

## Dealing with “the Destitute and the Wretched”: The Protestant House of Industry and Refuge in Nineteenth-Century Montreal

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### Résumé de l'article

Dans cet article, l'auteure se penche sur les réactions de l'élite anglophone montréalaise à la pauvreté et aux sans-abri. L'objet d'étude est le Montreal Protestant House of Industry and Refuge, de son ouverture en 1863 à 1900. Influencé par l'idéologie libérale en émergence qui considère la charité comme une faiblesse morale, le conseil d'administration de cette organisation de charité privée impose donc un rest d'aptitude au travail pour limiter l'aide et « réformer » les bénéficiaires, et pour offrir des conditions de vie minimales dans ses refuges. Toutefois, l'expérience aidant, les administrateurs ont dû composer avec les contradictions soulevées par leur condamnation morale des sans-emploi et la réalité du chômage et des sans-abri. En fin de compte, leur humanitarisme et leur esprit chrétien les ont empêché de permettre que leurs concitoyens meurent de faim dans les rues.

## Dealing with “the destitute and the wretched”: The Protestant House of Industry and Refuge in Nineteenth-Century Montreal

JANICE HARVEY

**T**he question of the relief to the poor during the winter is a difficult one but the Board are doing their best to meet it as wisely as they can.”<sup>1</sup> Thus Charles Alexander, the President of the Montreal Protestant House of Industry and Refuge, addressed his audience in 1899 and reflected on the thirty-six years the institution had been dealing with the sometimes-controversial questions of proper poor relief. This paper looks at how they went about doing so, the problems they grappled with, the choices they made, and how these reflected the approach to homelessness and unemployment in nineteenth-century Montreal. The research is based on the remaining private papers of the institution, a source no other historian has used to date.<sup>2</sup>

As Montreal industrialised over the nineteenth century and the population increased, the instability of the wage market meant that larger and larger numbers of people lived under the constant threat of unemployment, under-employment, destitution, hunger, and even homelessness. Much of this unemployment occurred during the winter, concurrently with increased fuel and clothing costs, making it even more devastating and threatening for the poor.<sup>3</sup> In times of need, people usually turned to kin or friends. Those without such networks or whose help networks were already stretched to capacity made use of whatever forms

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- 1 Montreal Protestant House of Industry and Refuge, “Annual Report, 1899,” in *Minute Book*, Vol. 4, 133.
- 2 The author would like to thank the Grace Dart-Montreal Extended Care Centre for permission to access the papers of the Montreal Protestant House of Industry and Refuge. This paper is an extension of the research that I undertook for my doctoral dissertation: Janice Harvey, “The Protestant Orphan Asylum and the Montreal Ladies’ Benevolent Society: A Case Study in Protestant Child Charity in Montreal, 1822-1900” (Ph.D. thesis, McGill, 2001).
- 3 Peter Baskerville and Eric W. Sager, *Unwilling Idlers: The Urban Unemployed and Their Families in Late Victorian Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998). For the role of winter in poor relief see Judith Fingard, “The Winter’s Tale: Seasonal Contours of Pre-Industrial Poverty in British North America 1815-1860,” *Canadian Historical Association, Historical Papers* (1974): 65-94.

of poor relief were available. Applying for charitable aid was, in effect, one of the many survival strategies used by the poor.

Although the poor were often able to use relief structures for their own purposes,<sup>4</sup> the aid available usually reflected the attitudes, prejudices, and concerns of the elite much more than the needs of the poor. This was particularly true of places like Montreal where no state relief system was developed until the twentieth century. Because authorities had declined to adopt the English Poor Law legislation, poor relief in early central Canada was allocated to the private sphere with only minimal public financial support. The model that developed in Lower Canada/Quebec differed substantially from that of Upper Canada/Ontario largely as a result of the prominent role played by the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>5</sup> The church built on the work of traditional Catholic charities with a deliberate campaign in the 1840s to consolidate its social role and to increase the number of religious orders available to assume responsibility for social service delivery.<sup>6</sup> Alongside these Roman Catholic charities, a relief network was established by Protestant churches, national societies, and private charities but dominated by the latter. The resulting Quebec system was thus both private and confessional, with separate Roman Catholic and Protestant relief networks; the Quebec government maintained this model even in areas of extensive state intervention such as reformatories and insane asylums, albeit with additional funding.<sup>7</sup>

In Montreal, this model gave the city's elite control over the forms of relief available to Protestants, and made charity an integral part of the urban social regulation structure. It was one of the ways in which the elite tried to reproduce the social forms of which they approved and to impose their control over social space. Members of this elite were influenced by many of the ideas that had served as the basis for the reform of the English Poor Laws. Although they saw

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4 For family income strategies in Montreal see Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993).

5 In many areas the Ontario government was more interventionist and provided much more substantial funding. For the general aspects of the mixed public/private system in Ontario see Mariana Valverde, "The Mixed Social Economy as a Canadian Tradition," *Studies in Political Economy* 47 (Summer 1995): 33-60.

6 On this see Jean-Marie Fecteau, "La construction d'un espace social: les rapports de l'Église et de l'État et la question de l'assistance publique au Québec dans la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle," in *L'histoire de la culture et de l'imprimé. Hommages à Claude Galarneau*, dirs. Yvan Lamonde and Gilles Gallichan (Quebec: Les presses de l'Université Laval, 1996), 61-90. For the nuns' work providing social services see Micheline D'Allaire, *Les Communautés religieuses de Montréal, Tome I: Les communautés religieuses et l'assistance sociale à Montréal 1695-1900*, (Montreal: Éditions du Méridien, 1997) and Huguette Lapointe-Roy, *Charité bien ordonnée: le premier réseau de lutte contre la pauvreté à Montréal au 19<sup>e</sup> siècle*, (Montréal: Boréal, 1987).

7 For the evolution of this model see my thesis, Harvey, "The Protestant Orphan Asylum and the Montreal Ladies' Benevolent Society," Chapter 1.

charity as a Christian duty, at the same time they increasingly believed poverty to be an individual responsibility and the result of moral weakness.<sup>8</sup> This belief, combined with the conviction that easily available poor relief would create relief dependency, led philanthropists to distinguish between the poor they thought deserved charity and those they called the "undeserving," and to carefully define what comprised "real charity" as opposed to "indiscriminate giving."<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, the Montreal Protestant community was torn between the need to create its own relief network to alleviate destitution, in order to avoid forcing Protestants to compromise their souls by using the Roman Catholic system, and the prevalent ideology against making relief too easily available or too abundant. As a result, the Protestants developed a somewhat constrained benevolence and a moralist approach to relief.

The idea of a House of Industry or workhouse to provide institutional aid for the growing number of homeless poor in Montreal over the winter months emerged early in the century when a joint committee of Roman Catholics and Protestants formed such an institution in 1817. This first workhouse was short-lived and, although similar committees established institutions in several other winters in the 1820s and 1830s, they were always sporadic and seasonal. Mounting ethnic and religious tensions between Protestants and Catholics by the 1830s compromised these joint efforts. They also suffered from a lack of dependable funding and committee members had ideological differences over the respective advantages of institutional and outdoor aid.<sup>10</sup> Starting in 1847, the city council considered establishing a municipal institution but this also floundered due to funding problems. The situation reflected the elite's overall hesitancy to provide readily available relief.

In 1863, a group of leading Protestant philanthropists decided that the volume of poverty in the city and the growing problem of street begging called for renewed efforts. In light of the unsuccessful joint committees and the failure of the city to assume responsibility for relief, they organised the Montreal Protestant House of Industry and Refuge (the House of Industry).<sup>11</sup> They ini-

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8 For the development of liberal ideology in relation to issues like poverty see Mitchell Dean, *The Constitution of Poverty. Toward a Genealogy of Liberal Governance*, (London: Routledge, 1991). See also Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Ideas of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age*, (New York: Random House, 1983).

9 See Michael B. Katz, *The Undeserving Poor: From the War on Poverty to the War on Welfare*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), 5-16; Alexander Keyssar, *Out of Work: The first century of unemployment in Massachusetts*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) and Joey Noble, "Class-ifying the Poor: Toronto Charities 1850-1880," *Studies in Political Economy* 2 (Autumn 1979): 109-30.

10 See Damien Chureau, "La Maison d'industrie de Montreal (1836-1870)," (M.A. thesis, Angers, 1996) and Harvey, "The Protestant Orphan Asylum and the Montreal Ladies' Benevolent Society," Chapter 1.

11 It was incorporated immediately. *Statutes of Canada*, 1864, 26 Vict., c.62.

tially planned to accept both Protestants and Roman Catholics, and applied for city support on this basis. The mayor and city council preferred to maintain the existing confessional system and allocated one-half of the special workhouse fund they had available to the Protestant Board, keeping the other half for an eventual Roman Catholic institution.<sup>12</sup> Aid from the city ended with that initial grant. The institution received small annual grants from the United Canada/Quebec governments but these never represented more than ten percent of revenue. In marked contrast with the Toronto House of Industry, for example, the Montreal institution remained both privately managed and privately funded throughout the century.<sup>13</sup>

The House of Industry organisers opened a temporary night refuge and soup kitchen over the winter months of 1863 and began to raise subscriptions toward a more permanent institution.<sup>14</sup> After a successful fund-raising campaign, they purchased a block on Bleury and Dorchester, hired a full-time superintendent, and opened the House of Industry with two buildings in December 1864.<sup>15</sup> The new institution greatly increased the aid available to poor Protestants in the city, because the existing charities were limited to the care of destitute women and children. By the end of the century three national societies operated receiving-homes for immigrants in the summer, as did the Anglican Diocese. Several private missions also existed, but the House of Industry remained the major relief institution for the adult poor, the unemployed, and the homeless.<sup>16</sup>

Homelessness in the nineteenth century, like poverty, was not restricted to some easily definable group. Single men and women without work, the elderly unable to depend on their families for support, recent immigrants trying to establish themselves in the city, unwed mothers, convalescents discharged from hospital but not yet strong enough to resume regular work, adolescents alone in the city looking for work or fleeing abusive families, children abandoned or neglected by parents unable to cope with the pressures of an industrial economy, and whole families left destitute as a result of the death or unemployment of a wage earner – all these and more might find themselves needing charity or shelter or both.

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12 House of Industry, "Annual Report, 1863," in *Minute Book*, Vol. 1, 61. The funds were the remains of an estate bequeathed in 1808 for the founding of the House of Industry. A Roman Catholic House of Refuge (run by the Grey Nuns) was formed in 1866.

13 The Toronto institution received substantial government aid. By the end of the century it received almost ninety percent of its revenue from some level of government. James Pitsula, "The Relief of Poverty," (Ph.D. thesis, York University, 1979), 26.

14 House of Industry, *Minute Book*, September 1863, Vol. 1, 1-29; January–March 1864, 44, 56; October 1873, 481.

15 House of Industry, *Minute Book*, March 1864–April 1865, 1, 53, 76, 91, 99.

16 For the development of Montreal's Protestant social services network see Harvey, "The Protestant Orphan Asylum and the Montreal Ladies' Benevolent Society," Chapter 2.

Recognising these different needs, the House of Industry developed several distinct services. The Board admitted the homeless poor whom it considered particularly deserving, mainly the elderly and infirm, into the main institution. In 1885, the work of caring for the elderly and infirm was moved to a specially constructed building outside city limits, which was called the Country House. The Board also opened a shelter called the Night Refuge for other homeless men and women. Thus the House of Industry had a mixed clientele as did many similar institutions, but it had two very important distinguishing features. First, the different categories of inmates were kept completely separate. Second, because there were existing child charities, young women and children were admitted only in the first few years. These residential aid services were supplemented by a soup kitchen and the centralised distribution of outdoor relief through the United Board of Outdoor Relief.<sup>17</sup> The Moore Convalescent Home was added in 1894. This paper will focus on the institutional aid provided for the elderly and the homeless.

Reflecting on the first few years of work in 1866, president John Redpath indicated that the Board of Directors felt assured "that as we gain experience our conceptions will become more enlarged, our organisation more mature, our victory over pauperism and its attendant vices and misery each year more triumphant and complete." He added, "this no doubt, will demand a constant and sustained effort on our part."<sup>18</sup> In effect, as Redpath's words reflect, the Directors had given themselves a sometimes-contradictory dual aim: to relieve destitution and to battle pauperism or relief dependency. This dual aim is evident in all aspects of their work but it is particularly poignant in the juxtaposition of the aid provided to the elderly poor, whom the Board generally considered as deserving, and that provided to the unemployed homeless men and women, who found shelter in the Night Refuges and were thought to be much less deserving.

The original 1863 committee was created to open a Night Refuge and a soup kitchen for the homeless poor,<sup>19</sup> yet the Directors shifted the main emphasis of their work quite quickly and seemingly almost naturally to the care of the elderly poor and infirm. Thus, even after thirty years, they still spoke of the Night Refuge residents as their "casual" work and distinguished between "the *Relief* extended to *the poor*" (at the Country House for the elderly) and "*Refuge* given...to those who may apply" in the city.<sup>20</sup> Although this emphasis reflected

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17 The United Board of Outdoor Relief was formed in 1865 and, although it worked out of the House of Industry, it was separate from the institution in terms of management and funding. The Board included the House of Industry Poor Relief Committee, representatives of the Protestant churches, several of the national societies, the YMCA, and the city missionaries.

18 House of Industry, "Annual Report, 1866," in *Minute Book*, Vol. 1, 154.

19 House of Industry, *Minute Book*, September/October 1863, Vol. 1, 29, 35.

20 House of Industry, "President's Address, Annual Meeting 1894," in *Minute Book*, Vol. 4, 131 (italics added).

the Board members' attitudes to the different categories of inmates, it belied the fact that in many years, the number of unemployed men in the shelters was greater than the number of elderly present, and that the city building was entirely devoted to Night Refuge work once the elderly moved to the country annex in 1885. Clearly the Board preferred to think of its work in terms of those aspects that were the least controversial and the most personally satisfying.

The House of Industry Directors referred to the elderly and the infirm as the "permanent poor,"<sup>21</sup> noting that many "were without a home or means of subsistence, and... were incapable of doing anything for themselves."<sup>22</sup> For the most part, the Directors considered these people to be deserving of aid. The Directors were sympathetic about the past circumstances that many of them had experienced, maintaining that, "It would be difficult to estimate the misery [to] which many of these poor inmates must have been subjected before the establishment of this Institution"<sup>23</sup> – and attempted to make their habitat minimally comfortable. The original building plans allocated the front building on Bleury Street as "The Home" and foresaw dormitories on the upper floors. However, it appears that the number of permanent inmates largely surpassed original estimates and that, in fact, they occupied part of both buildings. Within a few years improvements were made to the building, including galleries, day rooms for both men and women, separate sick wards, and a reading room supplied with a library.<sup>24</sup>

From the 1860s to the mid-1870s, an average of ninety-one persons (eighty of them elderly) were resident in The Home over the year. Before 1869, a few children were admitted and a day school existed, but after that, the children were sent to the child charities. The number of permanent inmates grew steadily. An annual average of 115 were present in the years 1876 to 1886; this increased to an annual average of 129 in the sixteen-year period from 1886 to 1901. The data is not always provided in a consistent form, but for years when the numbers are given, the seasonal differences were often substantial, with many more people using the institution over the winter months before the 1880s. After that, seasonal variations eased somewhat.<sup>25</sup>

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21 The elderly were generally considered deserving. For an overview of the historical studies of the elderly and poor relief, see Edgar-André Montigny, "Perceptions, Realities and Old Age: A Comparison of the Realities of Old Age with Government Statements about the Elderly and their Families in Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century Ontario," (Ph.D. thesis, University of Ottawa, 1994), 47-57.

22 House of Industry, *Minute Book*, October 1865, Vol. 1, 121.

23 House of Industry, "Half-yearly Report, October 1865," in *Minute Book*, Vol. 1, 121.

24 House of Industry, "Half-yearly Report, October 1866," in *Minute Book*, Vol. 1, 172.

25 Seasonal differences were the norm in many relief institutions elsewhere. See Stormie Stewart, "The Elderly Poor in Rural Ontario: Inmates of the Wellington County House of Industry, 1877-1907," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, New Series 3 (1992): 225-27; Sharon Cook, "'A Quiet Place . . . to Die': Ottawa's First Protestant Old Age Homes for Women and Men," *Ontario History* 81/1 (March 1989): 29.

Without a register of admissions, it is difficult to determine exactly who these "permanent poor" were or to know much about the details of their sojourn in the institution. However, information on admissions and discharges to the Country House annex (to which the permanent poor were moved in 1885) are included in the House of Industry *Minute Book* from 1888 to 1900 and this has enabled me to build a preliminary profile of those present. It is probable that these people reflect the population for much of the century since many of those referred to were admitted in earlier years.

Other than a few cases in which younger people were admitted temporarily while ill or due to a handicap, most of those who applied for admission into the Country House were between sixty and eighty. Some were disabled or ill; others were simply too old to support themselves any longer. This combination of age and health was effectively the criterion for admission; a sixty-year old man who was still able to work but found himself unemployed and homeless would have been admitted to the Night Refuge, not the Country House.<sup>26</sup>

As other historians looking at the old in nineteenth-century Canadian institutions have found, most of those present in the Country House annex had no living families or their families were unable to support them.<sup>27</sup> We find evidence of this in the circumstances listed to justify their admission requests and in the fact that many who died while residents were buried in the institution's burial plot, having no family or friends to claim their bodies. Residents came from all Protestant denominations and many were immigrants, with Ireland and England being the most common countries of origin listed. Some of those who entered due to illness left after a short time, but most residents remained for many years, a few up to twenty-five years. Of the 400 for whom some data can be determined, a minimum of 160 remained until they died; others left to live with family (usually their daughters), were sent to the insane asylum, or simply left on their own accord. Seven were discharged for bad behaviour or refusing to follow the rules.<sup>28</sup>

Several historians have found that even the elderly populations in poor-houses were largely dominated by men.<sup>29</sup> In Montreal, this was not the case in

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26 This was a common way to define the term elderly at the time. See Montigny, "Perceptions, Realities and Old Age," 13.

27 Stormie Elizabeth Stewart, "The Inmates of the Wellington County, House of Industry, 1877-1907," (M.A. thesis, University of Victoria, 1990), 220; Cook, " 'A Quiet Place . . . to Die'": 28; Edgar-André Montigny, " 'Foisted Upon the Government': Institutions and the Impact of Public Policy Upon the Aged, the Elderly Patients of Rockwood Asylum, 1866-1906," *Journal of Social History* 28/4 (Summer 1995): 824-26.

28 Discharge data is not available for many for those who entered after 1885 as the information would have been noted only at their death or departure. Unfortunately the Minutes stop recording this information in 1900 and thus leave much of the data incomplete.

29 Almost eighty percent of the elderly inmates in the Wellington County Poorhouse, for example, were men. Stewart, "The Elderly Poor in Rural Ontario": 224. See also Michael Katz, *Poverty and Policy in American History*, (New York: Academic Press, 1983), 76.



relation to the elderly, with men accounting for only fifty-five to sixty percent of elderly/infirm residents, although it was indeed true of the Night Refuge as the reader will see below. What is interesting in Montreal is the presence of so many elderly *women* in the House of Industry, especially when one considers that there were three other charities in the city that also admitted elderly women. Many of these women were ill or disabled and a few entered and left again on several occasions, but it is also possible that some of the stigma associated with admission to a poorhouse was reduced when the elderly were housed in a separate age-segregated institution and that this explained the reduced reluctance on the part of women to enter the institution.

The Country House annex certainly shared some of the characteristics of the institutions that historian Sharon Cook refers to as “midway between nineteenth-century forms of relief and the twentieth-century...old age home.”<sup>30</sup> This was less true when the elderly were housed in The Home inside the main House of Industry building. Despite their categorisation as deserving, and their isolation in a separate wing of the building, the permanent residents were governed by the standard rules of a House of Industry, rules that were designed to limit aid requests by making life in the institution unattractive. Men and women, even married couples, were segregated, and strict rules in relation to cleanliness, sobriety, and work were imposed.<sup>31</sup> Residents were expelled for insubordination or failure to follow the rules. Everyone worked if at all able. Men made kindling wood and, after the move to the country, did farm work; women sewed, knit, made quilts, and helped with the general housework. Although inmates were provided with a library, day rooms, and outdoor galleries, they had very little autonomy and were not free to leave the premises when they wanted.

Thus the Board members were influenced by their moral approach to the poor even in relation to those they generally considered deserving. Admission depended on a recommendation from a minister, doctor, or Board member, a process that served as an informal check on the “deservedness” of each individual case.<sup>32</sup> But despite this control, the Directors were constantly concerned about what they saw as poor “character” in the elderly inmates, especially a weakness for alcohol. As the President explained at the half-yearly meeting in 1877, residents “had to be let out once or twice a week and some of them always managed to get liquor.”<sup>33</sup> The Directors hoped that the institutional regime would reduce these weaknesses and the institution’s physician indeed

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30 Cook, “A Quiet Place . . . to Die,” 25.

31 “Rules for the Permanent Residents,” in *Minute Book*, Vol. 1, 126.

32 All of the admission entries recorded in the *Minute Book* include references to these recommendations. There is no reason to assume that this was not the norm in earlier years.

33 House of Industry, “Half-Yearly Report, October 1877,” in *Minute Book*, Vol. 2, 115.

assured subscribers that due to the "comfortable clean apartments, regular eating and sleeping" and being "deterred from intemperance," the elderly lived in "comparable ease and comfort."<sup>34</sup>

Religion played a major role in this rehabilitation work. The House of Industry was a Protestant institution run by men who saw charity as a Christian duty. The Directors were convinced that many of the elderly inmates had "long been excluded [from religious services] on account of their unfortunate position in society"<sup>35</sup> and they were determined to reverse this situation. Sunday service as well as morning and evening family worship were held "so that by this means those unfortunate persons who come into our hands may depart a little better than they came; having had, at all events, some good influence brought upon them."<sup>36</sup> Certainly in relation to the elderly, the Directors considered the aim of the institution as extending to the "eternal welfare of our inmates."<sup>37</sup>

From the beginning, plans existed to move the elderly and infirm residents to the country "some distance from their usual haunts and associates."<sup>38</sup> This reflected mixed motives, including a suspicion of intemperate habits and a desire to reduce future temptation, but also a sincere belief that the elderly would be more comfortable and healthier away from the hazards of the city. It is, of course, questionable whether the elderly themselves, many of whom probably had no former experience of farm life, appreciated this forced isolation on the outskirts of the city and the daily routine of farm chores.

In 1863, Thomas Molson had bequeathed the House of Industry a farm at Longue Point, east of the city, but the cost of construction of the necessary facilities was prohibitive and it was not until William Workman left a legacy for a country building in 1878 that such a move could be considered. The cornerstone was laid in June 1881, but the Country House, constructed in two distinct wings, was not occupied until June 1885.<sup>39</sup> Here the House of Industry was able to carry on "this noble work of beneficence towards our infirm and friendless poor."<sup>40</sup> Care was still taken to ensure that those admitted were deserving, as seen by the President's reference in 1887 that "no one applying for the privileges of the Home duly recommended have been refused admittance."<sup>41</sup> But, on the whole, the emphasis was placed on the fact that "after a life of vicissi-

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34 Ibid.

35 House of Industry, "Annual Report, 1865," in *Minute Book* Vol. 1, 94.

36 House of Industry, "Annual Report, 1864," in *Minute Book*, Vol. 1, 65.

37 House of Industry, "Annual Report, 1878," in *Minute Book*, Vol. 2, 143.

38 House of Industry, *Minute Book*, February 1864, Vol. 1, 48-49.

39 House of Industry, *Minute Book*, June 1885, Vol. 2, 589. Workman's legacy of \$20,000 proved problematic since it was largely in real estate and was over-evaluated; the rest of the money was raised by subscription.

40 House of Industry, "Annual Report, 1887," in *Minute Book*, Vol. 2, 684.

41 House of Industry, "President's Address, Annual Meeting, 1887," in *Minute Book*, Vol. 2, 680.

tudes and anxiety,” the elderly had now found “a haven on request, where surrounded by the ordinary comforts of life, they can prepare for a fast approaching eternity.”<sup>42</sup> The Board was able to increase the number of elderly poor they could accommodate once the Moore Convalescent Home was opened in 1894 and took in many of the infirm who had previously been in the Country Home.

Alongside this “noble” work with the elderly and infirm, the House of Industry established the first permanent facilities for other homeless men and women in Montreal – the “destitute and wretched, without either home or friends.”<sup>43</sup> The limited facilities forced many of the homeless to still find shelter in the city jail or police stations and several other shelters existed by the end of the century, but the House of Industry provided the core of the aid available to the Protestant homeless.

The Directors referred to the Night Refuge inmates as the “casual poor” and interpreted their circumstances as being either temporary or of their own fault. To this extent they saw this group as less deserving than the elderly and infirm, and made every effort to distinguish between the two categories. The Night Refuge, as they called the shelter, was originally designed to be open from October to May (that is during the winter slowdown), but in the end it was kept open year-long although it was used more extensively in the winter season. Strict rules were enforced: sign-in at seven p.m., lights out at eight p.m., no smoking or alcohol in the building, and no-one was admitted if intoxicated. Inmates were to leave by eight a.m. and they could be expelled for “wilfully violating the Rules, being noisy, or behaving indecorously.”<sup>44</sup> Lodgers were not supposed to remain more than a week without special permission but this rule immediately proved difficult to enforce.

Evaluating their first year’s experience with the temporary shelter in 1863, the Directors spoke of the recipients as “[t]he dregs of society” and explained that they had “come back upon our hands from week to week, until many have become permanent residents or boarders, which was not the design of the Refuge at all. This evil – and it is a great evil – could not well be avoided...it is nearly certain that many persons would have perished on the streets but for the shelter here afforded.”<sup>45</sup> This mixture of condemnation and pity reflected the Directors’ conception of the lodgers as not quite deserving but also their recognition of the reality that the House of Industry was the only charitable aid available to these people in the city. The Board hoped to resolve the problem of semi-permanent residence by shifting people from the Refuge into the main institution after two or three nights, but this proved impossible due to a lack of space.

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42 House of Industry, “Funding Appeal,” in *Minute Book*, Vol. 2, 685.

43 House of Industry, “Annual Report, 1868,” in *Minute Book*, Vol. 1, 223.

44 House of Industry, “Rules of the Night Refuge,” in *Minute Book*, Vol. 1, 127.

45 House of Industry, “Annual Report, 1864,” in *Minute Book*, Vol. 1, 63.

Here we find an excellent example of the ways in which the poor were able to influence the aid system. Faced with the fact the homeless returned nightly despite the rules to the contrary, the Board acquiesced and did not apply its internal regulations limiting length of stay. Similarly, when the need was made clear, it also kept the Refuge open in the summer months. The complicated relationship between power and agency is evident in any sensitive study of institutions of social regulation. Although it is difficult to measure with any degree of accuracy, the men and women who applied for aid effectively demonstrated agency to the extent that they forced a re-evaluation of the purpose of the Night Refuge.

The shelters certainly filled a need and they were often crowded. (See Table 1.) The total aggregate nights' lodging increased from approximately 6,715 in the 1860s to more than 14,000 by the late 1870s. An annual average of 25,000 nights' lodging was provided in the 1880s and 32,000 in the 1890s, with as many as 40,563 in 1889. These numbers decreased sharply in the early 1900s. As noted, many of the residents returned night after night.<sup>46</sup> In most years, the data available in the *Annual Reports* is given in terms of total aggregate nights' lodging, but specific comments in a few years provide an idea of how many different people were actually present.<sup>47</sup> Thus we know that sixty-eight men were in the Refuge in November 1867, but only twenty-four in 1870. By 1888, however, references are made to 220 different men in the Refuge at once, and in the 1890s there were regularly 235 men or so partaking of the annual Christmas dinner. Aid patterns were seasonal with many more men present in the winter months than in the summer. In the summer most left to take whatever seasonal work they could find.

**Table 1**  
**Montreal Protestant House of Industry and Refuge**  
**The Night Refuge, Total Nights' Lodging, 1865-1903**

| Year | Men   | Women | Total |
|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1865 | 4,068 | 2,668 | 6,736 |
| 1866 | 2,447 | 447   | 2,894 |
| 1867 | 4,908 | 1,004 | 5,912 |
| 1868 | 5,643 | 2,665 | 8,308 |
| 1869 | 7,454 | 2,276 | 9,730 |
| 1870 | 5,594 | 1,743 | 7,340 |
| 1871 | 4,714 | 909   | 5,623 |

<sup>46</sup> House of Industry, *Annual Report*, 1866, 6.

<sup>47</sup> Unfortunately inmate registers no longer exist.

| Year | Men    | Women | Total  |
|------|--------|-------|--------|
| 1872 | 5,279  | 1,417 | 6,696  |
| 1873 | 6,400  | 1,014 | 7,414  |
| 1874 | 7,993  | 2,145 | 10,138 |
| 1875 | 11,680 | 2,508 | 14,188 |
| 1876 | 14,663 | 2,714 | 17,376 |
| 1877 | 11,937 | 2,607 | 14,544 |
| 1878 | 9,780  | 2,615 | 12,395 |
| 1879 | 11,553 | 2,803 | 14,356 |
| 1880 | 10,890 | 2,877 | 13,767 |
| 1881 | 13,291 | 1,982 | 15,273 |
| 1882 | 11,137 | 2,248 | 13,385 |
| 1883 | 16,135 | 3,400 | 19,535 |
| 1884 | 23,679 | 3,135 | 26,814 |
| 1885 | 22,274 | 3,499 | 25,773 |
| 1886 | 27,533 | 2,501 | 30,034 |
| 1887 | 32,927 | 1,767 | 34,694 |
| 1888 | 35,738 | 2,122 | 37,850 |
| 1889 | 39,366 | 1,197 | 40,563 |
| 1890 | 30,098 | 624   | 30,722 |
| 1891 | 28,007 | 519   | 28,526 |
| 1892 | 29,841 | 503   | 30,349 |
| 1893 | 27,744 | 142   | 27,886 |
| 1894 | 29,501 | 752   | 30,262 |
| 1895 | 33,955 | 1,053 | 35,008 |
| 1896 | 38,300 | 904   | 39,204 |
| 1897 | 33,805 | 525   | 33,610 |
| 1898 | 33,621 | 664   | 34,285 |
| 1899 | 33,939 | 2,005 | 35,944 |
| 1900 | 23,305 | 2,053 | 25,358 |
| 1901 | 26,567 | 1,060 | 24,627 |
| 1902 | 21,864 | 854   | 22,718 |
| 1903 | 18,815 | 215   | 19,030 |

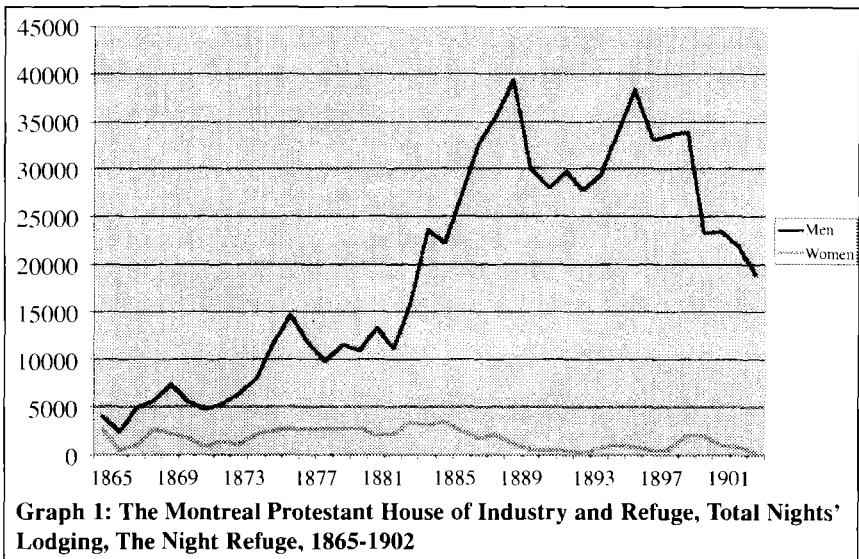
Source: Montreal Protestant House of Industry and Refuge, *Minute Book*, 1865-1901.

Gender was also a factor in the Night Refuge aid; there were always many more men than women and this difference grew over the century. (See Graph 1.) Men crossed the 10,000-nights' lodging mark by 1875 but women never used more than 3,500 nights' lodging in a year and by the 1890s that had decreased to less than 1,000 in most years. In a few years when specific numbers are given, we know there were usually fewer than ten women present at

## DEALING WITH "THE DESTITUTE AND THE WRETCHED"

any one time.<sup>48</sup> Some gendered admission restrictions existed, such as that against unwed mothers,<sup>49</sup> but most of this difference appears to be a result of the suspicion of homeless women at the time<sup>50</sup> and the lack of special facilities. From 1885 to 1894, it is not even clear if a separate woman's shelter actually existed.<sup>51</sup> It is very telling that the Directors almost never commented on the women in the Refuges when they discussed their work publicly.

Although the Directors always spoke of the institution as "The House of Refuge," they took its vocation as a House of Industry very seriously. Within a few years of opening, the Poor Relief Committee began to impose a work test, requiring two to three hours of work as payment for a bed and two meals.<sup>52</sup> By this means the Board provided aid only to those who accepted to work and



48 House of Industry, *Annual Report*, 1873, 5; "Annual Report, 1901" in *Minute Book*, Vol. 4, 356.

49 House of Industry, *Minute Book*, February 1867, Vol. 1, 176.

50 Tamara Myers, "Criminal Women and Bad Girls: Regulation and Punishment in Montreal, 1890-1930," (Ph.D. thesis, McGill University, 1995). See also Mary-Anne Poutanen, "The Homeless, the Whore, the Drunkard, and the Disorderly: Contour of Female Vagrancy in the Montreal Courts, 1810-1842," in *Gendered Pasts: Historical Essays in Femininity and Masculinity in Canada*, eds. Kathryn McPherson, Cecilia Morgan and Nancy M. Forestell, (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 1999), 29-47.

51 House of Industry, *Minute Book*, June 1885, Vol. 2, 590; January 1894, Vol. 3, 359, June-July 1894, 404, 407.

52 House of Industry, *Annual Report*, 1866, 4, 6. Families applying for outdoor relief were also obliged to give several days labour in return. House of Industry, "Report of the United Board of Outdoor Relief, 1871," in *Minute Book*, Vol. 1, 379.

thereby proved both their need for aid and their “worthiness” to receive such. Women were employed in the sewing rooms where they made clothing and bedding for the institution. At first the Directors employed men at stone breaking, but, finding the work was too difficult for many, they shifted to the making of kindling wood that was then sold to the public. This being a “light and easy occupation,” everyone was able to participate – sawing, splitting, or bundling.<sup>53</sup>

The Board had no trouble selling the wood on the open market. By 1870 the undertaking was making a profit and the institution invested in equipment to speed up production.<sup>54</sup> In 1875, it also started an outdoor labour service, advertising in the city papers that the House of Industry had men available to shovel snow, carry coal, attend furnaces, or do “any kind of jobbing work about a house.”<sup>55</sup> Part of the men’s wages went to the Refuge; the men kept the rest. The outdoor labour service was popular and the House of Industry was unable to keep up with demand for workers in the summer when fewer men were in the shelters. In fact, revenues from these two industrial sources became substantial quite quickly and made the Night Refuge almost self-financing.

Work was seen to have advantages other than the obvious financial one, not the least of which was that it kept the men away from temptation. But, most importantly, work itself was believed to have rehabilitative and character-building qualities, something that the Directors thought particularly appropriate for these homeless men and women. Thus in 1865 the Poor Relief Committee reported that, “The House of Refuge is becoming more and more a sort of reformatory for the vicious as well as a shelter for the homeless... This winter these homeless men have been at their own solicitation kept off the streets receiving their food and shelter, and giving, as an equivalent, their labour throughout the day at the stone breaking.”<sup>56</sup> By the end of the century, the Directors still evaluated the kindling-wood service positively, explaining that it “continues to afford exercise and refreshment to those who find it necessary to seek the friendly walls of the Refuge. The moral and financial returns are satisfactory.”<sup>57</sup>

This work also probably helped some of the men reintegrate onto the job market and certainly the outdoor labour service provided them with wages over the winter months. Here we find another way in which the House of Industry inmates demonstrated some agency in relation to their situation. They used the Refuge as a quasi-permanent shelter during the winter slow-down and even as a form of employment, and then left again in the summer months to take up sea-

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53 House of Industry, “Annual Report, 1868,” in *Minute Book*, Vol. 1, 222.

54 House of Industry, “Annual Report, 1870,” in *Minute Book*, Vol. 1, 319. Interestingly Pitsula finds that the Toronto House of Industry had trouble selling the wood its inmates produced and disbanded the work as a result. Pitsula, “The Relief of Poverty,” 144-45.

55 House of Industry, *Minute Book*, January 1875, Vol. 1, 528.

56 House of Industry, *Minute Book*, March 1865, Vol. 1, 143.

57 House of Industry, “Annual Report, 1900,” in *Minute Book*, Vol. 4, 252.

sonal work if able. Although their circumstances forced the Directors to recognise the role of unemployment and seasonal labour markets in causing poverty, our study will demonstrate that the poor were largely unsuccessful in actually altering the attitude of the Board to poverty and relief or in improving institutional conditions. As residents in the House of Industry, they lived in minimal conditions under a strict regime of work, discipline, and religion designed to restrict aid and reform recipients. It was an ambience in which they were seen as morally suspect. Thus their agency was limited by the power of the institution's Board to control internal conditions in the institution. Further, the Directors' control over admissions effectively gave the House of Industry Board the power to enforce restrictions like the work test (and thus to influence the behaviour of applicants) and to generally refuse admission to those they judged "undeserving." It is impossible to know how many homeless men and women were refused admission because of their appearance, their attitude, or their refusal to work.

Despite the Refuge's low cost and the strict application of the work test, the Directors always demonstrated some ambivalence about the Night Refuge aid and their attitude to its lodgers rarely moved beyond the judgmental. This is evident in both the language used to describe recipients and their character and the physical conditions of the shelters. On occasion the Board publicly recognised that most of the lodgers were "enfeebled by age or disease" and that, as much as possible, they were "all more or less engaged upon the kindling wood,"<sup>58</sup> yet the labels used to refer to them remained basically debasing. Throughout the century, the House of Industry Directors referred to discussions on "the class of people" using the Refuge, unequivocally separating them from the rest of society. The original 1864 description of the Night Refuge lodgers as "the lowest in the social scale. . . [t]he dregs of society," did not change much over the century.<sup>59</sup> Neither did the conviction that the main cause of their poverty was intemperance and bad habits. Thus, in 1877, the Directors explained the increase in inmates with the following comment: "Poverty is the immediate cause of bringing men and women here; Intemperance with its Hundred Hydra Heads, the remote cause in nine cases out of ten."<sup>60</sup> In the Annual Report that same year the Directors referred to the Night Refuge lodgers as a "crowd of miserables [sic] who nightly seek shelter."<sup>61</sup> The term "destitute persons" used in 1881 was much paler. The 1885 description of the lodgers as "waifs and strays,"<sup>62</sup> terms normally used to refer to street children,

58 House of Industry, *Minute Book*, Vol. 1, February 1868, 215.

59 House of Industry, "Annual Report, 1864," in *Minute Book*, Vol. 1, 63.

60 House of Industry, "Annual Report, 1877," in *Minute Book*, Vol. 2, 76.

61 House of Industry, "Annual Report, 1877," in *Minute Book*, Vol. 2, 76.

62 House of Industry, "Annual Report, 1885," in *Minute Book*, Vol. 2, 555. This label was also used for the public funding appeal in 1886-87. House of Industry, "Funding Appeal," in *Minute Book*, Vol. 2, 685.



infantilised the lodgers. In 1887 and 1888, years with a particularly high demand, references were made to “homeless wanderers” and “transient refugees.”<sup>63</sup>

By using charged language and labels like these, as well as others such as “deserving” and “undeserving” poor that presented poverty (and the poor) as a form of deviance (rather than a structural economic problem), the Directors were using the power of language to construct reality. Their conviction that the poor were morally inferior and susceptible to dependency flowed through all of their discourse. And when John Redpath or other Board members spoke of the “evils” of “pauperism” and its “attendant vices and misery,” they were reminding supporters of the social construct in which relief dependency was linked to indolence, intemperance, crime, illiteracy, and disease.<sup>64</sup> These images were more than a matter of simple language. They became an indictment of the poor, a justification for upper/middle class control, and a check on too-generous and unrestricted aid.<sup>65</sup> They also helped to legitimise the conditions provided for those who took shelter in the House of Industry’s Night Refuge.

The Night Refuge was originally designed to be located on the second and third stories of the rear building, but it is almost immediately referred to as in the basement, probably since the large number of permanent residents needed the upper floors.<sup>66</sup> Although the principle of less eligibility called for conditions that would not encourage anyone to apply for aid frivolously, conditions in the Refuge were particularly unattractive. As early as 1868 the Directors admitted that the dormitories were “not as should be wished” but that it was “impossible to improve them due to the construction of the building.”<sup>67</sup> In effect, the basement rooms were impossible to ventilate and almost always overcrowded. No reference exists to the ideal capacity but certainly by 1872, once the number of nights’ lodging had passed 10,000 a year, overcrowding had become a serious problem. The Directors refused all suggestions to move the Refuge or to build a new one since they hoped to be able to move the permanent residents to the country as soon as possible.<sup>68</sup>

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63 House of Industry, “Annual Report, 1887,” in *Minute Book*, Vol. 2, 685; Annual Report, 1888, in *Minute Book*, Vol. 3, 4.

64 For two insightful discussions of the development of the concept of dependency in the United States see Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon, “A Genealogy of *Dependency*: Tracing a Keyword of the U.S. Welfare State,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 19/21 (Winter 1994): 309-336 and Amy Dru Stanley, “Beggars Can’t Be Choosers: Compulsion and Contract in Postbellum America,” *The Journal of American History* 78 (March 1992): 1265-1293.

65 For a discussion of this notion see Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991).

66 House of Industry, “Annual Report, 1865,” in *Minute Book*, Vol. 1, 91.

67 House of Industry, “Annual Report, 1868,” in *Minute Book*, Vol. 1, 223.

68 House of Industry, “Annual Report, 1872,” in *Minute Book*, Vol. 1, 423.

Conditions worsened considerably before they improved. The death of several inmates from typhus fever in the winter of 1877 exposed the severity of the situation. The Montreal General Hospital blamed the disease on "the perfect unsuitability of the present apartments for the purpose intended."<sup>69</sup> In their *Annual Report* that year, the Directors themselves recognised the problem, describing the Refuge as "the best shelter we can afford them [the lodgers], but which in crowded seasons is not far removed from the 'black hole of Calcutta' and at least is quite unsuitable for a human dormitory," but they explained that nothing could be done until they had more space.<sup>70</sup>

To that point, the explanation of the Refuge's placement in the basement was the lack of space. But once the elderly inmates were moved to the Country House annex in 1885 and the upper floors of both buildings were vacated, nothing changed. An overflow room was opened upstairs with twenty-three straw mattresses but the main Refuge remained in the basement – despite the increase in the number of lodgers and renewed appeals from the doctor. Rather than move the Refuge upstairs, the Directors considered various options for renting the upstairs rooms and increasing revenue or even closing them for the winter to save on fuel costs.<sup>71</sup> It was not until five years later (in 1890) that the Refuge finally moved into the upper rooms and the infamous basement rooms were closed. Although this was a marked improvement, the doctor was again complaining in 1892 that the situation was "still far from satisfactory." Funding questions aside, this acceptance of substandard conditions is clearly linked to the ambivalence with which the House of Industry Directors saw the provision of such aid.

The Directors were constantly torn between on the one hand, their recognition that the lack of work and poor health contributed to explain homelessness and that the men's behaviour was "exemplary,"<sup>72</sup> and on the other, their suspicion that the poor had character weaknesses and that readily available aid would only encourage relief dependency. They attempted to limit aid to those unable to work and refused aid to those they considered "tramps" but numbers kept rising anyway.

The increased concern about recipient character from the 1870s roughly paralleled the growing apprehensiveness in the city (as reflected by an increased number of articles in city papers) about the number of homeless and the advent of "the tramp." Able-bodied men who did not work immediately

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69 House of Industry, "Letter from the Montreal General Hospital," *Minute Book*, February 1877, Vol. 1, 66.

70 House of Industry, "Annual Report, 1877," in *Minute Book*, Vol. 2, 70, 76.

71 House of Industry, *Minute Book*, May-June 1886, Vol. 2, 642-48; October 1888, Vol. 3, 40; February 1889, Vol. 3, 63.

72 House of Industry, "Annual Report, 1868," in *Minute Book*, Vol. 1, 223.

raised suspicion in the new industrial economy. The Canadian Vagrancy Act of 1860, for example, had specifically targeted this group.<sup>73</sup> In this context, “the tramp” became the symbol of the dangerous undeserving poor. The House of Industry Board explicitly dissociated their work from this social menace, reassuring supporters in 1878 that they avoided both “the tramp nuisance” and “promoting able bodied pauperism.”<sup>74</sup> As historian James Pitsula has found for Toronto, this concern over the dangers of aid to the able-bodied became even more pronounced in the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>75</sup>

By the 1880s, the ever-growing numbers of homeless seeking refuge also caused practical problems for the Board. First, it represented a serious funding problem. Although the original funding appeal in 1863 had resulted in an \$80,000 fund that allowed the institution to open with two mortgage-free buildings and a substantial endowment fund, the choice of using one-time life subscriptions rather than recurrent annual subscriptions limited their annual operating revenue and had led to deficits in several years by the 1880s.<sup>76</sup> The Board tried to resolve this problem by increasing income from industrial sources, augmenting the production of food and meat on its farm, and by otherwise limiting costs, but these measures became increasingly difficult as the number of inmates grew.<sup>77</sup> Certainly these budget considerations and the institution’s almost total dependence on private funding restricted its ability to extend its services.

Second, the growing demand for aid exposed a serious contradiction in Montreal’s Protestant aid system. The fact that no public poorhouse existed to accept the “undeserving” cases who were usually refused admission into private charities elsewhere, placed the House of Industry Board before a moral dilemma. Should it provide aid to many who might be considered undeserving or leave them to die? This was a situation in which strict notions of “deserving” and of relief dependency were hard to maintain.<sup>78</sup> The Board struggled for years with this dilemma in conjunction with its moral convictions about the poor and the delicate issues of what constituted “proper” charity.

It was particularly suspicious of men who requested aid in the summer. In 1885, for example, the Poor Relief Committee enquired into the character and

73 “An Act Respecting Vagrants,” *Statutes of Canada*, 1860, 32-33 Vict., c. 28.

74 House of Industry, “Annual Report, 1878,” in *Minute Book*, Vol. 2, 141.

75 James M. Pitsula, “The Treatment of Tramps in Late Nineteenth-Century Toronto,” *Canadian Historical Association Historical Papers* (1980): 34-45.

76 Life Governorships cost \$400.

77 Meanwhile their government grant was reduced over the century from \$800 to \$420.

78 Frank McLean, the first paid Secretary of the Montreal Charity Organization Society, identified this as a major complication for private charity in Montreal. Frank McLean, “Effects upon Private Charity of the absence of all Public Relief,” *Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections*, 1900, 145.

condition of the summer lodgers. They recommended that a few men be turned out but otherwise were satisfied that the men's needs were valid.<sup>79</sup> However, to reassure the public that it was not providing indiscriminate aid over the summer months, the Board began to insert a paragraph in its October reports reminding supporters that it had been "unable to satisfy demand" for outdoor labourers in the summer due to a lack of able-bodied men in the Refuge.<sup>80</sup> By 1897 it had added the further disclaimer: "the maimed and helpless only remained with us."<sup>81</sup>

It was in the winter months, though, that the problem of numbers became really pressing and that considerations of extenuating circumstances like seasonal unemployment and the severe winter weather also imposed themselves as complications. By December 1886, the Poor Relief Committee reported that "the numbers in the Night Refuge are largely in excess of last year, or indeed any other period of its history, and is becoming a problem."<sup>82</sup> The next month they blamed the large numbers on the unavailability of employment and explained that "in the severe state of the weather [that] we cannot refuse them shelter."<sup>83</sup> There seems to have been some public criticism of this approach, however, since in his address to the half-yearly meeting in October 1887 the President assured the public that the institution was "trying to diminish the number of those seeking Night Refuge, by stopping to encourage laziness on the part of those who are inclined that way."<sup>84</sup>

In 1888, the *Annual Report* again referred to the rising numbers in the shelters and the anxiety that it was causing the Board as to "the best way to meet this situation."<sup>85</sup> The President addressed the annual meeting in April 1889 at length on this question, referring to the dilemma of increased demands and the difficulty of refusing aid. He defended the institution against claims it was increasing pauperism by providing indiscriminate aid: "The reflection on the institution of encouraging idleness is not true; all that can be said in that connection, that only the feeling of sympathy for suffering men who had no work or home, might be screened from the severity of our winter weather."<sup>86</sup>

In their provision of aid to those who applied and agreed to work for it, the Montreal House of Industry Board demonstrated the same type of pragmatism that James Pitsula identifies within of the Toronto Board. The Montreal Board's

79 House of Industry, *Minute Book*, July 1885, Vol. 2, 588, 593.

80 See for example the Annual Report in 1887, *Minute Book*, Vol. 2, 720.

81 House of Industry, "Half-Yearly Report," in *Minute Book*, October 1897, Vol. 3, 672.

82 House of Industry, *Minute Book*, December 1886, Vol. 2, 671.

83 House of Industry, *Minute Book*, January 1887, Vol. 2, 675.

84 House of Industry, "Half-Yearly Report, October 1887," in *Minute Book*, Vol. 2, 720

85 House of Industry, "Annual Report, 1888," in *Minute Book*, Vol. 3, 4.

86 House of Industry, "President's Address, Annual Report, 1889," in *Minute Book*, Vol. 3, 71-72.

decision about the best way to meet the problem appears to have been to aid those who proved their need and character by accepting to work for shelter. Still, the Montreal Board seem much more sensitive to potential criticism of its work with the unemployed than did its Toronto counterparts.<sup>87</sup> One of the factors that influenced this sensitivity was the increasing prominence of the ideas propagated by the Charity Organization Society. An Associated Charities was active in Montreal from 1883 to 1886 and the Montreal COS was formed in 1900.<sup>88</sup> The COS movement argued for the application of “scientific principles” of investigation and centralisation to poor relief.<sup>89</sup> It openly attacked private charity as unthinking and indiscriminate and called for “a higher kind of charity.”<sup>90</sup> As the Secretary General of the Montreal association asserted in his first Annual Report: “moral disease...must be met by the force of intelligence and sympathy – not with bread and fuel.”<sup>91</sup> He might well have added, “not with shelter either.”

Faced with this so-called scientific discourse and criticism of their generosity, the House of Industry Board seems to have decided to apply the criteria of “deserving” more rigorously or at least to be publicly seen as doing so. In 1899, the President stated that the Night Refuge admitted “those who apply and are found deserving,” a clarification that had not been made so clearly in past *Annual Reports* although it had almost certainly always been a part of actual admission decisions.<sup>92</sup> In the *Annual Report* of 1900, the Board began to point to its use of the new “science” of inquiry, describing its work as “inquiring into and assisting many cases of misfortune, sickness and distress.”<sup>93</sup> At the same time it began to emphasise the deserving nature of the Refuge lodgers rather than their deviance, as in the 1902 description of the lodgers in which it reported, “many a poor fellow who is willing to work but often cannot find suit-

87 Pitsula, “The Relief of Poverty,” 34-36.

88 The final movement was led by Julia Drummond and George Drummond served as the Charity Organization Society’s first President. For a discussion of the formation of the Montreal COS see “Report of the Montreal Local Council,” *National Council of Women of Canada*, 1895, 41; Local Council of Women of Montreal, *Annual Reports*, 1900, 10; 1901, 9; Charity Organization Society, Montreal, *Annual Report*, 1900, 3-5; and Ann Pery, “Manliness, Goodness, and God: Poverty, Gender and Social Reform in English-Speaking Montreal,” (M.A. thesis, Queen’s University, 1999), Chapter 3.

89 One of the best recent books on this movement is that by Robert Humphreys, *Sin, Organized Charity and the Poor Law in Victorian England* (New York and London: St. Martin’s Press, 1995).

90 Charity Organization Society, Montreal, *Annual Report*, 1900, 6, 7. For the conflict between the Toronto COS and the Toronto House of Industry see Pitsula, “The Relief of Poverty,” 142-46; 192-93.

91 Charity Organization Society, Montreal, *Annual Report*, 1900, 7, 18.

92 The first such reference is made by the doctor in 1892. “Annual Report, 1892,” in *Minute Book*, Vol. 3, 246; “President’s Address, Annual Report, 1899,” in *Minute Book*, Vol. 4, 131.

93 House of Industry, “Annual Report, 1900,” in *Minute Book*, Vol. 4, 250.

able work during the cold winter weather."<sup>94</sup> The number of total nights' lodging recorded in the *Annual Reports* also began to decrease slowly and, by 1903, had dropped back to below 20,000 nights' lodging a year. Since the numbers of total nights lodging were the most obvious and public representation of House of Industry relief, these numbers were key to their public image and one of the areas where the Board was the most susceptible to criticism.

This new emphasis on strict definitions of "deserving" and on declining numbers allowed the Board to defend its policies but masked another reality. The Board may well have tightened its admission criteria somewhat but in fact the House of Industry seems to have reduced the number that it actually aided at the end of the century much less than its data suggests. A few of the elderly men who used the Refuge on an almost permanent basis were transferred to the Country Home annex in the late 1890s and thus no longer appeared in Refuge data. As well, the Board introduced a new distinction between Night Refuge lodgers who were permanently homeless and those who needed only temporary shelter. Through this distinction, it removed a number of men and women who repeatedly used the Night Refuge from the Refuge statistics, referring to them instead as permanent residents. That group included thirty-six inmates in 1900, sixty men and four women in 1901, and twenty-six men and four women in 1903; it effectively reduced the total aggregate figure by as much as 10,000 in these years.<sup>95</sup>

With this new distinction, the Board resurrected an idea that had been proposed in 1864 but had been found unworkable due to space restrictions. Effectively, it reproduced the same distinction it had made in the early years between the permanent poor and the casual Night Refuge lodgers. It is not clear, however, that the people grouped into new categories of permanent and transient lodgers were actually physically separated or that any difference in living conditions was offered the new permanent residents. It seems more likely that this was mainly a way for the Board to clarify the services that it actually provided and thus respond to mounting criticism of the number of "casual" lodgers in the Refuge, with its implications of unjustified poor relief. At the same time, the Board could avoid reducing aid.

In his evaluation of the Toronto COS, James Pitsula concludes that, "Those who were involved in charitable work on more than a passing basis kept before them the danger of pauperism. They were wary of the emotionalism of the uninitiated and the uninformed."<sup>96</sup> The example of the Montreal Protestant House of Industry and Refuge demonstrates that the opposite could also be true, and that actual exposure to work with the poor could lead not to an increased

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94 House of Industry, "Annual Report, 1902," in *Minute Book*, Vol. 4, 402.

95 House of Industry, "Annual Report, 1900, 1901, 1903," in *Minute Book*, Vol. 4, 251, 356, 402.

96 Pitsula, "The Relief of Poverty," 165.

fear of pauperism but to an accommodation of need. Although their public rhetoric about the undeserving poor and their overall moral approach to poverty and the poor changed very little, the House of Industry Directors continued to provide aid to those who applied and agreed to work in return, and to provide such aid to rapidly increasing numbers of people over the 1880s and 1890s despite severe budget problems and public criticism of what some thought of as indiscriminate relief.