'modernisation' at the Jost were amplified, and the shape of the 'modern' day care institution began to emerge.

Chapter 3:
Reassembling Day Care in the New Old-fashioned Way:
Jost Mission, 1939-1955

Lillian White passed away on 15 July 1940, and in her place, the Jost Ladies' Committee hired Miss Edna Pearson.¹ Pearson was of middle-age when she began her work at the Jost, but unlike her predecessor, she had never been married or had children. Although she was devoted to her work with the Nursery's children, her work at the Mission reveals a measure of detachment not apparent in the records relating to Lillian White's experience. Between 1940 and her retirement in June of 1952, Edna Pearson's work at the Jost illustrates many elements of the sympathetic, charitable attitude analogous to that exhibited by her predecessor. At the same time, however, she was extremely interested in providing the Nursery's children with the most modern techniques of care. Her efforts to this end, in fact, carried the Jost Mission much closer to the model of day care development described by Donna Varga's work, *Constructing the Child*. According to this model, the variety of welfare services provided by day nurseries, including employment services and poor relief efforts, were abandoned as "the role of supervising and maintaining children's genetic and personality development" became more important.² The result, according to Varga, was the emergence of a system in which Canadian day nurseries came to resemble more closely

¹ Christina Simmons states that Pearson was trained as a Deaconess in the Methodist Church, although I have not found any confirmation of this. If this was indeed the case, her education would have provided her with an understanding of modern social science techniques, and quite possibly, rudimentary nursing care. The Deaconess Society was also one that emphasised the importance of combining religious commitment with modern social scientific methods. The extant records on Pearson do not reflect any real "religious" intent in her work as they did for Lillian White. See Simmons, "Helping their Poorer Sisters," 289-290, 303 n.17.

² Varga, *Constructing the Child*, 80.

nursery schools such as that maintained at Toronto's ICS. At the Jost, records kept by Edna Pearson on the children attending the Mission during this period are pervaded by a psychologically diagnostic vocabulary which suggests that she indeed did place much greater emphasis upon mental health than previously had been the case. Similarly, greater attention was paid to training the Mission's staff, and several attempts were made by Pearson to close down the Employment Bureau in order to accentuate the Mission's work with children. Overall, this period indicates that a much more 'secular' or 'modern' attitude to day care services had been taken by the Jost's administrators. Where the Committee and its matron had once maintained an institutional defence using Christian imagery and vocabulary, the post-1940 period saw the centre promoted through emphasis upon its importance for the city's children. As with the pre-war period, however, the Jost Mission's development was complicated by the circumstances of its locality and management as much as by the advice of childcare specialists, or the wider trends of day nursery development in Canada. Employment patterns and attitudes toward working mothers, as well as the reputations and attitudes of the administrators, continued to be significant forces constructing the Jost Nursery's program. Importantly, the Ladies' Committee continued to operate under the assumption that their mandate was a charitable one, and that they were "helping people to help themselves, which is the objective of all social service work."³ Consequently, the development of the centre as a place for alternative childcare and education was limited by its constant association with 'emergency' services for women who had no alternative but to work.

³ JMAR 1948.

During the Second World War, the link between day care and ‘emergency’ service was a common one across the country. The DPWDNA, which led to the establishment of publicly funded day nurseries in Ontario and Quebec, was continually justified by the war time ‘emergency’. Indeed, when the funding was stopped by the Federal Government in 1946, Fraudena Eaton, assistant director of the National Selective Service for women, wrote to the Ontario minister responsible for day care, affirming that, “the financing of these and similar plans by the Dominion Government has been done as a war measure, and our Treasury Board naturally takes the position ‘now that the war is over why do you need the money?’”⁴ Moreover, the war time nurseries had been established initially as services for women working in the primary war industries, and not all Canadians agreed that mothers should leave their homes, despite the demands of the war. Helen MacMurchy, for example, declared that, “[t]he question of whether the mother should be in war work or not should be answered in relation to the welfare of her children. The first line of National Defense is the defense of our children. Mothers who stay at home to take care of their children are doing essential work for National Defense.”⁵ In Halifax, the rise in the number of working mothers caused by the war was certainly a concern for the societies associated with the Community Chest. In their 1944 circular for the annual fundraising campaign, one of the city’s most substantial social problems was described as, “An increase in Child problems – throwing added burdens on social agencies – all due to war causes such as absent fathers and working

⁴ Cited in Pierson, *They’re Still Women After All*, 50.

⁵ Helen MacMurchy, “Well Baby Centre: Canadian Day Nurseries,” *Canadian Home Journal* (October 1942), 43.

mothers.”⁶

Not surprisingly, in the post-war period while women’s domestic role was being promoted more forcefully than before, the working mother was defined as a social ‘problem’. Dr. Benjamin Spock’s 1951 article in *Canadian Welfare* explained, for example, that a woman who worked was a woman who was resentful of her role as wife and mother.⁷ The experience of the publicly funded day nurseries during the war years clearly had not altered public attitudes toward day care, and the majority of the population continued to believe that home care was the best environment for children. As late as 1960, in fact, only five per cent of Canadians polled indicated their support for mothers with young children working outside of the home.⁸

These attitudes were also part of the Halifax experience in the post-war years, where the working mother continued to be a source of friction within the city. In the 1950’s, a series of interviews with fifty-one local wives was used by students at the Maritime School of Social Work (MSSW) in Halifax to examine the ‘problem’ of working mothers in the city. The students involved expressed a measure of professional disdain for working mothers, as well as for the social system, which, in their view, had promoted the problem. While these studies acknowledged that women both desired outside employment and required it to support their families, they also were dedicated to explaining the detrimental effects of

⁶ PANS MG 20 Vol. 411, # 1.4, “Think Twice...,” Pamphlet for the Halifax Community Chest Fund, 1944.

⁷ B. Spock, “What We Know About the Development of Healthy Personalities in Children,” *Canadian Welfare* (15 April 1951), 3-12.

⁸ Monica Boyd, *Canadian Attitudes toward Women: Thirty Years of Change* (Ottawa: 1984), 12.

maternal employment upon child development, and the importance of women's domestic roles. The "greatest service a woman could render to society" and her family was to enable her children to develop into "emotionally healthy adults," a task that could only be accomplished through her role as a homemaker. While the economic necessity of women's paid labour was understood, it was also reasoned that "material wealth does not substitute for love and affection."⁹ Similar sentiments were echoed in the Halifax press. In November of 1944, for example, columnist Ruth Millet declared in the Women's Pages of the *Halifax Mail* that "Public Opinion Must Make Motherhood More Attractive."

It has been sold short for the past quarter of a century by higher education for women (which practically ignores it), by cosmetic manufacturers who have persuaded women that they must hold their men by youth and beauty, by the so-called intellectual women's clubs that have made housewives ashamed of the term housewife, [and] by the interior decorators who have made women think a home is a stage setting, instead of the place that kids run home to after school....¹⁰

Attitudes such as these, as well as the focus upon maternal deprivation, greatly influenced the suggestions made by social workers to alleviate the problems caused by working mothers in Halifax. In order to assist women who worked out of financial necessity, for example, it was recommended that the state amend the Mothers' Allowance Act. Raising the level of the benefit and granting it to a larger cohort of women, including those who were divorced, separated, or had been deserted, would allow many

⁹ Henry Bourgeois, "A Report of the Survey 'Married Women Who Are Working For Pay In Halifax'," Master's Thesis, Social Work, Maritime School of Social Work (1956), 27, 37. See also Judith Fingard, "Marriage and Race in Women's Employment Patterns in Post War Halifax," Paper presented at the Atlantic Canada Workshop (Halifax), 16-17, August 1997.

¹⁰ *Halifax Mail*, 22 November 1944, 13.

more mothers to stay at home with their children.¹¹ Not only the social work profession placed such importance upon Mothers' Allowances: the Canadian Red Cross Homemaker Service in Halifax judged the benefit as the only appropriate means of caring for families without a male breadwinner. As Marian McPhee's thesis illustrated, this service chose to ignore altogether the existence of families where the need for child care arose because both mother and father were employed.¹²

In his discussion of those women who worked for 'extras', Henry Bourgeois also raised the issue of the family wage. Men's wages should be adequate to cover all expenses, he stated, so that "the mother could spend as much time as she wishes with her family."¹³ Similarly, as the WCH's Child Welfare Division was told by the Committee of the Jost Mission, there was not so much a need for employment for mothers, but "rather employment for husbands."¹⁴ Bourgeois' thesis also recommended that an educational campaign be directed toward women whose labour force participation was based upon personal preference. "[P]erhaps some way of educating these people could prove beneficial," he wrote, so that women could understand the effects of deprivation before they made the decision to enter the workforce.¹⁵ Interestingly, his analysis does not seem to support an

¹¹ Henry Bourgeois, "A Report of the Survey," 40. Another student who supported this view was Paul B. Gorlick, "Employment or Public Assistance for Families headed by Women?" Master's Thesis, Social Work, Maritime School of Social Work (1956), 35.

¹² Marian McPhee, "A Report of the Survey of Married Women Working for Pay in Halifax, 1955," Master's Thesis, Social Work, Maritime School of Social Work (1956), 26-28.

¹³ Bourgeois, "Report of the Survey," 40.

¹⁴ PANS MG 20 Vol. 408, #1.1, WCH, Child Welfare Division minutes 15 January 1935.

¹⁵ Bourgeois, "Report of the Survey," 40-41.

increase in the provision of day nursery services as a means of protecting children from neglect while their mothers worked. "One may question very strongly," he wrote, "if nurseries are the answer or even part of the answer."¹⁶ Indeed, despite the Red Cross's refusal to provide home care for the children of working mothers, Marian McPhee recommended that their homemaker service be adapted to the task, and that day care be expanded only as an alternative.¹⁷

The MSSW students' hesitancy in recommending the expansion of day care services appears to have been based upon the fact that only one of the fifty-one women surveyed made use of a nursery. Moreover, most of the women in the study expressed doubt that they themselves would ever use such assistance even if it were available.¹⁸ That the mothers surveyed did not seem particularly enthusiastic about day nursery care is no indication that the need for the service had declined. Much like the women before them in pre-war Halifax, the city's mothers continued to entrust care of their children to family members and neighbours while at work. The WCH records indicate that the practice of boarding children at orphanages and children's homes also persisted, and while adoption seems a particularly drastic measure, the Council's Child Welfare Division reported that of eighty-eight unmarried mothers consulted in 1944, over half of them (forty-nine) gave their children up for adoption.¹⁹ The number of households with female breadwinners in the province had not

¹⁶ Bourgeois, "Report of the Survey," 39.

¹⁷ McPhee, 26-28.

¹⁸ Bourgeois, 20.

¹⁹ PANS MG 20 vol. 408 #5, Provincial Department of the Public Welfare, Child Welfare Division, Self Survey of 1949.

decreased over the 1940's, either, and in 1951, twelve percent of families in Nova Scotia were headed by women.²⁰

Despite the apparent need for day care services in Halifax, the Jost Mission remained as the only charitable day nursery in the city.²¹ Not surprisingly, one of the greatest difficulties faced by the Jost administration after 1940 was finding room for the number of children applying for admission. The daily average of residents had dropped off during the Depression, but the early 1940's saw a significant increase in the number arriving each morning. Sickness occasionally left as few as ten or twelve children per day, but there were, on average, between seventeen and twenty-five "little ones" at the nursery regularly, and often as many as thirty-five. During the war years, these high numbers of applicants, coupled with a lack of experienced help, led to frequent closures of the Nursery, and the end of the war did not bring any drop in the number of users. By the early 1950's, averages of twenty-eight to thirty-six children a day were common.²²

It was not until 1955 that any systematic attempt was made to assess the city's requirements for expanded day care services. In that year, the WCH surveyed several institutions in the city, requesting their impressions concerning the condition of, and need for services. While some of the institutions polled did not think that the number of working

²⁰ Canada Census, 1951, Vol. 3, table 136, p. 136-7.

²¹ During the war years a small nursery was established by the Royal Canadian Navy which allowed "the wives of naval personnel to leave their children under good supervision [and] have free time to go shopping, visiting, or spend time with their husbands when they return from sea." As it served only the children of naval personnel, however, it was limited in its ability to assist working mothers in Halifax. *The Halifax Mail*, 22 November 1944, p. 13.

²² JMC Annual Reports and Minutes, 1940-1953.

mothers was increasing in the city, or that day care services should be expanded, the majority expressed the opposite opinion. In the mid-1950's, Olive Irwin, who conducted a baby-sitting service in the city, reported that she had been receiving several requests for day care services that she had been unable to fulfil. It was reported that,

[M]any times women who wish to get work, or who actually have positions, telephone her to see if they can have someone come in all day to look after their child, or if she can recommend a place where the child can be cared for. In a number of instances they have already tried the Jost Mission, and it cannot accept any more children.²³

Ironically, given their Home Services' approach to child care, the Red Cross Society also believed that there was a "definite need" for more nurseries in Halifax, and as H.B. Jones of the Department of Public Health and Welfare for the city expressed it,

We feel that a Day Nursery is definitely needed in this city, and would look upon such as a supplementation of the service now given by the Jost Mission rather than in any way replacing the work that the Mission now endeavours to do. A Day Nursery would be of great assistance to mothers who need someone to care for their children during the day, whether because of economic reasons or family troubles.²⁴

Despite the results of this survey, the WCH was not able to secure the necessary resources to expand day nursery services in Halifax. According to Gwendolyn Shand, one of the city's leading social workers, they were not able "to assemble sufficient proof that extra Day Nursery Care would be used."²⁵ Nevertheless, there was a steady increase in the number of mothers entering the paid labour force in Halifax after 1940. In 1941, the national

²³ PANS MG 20 Vol. 408, #6.16, WCH, "Day Nursery Situation in Halifax," 12 October 1955.

²⁴ PANS MG 20 Vol. 408, #6.8, H. Bond James to Gwendolyn Shand, 4 October 1955.

²⁵ PANS MG 20 Vol. 408, #6.23, Gwendolyn Shand to Marion Royce, 6 September 1957.

Census reported that approximately thirty-five percent of the city's entire work force was female. Shand also announced that because of the war's impact on the local economy, "[w]omen are being drawn into employment very rapidly. Stenographers are at a premium... Good waitresses cannot be found, clerks in shops, women for the candy and clothing industries, household workers for the various "service" types of employment, are being absorbed swiftly."²⁶ Following the war, there was a slight decrease in the number of working women, but by the end of the 1950's over forty percent of the work force in Halifax was female, one of the highest percentages in the country. Furthermore, even without the inclusion of divorced and widowed women, fifty-four percent of these female workers were married, up from just under one quarter in 1951.²⁷ Many of these workers continued to be employed in personal and domestic services, but after 1940, clerical work became the most prevalent type of employment, claiming approximately thirty-six percent of the female labour force in 1951 (see Appendix 2).

The increased employment rate for the city's women did not necessarily signal an improvement in the quality of life for working-class families in Halifax. More women may have been able to contribute to the family income, but the cost of living continued to rise throughout this period. In 1942, it was noted that the prices for rent and food in Halifax were extremely high, and that women "found it difficult to make the income cover all needs where there are more than two children: where there are very many the dependants' allowances

²⁶ Gwen Shand, "On the Eastern Seaboard," *Canadian Forum* XVII, 7 (January 1947), 17-18.

²⁷ Fingard, "Marriage and Race in Women's Employment Patterns," 1.

simply will not stretch far enough.”²⁸ The rising cost of living continued to be a matter of great concern in the late 1940’s as well, as it reached one of the highest levels in the entire country.²⁹ These conditions do not seem to have improved in the 1950’s. As a redevelopment study conducted in 1957 reported, while poverty was not as prevalent as it had been before the war, many people in the city were still living below common standards of health and decency. “High costs are imposed on a community where there is a large percentage of sub-standard housing with its attendant overcrowding, insanitary conditions and lack of public amenities in the form of playgrounds.... paved and lit streets, and a general atmosphere of good standards.”³⁰ According to the director of the city’s Health and Welfare Department, as a result of such conditions, “more mothers want to work to help out with the family budget than at any time in the post-war period.”³¹ Despite McPhee’s description of their rather apathetic response to the difficulties faced by working mothers, the

²⁸ Shand, “On the Eastern Seaboard,” 18. See also the “Report of the Minimum Wage Board” in Nova Scotia Department of Labour, *Annual Report*, 1941, p. 73, which noted that wages received by the province’s workers were not adequate to meet the cost of living.

²⁹ Several articles appeared in the *Halifax Mail* over the course of 1947 and 1948, describing the steady rise of living costs in the country, and the province. In June of 1948, it was noted that the rate in Halifax itself was the third highest in the country. See especially *Halifax Mail*, 5 July 1947; 17 August 1947; 4 February 1948; 28 February 1948; 11 June 1948; 16 August 1948. J.A. Grandy and G.E. Hart also produced a study of the cost of living in the city in December of 1946 entitled, “A Study of the Cost of Living... in Halifax which should Maintain Health and Self Respect,” PANS, MG 20 Vol. 412 #4.1.

³⁰ Gordon Stephenson, *A Redevelopment Study of Halifax, Nova Scotia* (Halifax: 1957), 34. Details of the provincial economy and its labour force during the post 1940 period can be found in A.C. Parks, *The Economy of the Atlantic Provinces, 1940-1958* (Halifax: 1960).

³¹ PANS MG 20 Vol. 408, #6.8, H. Bond James to Gwendolyn Shand, 4 October 1955.

director of the Red Cross Home Services division also maintained that mothers were not working to “buy luxuries, but just to ease the burden of the household finances.”³²

Throughout the post 1940 period, the Jost Mission Committee carried on in their endeavours to help these working mothers in a manner which was, in many ways, parallel to the efforts of the earlier period. Nevertheless, this was also a time in which the administration was compelled, from both within and without its ranks, to make many changes to its program. Evidence suggests, in fact, that the Jost was undergoing what Donna Varga has described as a central element in the shifting nature of day care provision in the twentieth century. During these decades, the Mission’s administrators appear to have promoted as their primary responsibility the care and training of the city’s children, while gradually discarding other ‘charitable’ elements of their program. “We feel great responsibility toward these children,” they maintained, “and that our work is of the utmost importance, deserving of the best we can give them in leadership and equipment.”³³ What is equally apparent in the Jost’s development, however, is that any transformation of their agenda was regulated as much by the Committee’s own goals and limitations, and the needs of the local community, as it was by the growing trend toward expert child training. In 1942, for example, the mothers’ meetings, which had been such a prominent focus of the Mission’s mandate in the inter-war years, were discontinued as “the need for them is past [*sic*].”³⁴ In their place, the Jost Committee extended services for local children in the form of weekly

³² PANS MG 20 Vol. 408, #6.10, Mary Meahan to Gwendolyn Shand, 4 October, 1955.

³³ JMAR 1942.

³⁴ JMAR 1942.

boys' meetings. The time and donations of food and craft supplies once directed toward the nursery mothers now were directed toward a gathering of ten to twenty boys who were entertained by a Scout leader, and given an evening meal each week at the Mission's facilities. On the one hand, this change does attest to the fact that the Mission was far more intent upon serving the needs of the city's children. On the other, there is evidence to suggest that changes in the pattern of recreation for the city's mothers were of equal consequence in this program modification. In November of 1944, Edna Pearson remarked that "[t]here used to be a Mother's Club but just now most of the women prefer to attend Bingo Games."³⁵ Similarly, when commenting on the smaller attendance at the yearly Christmas party in 1953, it was noted that "some parents wish their own Party 'at home' to come first."³⁶

Thus, the private recreational activities of local families had a considerable impact on the changing nature of the services at the Jost. Over the course of her tenure as the Mission's matron, Edna Pearson also presented a force for change. Under her leadership, the Jost nursery began to focus on the promotion of healthy personality development among the local children. The Committee's Annual Report for 1950 gave significant rationalisation for this trend, and in keeping with developments in modern child care discourse, it did so through the secular authority of the future Queen, Princess Elizabeth. During a wartime address, they wrote, she had stated that, "To know the child, to study and work that he may

³⁵ PANS MG 20 Vol. 408 #6.1, WCH, "Child Welfare Division, 1944: Nursery School Training Course," Minutes of 16 November 1944.

³⁶ JMAR, 1953, p.6.

grow is the greatest work in the world. You are a greater artist than he who carves a statue, than he who paints a picture, than he who writes a book. Your product is human conduct.”³⁷

An interesting comparison also exists between the portrayal of the Jost children in the local press during the inter- and post-war periods, which seems to indicate further that the Mission’s focus had shifted to providing quality childcare over more general social welfare or charity services for the poor. While the photographs published in 1924 (see Appendix 3) emphasised the financial need of the Mission and its clients through darkened, melancholy illustrations, a series of photographs appearing in 1950 emphasised the health, happiness and pleasure experienced by children at the centre (see Appendix 4). Nursery children were photographed outdoors in the sunshine, playing together on the Mission’s playground equipment, apparently enjoying themselves immensely. Similarly, while the earlier article had focused on the benefits which the Mission provided for the *community* through its welfare services, the 1950 editorial described, primarily, the benefits which the centre provided for the children themselves.

The day nursery at 91 Brunswick Street is a happy place for children. Everything in this red brick building is directed toward their safety and happiness and the few adults who work there are chosen largely because of their love for children.... When parents return for their children in the evening they find a group of tired but happy children.³⁸

Notwithstanding their intention to ‘know the child’ better, the Jost Nursery workers do not appear to have made any fundamental changes in the practical aspects of the daily program. It continued to operate in a manner which was almost identical to that of the pre-

³⁷ JMAR 1950.

³⁸ *Mail Star*, June 1, 1950, p. 27.

war years. Importantly, however, their understanding of what the program accomplished in terms of ‘producing human conduct’, and in helping children adjust and conform to social standards, came to be articulated far more frequently in a language corresponding to that of ‘expert’ child care providers. At the Jost, according to Edna Pearson, the “training” provided by the nursery’s staff was of particular value to the “little ones” as it helped them both “*socially and mentally*, fitting them to make a better adjustment to school.”³⁹ Similarly, free play times were described as “constructive play,” and the staff seems to have been aware of the connections between these periods and the development of individual personalities. In one report, for example, it was noted that the nursery workers had become interested in observing the patterns of choice made by children during their regular play times.⁴⁰

The growing significance of the mental health movement within the Jost also is discernible in Edna Pearson’s hiring practices at the centre. As Donna Varga has indicated, the hiring of trained and experienced professionals was an integral part of shifting attitudes to childcare, as only trained employees were considered skilled enough to help a nursery realise the potential of new child development theories. Edna Pearson’s approach to hiring staff at the Jost reflects an awareness of the importance of professional employees. During the war years, the Mission experienced a chronic shortage of help in the nursery and on several occasions was consequently forced to close its doors. This shortage may well have been caused by the overall deficiency in the labour force during the war years, but Pearson

³⁹ PANS MG 20 Vol. 408, #4, WCH Child Welfare Division minutes, 10 December 1948. My emphasis.

⁴⁰ JMAR, 1950.

expressed definite concern that *qualified* personnel be secured to operate the nursery. In the campaign to secure adequate staffing levels, she emphasised to the committee, and to the WCH who was assisting in the effort, that experience and training were imperative. Their inability to secure assistance through advertisements in the provincial newspapers by November of 1944, however, led to the establishment of a training school in nursery care and education for local women who were “interested in this type of work.”⁴¹ With the assistance of the WCH, the Women’s Voluntary Services, the Maritime School of Social Work, the local Mental Health Clinic and the Council of Social Agencies, the Jost Mission sponsored a series of lectures for several local women, “girls,” and students from Dalhousie University.⁴² The *Halifax Mail*’s report on the school highlights that a professional level of instruction was expected. The course was “an excellent opportunity for anyone interested in the future welfare of our Halifax children to obtain firsthand knowledge from people experienced in this field of the methods being used in Day Nursery work.”⁴³ Within the curriculum of this course, the new emphasis upon training and professionalism for potential staff members is evident. In a course of six lectures, only one, Edna Pearson’s introductory history of the Jost, was not related to child development and techniques of care. Of the remaining five classes, it appears that training suggestions from Blatz’s ICS were used as a guide in deciding content. Two classes were given on nursery school programs and practical

⁴¹ PANS MG 20 Vol. 408, #3, WCH, Child Welfare Division, Annual Report 1944-5.

⁴² Significantly, the Training School is mentioned nowhere in the minutes of the Jost Ladies’ Committee for this period. The published report for 1944 was not available, but the general meeting in January of 1945 at which Pearson presented her yearly report also makes no mention of the school.

⁴³ *Halifax Mail*, 14 November 1944, p. 13.

kindergarten teaching (including free play and routine training), and the remaining three were devoted to the physical, emotional, psychological and social development of the child.⁴⁴

Unlike her predecessor, Pearson also began to implement a system of casework in the late 1940's, making use of a variety of resources and connections in the city. She appears to have been far more comfortable with the use of the Social Service Index than Lillian White, for example, and contacted them quite early in her tenure. According to their minutes in November of 1940, Pearson "now use[s] the Index consistently by telephone and realizes its value to her work."⁴⁵ In addition to this, Pearson also maintained contact with the city's policewoman, Lillian Rafuse, and while she was a regular at the meetings of the WCH's Child Welfare Division, she also served on the executive of that body for at least one year in the mid-1940's. In dealing with the nursery's children, she also made referrals to the Family Allowance Board in the city "when a child has come to us in a neglected and uncared for condition,"⁴⁶ and to the psychiatric clinic at Dalhousie University. Such a system of operations was considered a fundamental part of 'modern' social service work, as it established a co-operative relationship within the entire network of welfare institutions in the

⁴⁴ PANS MG 20 Vol. 408, #3, WCH, Child Welfare Division, Annual Report 1944-5.

See also PANS MG 20 Vol. 406, #6.1, which contains the minutes of the committee established to regulate the school, as well as a "suggested course for volunteers as outlined by the staff of the Institute for Child Study." This course outline was structured around a six-week program, containing twelve components, of which seven were clearly covered by the Halifax School. Those not covered included a discussion of the DPWDNA, procedures for adult education, and the "basic principles" of nursery school education. The program at the ICS also divided discussion of training and routines into four separate lectures, and it is likely that all four of the topics (play, sleeping, washroom and dining room routines) were covered by the Training School.

⁴⁵ PANS MG 20 Vol. 414, #4.7, WCH, Social Service Index, minutes November 1940.

⁴⁶ JMAR 1950.

city, promoting efficiency and professionalism. Special note was made of the significance of these connections in 1950, when the Committee declared that they were “a part of the larger Social Service Program of the city. In no way do we overlap but we do co-operate in many ways.”⁴⁷

Recognition of the importance of co-operation, however, did not always guarantee that the Jost was willing to do so. Despite the difficulties experienced by the Ladies’ Committee in meeting their financial obligations during this period, for example, the Jost Mission was never connected to the Community Chest. Donna Varga has suggested that admission into a Chest, while relieving committees from the burdens of fundraising, often resulted in some loss of autonomy for the centres, “particularly in terms of child care admission policies.”⁴⁸ This reasoning may well have been the cause behind the Jost’s refusal to seek funding by this means, as is suggested in a letter from the assistant executive director of the Canadian Welfare Council to Gwendolyn Shand of the WCH in 1944.

I have been wondering whether there has been any move to have the Jost Nursery included in the Chest... It is understood, of course, that in order to be included... the nursery would have to demonstrate not only its usefulness and necessity in the community, but its willingness to operate under a good program.⁴⁹

Of all the connections maintained by Pearson and the Committee, one of the most significant was that with the Dalhousie University Mental Health Clinic. This particular link was an extremely important part of Pearson’s endeavour to ‘modernise’ the Jost’s method

⁴⁷ JMAR 1950.

⁴⁸ Varga, *Constructing the Child*, 19.

⁴⁹ PANS MG 20 Vol. 408, #6.1, Nora Lea to G. Shand, 11 November 1944.

of care giving, and to provide thorough attention to the mental health and personality development of the children under her care. In her reports, descriptions of progress (or regress) among the nursery children were frequently articulated in a vocabulary pervaded by psychological diagnoses of their mental states. In 1950, for example, one of the Nursery's children, who may well have been numbered among the "shy" children of earlier years, was instead described as suffering from an "inferiority complex."⁵⁰ Similarly, a set of two-year-old twins who had not been fully toilet trained were described by Miss Pearson as suffering from "low mental development" and taken to the psychiatric clinic for assessment.⁵¹ Several children who exhibited 'nervous' disorders were also referred to the clinic for mental 'check-ups', and in one instance the clinic itself referred a child to the Jost, in hopes that social interaction with other children might 'cure' her of her nervous ailment.⁵² One case of particular interest involved a young boy who entered the Nursery with "defective speech - A real behaviour problem." Pearson's concern in this instance may well have come as a result of her attendance at a series of lectures sponsored by the WCH, in which the Council was instructed on the issue of children's speech defects and the psychological problems associated with them. Those with speaking difficulties were considered to be "handicapped," and the "majority of speech difficulties are not due to some physical malformation of the

⁵⁰ PANS MG 20 Vol. 1412, #7, Jost Mission, Reports of the Director on Parents and Children (hereafter entitled 'Reports'), February 1950.

⁵¹ PANS MG 20 vol. 1412, #7, Reports, April 1952. The children's parents were notified of the assessment only after the appointment at the clinic had been held.

⁵² PANS MG 20 Vol. 1412, #5, Reports, April 1949. Several other cases of 'nervous' ailments are mentioned throughout this particular set of reports, but see also PANS MG 20 Vol. 1412, #7, *passim*.

organs of speech but to some functional disturbance.”⁵³

This case is not only of interest for what it demonstrates about the connections Miss Pearson made with the wider social welfare community, but also because it confirms that the Jost administration continued to take the initiative in assessing and caring for the children’s health, with little or no interaction with the parents. After the matron had sent this particular boy to the Clinic for analysis in 1952, the doctor’s preliminary findings, rather than being sent to the child’s mother, were sent to Miss Pearson. In his letter, the doctor informed Pearson that,

It is our feeling that he probably is somewhat retarded but felt that much of his behaviour constitutes a behaviour problem... We would like to further evaluate the child and plan to get in contact with the mother about the possibility of further evaluation and treatment... Thank-you very much for referring this child to us....⁵⁴

It was only following the doctor’s assessment that Pearson contacted the boy’s mother and advised her to bring him to the clinic for regular evaluations. The expertise of the Dalhousie Clinic appears to have given Pearson an important degree of authority in this instance, as her reports note that the boy’s mother eventually gave up her job as a clerk at Eaton’s in order that she might be able to follow the advice.

Pearson’s efforts to promote healthy personality development among the nursery’s children, were complemented by a trend within the WCH. The records of this association after 1940 also indicate growing awareness of the importance of psychology and character

⁵³ PANS MG 20 vol. 408 #4, WCH, Child Welfare Division minutes , 22 July 1949.

⁵⁴ PANS MG 20 Vol. 1412, #7, Dr. H. Kenneth Hall to Edna Pearson, 20 January 1951, included in the Reports.

training in the care of pre-school children. In 1949, Mae Flemming, chief supervisor of the WCH's Family Allowance Division, stressed that in the past, "all that was thought necessary was a home, food and clothing." Consequently, the "emotional and mental side" of a child's life had been overlooked, with serious consequences. "[W]hat happens in the pre-school years," she remarked, "has life long result."⁵⁵ The WCH also was instructed that psychology was not merely a tool for encouraging healthy mental development, but an indispensable component of any system of childcare which dealt with pre-school aged children. Mary Macauley, a visiting speaker from the Iona Adult Education Centre in London, England addressed a large meeting of the WCH in 1948, explaining that the pre-school years of a child's existence were the roots on the "Tree of Life." A child gradually realises, she stated,

[that] there are two parts to our lives, what happens outside and what happens inside. Actually far more happens inside than outside, and that is the reason why it is important for us to understand human psychology... Psychology is a stepping stone to real humanity... The understanding of ourselves is the foundation.⁵⁶

Pearson's efforts to move the Jost toward greater employment of these modern psychological methods in the Nursery were part of a general drive on her part to assume a greater focus of attention and finances on the children. She suggested on several occasions, for example, that the centre's Employment Bureau be closed down, and that the women applying for work "be directed to the unemployment office and by doing so more time could

⁵⁵ PANS MG 20 Vol. 408, #4, WCH, Child Welfare Division minutes, 11 January 1949.

⁵⁶ PANS MG 20 Vol. 403, #4, WCH, Child Welfare Division minutes 13 September 1948. Macauley was social worker born in Cape Breton, and had worked in Toronto, New York, and finally London, where she was the Director of the Iona Centre's programs.

be spent on the children.”⁵⁷ As Donna Varga has demonstrated, the closure of employment bureaux in other nurseries across the country was indeed an integral part of their transformation from centres providing a broad spectrum of charity and welfare services, to institutions focused on the training of the nation’s children.⁵⁸ The case of the Jost’s Mission indicates, however, that the maintenance or closure of an employment bureau was not necessarily a deliberate, or desirable part of any emerging campaign to promote modern methods of child care. While the majority of day nurseries in Canada had closed their Employment Bureaux by 1940, the Jost’s job placement service was in operation as late as 1953, despite Pearson’s arguments for its closure.

Financial considerations appear to have had a major impact on the decision to maintain this service. In response to Pearson’s first request that the service be closed in 1942, for instance, the Ladies’ Committee argued that, “if we dropped this some other organization would take it up [and] we would loose [sic] the revenue.”⁵⁹ During the war years, in particular, this revenue was a significant part of the Jost’s annual budget. The majority of women applying for work between 1940 and 1947 (often upwards of one hundred per day) were employed as cleaners on the ships that moved through the harbour, work that was particularly lucrative for the Jost. In 1946, for example, the Mission’s cash receipts totalled \$3594.23, and the revenue from the boats, at \$819.65, was the largest source, second

⁵⁷ JMC minutes, 15 March 1949. See also minutes for 15 September 1942, 20 January 1947.

⁵⁸ Varga, *Constructing the Child*, 80.

⁵⁹ JMC minutes, 15 September 1942. “Revenue” refers to the fees received by the Jost’s Employment Bureau from each employer to whom a worker was sent.

only to the \$1200.00 bursary granted by the Jost Mission Board of Trustees.⁶⁰ Significantly, the Committee also began charging registration fees to women who did not leave children at the nursery,⁶¹ indicating that there may well have been an element of institutional control involved with the perpetuation of the employment bureau. Other publicly funded and administered employment agencies had been established by the federal government in the 1940's, including the National Employment Service, which clearly overlapped with the assistance provided at the Jost Mission. Outside regulation of job placement, however, removed an element of the Mission's influence on the behaviour of their clientele. As long as women obtained their employment through the Jost, the Matron could be assured that the nature of the work being undertaken by them met with the standards of respectability set by the Mission's administrators. Indeed, this concern was as significant in the post 1940 period as it had been before the war. In 1945, for example, a nineteen year old single mother was refused care for her son because she was "Working in O'Keefe's Brewery - we do not call this essential work therefore feel not called upon to care for [the] baby - It is against our Principles."⁶²

The continued operation of the Jost's Employment Bureau also illustrates that the administrators were consistently mindful of the economic status of their clients, and the consequent need to provide them with a multitude of social services beyond day care. The committee minutes indicate, in fact, that the majority of the Mission's administrators

⁶⁰ JMAR, 1946. Total revenue from the "boat work," including the wages received by the workers themselves, was \$27,398.

⁶¹ JMAR, 1952.

⁶² PANS MG 20, v. 1412, #5, Reports, September 1945.

considered the Bureau a valuable part of their efforts to attend to the needs of their community. The “voice of the meeting[s]” held on the issue of the closure expressed the opinion that the Bureau had “filled a well felt want in the past and might fill a greater need in the future.”⁶³ Indeed, the Bureau was frequently described as “very busy” in Pearson’s monthly reports to the Committee, indicating that it was a service many women in Halifax continued to value.

Other, more traditional, charitable aspects of the Mission’s services also continued, in direct contrast to the centres studied by Varga, where charity services were discontinued in favour of a ‘modern’ child care focus. Immunisation and health clinics continued to be held for the children, and while cash relief for local families had been provided on occasion, particularly during the Depression, as late as 1942 two families continued to receive such relief from the Mission.⁶⁴ Frequent donations of warm clothing and shoes were made to some families, including “complete outfit[s] from pajamas [sic] to outside suits,”⁶⁵ and during the winter season, the Ladies’ Committee also held knitting parties to make mittens, scarves and sweaters for the children. Similarly, while they may no longer have been providing entertainment for mothers, recreation for the Mission’s children remained a high priority in the Nursery. Summer picnics and trips to various local attractions continued, as did the Christmas parties, which, although smaller, were the focal point of the years’

⁶³ JMC minutes, 15 September 1942, 20 January 1947.

⁶⁴ JMC minutes, 24 February 1942. It is not clear whether or not these were families who made use of the Nursery or Employment Bureau, but the records indicate that during the Depression many families who were not users of these services, did receive relief in cash and kind from the Mission.

⁶⁵ JMAR, 1950.

activities.

Providing recreation for the children was not the only element of continuity in the nursery program. While Edna Pearson's emphasis on mental health was clearly a new and modern way of categorising the children, constant affirmation of good habits, particularly those relating to respectable appearance and behaviour, remained constant elements of the Jost's training. There was a continued prohibition on corporal punishment for misbehaviour,⁶⁶ but obedience and cleanliness were promoted through the scheduling of the program, to the same degree as they had been before the war. Much like the program at the ICS, children were provided with their own hooks for towel and washcloth, and basins were provided on low tables in order that they might learn to wash their face and hands in the morning and before meals. Cleanliness and good behaviour were not simply skills or values taught to the children for their personal benefit, however, but points of pride for the staff, and a means of evaluating the quality of care children received at the Mission. As Mrs. MacMillan, a member of the Jost Committee executive, reported in 1942, "the healthy appearance and good behaviour of the children, [show] what good care they have received from our superintendent [Miss Pearson]."

⁶⁶ As with the pre-1940 period, the Mission's staff took any hint that they had neglected or harmed the children in their care very seriously. In 1952, a young girl received a "little bump" on her head while playing at the nursery. The records noted that when her father returned to pick her up that evening, "he did not like this." The next day, Miss Pearson and another staff member "looked for scratches when she came in," and pointed them out to the father, most probably as a means of ensuring that they could not be found at fault for any mark on the girl. See PANS MG 20 Vol. 1412, #7, Reports, April 1952.

⁶⁷ Similarly, a visit to the Jack and Jill Nursery School in Halifax in 1949 seems to have caused concern at the Jost, as the visitors reported that while “the Mission compared favourably in equipment.... our children were not as pleasing in appearance.”⁶⁸

Descriptions of appearance and cleanliness were also a prominent part of the records kept by Miss Pearson on the nursery’s inmates. Her reports often contained detailed descriptions of the children’s clothing, physical features, skin colour and hygiene, and she frequently made implicit connections between a child’s appearance and his or her behaviour. Those who were “well-dressed” were generally cast as “well-behaved” or “pleasant,” and those who were poorly clothed or dirty were often those who caused Pearson the most frustration. Indeed, the inability of a parent to maintain acceptable standards of comportment or cleanliness in their children did render the child, on occasion, an unacceptable client. Indicating that the services were shaped as much by the needs of the nursery’s staff as they were by the mothers, chronically troublesome children were refused care. In 1949, for example, two sisters were described by Pearson as “very disobedient [and] hard to manage” and she informed the mother that “we could not take them [any] longer.” Other parents were told their children were “too much work” for the staff and one was told that her baby cried continually, and, therefore, “we were afraid we would not be able to keep him.”⁶⁹ Similar restrictions were placed on children whose appearance fell short of the Mission’s standards

⁶⁷ JMC minutes, 19 January 1943.

⁶⁸ JMC minutes, 15 February 1949. The Jack and Jill was a Nursery School run by the Halifax Ladies’ College during the 1940’s. Mrs. G.A. Rathkins, who volunteered as a kindergarten instructor at the Jost, was a paid teacher at this institution.

⁶⁹ PANS MG 20 vol. 1412, #5, #7, Reports, *passim*.

of cleanliness. In February of 1950, for example, Miss Pearson noted of one child that he was “very dirty - clothes rags. Spoke to [his mother and she] promised to clean him up. Said she had no soap.” When the boy returned to the Nursery he was cleaner, but his “Clothes [were] still rags ,” and Pearson noted that she would tell his mother that he “must have clothes or we shall not accept him.”⁷⁰ Thus, despite the fact that the boy’s mother appears to have been unable to afford soap, she, ironically, was expected to provide new clothing for her son in order that he be allowed to attend a nursery which was dedicated to the service of the ‘poorer classes’ of the city.

Pearson’s records were also consistent in their documentation of the religious and ethnic background of the children entering the nursery. As with the pre-war period, however, there were no obvious restrictions on entry because of religion or ethnicity. According to the *Halifax Mail Star*, “The Mission is open to children of all religious faiths, races and colours, and the visitor will find almost every group represented.”⁷¹ What was clearly of more significance for Pearson in the evaluation of her clients was the marital status and respectability of the children’s mothers. These aspects of the family’s history, in fact, were

⁷⁰ PANS MG 20 Vol. 1412 #7, Reports, February 1950. There are several other cases where parents were informed that their child would be refused entry to the nursery unless their parents would, for example, “bath them, wash their hair and put strikly [*sic*] clean cloths on them [*sic*].” The practice of bathing the children after they had arrived, and dressing them in clothes owned by the nursery seems to have diminished after 1940.

⁷¹ *Mail Star*, 1 June 1950, p. 27. The photographs accompanying this article, as well as several others which appeared over this decade, do show a predominance of white children, although black children are also present. The imbalance may well reflect the predominance of the white population in the city. See the *Halifax Mail*, 18 November 1943; 30 November 1944; 22 November 1949; 30 October 1950. The latter two articles are those in which black children are included in the group.

usually the first items recorded about every individual applying to the Mission. Significantly, for those of the applicants who were married, their husband's occupational status was listed, usually as the reason for the woman's desire to seek work outside of her home. While such details for the pre-war period are not available, it is likely that many of the reasons given during the application process remained the same. The majority of married applicants stated that their husbands were unemployed, worked in seasonal industries, or that their wages were inadequate to maintain their families. Several of the women also reported themselves as being divorced, separated, or the victims of desertion. Occasionally, both mothers and fathers would apply to have their children taken in for the day while a spouse was ill in hospital, and school-aged children continued to arrive for lunch and after school care. In one typical instance, a woman placed her three children at the nursery, because "her husband was in the hospital in Montreal with pneumonia, and she wanted to work to pay the rent so they would not lose their house."⁷²

Pearson's records are not consistently neutral in their descriptions of the women applying at the Jost. They reflect, instead, a tendency to pass judgement upon the applicants based upon a conception of respectability that was rooted in a woman's marital status and her ability to meet various criteria of traditional motherhood. One woman referred from the City Relief Department, for example, was described as "a very good mother - House clean and neat - and worthy of whatever we can do for her." Similarly, a young mother who had initially been described as an unreliable, "slow witted" worker was "measuring up" after

⁷² PANS MG 20 Vol. 1411 #5, Reports, October 1945.

several years of steady work and guidance from the Mission's staff. In another instance, by contrast, Pearson made note of a woman who had been obligated to take rooms in a disreputable but inexpensive boarding house following her separation from an abusive husband. The apartment was run by a woman of "very loose morals" who had "men in at night," and in a note taken several years after Pearson's initial contact with the mother, it was noted that she had, unfortunately, "Got [a] divorce. Developed into a loose character."⁷³

It is quite possible that many women who were interviewed by Edna Pearson in this manner lied about their marital status in order to avoid such negative sanctions as might have been applied.⁷⁴ Indeed, Pearson appears to have suspected this much of several applicants, as is indicated by the occasional question marks placed after the statement of the woman's marital status. Similarly, in January of 1951, the matron made note of an application from a door-to-door jewellery saleswoman whose husband was said to be "missing - if she ever had one."⁷⁵ While there does not appear to have been much direct confrontation with Pearson over her methods, several of the records do suggest that local women found this interview process intrusive. In 1945, for example, Pearson contacted the city's policewoman, Lillian Rafuse, over one applicant who she believed to be "mentally deranged." When she would have referred the client to Rafuse for assistance, however, the woman "left here saying she would go on her own - Disgusted with everyone."⁷⁶ In another incident, Pearson noted

⁷³ PANS MG 20 Vol. 1412, #5, #7, October, 1951; January, 1944; November 1948.

⁷⁴ Varga suggests that this was a common practice, and given that single mothers were occasionally refused service, such a 'precaution' is quite understandable.

⁷⁵ PANS MG 20 Vol. 1412, #7, Reports, January, 1951.

⁷⁶ PANS MG 20 Vol. 1411 #5, Reports, October, 1945.

that a mother became “very huffy when asked about husband etc. – was going to take [her son] away – some place else if she had to answer so many questions.”⁷⁷

The character judgements made by Pearson through her casework routines may well have made the women receiving assistance from the Jost aware of the fact that their lifestyles did not ‘measure up’ to the standards expected by the centre’s administrators. Moreover, it appears to have been important to the Committee and its Matron that the Mission’s clients acknowledge this inferiority and the consequent significance it leant to the services provided. The records for this period, for example, amplify the gratitude of the women using the Nursery and Employment Bureau with a degree of intensity not present in the pre-1940 documents. According to the Committee, local women were “thankfully aware of the advantages” of the services provided to them, and on several occasions they ‘returned the favour’ by voluntarily cleaning the Mission building each spring.⁷⁸ Indeed, Pearson’s approach to the women, particularly in the interview process, tended to emphasise the differences in social status between the providers and recipients of care. In order to place a child in the nursery, local women were required, in essence, to give an account as to why they were unable to care for their children at home where they belonged. Thus, despite the fact that few women were refused assistance, the ‘professional’ casework method employed by Pearson allowed her considerable leeway in screening the applicants and identifying the ‘acceptable’ qualities of their characters.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ PANS MG 20 Vol. 1412 #7, Reports, July, 1951.

⁷⁸ JMAR 1953.

⁷⁹ As Susan Prentice has shown for the Ontario context, provincial nurseries established after the war had very strict eligibility requirements which were designed as a means of discouraging women who did not ‘need’ to work from entering the labour force.

These 'qualities' of character continued to be defined by the standards of behaviour and respectability practised by the Mission's committee and its matron. This continuity of posture is not altogether surprising, in fact, as the membership of the Ladies' Committee itself was remarkably static throughout this entire period.⁸⁰ Their personal vision of ideal family life was consistent with the popular images of motherhood and domesticity in the post-war period, and was supported by the fact that their economic status allowed them to maintain such an existence without the difficulties faced by lower income Canadians. Thus, despite awareness that financial difficulties prevented many of their clients from maintaining the ideal, problems faced by the Jost's clients were assumed to be the result of individual failure, and not systemic malfunction. As with the pre-1940 period, neither the matron, nor the Committee members, offered any challenge to the economic or social system that prevented these women from living the 'ideal' lifestyle. By contrast, they structured the administration of the Jost Nursery around the principles of 'emergency' welfare assistance. Day care was not an alternative to home care, but "a special service" provided through the goodwill of the Mission's Ladies' Committee. It is not surprising to note, therefore, that while the Mission began to articulate a bureaucratic justification centred on the expert care given to the children, there was a continued assurance that the women who arrived at the Jost each day were *deserving* women. Moreover, this aspect of their mandate was not expressed in the language of Christian charity as it had been before the war; instead, practicality

See "Mothers, Workers, Reds," 132.

⁸⁰ The majority of the committee members served terms of five to ten years, and many of those who worked with Lillian White continued to work on the Ladies' Committee well into the 1940's.

reigned. The Mission's clients required work out of desperation, not choice, and by providing for them, the Jost was furnishing a "much needed public service,"⁸¹ thereby protecting the public coffers. In 1950, for example, the *Annual Report* declared that, "In this time of the high cost of living, many mothers find it necessary or helpful to extend the family budget, or as in some cases, a number of families would be public charges if the mother could not leave her child or children at the Day Nursery."⁸² The WCH's Child Welfare Division echoed this mandate in 1951 and, importantly, strengthened the image of the day care centre as a place for *quality* childcare. Day care was not to be regarded as a substitute for home care, they argued, as its purpose was "always to assist parents in fulfilling their responsibilities." At the same time, the nursery was "to make sure that the experience is constructive for the child."⁸³

The adoption of techniques thought to promote mental health, as well as the retention of more charitable, traditional aspects of their services, allowed the Jost to meet the requirements of a 'good' nursery service in this period. The well-conducted day care centre was not merely to be a centre for education, but "an integration of the services of health [and] welfare... to meet the children's needs."⁸⁴ According to an article in *Canadian Welfare* authored by pre-school educator Dorothy Millichamp,

A good day nursery is not easy to attain or to maintain. It must be adequate

⁸¹ *Mail Star*, 1 June 1950, 27.

⁸² JMAR 1950.

⁸³ PANS MG 20 vol. 408 #6.2, WCH, Child Welfare Division, September 1951: Review of "A Guide for the Development of Day Care Programs."

⁸⁴ PANS MG 20 Vol. 408 #6.2, WCH, Child Welfare Division, September 1951: Review of "A Guide for the Development of Day Care Programs."

in four things: complete care for health and safety; a program of activity based upon fundamental knowledge of child development; a sound philosophy of mental hygiene; and an approach embracing broad principles of social welfare.⁸⁵

By pinpointing the influence of the ICS and the mental hygiene curriculum, Donna Varga had rightly identified the ‘modern’ changes that were necessary for a day nursery to meet Millichamp’s requirements for care. Her arguments that day nurseries gradually envisioned their purpose as something akin to nursery schools, however, does not take into account that some welfare experts, both in and outside of day care administration, viewed day care as a unique and important part of any welfare system which had to cope with the ‘problem’ of working mothers. According to American pre-school educator Ethel Beer,

Traditionally the day nursery exists for the care of the children of working mothers, an increasing problem in many countries today. This aim is the bond that can hold the Day Nursery movement together so that it will develop for the maximum benefit of its group. Such a goal cannot be reached while the Day Nursery deviates from its course and is confused with the Nursery School.⁸⁶

The Jost’s emergence as a successful and ‘modern’ day nursery in this period, therefore, was accomplished in part through Edna Pearson’s efforts at promoting new methods of caring for the children, including her recognition of the importance of their mental health and ensuring that a degree of professional training was held by the centre’s staff. Providing quality childcare in this manner kept the Mission’s services at a level of care that corresponded to the expectations of child welfare experts like Millichamp. At the same

⁸⁵ Dorothy Millichamp, “Day Nurseries and the Community,” *Canadian Welfare* 28, 1 (1952), 41.

⁸⁶ Ethel Beer, *Working Mothers and the Day Nursery* (New York: 1957), 17-18.

time, it also is apparent that Pearson's retention (however reluctantly) of the older, traditional aspects of the centre's services was the mechanism by which the Jost sustained a position of relevance in their community. The Nursery and the Employment Bureau, by virtue of their continued popularity, were clearly services required by the city's working mothers, and much like the pre-war period, emphasising this 'need' gave powerful justification for the centre's continued operation. The mother's absence from her home certainly had not become an acceptable circumstance during these years, but 'emergency' care for women who clearly needed and deserved it was an acceptable measure of social welfare. The maintenance of these services, in fact, particularly in reference to the employment bureau, is clear evidence of a continued attitude of charitable benevolence on the part of the Jost Committee and the matron. Giving mothers the opportunity to work and maintain the economic independence of their families was an important aspect of social welfare, based upon an older model of income assistance which was, in the early 1950's, still an important part of social work's broader principles of 'helping the women to help themselves'. Indeed, while developing principles of 'good' day care was an important consideration for care givers like Edna Pearson, the service's constant association with social welfare effectively ensured that day nurseries would remain completely distinct from other forms of pre-school care and education. Although Millichamp's editorial in *Canadian Welfare* promoted the development of quality day care, for example, she simultaneously asserted that "Home Comes First."

Obviously we neither need nor want such a day nursery life for every child....
What we do want for every child is a thoughtful home which plans carefully for him. Our first job in social welfare, health, and mental hygiene is still, as always, to help homes to greater adequacy. To-day, good day nurseries are one of the best means of accomplishing this. For future generations of

children our aim is to increase the possibilities for full home life, thus reducing, finally, the need for day nursery care.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Millichamp, "Day Nurseries," 40.

Conclusion

In 1959, Gwendolyn Shand of the WCH conducted a review of day care services in Halifax. Surprisingly, her findings made it clear that at the close of the decade, most of the city's welfare institutions were extremely dissatisfied with the quality of services provided by the Jost Mission. According to Shand's report, neither the Committee president, nor the matron Jessie Lowe (who replaced Pearson in 1952), "regarded the day nursery as a real community service." They did not understand "what a Day Nursery should be, what community responsibilities they have, or any responsibility for the future," and they expressed no interest in the city's other welfare agencies. They were simply not "part of the community '*welfare*' picture."¹ The critique of the Jost was not limited to this lack of involvement in the community, but touched upon all aspects of the program at the centre. Among the more serious of accusations was a claim that "[t]he Nursery knows nothing about the parents [or] the mother's reason for working," and that "[s]ometimes they have seen the mother only once." The staff was described as completely unprofessional and untrained, holding no other qualification for employment beyond their enjoyment of children. The result was that there was not only a lack of interest taken in the children's development, but "no understanding of child problems [or] referral to other agencies in the community." Moreover, the staff was apparently apathetic about the plight of the children to whom they refused admittance, and they had no plans for expansion to meet the needs of working mothers in the city. Many local agencies, in fact, found the Jost obsolete and inefficient, and

¹ MG 20 Vol. 408, #6.26, WCH, "The Jost Mission, November 1959." Emphasis original.

practically “count[ed] it out” as a viable source of day care. It was of “little use to low income families,” they complained, as the administrators preferred to serve only women who worked in regular positions such as teaching; domestic workers had “little chance to place their children there.” According to the City’s Department of Welfare, instead of helping the families who made use of the Nursery, the Jost had been reduced to “a sort of corral” for the children of the city.²

Unfortunately, these accounts of the Jost’s failings can be neither corroborated nor refuted, as the records for the Mission are not available beyond the early 1950’s. This documentary bias is similar to an imbalance which exists in the records covering the 1920 to 1952 period. In the latter case, where the Mission’s records are abundant, evidence which might have given a better indication of the attitudes and reactions of the Mission’s clients, is not. This gap in the extant sources makes it difficult to comprehend the full dynamic of the relationship between the Jost administrators and their clients. While the Committee and matron’s perceptions of the need for day care in the city, and their understanding of how such a service should be managed, are evident, the mothers’ opinions on these issues remain obscured. Nevertheless, the surviving records of the Mission and the WCH do illustrate what the child welfare community in Halifax believed to be the requirements of ‘good’ day care, and how they balanced these goals with their other tasks.

As Donna Varga has rightly emphasised, an increasingly important component of

² MG 20 Vol. 408, #6.27 - 6.35, WCH, reports and correspondence of Gwendolyn Shand concerning the Jost Mission, 1959.

'good' day care was the attention paid by caregivers to the mental health of the children in the nursery. In their attempts to provide the best quality of care, new and scientific standards promoted by professional childcare experts like Dr. Blatz were duplicated, as far as possible, in day care centres. Indeed, despite the deliberate distinction made by the experts between day nurseries and nursery schools, the authority of trained pre-school educators had an unmistakable influence on the course of day care's development in Canada. White and Pearson demonstrated their awareness of these developments through their involvement in local, national, and international child welfare institutions such as the WCH, the Canadian Welfare Council, and (in the case of Lillian White) the National Conference on Day Nurseries in the United States. Moreover, according to these professional standards, the Jost offered a program that integrated many of the characteristics considered necessary for the promotion of optimal personality development.

As Varga argues, the "central principle guiding the transformation of day nurseries" over this century was their gradual shift away from their 'social roles' as employment and charity centres, in favour of the incorporation of these new methods of care. On several occasions, particularly after Pearson's arrival, the administrators at the Jost unquestionably considered this component of their services to be their foremost responsibility. Notwithstanding their desire to provide children with the benefits of these modern trends in childcare techniques, however, the Mission's staff preserved a significant measure of 'old-fashioned' perspective in their approach to day care provision. Notably, the perpetuation of these traditional aspects of service was far from an impediment to the application of

'modern' methodology. While experts frequently linked the adoption of scientific and modern techniques to an estimation of efficiency in social services, retaining 'traditional' approaches, such as those applied at the Jost, did not necessarily imply stagnation or underdevelopment. Instead, it indicated the ability and inclination of the institution to meet a variety of needs as they were defined by the administration, the community, and those making use of the Mission's services.

Thus, while White and Pearson did attempt to manipulate the centre's program in favour of modern childcare, the abandonment of the Jost's social role in the community was not necessarily advantageous, or acceptable to the matrons or the Ladies' Committee. A 'spill-over' of techniques used in nursery schools is evident, but it is equally apparent that this day nursery did not see its purpose as one similar to a nursery school. The Jost, in essence, was a centre providing childcare for working mothers, and the association between this type of care and the social and economic needs of the centre's clients was constant and necessary. Not only did it correspond to the administrators' personal sense of duty and community service, but it was also an integral part of their attempts to erect an effective institutional defence. Majority opinion throughout this entire period promoted a distinct set of familial relationships in Canadian society, which placed the mother at the centre of a family's childcare efforts. Although this ideal of feminine domesticity was integral to professional attempts at improving the health of Canada's children, it had the added effect of constructing a restrictive definition of 'good' motherhood that was simply not possible for many lower income parents. Thus, 'good' day care service was promoted as a part of the

welfare network that attempted to remedy the worst effects of poverty and family stress, not as an alternative to home care. It was dispensed as a charity service, and the recipients of that charity were expected to be suitably deserving and grateful. Indeed, understanding of the child's circumstances, awareness of its mother's reasons for working, and attempting to alleviate suffering caused by economic deprivation, were as significant to 'good' day care as the application of modern methods in the nursery.

As the contrast between the Jost's reputation during the administration of Pearson and her successor Jessie Lowe indicates, running a good nursery also appears to have depended a great deal upon the ability and motivation of the matron. Certainly, the success that Pearson and White experienced in maintaining the status of the Jost was not achieved without bias. Each of them approached their duties with a set of expectations and a history of experience and training that influenced their perception of the needs of both the mothers, and their children. For Lillian White, this bias lay unmistakably in her belief that the efforts undertaken at the Mission were part of her 'practical' duty as a Christian. For Edna Pearson, it appears most clearly in her understanding and application of the casework method, and her awareness of the importance of healthy mental development among the nursery children. Despite any indication of their personal mandates, however, these women effectively balanced the forces of change and continuity at the Jost. The result was that they met the requirements of the Ladies' Committee, the Mission's clients, the city's childcare professionals, and the Halifax community itself. Children attending the Jost Day Nursery were given attention reflecting the staff's awareness that the guardianship of all aspects of

a child's life, from the psychological and spiritual, to the physical and economic, was of "great importance" to the nation. "For children, the citizens of tomorrow, are our most precious asset, they are not expendable, their health, education, spiritual training and economic security are a first concern of any country."³

³ MG 20 Vol. 408, #3, WCH, Child Welfare Division Minutes, 29 January 1947, presentation by Miss Ada Greenhill of the MSSW.

Appendix 1

Outline of the Nursery School Program Conducted at St. George's Nursery School (source: William Blatz, *Understanding the Young Child*, 270-273.)

Morning:

08:45 – 09:30 : NURSE'S INSPECTION AND ENTRANCE ROUTINE

09:00 – 09:30 : ELIMINATION ROUTINE

09:00 – 11:00 : OUTDOOR "FREE PLAY" PERIOD

10:30 – 11:00 : PUTTING AWAY TOYS.

"Each child is expected to put away at least one toy before going inside.
The children are directed indoors two or three at a time."

: CLOAKROOM ROUTINE (UNDRESSING)

"Each child proceeds to his own locker, removes his outdoor clothing...
and puts on house slippers and smock. There are two cloakrooms, a
junior [ages 2-3] and a senior [ages 4-5]."

: ELIMINATION ROUTINE

"Each child makes an attempt to urinate, flushes the toilet, and rinses his
fingers. (In addition to the regular routine periods, a child may be taken
to the toilet individually at more frequent intervals. In the case of an
involuntary elimination, the child is taken to the toilet immediately and
is changed. No comment is made.)"

10:30 – 11:00 : MID-MORNING NOURISHMENT

11:00 – 11:35 : INDOOR "FREE PLAY" PERIOD

: WASHING ROUTINE

"A definite washing procedure is followed (washing hands, changing
water, washing face, drying hands and face, combing hair)."

: CARPENTRY [for those not participating in/finished the washing routine]

11:30 – 11:35 : PUTTING AWAY TOYS

11:35 – 11:50 : ORGANIZED GROUP PLAY [story telling, music, singing, marching, etc]

11:50 – 12:00 : RELAXATION ROUTINE

Afternoon:

12:00 – 12:30 : DINING ROOM ROUTINE

A cafeteria style procedure was in place, with each child retrieving his
or her own meal. Grace was said, and "Cod-liver oil is given as a routine
procedure."

12:30 – 12:45 : ELIMINATION ROUTINE

"Only those children who ask, or whose parent requests it, wait for
bowel movement."

12:30 – 14:30 : SLEEPING ROUTINE

14:30 – 14:45 : ELIMINATION ROUTINE

14:30 – 15:00 : DRESSING ROUTINE

14:45 – 15:00 : MID-AFTERNOON NOURISHMENT

: PARENTS CALL FOR THE CHILDREN

Appendix 2

A. Actual Numbers of Women Employed in Selected Industries Halifax, 1921-1951

	1921	1931	1941	1951
Domestic and Personal Service	1638	2405	3255	2558
Saleswomen	715	570	859	938
Telephone Operators	173	150	130	249
Clerical Service (esp. Stenography)	1234	1479	2344	404
Manufacturing	525	344	563	597
Total	5895	6185	8923*	11,139

* This includes women in active service

B. Percentage of the Total Number of Women Employed in Selected Industries Halifax, 1921-1951

	1921	1931	1941	1951
Domestic and Personal Service	28	39	36	23
Saleswomen	12	9	10	8
Telephone Operators	3	2	1	2
Clerical Service (esp. Stenography)	21	24	26	36
Manufacturing	9	6	6	5

Source: *Census of Canada, 1921-1951*

Appendix 3
Jost Mission Children, *Halifax Mail*, 31 March 1924



Appendix 4

Jost Mission Children, *Halifax Mail Star*, 1 June 1950



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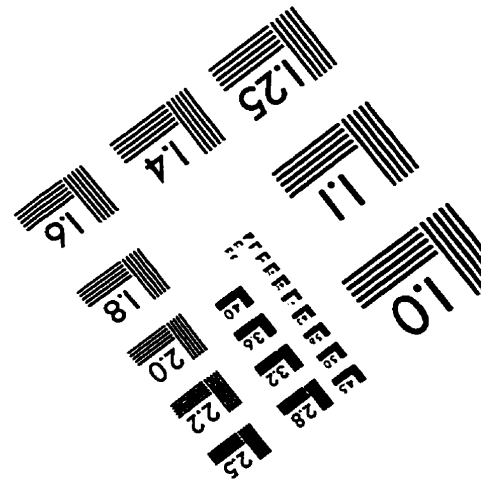
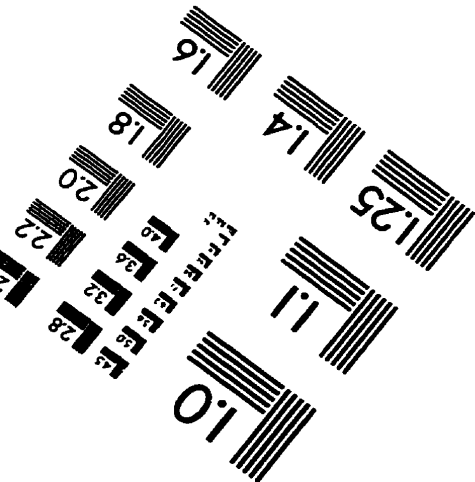
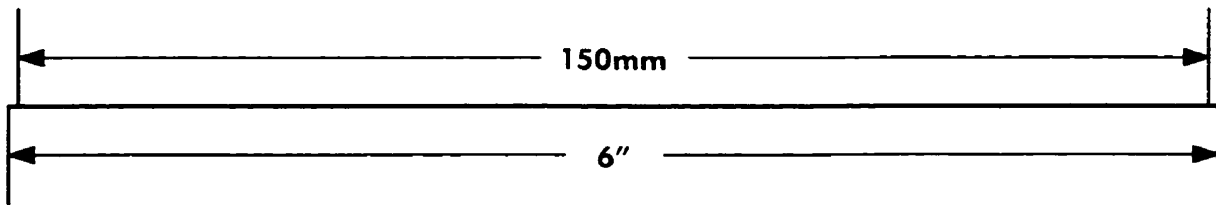
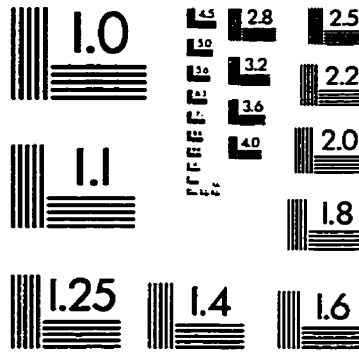
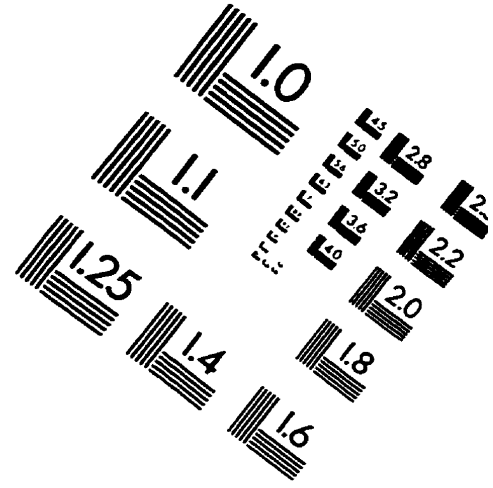
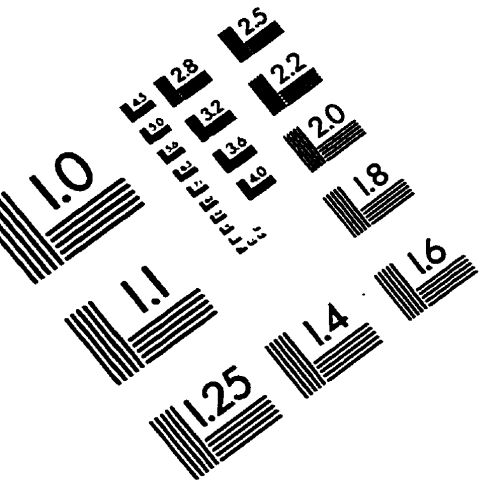
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