

“Married men should, I feel, be treated differently”: Work, Relief, and Unemployed Men on the Urban Canadian Prairie, 1929-32

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Charlotte Whitton, the famed director of the Canadian Child and Family Welfare Association, had written Saskatoon's city clerk in early January 1931 asking after that city's work relief policies for the Depression-related jobless. City Clerk Tomlinson replied quickly and decisively: "We distribute nothing without work," he wrote, "as otherwise we should be creating paupers and there is no doubt in my mind that this is the greatest danger at this time."¹ Whitton was undoubtedly pleased with the clerk's reply, but his response was not entirely truthful.² Saskatoon's city relief administration, like those in cities across the country, struggled to provide its resident jobless with relief work and often came up short. At the same time Saskatoon's city clerk was claiming his city distributed nothing without work, all of the city's public works projects combined were employing no more than five hundred men; yet well more than one thousand men were unemployed and on relief in the city.³ Put simply, there was never enough work to keep all of the city's unemployed occupied all of the time, forcing relief officials to, in fact, distribute something without work. Still, the creation of paupers, as Saskatoon's city clerk pointed out, was considered by relief officials across the nation as a serious and negative repercussion of Depression-related unemployment. Pauperism, relief officials believed, threatened the work ethic and contributed to demoralization amongst able-bodied men in particular. Major urban work relief schemes were designed to counteract these effects by giving the men some useful task to occupy their time.⁴

But city officials applied their work relief policies in a much more precise way than that, they reserved employment on their major work relief schemes explicitly (and nearly exclusively) for unemployed married men in an effort to bolster what they and elements of their society believed was the withering of the main breadwinner role. Meanwhile, they denied employment on those same major work projects to what they viewed as the increasing numbers of potentially dangerous single men congregating in their cities, in the hopes that doing so would encourage the men to accept work on farms or in work camps well outside of their borders. Using several urban centres on the Canadian prairies as case studies, this essay shows how work relief policy, both as a concept and as a practice, represented one tool in relief officials' toolkit that could simultaneously accomplish these two city policy goals.

The degree of the cities' success in these efforts, however, was in many ways contingent on a broader policy narrative written by senior governments. Between 1930 and 1932, all three levels of government together funded and financed major urban work relief schemes designed primarily to keep unemployed

married men working. During this period, cities saw the regular and mostly willing participation of the men in the schemes. In fact, there were typically far more men clamouring to secure a job on the schemes than there was work available for them. This was not surprising; after all, the work took place typically within the city and it offered workers a real hourly wage, mimicking conditions in the normal capitalist labour market. It was during this period, too, that cities held primary responsibility for unemployed single men within their boundaries, setting in relief policy makers' hands the task of minimizing the civil disorder (real or imagined) that single men represented. By the fall of 1932, however, the senior governments abandoned the policy of funding and financing urban work relief schemes in favour of cheaper direct relief contributions to cities. The federal government also accepted responsibility for unemployed single men, and opened a series of relief camps operated by the Department of National Defence to accommodate them. The changes in federal policy meant cities could only pursue smaller, less expensive work projects, such as street sweeping, snow shovelling, and brush clearing, using mostly unemployed married men on direct relief as labour. At the same time, however, the end of municipal responsibility for single unemployed men reduced considerably city officials' anxieties about masses of potentially dangerous men congregating in their cities.

This essay is set within a much broader literature on men, women, and work in the Depression, dealing with what American historian Alice Kessler-Harris has termed "an already tense debate over who had the right to work" during the 1930s. Caused by the "depression-generated scarcity of jobs," the debate according to Kessler-Harris revealed "deeply rooted assumptions about women's secondary status in the workplace."⁵ Kessler-Harris advanced an economic argument to explain those assumptions. Large portions of American society did not have difficulty with women working *per se*, she argued, but they did have a problem with women working during a time of severe economic crisis when it was widely believed jobs would better go to men. Kessler-Harris's explanation touched off a lively rejoinder from Canadian historian Margaret Hobbs, who agreed that women generally faced opposition to waged work during the Depression, but argued that the opposition women faced was gendered, not economic.⁶ Women, in other words, were denied work on an equal basis with men precisely *because* they were women. Other social scientists have since weighed in on the debate. For instance, historian Joan Sangster accepts both the economic and the gendered explanations for married women's exclusion from the paid workforce. "[C]alls to fire married women," Sangster writes, "were based on a conception of economic need and the right of every family to have only one breadwinner in hard times; but they also reflected a gender ideology, which saw earning as an unqualified male right but a qualified female right that was limited by marital status and economic background."⁷ More recently, historian Lara Campbell has suggested that "criticism over women's labour were wide-ranging and complex, and came from women

as well as men.”⁸ In the end, Campbell finds the middle road between Kessler-Harris and Hobbs, arguing that “these criticisms were concerned with economic justice and fair distribution of jobs in a limited market, but at their root was the deeply felt belief in the essential right of men to labour, the value of a family wage, and the gendered ideals of breadwinner and homemaker.”⁹ What follows here contributes to that debate, but shifts its focus from the differing experiences of women and men at work in the normal capitalist market to one of married and single men on work relief. City policymakers and others interested in the “problem” of unemployed men, whatever their marital status, marshalled both gendered and economic justifications for their work relief distribution policies. Both arguments, however, sought to bolster the main breadwinner role amongst married men and to remove single men from the cities altogether.

Building Men: From the New Poor Laws to Depression-Era Work Relief

The administration and delivery of poor relief has long been about more than mere economic considerations. In fact, gendered assumptions and constructions have infused ideas about welfare provision at least as far back as the New Poor Law Act of 1834. British historian Sonya Rose has argued that the Poor Law Act itself “proclaimed that men were solely responsible for the economic welfare of their families,” because it offered relief to families and individuals through men only.¹⁰ The corollary to this emphasis, of course, was that women and children came to be viewed as the dependents of men. The New Poor Law’s ideological assumptions about the male breadwinner role shared an easy alliance with working-class male activists’ fear that women’s lower wages would undercut their own, as well as middle-class moralists who insisted women should, as historian Marjorie Levine-Clark has pointed out, “limit or cease their work both for their own health and that of the families they were presumably neglecting at home.”¹¹ As we shall see, these ideas would persist into the 1930s on the urban Canadian prairie.

By the interwar years, the male breadwinner ideal had long been in ascendance in the industrial world.¹² Economic changes originating at the Industrial Revolution in Britain, according to historians such as Sara Horrell and Jane Humphries, “promoted increased dependence on male wages and male wage earners.”¹³ This did not mean, however, that women’s waged work and women’s contributions to the family economy sharply declined with the transition from a pre-industrial to an industrial economy. Instead, as Horrell and Humphries have recently shown, the decline in women’s participation in the waged market economy through the first half of the nineteenth century was “neither continuous nor uniform across occupational categories.”¹⁴ Neither did the male breadwinner ideal emerge fully born out of the Industrial Revolution. Instead, its rise to the status of conventional wisdom by the late nineteenth century occurred only in fits and starts.¹⁵ Still, even as early as mid-century, the idea of the independent male wage

earner and the female dependent slowly became ever more fixed within both middle- and working-class society.¹⁶ In Canada by the 1920s, especially in the growing urban centres, men (and most women, too) viewed women's proper place as in the home.¹⁷ But while this ideal was widely accepted, most Canadians found it difficult to live the reality of such sharply delineated and prescribed gender roles. Women who stayed at home and out of the waged labour workforce contributed mightily to their families' economic survival, performing much of the work associated with taking in boarders, as well as producing goods like knitted clothing for sale, and performing services such as child care and laundry for pay.¹⁸ On the urban prairie, historian Gerald Friesen has suggested, "[...] there is little reason to believe that one adult wage-earner could provide more than the bare minimum in food, clothing, and housing for a family."¹⁹ For most working-class households, the work of wives and daughters and sons was critical to the family's survival. Nevertheless, women's (and children's) contributions to the family economy did not challenge the breadwinner ideal. While men contributed a wage to the household, women's paid and unpaid work fit well within what many considered "domestic duties"—cooking, cleaning, and raising children. Ironically, it was the work that women performed, whether paid or unpaid, that maintained the illusion of the breadwinner ideal, mainly because their contributions were minimized and made secondary to the primacy of the man's wages.

Nevertheless, the onset of the Depression, with its attendant social and economic crises, challenged that ideal, if not the reality of the male breadwinner. When increasing numbers of family men lost their jobs, the breadwinner ideal became ever more difficult to sustain, especially for working-class men. Turning gender roles on their heads, moreover, some women even left the home to replace their husbands in the main breadwinner role.²⁰ Political scientist Margaret Hillyard Little has argued "Since the very essence of masculinity was deeply tied to this notion of the male breadwinner and head of household, it is no wonder that many men were deeply troubled by events beyond their control."²¹ Doubtless, the onset of the Depression ushered in an era of severe social anxieties, especially about the roles of married men and the ways they related to their work (or lack of work), their families, and their society.²²

Yet if the Depression threatened the male breadwinner ideal, then it also simultaneously bolstered it. City relief policies focused most of their attention on families, and particularly on the unemployed family man. In good, or at least stable, economic times the male breadwinner ideal maintained a quiet insistence of its simple truths: that men's rightful and natural role was at the head of his household and that men's responsibilities to their dependents were to be fulfilled through hard work and the wages that hard work produced. In bad and unstable economic times, that quiet insistence grew louder, anxiously reinforcing what many considered men's natural provider role in the face of unprecedented social and economic threats.²³

Maintaining the Breadwinner Role Through Work Relief—Excluding Single Men: 1929-1932

Just as debates over who had the right to work during the Depression revealed women's secondary status in the workplace, city policies about who had the right to access relief jobs revealed single men's secondary status in the relief workplace. The privileging of married men over single men on work relief jobs emerged early. For example, in December 1929, Edmonton City Commissioner David Mitchell emphasized that his city's "emergency relief plan is for the benefit of unemployed married men who are bona fide residents of the city." "The city," he continued, "is not in a position to consider others. No single men will be employed under this plan and each married man will be carefully investigated by relief officer Magee before being placed at work."²²⁴ In doling out work on a new nurse's home addition to Saskatoon's City Hospital the following summer, Mayor Hair assured citizens that "a rigid checkup is being maintained to insure that the people who were given jobs are bona fide citizens, married men with dependents receiving first consideration."²²⁵ Large placards posted at the entrance to Edmonton's city hall announced in June 1930 that only married men supporting families need apply at the relief office for work on the city's latest waterworks construction project. The city commissioners also issued an "iron clad ruling that no single men [...] can take advantage of the work offered."²²⁶

Any ruling reserving work relief for married men, however "iron clad," would have little effect if it were not enforced rigorously. And enforced rigorously it was, revealing city officials' dedication to ensuring only married men accessed work relief in their cities. This was easy enough to do at the relief office itself, where men assembled to receive their work orders each day. The relief officer simply assigned jobs only to married men. The process became more complicated in those instances where the city contracted different jobs to local construction and hauling companies. The married-man-only rule applied to private firms involved on relief jobs, but the relief office was one step removed from hiring those workers, making it more difficult for relief officials to ensure only married men found work on relief jobs. For the most part, the private firms that had won contracts for relief work followed city work relief distribution policies. Winnipeg's Carter-Hills-Aldinger Company, for instance, explained its labour distribution practices in the construction of two steel and reinforced concrete bridges crossing the Red and Assiniboine Rivers this way: "We possibly employed on two relief jobs during the month of July 1932 around 500 men," W.H. Carter wrote the province in early September 1933, "and say 500 more in the plants in Winnipeg processing materials." On rotating the men so they worked one-half time at most, Carter estimated his company had made provision for some 2000 men. "All were married men," Carter assured relief officials, and, taking provincial "figures of five to a family, this would take care of 10 000 individuals at least and possibly more."²²⁷

But not all contractors followed city dictates. Typically in these cases, city officials relied on outside complaints to find out whether single men were working on relief jobs. When Edmonton relief officials learned, for example, that the J.B. McDonald and Son grading company was using a single man to haul gravel for a relief job, the city's chief engineer instructed the company to "remove him and make room for a married man."²⁸ In another instance, Edmonton alderman Ogilvie received an anonymous letter advising him that "someone named Swanson was employing single men on city work." In looking into the matter, the city's chief engineer found that Swanson, who had earlier won a curbing and walk work contract from the city, was in fact employing five single men as finishers and form setters. The remaining thirty men on the project were married. The engineer only allowed Swanson to retain the single men when he learned that finishing and form setting required experienced hands and no married men with that experience were available. The chief engineer made a similar report on the Crown Paving Company and the H.G. Macdonald Paving Company. In each of those instances, the companies had working for them a combined total of eighty-seven men. All but five were married.²⁹ Saskatoon was equally anxious to ensure single men found no work on that city's work relief projects. In December 1930 the city commissioner received word from a concerned member of the Canadian Legion that the city was "employing New Canadians who are presumably married but are not actually married, or if they are, have wives living in the Old Country." The commissioner asked the Legion to provide a "list of the names of the new Canadians" as the city was "more than anxious to deal with the difficult problem of seeing that the available work goes to those most entitled to it."³⁰

On one level, of course, city work relief policies excluding single men made good economic sense. After all, by offering work relief only to married men with wives and children, policymakers believed, cities effectively stretched each relief dollar further than they could by giving that relief dollar to a single man. But on another level, reserving work relief jobs exclusively for married men was also aimed at enabling married men to fulfill their breadwinner role and to preserve their morale, their self-respect, and their manhood. In defending his city's policy that only "bona fide" married men qualified for work relief, for example, Saskatoon mayor John Hair explained to several single men seeking work relief that "[o]ne of the first principals [sic] of manhood was to recognize women and children first. Until we have taken care of women and children I had no authority to deal with men such as they."³¹ Manhood, in the mayor's estimation, involved breadwinners taking care of their families, not unemployed single men working on relief jobs. It was a principle, the mayor believed, the single men seeking relief jobs clearly did not understand. Even more so, the mayor's admonishment suggested the single men lacked even a basic sense of what "manhood" was all about. In any case, the mayor's message was simple: single men need not expect work relief from the city until the married men were able to fulfill their breadwinner

role. The director of Edmonton's special relief office agreed with the principle of maintaining the primacy of the breadwinner's role through relief work, but he expressed that primacy in legal, rather than economic terms. "Undoubtedly," he asserted in 1934, "a man has a legal responsibility to take care of his family."³² Employment on Edmonton's major work relief schemes was reserved for married men to enable them to do just that.

Others believed unemployed married men's inability to provide for their families (to fulfill their breadwinner role) affected negatively the men's own self-image, and only a proper course of work relief would ameliorate that unhappy situation. Married men, *Winnipeg Tribune* Associate Editor Ronald Hooper wrote Manitoba's Public Works Minister in November 1932, had "struggled hard to keep off relief and preserve their self-respect." But those same men, the "heads of families who are homeowners, who have been encouraged to expect a relatively high standard of living," were nevertheless "coming on relief in increasing numbers." In the associate editor's opinion, one he claimed to share with unemployed family men throughout the city, heads of families needed relief work, preferably paid in cash to "help them in preserving their self-respect and make things a little easier for their wives."³³ Hooper's emphasis on the loss of self-respect among unemployed heads of households speaks primarily to his anxieties over married men's loss of breadwinner status due to unemployment rather than to a concern about simple pauperism. His remarks also reveal the ways class anxieties intersected with gendered ones in relief policy debates. Work relief would not only maintain the breadwinner role amongst both working and middle class married men, but it would also bolster the self-respect—and class position—of those unfortunate cases who had enjoyed a high living standard before they lost their jobs. A Calgary city council resolution sent to its Edmonton counterpart in September 1933 was even more explicit. In calling for a concerted municipal effort to secure funds from the senior governments for major work relief schemes, the resolution declared that, "It is generally recognized and admitted that the continued lack of employment of a large section of our population particularly in homes where women and children are affected, is having a degrading and demoralizing effect which is becoming daily more intolerable."³⁴ Calgary's city council was clearly concerned about married men's inability to provide for their families, and especially of the consequences the failure of their breadwinner role might have on their homes. The cities' failure to provide married men with work, one Winnipeg businessman warned Manitoba officials, would be "a terrible item which you will have to pay for in years to come."³⁵

Groups representing unemployed workers also believed that, without a proper course of work relief, the unemployed family man's manhood was in danger. Direct relief for married men, Winnipeg's Building Trades Council explained to relief officials in that city, meant "suffering privation, under-nourishment of women and children, and the stagnation of manhood." Direct relief, like unem-

ployment generally, led to a “loss of stamina, the disintegration of the home, and other heart-rendering [sic] effects.” Unemployed married men, in the Council’s view required “a standard of wages sufficient for any self-respecting citizen to maintain his home and family with the necessities of life.”³⁶

Cities were quite conscious of the hierarchy of relief and the implications of their work relief distribution policies. “Married men should, I feel, be treated differently,” Edmonton’s relief officer confided to an Alberta Provincial Police detective in March 1931. “From personal contact,” he continued, “I find necessity to exist among married men who have kept out of the bread line as long as possible.”³⁷ That hierarchy of relief convinced some relief officials that single men were getting married to improve their situation.³⁸ Saskatoon’s relief officer, for instance, pointed out in March 1932 that more than half of the 2 152 families on relief had been married only a year or so earlier. The majority of these, he claimed, “got married in order to get on relief.”³⁹ One week later, the relief officer offered up an illustration by pointing to the case of one man who, after only three days of being married, applied for assistance.⁴⁰ In order to deal with these sorts of situations, Saskatoon instituted a policy where newly married couples could expect no relief, and certainly no work relief, until they could satisfy the city that they had been married at least one year.⁴¹ Edmonton relief officials discovered similar activities in their city, and followed a course much like Saskatoon’s. “No man on ‘single’ relief,” Edmonton’s relief officer declared early in 1933, “shall be allowed to transfer to ‘married’ relief notwithstanding the fact that he may have been married in the meantime.”⁴² The situation even led relief officials to believe they had the right to make moral judgements about relief recipients’ conjugal relationships, accusing the newly married of failing to take account of their poverty before heading down the matrimonial aisle. Single men who married without “proper foresight and no funds,” Edmonton’s relief officer explained, were not yet prepared to take on the duties and obligations of the married man. “These cases are not isolated ones,” he continued, “but are occurring with sufficient regularity and frequency to indicate that there is an undoubted intention on the part of some people to get married and set up homes at our expense. When a man has no money whatever and has no job [...] we cannot accept [him] making his vows and then immediately coming to the Relief Department to ask us to carry them out.”⁴³

In some instances, relief officers pointed out, single men went even beyond getting married just to get on relief and actually claimed they were married when they were not. In one case, a relief officer told the tale of five single “foreigners” who “had each produced the same woman in turn as his wife in making application for assistance.”⁴⁴ Another Saskatoon man was sent to jail for three months after he had obtained \$4.75 worth of work relief from the city on the apparently false claim that a certain woman was his wife and that one of her children was also his. The woman also received a one-month jail sentence. The charge was “corrupting the morals of a child.”⁴⁵ Clearly favouring a hard-line

approach to fraud, the relief officer told the court at trial that “he was confident that many men were receiving relief as married men when in fact they were single and living with women for the purposes of defrauding the city.”⁴⁶ In response to this trend, Saskatoon instituted a new policy insisting that applicants for married men’s relief produce documentation to prove the marriage had actually taken place. Almost immediately, some single unemployed men found ways to circumvent the new policy. “Several [men] who had no wives,” Saskatoon’s relief officer reported, “merely bought marriage certificates,” and produced them as proof of their married status.⁴⁷ For these men, it seems, counting oneself among the married category of relief and getting work relief jobs was clearly preferable to remaining on single men’s relief where they could expect farm work or camp work well outside the city and under close supervision at best and the bum’s rush out of town at worst.⁴⁸

The Danger of Single Men

Societies have long considered single men, whether employed or not, to represent some element of danger. For example, in the United States, historian Howard Chudacoff has traced the idea of the dangerous single man to at least the very earliest years of the American republic.⁴⁹ In part, this danger was related to single men’s apparent independence and free mobility. He was, in many respects, unfettered by the broader society’s concerns for respectability, family life, and responsibility. Increasingly through the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, alongside the rise of a newly created consumer culture and growing urbanization and the increasing numbers of young men taking advantage of “alternatives to marriage, such as opportunities for economic, social, and sexual independence” came an increasing societal sense that the single man constituted a danger to respectable, established society.⁵⁰ The very independence and mobility and youth that made the single man’s experience reflective of the frontier (both in Canada as well as in the US), simultaneously made him dangerous in various ways. At one and the same time, historian Paul Laipson has explained, the single man represented “both a failure of masculinity and an excess of it.”⁵¹ The single man’s state of singledom (whether that state was permanent or transitory) imbued him with an ambiguous sexuality; he was possibly asexual, or even homosexual on the one hand, or he was aggressively “hyper-masculine [...] reluctant to marry because he is unwilling to restrict himself sexually to one woman or to give up access to the pleasures available to him as a single man.”⁵² More dangerous even than an ambiguous sexuality, however, was the single man’s supposed propensity for violence.⁵³ For historian Mary Beard, writing in the 1930s, single men were even behind the rise of fascism: “The Fascist movement in Germany, as in Italy and Japan, is essentially a dynamic of unmarried males [...] Adolph Hitler, a bachelor like the majority of the thirty or forty leaders of the Nazi party, is a rover, a veteran of the world War,

undomesticated and unused to the responsibilities connected with public life in a time of peace.²⁵⁴ In less hyperbolic terms, especially younger and working-class single men were believed to engage at the very least in unruly, rowdy, sometimes drunken behaviour. This sort of behaviour became, many believed, even more dangerous when groups of young men got together.⁵⁵

While western societies had established that single young men generally represented potential problems, economic conditions caused by the Depression in particular exacerbated that potential in three important ways. Suddenly, single young men (particularly men relying on the construction and building trades for their livelihood) were not only unattached, independent, and prone to hang around in groups causing trouble, but they were also idle, susceptible to a much reinvigorated Communist movement, and, perhaps worst of all, representative of both the wasted promise and vitality of youth, as well as the bleak future of western industrial society.⁵⁶

Unemployment, Edmonton's Highlands and District Community League warned city councillors in April 1933, was "preventing the normal development in the young people [of] self-respect and economic independence and initiative." Together, these "human qualities" represented "the most valuable asset of the Country."⁵⁷ Whether or not societal fears of single men were based on real or imagined violence and disorder, real or imagined freedom and independence from "civil society," or real or imagined danger, single men, as we shall see, were clearly singled out by relief administrators on the urban prairie as individuals on which to keep a close eye.

As early as the autumn of 1929, city officials in prairie cities had determined that unemployed single men already represented a serious problem. "We have single men who are without food and a place to sleep," Saskatoon's finance committee reported, adding "that if work cannot be provided for them by individual effort, the only other course open is to have them arrested as vagrants and housed in jail, and hope that such an alternative may drive them out of the city."⁵⁸

Single Men Down on the Farm and Out in the Camps

Given the prevailing sense that unemployed single men represented disorder and potential danger, especially during the period before the federal government took responsibility for them, city relief officials employed policies designed to reduce their number on city relief rolls wherever possible. One way of accomplishing this was for cities to occasionally offer unemployed single men some of the meanest work possible, explicitly discouraging them from waiting on the city for relief altogether. Edmonton's relief officer, for example, suggested the city's engineering department should "put on a good substantial force of single men with brooms sweeping the muck to the side of the street in little piles [. . .] the offering of this work, day by day, until the whole street is cleaned up, would likely have its effect

in reducing the number of men reporting for work, and consequently for relief.²⁵⁰ The idea of work relief, in this sense, had different meanings for different categories of relief. At one and the same time, cities used work to maintain married men in the city and to remove single men from the city.

Far more common, however, were municipal efforts to remove single men by encouraging them to take up farm or camp work well outside the city. This was not an unusual, or especially new, response to the “problem” of single men; single men had long relied on harvest work in the autumn season through the three decades leading to the Depression. Farmers, too, welcomed a cheap and available labour supply of single men and, less commonly, married men, to be available to work during their busy harvest seasons when wheat had to be threshed before first frost. Encouraging single men to work on farms would, according to Manitoba provincial officials, “help solve the farm labor problem.”⁶⁰ The idea made good sense to municipal, provincial, and federal officials for two reasons. First, paying part or even full wages to single men working on farms was cheaper than maintaining them in cities. Second, most officials recognized the added benefit of removing the idle and potentially dangerous men from city street corners and giving them something useful to do. Alberta premier Brownlee, for one, believed that “the [single unemployment] situation has to be handled carefully as otherwise we may have a considerable amount of disorder and possibly damage.”⁶¹

Also playing on some minds was the danger that single men, if left without work for too long, might never learn the value of honest labour. “For God’s sake,” one exasperated man begged Edmonton Mayor Douglas, “relieve me of this deadly incubus idle for a very long time.” The “deadly incubus” was the man’s twenty-five-year-old “terrible burden” of a son. In the father’s opinion, his son’s main problem could be attributed to deteriorating values among young people in general. “I’d clean toilets before I’d be a burden to anyone, but the youth of the present day just want to ‘glass cock’ around with powder comb glass, long hair, no cap or hat and they make me sick in the head and stomach—two foot wide pants, trailing in the gutter.” The mayor replied a few days later by letter, “my advice to you would be to put that boy on a farm where he would be compelled to do a little at least for his board, and you might make a man of him.”⁶²

It was when the cities, the provinces, and the federal government began to jointly initiate organized farm placement programs that seasonal farm work became work relief designed to serve a particular purpose. Typical during the early Depression years was Saskatoon’s cooperation with the province and the federal government in placing single men on surrounding farms in early September 1931. By mid-month, some 1000 single men had been placed with farmers, and another 1000 were set to go. The city’s relief officer also instructed investigators visiting the homes of Saskatoon families on relief to advise any single men living there to “take advantage of the threshing season.”⁶³ As an added incentive, Saskatoon City Commissioner Leslie declared that “no more meals were to be served to unem-

ployed single men, unless they were certified unfit for harvest work by the medical health officer.”⁶⁴ Those single men still unwilling to take up harvesting jobs that autumn, the mayor warned, “would have a tough row to hoe when they apply for work in the relief camps this winter.” The mayor vowed to convince provincial officials to offer them space in the camps only after all harvest workers had secured a place.⁶⁵

How the single men felt about the schemes is difficult to gauge in any general way. Some men signed up quickly while others not only refused, but also counselled their fellow single unemployed not to accept any farm relief jobs until the various governments agreed to pay something more than “starvation wages.” Some men, whom Saskatoon’s relief officers designated “ringleaders,” attempted to convince single unemployed men not to accept the jobs until the city agreed to pay their fares. The so-called ringleaders appeared to have some success in their campaign. “There were,” city employment officer R. Briscoe reported in January 1930, “a large number who were not keen to take jobs on farms for their board.”⁶⁶ For many men, however, remaining in the city meant no work or relief, and possible vagrancy charges. The bleak prospects drove them to the relief offices seeking farm placements. At Winnipeg, some fifteen or thirty single men could be found at that city’s relief office each day at three o’clock in the afternoon “waiting for the doctor to give them the once over” before being placed with a farmer seeking labourers. There, to pass the time, they engaged in “good natured banter” that reflected their shared experiences as young single unemployed men. In good humour, according to relief officials, some speculated that they would take a trip to Europe or the Mediterranean once they received their payment at the end of the season. Others joked that they would get married or that, with the payment in hand, they would soon be ready for retirement.⁶⁷ They told stories, too. An apparently popular one was of a farmer who had hired two men from the relief office. A friend of the two men wished also to go along. When told by the farmer that there was work for two men, not three, the third invariably said “Oh don’t let that worry you. You’d be surprised at how little work it takes to keep me going.” Another story revolved around an inexperienced young city man sent for the first time to a farm to work. On being told by the farmer how hens produce eggs in their nests, the man deduced that he had found a cow’s nest when he discovered a pile of condensed milk cans.⁶⁸ Winnipeg relief officials believed stories like these represented single men’s efforts to “keep up their spirits.” On a deeper level, however, relief officials believed that running through the stories was “a note of pathos, for collectively their sphere of work, by conditions which they cannot understand and are doing their best to accept with a smile, still in them is the hope that it won’t be long until they can return to their chosen work, with some assurance of permanence and stability in that work and in the homes they try to build.”⁶⁹

Cities also supported and steadfastly encouraged the senior governments

to set up relief camps for single men. Much like the farm work schemes, the camps were designed both to save cities and the senior governments money, as well as remove single men from the cities. The first relief camps opened in the late fall of 1930. At first, federal Parks Commissioner J.B. Harkin had hoped, not without good reason, that the federal government would agree to open a string of relief camps in National Parks across the West. National Park relief camps, the commissioner believed, were a perfect solution to many of the problems then facing the nation. Not only would they take thousands of unemployed men from the cities, thereby relieving pressure on local city relief administrations, but they would also, through the men's labour, turn the parks into important revenue-generating tourist attractions. In return for their labour, mostly road building into and out of the parks to accommodate motor car traffic, the men would get three square meals a day, a warm bed at night, and a healthy, natural setting in which to wait out the hard times. For Harkin, it was a perfect idea.

It was not to be, at least not to the scale Harkin had envisioned that autumn. Because the federal Unemployment Relief Act maintained that responsibility for unemployment was a purely local one, none of its \$20 million appropriation could be used by any federal department. If Harkin was to get any relief money at all, he would have to convince provincial governments to use part of their appropriations to finance camp work in National Parks inside their own borders. In the end, only Saskatchewan and Manitoba agreed to do so, believing camps at Prince Albert and Riding Mountain respectively would ease a little their unemployment problems.⁷⁰

Complementing the Saskatchewan camp at Prince Albert that autumn was a purely Saskatoon-initiated camp at the city's southern edge. The province donated use of a government building on the site, and the city renovated it to accommodate double deck bunks for some 500 men. The city also installed in the building two steel bathtubs, three shower baths, a delousing plant and dryer, and a rack and wash tubs for washing and drying clothes. Heating was provided by a stationary boiler borrowed from the city engineering department that offered some warmth for the men and protected the building's plumbing from frost. The Saskatoon camp's operation was run with an eye toward military efficiency. Single men made application for admittance to the camp at the city relief office downtown. Later, the city required the men to make application for admission at the camp itself because, as the camp's commandant explained, it engendered in the men "a much greater respect for authority." It also made it easier to verify the men's statements as to their place of residence and employment history to eliminate "drifters from other provinces."⁷¹

If an unemployed single man was accepted, then the city relief office handed him tickets to the baths and delousing plant on the camp grounds. Once the man was in the baths, camp attendants sterilized all his belongings. Following the bath, the man visited the camp storekeeper who provided him with clean blan-

kets, assigned him to a bunk, and instructed him to read the “Camp Standing Orders.” The orders ranged from insisting that “all men who are warned for any duties must report [for work] on schedule” to ensuring that every man “must shave and generally keep up his appearance” to keeping the toilets “in good order.” On the last point dealing with the toilets, the men were reminded that “loitering there is absolutely forbidden.”⁷²

Where any men were found in contravention of the camp’s standing orders, the men “did not get their next meal until they were interviewed at the Camp Office and given a warning.” On any man’s second offence, “or charges of a more serious nature,” he was subject to summary dismissal from the camp. Once dismissed, moreover, the camp kept a record of the incidents on file because, as the camp’s director later reported, “in some cases these men went down town and complained to some organization of unfair treatment.” Through the days, the men were given “a certain amount of work [...] to keep them out of mischief.”⁷³ Clearly, most of the men’s daily activities were closely monitored. In the evenings, the men might enjoy performances by various Saskatoon-based concert bands, free movies at Saskatoon theatres once each week, or free attendance at hockey games played at the Saskatoon stadium. Each day the men were also provided with free daily issues of the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*. Other entertainment included the loan of a piano from a Saskatoon music store and the loan of a radio from the Hudson’s Bay Company.⁷⁴

Alberta, meantime, opened relief camps using its federal appropriations under the Unemployment Relief Act along the Jasper-Banff Highway, and accepted nearly 1000 of Edmonton’s single unemployed male population over the winter of 1930-1931.⁷⁵ Clearly, Alberta’s relief camp activities alleviated Edmonton’s single man “problem,” reducing the city’s responsibility for roughly one-quarter of its single male population, at least for the winter months. With the arrival of spring, however, the province expressed its intention to close down its camps and expel the men. This posed a serious problem for the cities. If the camps closed, Edmonton’s city council believed, that the men would have little choice but to drift back into the city. The rapid introduction to the city of potentially 1000 single men with nothing to do caused city officials a good deal of anxiety. Edmonton could not afford to look after the numbers of unemployed in the city as it was. The potential addition of one thousand men (and possibly dangerous ones at that) to the mix, city officials believed, was simply not possible. Edmonton’s city council had already decided to cut all single men from city relief for the summer and accept no new applicants beginning on the last day of April, and pleaded with the province to keep the camps running for at least another month “to prevent men from drifting into the city” before it made the cut.⁷⁶ The province agreed to keep the camps open until the end of April, and the city subsequently shut down its office for single men. As of 6 May, the city relief officer reported that “no untoward incidents [had] arisen.”⁷⁷ It was a situation that would shortly change. By

early June, Edmonton already was reporting a “tense situation” among the single men.⁷⁸ It was only the arrival in the city of a detachment of the Strathcona Horse and a strengthening of the provincial police presence, city officials maintained, that forestalled potential violence, at least for the time being. Thereafter, the city’s relief officer informed City Commissioner Mitchell, “a very noticeable improvement in the demeanour of the crowd has taken place.”⁷⁹ How long the single men’s demeanour might remain that way was anyone’s guess.

Through the summer of 1931, cities and provinces grew ever more anxious about how they might deal with what had become known as the “single men problem.” Certainly, the cities’ favoured solution was to disavow any responsibility for them whatsoever. To do this with a minimum amount of backlash from angry and frustrated men, however, cities would have find some way to remove the men from their borders. Sending the men to work as labourers on surrounding farms, as noted earlier, was one way, but the schemes never seemed to take up enough men. Alberta’s Department of Municipal Affairs suggested that single unemployed men should be “concentrated on a semi military basis.” Letting the single men roam through the cities and issuing them purchasing tickets, the Department argued, would “leave them at large with a feeling of victory to take part in any disturbance agitators wished to promote.”⁸⁰ Prime Minister R.B. Bennett, for his part, appeared willing to help. The Prime Minister, in fact, along with most other municipal, provincial and federal leaders, had long believed that single unemployed men represented a menace and a threat to public order. He also believed they were especially vulnerable to communist ideas.⁸¹ At a meeting with Alberta municipal leaders at Calgary during the summer of 1931, Bennett assured all in attendance that the federal government “intended to establish camps, particularly in the Parks and in British Columbia on the Railways” that fall. Although the Prime Minister admitted that “the Government has no power to compel single men to go to camps,” Edmonton’s chief engineer reported to that city’s commissioner, “he practically suggested that the cities should cut out single men’s relief.”⁸² However the cities interpreted the Prime Minister’s assurances, Bennett himself remained unwilling to allow the federal government to accept full responsibility for single unemployed men. Instead, his administration’s Unemployment and Farm Relief Act, passed at Ottawa on Dominion Day 1931, would only provide provinces with federal monies to open road building camps along the Trans-Canada highway over the following winter. The only projects Bennett was willing to finance as purely federal undertakings were in the National Parks. These too aided beleaguered cities in no small measure.⁸³

Most cities regarded the work plans for single unemployed men as good news. Edmonton’s relief officer, for instance, was pleased to note that the Jasper-Banff Highway camps promised to rid the city “of these transients who are becoming a pest on our private institutions and city homes in the widespread system of begging carried on.”⁸⁴ Edmonton would also benefit by sending single

unemployed men to brushing and clearing camps at Elk Island National Park just a few miles to the city's east. Winnipeg could similarly benefit from new programmes for the single unemployed that autumn, Labour Minister Gideon Robertson informed a Manitoba delegation to Ottawa in late August, 1931. If the province and the city agreed to jointly pay the men thirty cents each per hour worked on the Trans-Canada Highway west of Fort William, then the federal government would pay the men's transportation to the worksite. The job, the Minister of Labour pointed out, could provide employment for 2000 to 3000 thousand Winnipeg men.⁸⁵ In addition, the federal government had set aside \$200 000 for work in National Parks located in the province. By November, hundreds of Winnipeg men, as well as men from throughout the province, began arriving at Riding Mountain National Park. Shortly they were engaged in constructing park buildings, clearing roads, and improving the park's golf course.⁸⁶

By the following spring, the threat of single men returning from the camps again emerged, and cities were in no better position to accommodate them than they had been in the spring of 1931. A worried Edmonton Mayor Daniel Knott wired R.B. Bennett warning that there was "strong pressure here to again open construction camps [for single men] at Jasper and Elk Island Parks."⁸⁷ As late as May still no word had come from Ottawa, and Alberta's premier intervened directly, writing the federal minister of the interior to ask why they were being held up. There was, the Premier warned, "an awkward situation with respect to the large numbers of single men in Edmonton and Calgary."⁸⁸ It seems negotiations over wages for supervisors and foreman were in back of the delay, the minister replied, but he expected the camps would open shortly. In the meantime, the premier informed Edmonton's mayor, the province would open several of its own camps in the Forest Reserves north of the city to accommodate up to 500 men.⁸⁹ Some weeks later, a first group of eighty-five Edmonton men set out for Jasper.

It is difficult to gauge how the men themselves felt about leaving the city to spend an indeterminate amount of time in an isolated camp, but cases of men quitting the camps or even refusing to go in the first place tell at least part of the story. Although eighty-five men agreed to go to Jasper in the early spring of 1932, for example, 119 refused. The men's chief complaint, according to Edmonton Mayor Daniel Knott, was the small wages paid at the camp. All were subsequently cut from the city's relief rolls.⁹⁰ A group of twenty-five men who simply left the Jasper camp and made their way back to Edmonton in early January 1932, received similar treatment. When an "extremely surprized," city commissioner learned that the men, together with a further contingent arriving in the city a few days later, had received some small emergency relief, he ordered Edmonton's relief department to stop offering the men any relief at all.⁹¹ The men also had their defenders. Writing to Premier Brownlee some days later, Secretary William E. Harrison, of the Unemployed Ex-Servicemen's Association, admitted that his organization was "most certainly not in support of the methods these men used in quitting work,"

but, he added, the men should be given relief anyway, “to prevent any portion of them possibly affiliating with the Communistic element in the Province.” The threat, according to the Ex-Servicemen, was real and imminent. “We have definite proof,” Harrison assured the Premier, “that these men were lured away from the job by Communist propaganda.”⁹² Whether or not the men were communists is unclear, but Edmonton Relief Officer H.F. McKee saw any instance—no matter the circumstances—where men left camps (or farm work for that matter) as a “very evident excuse for taking up their identification cards” and reducing the city’s relief burden.⁹³

Conclusion

Married men and single men through the early Depression years had completely different work relief experiences. Wages paid to single men on farms or in camps were typically much lower than those paid to married men on city relief; married men employed on work relief projects in the cities earned between forty-five cents to one dollar per hour while the going rate on farms was between five and ten dollars per month and, in the most notorious work camp cases such as those housing the so-called “Royal Twenty Centers” operated by the Department of National Defence after the fall of 1932, paid twenty cents per day.⁹⁴ The single men who accepted such work, moreover, would find themselves relying entirely on farmers or camp commandants for their food and their shelter. While married men enjoyed a measure of autonomy when their shift ended, single men in the camps and on the farms were under more or less constant surveillance.

Certainly, cities made work relief distribution policy with an eye to economy. Excluding single men from participation on work relief schemes both reduced the number of unemployed men cities needed to place on relief jobs and assured cities that work relief wages would support families rather than single men. On another level, however, the different work relief experiences among single and married men also reflected relief policymakers’ perceptions of the different problems each category posed to their cities. Where cities designed married men’s work relief, for the most part, to enable families to remain in the city and in their own homes as heads of their households, they designed single men’s work relief—flatly—to remove the danger they represented from the city entirely.

Notes

1. 6 January 1931, 1069-2055 (8), Saskatoon Archives.
2. For interpretations of Whitton’s thought, see James Struthers, “A Profession in Crisis: Charlotte Whitton and Canadian Social Work in the 1930s,” *Canadian Historical Review*, 62 no. 2 (1981): 169-185. See also Patricia T. Rooke and R.L. Schnell, *No Bleeding Heart: Charlotte Whitton, A Feminist on the Right* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1987).
3. City Clerk, Saskatoon to City Clerk, Calgary, 12 January 1931, 1069-2055 (8), Saskatoon

Archives.

4. See for example, James Struthers, *No Fault Of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914-1941* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 44-70; Michael B. Katz, *The Undeserving Poor: From the War on Poverty to the War on Welfare* (New York: Pantheon, 1989), 5-16.
5. Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 56. On the debate generally, see Ruth Roach Pierson, "Gender and Unemployment Insurance Debates in Canada, 1934-1940," *Labour/Le Travail* 25 (1990): 77-104; Margaret Hobbs, "Equality and Difference: Feminism and the Defence of Women Workers during the Great Depression," *Labour/Le Travail* 32 (Fall 1993): 201-223.
6. Margaret Hobbs, "Rethinking Antifeminism in the 1930s: Gender Crisis or Workplace Justice? A Response to Alice Kessler-Harris," and Kessler-Harris's reply, both in *Gender & History* 5 no. 1 (1993): 4-19. See also Mimi Abramovitz, *Regulating the Lives of Women: Social Welfare Policy from Colonial Times to the Present* (Boston: South End Press, 1988), which explores the simultaneous development of a work ethic and a family ethic that together reinforced the notion that men should provide for their families through waged-work, whereas women should primarily be engaged in the home at domestic and reproductive unpaid labour.
7. Joan Sangster, *Earning Respect: The Lives of Women in Small Town Ontario, 1920-1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 122.
8. Lara Campbell, "Respectable Citizens of Canada: Gender, Family, and Unemployment in the Great Depression, Ontario," (Ph. D. diss., Queen's University, 2002), 172.
9. Campbell, 173.
10. Sonya Rose, *Limited Livelihoods: Gender and Class in Nineteenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 53.
11. Marjorie Levine-Clark, "Engendering Relief: Women, Ablebodiedness, and the New Poor Laws in Early Victorian England," *Journal of Women's History*, 11 no. 4 (Winter 2000): 111. Voices advocating women's unfitness for paid work, it should be said, were answered in kind by competing voices from political economists and "self-interested factory owners" who argued that women should work for the "good of society and the economy." See Levine-Clark, 111.
12. See a useful review of the origins of the male breadwinner role, Colin Creighton, "The Rise of the Male Breadwinner Family: A Reappraisal," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 38: no. 2 (April 1996) 310-337. On Canada in particular, see Nancy Christie, *Engendering the State: Family, Work, and Welfare in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).
13. Sara Horrell and Jane Humphries, "Women's Labour Force Participation and the Transition to the Male Breadwinner, 1790-1865," *Economic History Review*, 1 (1995): 89.
14. Horrell and Humphries, 113.
15. See E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity From the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: BasicBooks, 1993), 55; E. Anthony Rotundo, "Learning About Manhood: Gender Ideals and the Middle-Class Family in Nineteenth-Century America," J.A. Mangan and James Walvin, eds., *Manliness and Morality: Middle Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987). Historian Michael Kimmel has located the earliest emergence of the term "breadwinner" in the peri-

- od 1810-1820. At that time, Kimmel argues, the term meant “taking care of one’s family.” See Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Free Press, 1996), 20.
16. Anna Clark “The New Poor Law and the Breadwinner Wage: Contrasting Assumptions,” *Journal of Social History* 34 no. 2 (2000), 261.
17. Nancy Christie, *Engendering the State*. Historian Cynthia Commachio has illustrated an important class dimension to the widespread acceptance of the male breadwinner role. “By the turn of the [nineteenth] century,” she argues, the male breadwinner ideal was becoming integral to working-class notions of respectability.” See C. Commachio, “‘A Postscript for Father’: Defining a New Fatherhood in Interwar Canada,” *Canadian Historical Review*, 78 no. 3 (September 1997): 385-409.
18. Veronica Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada, 1919-1939* (Markham, ON: Penguin Books, 1988), 125-127.
19. Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 288.
20. Cynthia Comacchio, *The Infinite Bonds of Family: Domesticity in Canada, 1850-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).
21. Margaret Little, “‘No Car, No Radio, No Liquor Permit’: The Moral Regulation of Single Mothers in Ontario, 1920-1993,” (Ph.D. diss., York University, 1996), 204.
22. For one fascinating sociological look at the effects of Depression-related unemployment on married men, see Mirra Komarovsky, *The Unemployed Man and His Family: The Effect of Unemployment Upon the Status of the Man in Fifty-Nine Families* (New York: Octagon Books, 1940).
23. This sort of anxiety is, in large measure, what Alice Kessler-Harris, Margaret Hobbs, Ruth Roach Pierson, Lara Campbell, Cynthia Comacchio and others have referred to in the context of women’s right to work during the Depression.
24. *Edmonton Bulletin*, 19 December 1929.
25. See *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 5 July 1930.
26. *Edmonton Bulletin*, “Married men only will be employed,” 30 June, 1930. See also, Haddow to Commissioner Mitchell, 23 August 1934, and Alderman Farmilo to Council, 1 October 1934, RG 11 Class 160 File 8, Edmonton Archives.
27. Letter from W.H. Carter to Manitoba’s Assistant Deputy Minister of Public Works A. MacNamara, 8 September 1933, G8030 Unemployment Relief, Manitoba Provincial Archives.
28. Relief Office Report on earnings of trucks and teams, 15 March 1932, RG 11 C 149, File 8, Edmonton Archives.
29. *Ibid.*
30. City Commissioner to Canadian Legion, December 1930, 1069-2055 (8), Saskatoon Archives.
31. *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, “Mayor Hair Nails Story By Scarlett: Did Not Tell Men to Rustle For Meals, He Declares,” 10 July 1930, 6.
32. Harold McKee to Commissioner Mitchell, 23 August, 1934, RG 11 Class 160 File 8, Edmonton Archives.
33. Unemployment Relief, letter from Ronald Hooper to W.R. Clubb, 10 November 1932, G8030, Manitoba Archives.
34. Clerk to Mayor 20 September 1933, RG 11 C 160 F 5, Edmonton Archives.

35. Unemployment Relief File, G 8030, Manitoba Archives.
36. Unemployment Relief, Building Trades Council of Winnipeg and Vicinity, Submission on Building Construction vs. Direct Relief, 12 September 1933, G8030, Manitoba Archives.
37. Magee to Rathbone, 2 March 1931, RG 11 Class 149 File 2, Edmonton Archives.
38. Alice Kessler-Harris spoke to similarly motivated practices among married women during the Depression. "There are instances of women divorcing their husbands or separating from their husbands to keep their jobs," she said in an interview with *New River Media*, "pretending they weren't married, postponing marriages and so on." *New River Media* Interview with Alice Kessler Harris, Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), <http://www.pbs.org/fmc/interviews/kesslerharris.htm>.
39. *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, "Many on relief childless, Rowland presumes large number got married here to obtain assistance," 18 March 1932.
40. *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, "City Council to Adopt New Scheme of Giving Relief," 26 March, 1932.
41. Clerk to Central Council on Unemployment, 27 November 1933, 1069-1099, Saskatoon Archives.
42. H.F. McKee to City Commissioner, 2 February 1933, RG 11 C 149 F 19, Edmonton Archives. It might be noted, though, that the City Relief Officer could (and did) make some allowance when children were involved.
43. *Ibid.* The city's unemployed, not surprisingly, disagreed. On 14 February 1933, a United Workers' Council appeared before the city council "protesting against single men on relief being refused relief upon getting married." The city chose to "take no action" on the complaint. City Clerk to City Commissioners, 14 February 1933, RG 11 Class 149 File 19, Edmonton Archives.
44. *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 13 October 1932.
45. *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 29 February 1932.
46. *Ibid.*
47. *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, "City Council to Adopt New Scheme of Giving Relief," 26 March, 1932. It is not clear where the men got the marriage certificates.
48. *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, "Shirkers to get no consideration," 4 September 1931.
49. Howard Chudacoff, *The Age of the Bachelor: Creating an American Subculture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).
50. Chudacoff, 65.
51. Peter Laipson, "'I Have No Genius For Marriage': Bachelorhood in Urban America, 1870-1930," (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan 2000), 2.
52. Laipson, 3.
53. Historian David T. Courtwright has explored the association of violence and single male culture from the late nineteenth century to the late twentieth in his book, *Violent Land*. David T. Courtwright, *Violent Land: Single Men and Social Disorder From the Frontier to the Inner-City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996). Courtwright explains that the real (as opposed to imagined) violence single men have carried out in the past (as well as the present) was the result of lethal combinations of high testosterone, easy access to guns and other weapons, and booze. This concoction, in Courtwright's view, fuelled single men's violence and society's fears of it.
54. Quoted in Laipson, "'I Have No Genius For Marriage,'" 284.
55. See for example, Harry Hendrick, *Images of Youth: Age, Class, and the Male Youth Problem*,

- 1880-1920 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); Stephen Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels? An Oral History of Working-class Childhood and Youth, 1889-1939* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1982); Craig Heron, "Boys Will Be Boys: Working-Class Masculinities in the Age of Mass Production," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 69 (2006): 6-34.
56. David Bright, "The State, the Unemployed, and the Communist Party in Calgary, 1930-1935," *Canadian Historical Review*, 78 no. 4 (1997): 537-565. See also Bill Waiser, *Park Prisoners: The Untold Story of Western Canada's National Parks, 1915-1946* (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1995), 87-88.
57. Resolution Adopted By The Highlands & District Community League To Be Submitted To Edmonton City Council, 7 April 1933, RG 11 Class 160 File 3, Edmonton Archives.
58. Finance Committee Report, 21 December 1929, D500 III 895, Saskatoon Archives.
59. 24 March 1932, RG 11 C 149 F 8, Edmonton Archives.
60. Reports 1931-2 "Unemployment Policy," G8032, Manitoba Archives.
61. Brownlee to Priestley, 28 April 1932, 68.289 (170A), Provincial Archives of Alberta.
62. P.S. White to Mayor Douglas, 22 August 1931, RG 11 Class 150 File 16, Edmonton Archives. See also Cynthia Comacchio, "Dancing to Perdition: Adolescence and Leisure in Interwar English Canada," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 32 no. 3 (Autumn 1997): 5-36.
63. Mayor Underwood to City Clerk, 1069-1522 (2) 13 September 1931, Saskatoon Archives.
64. *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, "Shirkers to Get No Consideration," 4 September 1931.
65. Ibid.
66. *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, "Shirkers Causing Trouble In Ranks Of City Jobless," 10 January 1930.
67. 28 March 1932, G8030, Manitoba Archives.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid.
70. Waiser, *Park Prisoners: The Untold Story of Western Canada's National Parks, 1915-1946*, 48-84.
71. The camp commandant had on file more than 150 forms completed by "professional drifters" from as far away as Halifax, Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary, and Edmonton who had heard the city was opening a camp. All were refused admission.
72. It is not clear exactly how this was meant to be read. The toilets, as some historians have shown in other contexts, could be a place to relax away from the foreman's eyes. It could also be place for illicit sexual liaisons. See, for example, Steven Maynard, "Through a hole in the lavatory wall: Homosexual Subcultures, Police Surveillance, and the Dialectics of Discovery, Toronto, 1890-1930," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5 no. 2 (October 1994): 207-242; Jeffrey Weeks, "Movements of Affirmation: Sexual Meanings and Homosexual Identities," *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History*, Kathy Peiss and Christina Simmons, eds. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 81.
73. Circular letter from Mayor Hair to all new candidates for alderman, 17 November 1930, D 500 III 893, Saskatoon Archives.
74. As of 28 February, 796 single men out of a total 3770 were in the camps. By early March, 835 single men out of a total 3839 were in camps. The number of single men in the camps increased steadily to a high of more than 1000 by April, 1931. The province also opened smaller camps at Barrhead and Ardrossen in early 1931. City Commissioner to Magee, 1 April 1931. RG 11 Class 149 File 2, Edmonton Archives.

75. Council Resolution, 8 April 1931, RG 11 Class 149 File 2, Edmonton Archives.
76. Council Resolution, 8 April 1931, RG 11 Class 149 File 2, Edmonton Archives.
77. Magee to City Commissioner Mitchell, 6 May 1931, RG 11 Class 149 File 3.
78. Circumstances described in James Struthers, *No Fault of their Own*, 51.
79. Relief Officer Magee to City Commissioner Mitchell, 17 June 1931, RG 11 Class 149 File 3, Edmonton Archives.
80. Memo from R. English, Department of Municipal Affairs to Smith, Chairman, Relief Committee, 1 June, 1931, Premier's Papers 68.284, 515 B, Provincial Archives of Alberta. ,
81. See for instance, James Struthers, *No Fault of their Own*, 52-53; See also Bill Waiser, *Park Prisoners: The Untold Story of Western Canada's National Parks, 1915-1946*, 87-88.
82. Memo to Commissioner re: Unemployment Relief, Calgary Meeting, August 19, 1931, RG 11 Class 160 File 1, Edmonton Archives. It is not clear whether the chief engineer meant that Bennett almost (practically) suggested cutting the men from the relief rolls or that Bennett's idea itself was practical. Either way, the effect was the same, making Edmonton officials believe the federal government would take care of single unemployed men in camps.
83. See Bill Waiser, *Park Prisoners: The Untold Story of Western Canada's National Parks, 1915-1946*, 55-84, for an extensive and sensitively drawn account of these operations. The National Park initiatives included relief camps at Waterton Lakes, Elk Island, Jasper, and Banff in Alberta, Prince Albert National Park in Saskatchewan, and Riding Mountain National Park in Manitoba.
84. 24 June 1931, RG 11 C 149 F 4, Edmonton Archives.
85. Memorandum Covering Discussion with Senator Robertson at Ottawa, 25 and 26 August 1931, G 8030 Unemployment 1930-31, Manitoba Archives. If the men remained on the job for three months, Robertson promised, the federal government would pay their way back to the city in the spring.
86. Bill Waiser, *Park Prisoners: The Untold Story of Western Canada's National Parks, 1915-1946*, 58-62.
87. Knott to Bennett, 22 April 1932, 23, Edmonton Archives.
88. Brownlee to Murphy, 6 May 1932, RG 11 Class 149 File 10, Edmonton Archives.
89. Brownlee to Knott, 9 May 1932, RG 11 Class 149 File 10, Edmonton Archives.
90. Knott to Calgary Mayor Davison, 28 May 1932, RG 11 Class 149 File 10, Edmonton Archives.
91. City Commissioner to T.S. Magee, 3 February 1932, RG 11 Class 149, File 7, Edmonton Archives.
92. Harrison to Brownlee, 6 February 1932, 68.289 516 B, Premier's Papers, Provincial Archives of Alberta.
93. McKee to Mitchell, 6 May 1932, RG 11 Class 149 File 10, Edmonton Archives.
94. See, for example, Bill Waiser, *All Hell Can't Stop Us: The On-to-Ottawa Trek and Regina Riot* (Calgary: Fifth House, 2003); Bill Waiser, *Park Prisoners: The Untold Story of Western Canada's National Parks, 1915-1946*.