Introduction

The Great Depression was a decade that seemed to go out of control. Canadians did not consciously shape the events of the Depression; rather, they responded desperately to the seemingly uncontrollable forces that sapped the lifeblood of the nation. As the economy crumbled in the winter of 1929-30, hundreds of thousands of men and women fell out of work and faced a hungry, cold, insecure world. In spite of predictions during 1930 and 1931 that the economy would improve, conditions grew worse. In the cities, an overpowering, impersonal disaster called "unemployment" hit the unskilled workers, the factory employees, the young and the old. Unemployed families could not afford to buy goods. Prices and profits fell. Manufacturing slowed down. Unemployment grew worse. And no one was able to stop the vicious cycle.

As if economic slowdown and severe unemployment were not enough, the prairie farms where Canada's wealth had once grown in the wheat fields, faced the worst droughts, the worst dust storms and the worst grasshopper plagues ever. Year after year farmers planted crops only to see them destroyed before harvest time.

Governments and businesses were unable to cope with the immense proportions of the problem. Welfare programs were stretched well beyond their limits. The poverty problem burst onto the political scene with dramatic protest movements like the On-to-Ottawa Trek. Unhappy with the old political parties, many Canadians involved themselves in new social movements designed to rebuild the nation.

Strange as it may seem, not everyone suffered during the decade of the Depression. Those with a moderate but secure income found that a little money went a long way. For some Canadians, the confidence, optimism, and vigour of the 1920s continued into the 1930s. It was a decade of contrasts. The ultimate contrast exploded into reality in September 1939 when the outbreak of the Second World War speeded economic recovery and ended Canada's preoccupation with itself.

This book documents the frustrations and hopes of those Canadians who faced the Great Depression. The scrapbook format presents a unique assembly of photographs, documents, comments, and explanations which compel the reader to observe, to participate, to locate himself in the Depression. Each page reveals the lives of individuals and lays their feelings, passions, agonies and judgements before the reader. The interplay of photographic and print documents draws the reader into the decade.

to Sandi, Danny and Sally
THE DEPRESSION YEARS:
CANADA IN THE 1930s

PAUL MENNILL
Saunders Secondary School, London

PRENTICE-HALL OF CANADA, LTD., SCARBOROUGH, ONTARIO

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In my younger days crops were good, prices of farm produce reasonably satisfactory, and an air of prosperity and general well-being pervaded the whole province. My father bought a new car, a new tractor, a new grain separator, a new washing machine and a new radio on the installment plan. No one seemed in the least bit worried about the future.

Then came the terrible stock market crash in 1929 and with it a fall in grain prices, which in succeeding years fell to unprecedentedly low levels. Unfortunately for the farmers, while the prices of farm produce grew steadily less, the freight rates and prices of farm machinery, gas and oil, and other farm necessities remained comparatively high. To add to my father’s worries, a series of drought years set in when crops were exceedingly poor, often only averaging eight or ten bushels to the acre. The drought was accompanied by a swarm of grasshoppers which ate the scanty crops we succeeded in producing.

Within a year or so of the stock market crash other effects of the depression began to be felt in our district. Prices of all commodities began to fall, wage cuts became common and fear of unemployment began to affect all of us. Unemployed workers, seeking employment in the cities and in the grain fields, began to drift from one district to another, and transients who “rode the rods” became a familiar sight. Soon the cities were forced to set aside large sums for relief. I remember my mother estimating that during one of the worst years of the depression we must have produced meals for at least a hundred men during the year.

J. A. Irving, The Social Credit Movement in Alberta, pp. 235-236

Some People Lost Everything...

One man, now trying to support a wife and three children on wages that in August average $10.00 to $18.00 for 32 hours, had lost his house, a building lot on which he had invested a 15 year endowment policy and about $800 of savings. Another, unable to support wife and child with wages averaging $9.00 weekly, had used up the whole of the $2,700 he had managed to save during the boom years. Yet another, trying to maintain his mother and unemployed father, reported telephone disconnected and radio repossessed. These are but samples of general conditions—except that we found only a small number of workers who seemed ever so have had insurance. Very few even kept any bank accounts. Living expenses use up their week’s pay only too quickly.

Here and there we would find workers who were still living tolerably despite poor wages. In

Many unemployed men became desperate for work.
Apparently the number of actual evictions for non-payment of rent was small during the first two years of the depression. However, reports from various places during 1932 show a great increase in eviction notices, and many instances of people actually being put out on the street, although in general the social agencies appear to have found it possible to prevent this.

H. M. Candy, Unemployment and Relief in Ontario, p. 244

Conditions were very terrible at Magog during the early thirties. Wheat was 19 cents a bushel; the best pig sold at two dollars each, not two dollars a hundred but each. A number of farmers shipped cattle to market, and were billed back for expenses freight—the cattle didn't pay the cost of freight charges. Hundreds of people in our area were on relief. Mortgages and interest piled up to excessive rates. I had a quarter section with 100 acres irrigated. Irrigation taxes on my 100 acres piled up to $9,000. What was the use of paying any kind of taxes when you had $9,000 against a quarter section? Practically every farmer fell heavily into debt and was also heavily mortgaged.

J. A. Irving, The Social Credit Movement in Alberta, pp. 229-230

FOOD PRICES IN 1932 IN WINNIPEG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
<th>1932 Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bread</td>
<td>44 lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butter</td>
<td>154 lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>156 lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamburger</td>
<td>84 lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>64 q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peanut Butter</td>
<td>208 lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>300-400 per 100 lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roast Beef</td>
<td>126 lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sausage</td>
<td>74 lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>54 lb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

J. H. Gray, The Winter Thread, p. 146

INCOMES in 1931

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of Income</th>
<th>Number of Persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under $1,000</td>
<td>1,226,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,000-$1,500</td>
<td>640,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,500-$5,000</td>
<td>440,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$5,000-$10,000</td>
<td>85,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,000 &amp; over</td>
<td>11,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,712,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F. R. Scott, Canada To-day, p. 36

Teachers' salaries were drastically reduced. My salary was cut from $1,000.00 to $500.00 over a period of years. The number of unemployed teachers rose and salaries even in the most prosperous areas were not more than $500.00 or $700.00. J. A. Irving, The Social Credit Movement in Alberta, p. 225

NOT EVERYONE SUFFERED...

Some Canadians lived well in the 1930s. Prices were very low. By 1933 it took only $1 to buy goods worth $4 in 1928. With bread at about a nickel a loaf, hamburgh a dime a pound, a good dinner costing about a dollar, tinned brick homes on the market at $4,000 and less, and sterling market in servants at four or five dollars a day and families whose head worked steadily at decent wages, say $30-$40 a week, got through the decade rather pleasantly. In fact the average factory worker who kept his job in the 1930s enjoyed a slight increase in his standard of living (through his wages dropped, they did not fall as fast as the cost of living), and the full-time Dominion civil servant actually saw his standard of living rise by 25 per cent between 1926 and 1933. For a few people it was a time to make up the ground lost in inflation in the 1920s, buy that first automobile, hire a cleaning lady one day a week to run the new vacuum cleaner and electric washing-machine, take holidays, and relax in the evenings around the radio. They were the lucky Canadians.

J. M. Grierson and M. Bliss, The Wretched of Canada, p. 21

A MOTHER WRITES TO PRIME MINISTER BENNETT FOR HELP, 1933:

Toronto, Ont.

I am writing to you because I am in desperate straits. I am not a beggar nor am I a person of nerve, but I am about to lose my home. I have paid $3300.00 in it and now the mortgage company will foreclose unless I can pay up all that is owing this month. I have three sons, aged 17, 19 and 21, all so willing and anxious to work but can get absolutely nothing at all to do to earn a dollar, they have tried to get in the Camps but have been refused because they have a home in the city, or because they were unfortunate enough to be born in Toronto. I was born in Nova Scotia but have lived here over twenty five years. Yet I must lose all, is there no way, is there not anything that can be done. I am told that I am only one in thousands, does that better my position any? I am forty seven years old and have worked hard for everything I ever had, and it is hard to see it go now.

Mr. Bennett, I believe you to be a good as well as a great man, therefore I am appealing to you to help me save my home. Picture yourself, through no fault of your own, homeless, with sons willing but unable to provide for you.

Mr. Bennett, could you help me by loan of five hundred dollars. I know times will be better as I realize you are striving toward that thing as best you can and your great efforts will bring success, but my need is now.

Please help me or what can I do. Bennett Papers -

The winter of 1932 was grim and tough. Eggs were five cents a dozen; hogs two cents a pound; cattle around five or six cents a pound. There was great pressure put on by creditors to collect debts for land and machinery. The situation grew desperate in 1933. Evictions for non-payment of debts began to take place. I had to go out north of ________ to give a family the bad news that they be evicted immediately. On this farm a man and his wife, three or four children, and a bed-ridden mother-in-law lived in an old shack. I had to tell that middle-aged man and his fragile wife, "My instructions are to put you on the road allowance at once." Another time I had to seize all a man's furniture. This man lived in a poor shack on a farm with his wife and children. He owed money for the furniture which he had in his possession. I was ordered to take his furniture away from him. The furniture was removed. J. A. Irving, The Social Credit Movement in Alberta, pp. 238-239
TORONTO, 29 OCTOBER, 1929

Stock Prices Crash Early!

MILLIONS OF SHARES VALUED IN BILLIONS SOLD IN STOCK BREAK

Prices came tumbling down in the greatest crash of all at the opening of the stock markets today and what took hours to accomplish on Thursday was accomplished in minutes this afternoon.

Thursday's crash has been described as the worst in history, but this performance was put into the shade in the first half hour today.

Almost every stock market today saw the well-known stocks of a well-known company drop to the floor, but the performance was put into the shade in the first half hour today.

All markets were swamped with selling orders and where the bell rang to start trading, there was a mad rush to get out at all costs.

Prices didn't mean a thing and eyes were shut to values in the wildest scramble to get out of the market the exchanges have ever witnessed.

There was the case of a customer who held a 15% share block of a well-known stock. The quotation showed that it was dropping and at the same time, it stood at 56. The holder had suffered a $3,500 loss up to that time and in despair ordered his broker to sell. In the meantime in which it took to get a phone connection and give selling instructions, the stock had dropped another two points.

The small speculator unable to put up additional funds were the chief losers. Many of these young clerks and salaried men with a few hundred dollars for speculation purposes. They were in large part responsible for the frantic unloading when savings were gone and they were unable to raise more.

White-faced and distraught and with nerves at breaking point, these youngsters saw their money swept away as they stood helplessly by. One young fellow who had been left $6,000 by his aunt and had bought several parcels of stock had his newly gilded funds were caught in the panic and thrown everywhere overboard. He lost two-thirds of his inheritance without the quiver of an eyelash.

Losses have been enormous and fortunes wiped out overnight. Individuals who were rated millionaires one day are as poor as paupers today. An estimate of the losses suffered is next to impossible. The situation in New York of listed and unlisted securities in the past five weeks is estimated at $22,000,000.

Sixteen corporations having their securities listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange have had $1,100,000,000 topped off valuations from the high for 1929 and the decline in the same issues on Monday was close to $300,000,000 alone, or at the rate of almost $1,000,000 a minute.

Toronto Daily Star, 29 Oct. 1929

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**Scene of the Toronto Stock Market Crash**

**Sample of Decline in Stock Values from High Point of 1929 to Low Point of 1932**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1929</th>
<th>1932</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High</strong></td>
<td><strong>Market Value</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bell Telephone</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazilian Tobacco</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA Oil</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada Cement</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada Packers</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPR</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumers' Gas</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duffel-Stearns</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominion Bridge</td>
<td>117%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominion Stores</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford of Canada</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton Bridge</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperial Oil</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Nickel</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massey-Harris</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noranda Mines</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power Corp</td>
<td>139%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherwin-Williams</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steel Co. Canada</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winnipeg Electric</td>
<td>198%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sample Operating Profits 1930, 1932**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1930</th>
<th>1932</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Profits</td>
<td>Profits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,000,000</td>
<td>$1,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bell Telephone: 413.6 (gros) 292.5
Brazilian Tobacco: 464.9 (gros) 43.7
BA Oil: 519 (gros) 26.4
Canada Cement: 102 (gros) 7.3
Canada Packers: 1,009.9 (gros) 1,239.4
CPR: 21.1
Consumers' Gas: 22.3
Duffel-Stearns: 38.2
Dominion Bridge: 15.3
Dominion Stores: 24.1
Ford of Canada: 23.0
Hamilton Bridge: 171.7
Imperial Oil: 1.8
International Nickel: 167.1
Massey-Harris: 17.8
Noranda Mines: 6.1
Power Corp: 9.9
Sherwin-Williams: 7
Steel Co. Canada: 18.2
Winnipeg Electric: 20.9

Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs, 1932, pp. 637-641
NOMY COLLAPSES!

Unemployment among teachers became so acute that all sorts of methods were adopted to solve the problem...
It became common to find people returning furniture, radios, and other articles bought on the installment plan. In 1932 or 1933 farm foreclosures on crop mortgages became quite frequent.

J. A. Irving, The Social Credit Movement in Alberta, p. 235

The total annual marketed value of all fish landed in the Eastern Division of the Department of Fisheries, comprising the provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island and the Magdalen Islands of Quebec for the past eight years was as follows:

1936 .................................................. 519,823,557
1927 .................................................. 17,380,316
1928 .................................................. 10,524,697
1929 .................................................. 19,334,631
1930 .................................................. 17,026,070
1931 .................................................. 13,689,834
1932 .................................................. 10,914,306
1933 .................................................. 10,364,674

Bread Commission on Price Spreads and Meat Buying, 1937, p. 159

Why Did It Happen?

The Economists Say....

“The Canadian economy depended very heavily on selling Canadian goods to other nations. When the Depression hit, those other nations stopped buying. It also caused the prices of Canadian goods to fall to low levels, and the whole economy suffered badly.”

“After the very successful wheat crops of 1928, there was a surplus of foodstuffs in the world. No-one wanted to buy Canadian wheat.”

“By the late 1920s, Canada’s primary industries were reaching a limit to their development. But they kept on producing anyway. In 1928-1929, Canada produced more pulp and paper, more metals, and more automobiles than could possibly be purchased.”

“The world-wide effects of World War I were being fully felt. The war debts and the reparations payments owed by the defeated nations had severely shaken the world financial system.”

“The late 1920s was a period of too much speculation and credit expansion, especially in the U.S.A. Investors were allowed to buy huge quantities of stock on credit (margins). The result was highly inflated values and prices. When people lost confidence in the system, the whole bubble burst.”

“When the U.S.A. found that its money had tightened up, there was no more capital to invest in Canadian industries.”

“When manufacturers found that they had more goods than could be bought, they laid off workers. Unemployed workers lost their source of income and had no money to purchase goods. This caused manufacturers to lay off more workers. Once begun, the cycle was almost impossible to stop.”

The Hoboes Said....

“We wisely listened to each others views on depression. It’s due to tariffs, to immigration, the price of wheat, the U.S.A., Russia, war, their “big-bugs”, religion, the “bohunks”. Nothing but war will bring back prosperity; no cancellation of war debts; no socialism; no God;—let’s have the good old days; scrap machinery, to hell with motor cars, deport the Reds, deport the “bohunks”...”

Saskatchewan Worker, Spring, 1941, pp. 87-88
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Montreal Cost Approx.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>13 gals.</td>
<td>$1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
<td>2 bush. 6 lbs.</td>
<td>$1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>25 lbs.</td>
<td>$2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrots of Turnips</td>
<td>4 lbs.</td>
<td>$0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabbage</td>
<td>2 lbs.</td>
<td>$0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onions</td>
<td>2 lbs.</td>
<td>$0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dried Beets</td>
<td>1 lb.</td>
<td>$0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dried Peas</td>
<td>1 lb.</td>
<td>$0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peas or Figs</td>
<td>1 lb.</td>
<td>$0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown Bread</td>
<td>10 leaves, 240 ir.</td>
<td>$0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolled Oats or Cracked Wheat</td>
<td>1 lb.</td>
<td>$0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastry</td>
<td>2 lbs.</td>
<td>$0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice or Barley</td>
<td>2 lbs.</td>
<td>$0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese</td>
<td>1 lb.</td>
<td>$0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chick Roast</td>
<td>3/4 lbs.</td>
<td>$0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef or Pork Liver</td>
<td>1 lb.</td>
<td>$0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butter</td>
<td>1 lb.</td>
<td>$0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pea Nut Butter</td>
<td>1/2 lb.</td>
<td>$0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrimplings</td>
<td>1 lb.</td>
<td>$0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molasses</td>
<td>1 lb.</td>
<td>$1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>2 lbs.</td>
<td>$4.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MONTEAL RELIEF OFFICIALS GIVE ONE WEEK'S FOOD ALLOWANCE AND SUGGEST MENU FOR A FAMILY OF FIVE, 1932:**

**Breakfast**
- Rolled Oats or Cracked Wheat
- Molasses
- Bread and Butter
- Milk

**Dinner**
- Chuck Roast
- Baked Potato
- Turnip
- Prunes

**Soup**
- Rolled Oats or Cracked Wheat
- Molasses
- Bread and Butter
- Milk

**Sunday**
- Rolled Oats or Cracked Wheat
- Molasses
- Bread and Butter
- Milk
- Chopped Raw Cabbage
- Grated Raw Carrot
- Cheese Sauce on Toast
- Hot Water Gingerbread

**Monday**
- Rolled Oats or Cracked Wheat
- Molasses
- Bread and Butter
- Milk
- Scalloped Rice with Cheese
- Bread and Butter

**Tuesday**
- Rolled Oats or Cracked Wheat
- Molasses
- Bread and Butter
- Milk
- Rolled Oats or Cracked Wheat
- Molasses
- Bread and Butter
- Milk
- Scalloped Rice with Cheese
- Bread and Butter

**Wednesday**
- Rolled Oats or Cracked Wheat
- Molasses
- Bread and Butter
- Milk
- Carrots and Onions
- Creamed Tomato Soup
- Baking Powder Biscuits

**Thursday**
- Rolled Oats or Cracked Wheat
- Molasses
- Bread and Butter
- Milk
- Carrots and Onions
- Creamed Bean Soup
- Baking Powder Biscuits

**Friday**
- Rolled Oats or Cracked Wheat
- Molasses
- Bread and Butter
- Milk
- Scalloped Princes
- Split Pea Soup
- or
- Creamed Bean Soup
- Prunes

**Saturday**
- Rolled Oats or Cracked Wheat
- Molasses
- Bread and Butter
- Milk
- Scotch Soup
- (made with Rolled Oats or Molasses)
- Onions, Prunes, Tomato
- Cabbage with Cheese
- Sauce
- Bread and Peanut
- Butter
- Milk

**Great numbers of people have moved to poorer quarters, or have "doubled up" with friends or relatives as a means of economizing...**

**The problem of eviction notices has now become most serious in many communities, and relief organizations, with inadequate allowances for rents, are hard pressed to keep roofs over the heads of their clients...**

**A notable instance of deterioration in housing standards brought on by inability of tenants to pay rent and inadequate arrangements for rent relief has occurred in York Township, where during the present summer a tent colony has been set up in a public park to shelter a considerable number of evicted families. H. M. Connolly, Unemployment and Relief in Ontario, pp. 244-245**
The housing situation has also been acute among single men. Last summer hundreds of men in Toronto had no place of abode and slept out-of-doors. One morning at 4 a.m. the writer counted about 60 men lying on the grass, usually with newspapers wrapped around them, in one small park in the downtown section of the city. At the time civic relief officials estimated that nearly 1,000 men were sleeping out-of-doors or in makeshift shelters. Several hundred of them were encamped in a "jungle" at the Don Valley, where they had taken possession of brick kilns that were not being used or of box cars lying on the railway tracks, or had made themselves rude shelters from sheet iron, lumber or canvas they had picked up. Other cities also had jungle encampments of the sort.

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LETTERS TO PRIME MINISTER BENNETT:

Lambert, Sask., 1934

"... I have three children 2 of School age, one boy is going to School. Some days he can't get to school as we have no food in the house & I won't let him go those days. He has one Suit of under wear one pair overalls one pair sock's one pair mocassin rubber & that all the clothes he has, not even a top shirt or a pair of trousers & the girl she can't get to school as she hasn't proper clothing to go with & the little boy five years of age is in bad need of clothing. Mr. Warden has a job & the Seven Sisters poor house construction job was completed & I'll tell you were had a hard struggle ever since ... we are living in a shack two rooms a bed room just enough room for two beds & the house is cold there's two inches of Ice freezes on the water in the house cold nights we are shivering in bed at night we have no mattresses on our beds, only gunny Sacks & not enough blankets on our beds. Mr. Warden has no under wear no top shirts no Socks only rags on his feet no trousers only overalls & they are done for, boots are near don my Self I have no house dress & no wash tub & when I tell Mayor Yeal those thing's he says why don't you go back to Manitoba where you came from ... there are times we live on potatoes for days at a time & its lasting So long I don't see how much longer it can last all I have in the house now is potatoes & there are good men people the same in this town I am five months pregnant & I haven't even felt life yet to my baby & its I feel quite sure for the lack of food."

Bennett Papers

Angiers, P.Q., 1935

"... I am the wife of a return soldier who has served 4 years overseas under the Canadian army and I am the mother of 5 children living. On the 6 of Jan 1934 I took very sick as I was in a family way suffering from so many disease I started to lose my eyesight. And which the Doctor told my husband it was through weakness. So finally in the 16 of Jan when my baby Girl was born I was in real darkness I wasn't able to see no one around my bed. And I stayed in bed 3 month Jan Feb & March without no treatment whatever because my husband was without work and which he has been for several years. So the first part of April I started to get up for the first time. On which I wasn't able to see nothing with very little food in the house & 6 children it was very hard for me to get better so on the 11 of June my baby get a bad cold & she died ... we had no money to get even a Doctor. So I half blind & losing a child made it worse for my health. So about the month of Aug it was a Doctor in town so my husband brought him home to examine my eyes. So he told me that he could not do me nothing whatever I have to go through an eye specialist. And which I have no money to procure to the destination which it will be to Toronto or Ottawa so please have mercy on me as I'm only a young mother age 22 and the condition I am cannot attend to my housework."

Bennett Papers
FRIENDSHIP?

I worked in this little store on Bloor Street West. A little store but my boss had a good neighborhood business, vegetables, canned goods. Well, it was just a little store like there were hundreds in Toronto. A family store.

I opened up at eight because somebody had to be there for the first delivery, bread, vegetables, and I stayed till six at night and I got $7 a week which amazed me all right and the owner would let me take home vegetables and things he knew he couldn't sell that day. It wasn't much but my sister was with me and we had no job. We came from Timmins. So every bit helped and we got by. The room was $6 a month that we lived in.

This girl I went to school with in Timmins, Edith, she looked me up and used to come around to the store sometimes or up to the room to eat. She didn't have a job. Edith and I went girls friends that I'd known her since I was a kid. Yes, she could say we were good friends.

One Saturday afternoon the owner, this Italian, he asked me if I would work for $5 a week and I said I was supporting my sister so how could I. I wasn't paid. I told him. Won't my work good? I didn't steal from him. So he said he was sorry but he had to let me go and there I was, two hour I've got a job and the next minute, and without actually saying I wouldn't take the $5 out of a 30 cent cut, I was out.

I went back Tuesday to get some things I'd left in the backroom, and guess who was cleaning behind the counter? Sure. You don't have to guess too hard. My friend, my wonderful friend Edith. She'd gone around behind my back and told Alfred, the store owner, she'd work for $5. That happened a lot in those days. When it was between friendship and a job. Friendship just went out the window. It was four months before I got another job.

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in the town of Sydney and the mining towns... there are approximately 1,500 young men between the ages of 18 and 23 who are unemployed and never as yet have had work. Sydney and Glace Bay each have 400 and 500; Sydney Mines and North Sydney each 200 and another 2 or 3 hundred divided between New Waterford and Dominion. These young men are living with their parents who in practically every instance are receiving inadequate wages and in many cases the parents drawing direct relief. This is a condition which should be rectified if at all possible.

Bennett Papers

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OUT OF WORK!
The first effect of unemployment upon the worker, of course, is to strike at any savings he may have accumulated. Another result of unemployment is to make impossible payments upon houses, furniture or other goods being bought on the installment plan.

When the savings of the unemployed family are depleted, or when there are no savings of any amount to draw upon at the beginning of the unemployment period which is probably characteristic of the majority of working-class households, debts begin to pile up with landlords, butchers, grocers, bakers, doctors, and others. Rent, since it is one of the heaviest items of the budget and one which can be left unpaid more easily than others, is particularly liable to fall in arrears.

J. S. WOODSWORTH: How do we actually deal with the large number of people who are today unemployed? May I point out that there is a certain class of them whom we are simply getting rid of. Out of a grand total of deportations for the past year and a half of some 15,368, there were 9,446 who were deported simply because they had become public charges. I am not holding the government altogether responsible for this action because I know that there has been a good deal of pressure on the part of municipalities to have these people deported, but it is not fair that when we have invited immigrants to come here to this country, people who very often have broken up their homes and given up jobs in the old land, having sworn themselves loose to come here, expecting to find the opportunities which were promised to them, we do not let them the position and then would be able to work, simply send them back to the countries from which they came. I do not think it is at all fair. In this land of plenty we should have assumed our obligations to care for them.

A LETTER TO PRIME MINISTER BENNETT:

Hamilton, Ontario 1934

Dear Sir:

I am writing you as a last resource to see if I cannot, through your aid, obtain a position and at last, after a period of more than two years, support myself and enjoy again a little independence.

The fact is: this day I am faced with starvation and I see no possible means of counteracting or even averting it temporarily.

I have received a high-school and business-college education and I have had experience as a Librarian. My business career has been limited to Insurance, Hosier, and Public Stereography, each time in the capacity of Bookkeeper and Stereographer briefly, General Office work.

When the Sanderson-Marwick Co., Ltd., went out of business I had saved a little money and there being no work there for me I came to Hamilton. Since then I have applied for every position that I heard about but there were too many girls who applied that it was impossible to get work. So time went on and my clothing became very shabby. I was afraid to spend the little little I had to replenish my wardrobe. Always the fear was before me that I would fail to get the position and then I would be without food and a roof over my head in a short time. Many prospective employers just glared at my attire and shook their heads and more times than I care to mention I was turned away without a trial. I began to cut down on my food and I obtained a poor, but respectable, room at $1 per week.

First I ate three very light meals a day; then two and then one. During the past two weeks I have eaten only toast and drank a cup of tea every other day. In the past fortnight I have lost 20 pounds and the result of this deprivation is that I am so very nervous that I could never stand a test along with one, two and three hundred girls. Through this very nervousness I was ruled out of a class yesterday. Today I went to an office for an examination and the examiner just looked me over and said: "I am afraid Miss, you are so awfully shabby I could never have you in my office."

Day after day I pass a delicatessen and the food in the window looks oh, so good! So tempting and I'm so hungry!

Yet I am very hungry and the stamp which carries this letter to you will represent the last three cents I have in this world, yet before I will stoop to dishearten my family, my character or my God I will drown myself in the Lake. However, I do not hint that I have the slightest intention of doing this for I am confident that you will either be able to help me find employment or God will come to my aid.

But in the meantime my clothing is getting shabbier and I am faced with the prospect of wearing the same heavy winter dress, that has covered me all winter, during the coming summer.

"Oh please sir, can you do something for me? Can you get me a job anywhere in the Dominion of Canada? I have not had to go on relief during this depression but I cannot get relief even here. Moreover it is a job I want and as long as I get enough to live I shall be happy again. I have tried to get work at anything and everything from housework up but I have been unsuccessful and now I am going to starve and in debt to my landlady. I wouldn't mind if I could just lay down and die but to starve, oh its terrible to think about."
Relief Payments Were Never In Cash

In all Ontario cities for which information is available, relief has been issued in kind or in orders for goods rather than in cash.

Generally the grocery orders which authorized relief recipients to obtain foodstuffs from retail stores were good only for specified items, staple articles such as flour, lard, salt, sugar, rolled oats, butter, stewing meat, potatoes, turnips and soap. The purpose of specifying the articles that could be purchased was, of course, to prevent families on relief from spending their allowances upon luxury foodstuffs. In some places families were left to obtain bread and milk from retail stores with their grocery orders, as they pleased, while in others there were separate arrangements for the distribution of bread and milk. Some cities issued orders for bakeries and dairies which could be exchanged for bread and milk tickets, and others gave out the tickets at their relief offices. Practice also varied with respect to fuel, the most common method being to issue orders for a given amount of fuel which relief recipients could present to the dealers of their choice.

H. M. Cassidy, Unemployment and Relief in Ontario, pp. 189-190

The married unemployed had to bring their gassy sacks or some kind of container to a building behind the Daily Province building where they had lined up to receive such goods as beans, macaroni, sugar, meat, soup bones, and so on. It was called by the unemployed the "Gunny Sack Parade" and was a humiliating experience.

People came from every part of the city to this one distributing centre, having to wait for hours in long line ups, then two hours, sometimes three miles, the food ration based scientifically on enough calories to keep one alive. There was a campaign going on to have this system for the married people abolished and a system of cash or scrip established.

R. Lovece, Unemployment in the 1930's in Ottawa Park, pp. 16-17

The X family of four persons—a man and his wife and two children—came to Vancouver from a prairie town in 1936, partly because the husband, a skilled tradesman, had lost his job and partly because they were determined to move in the interest of the wife's health. Although they had a fair amount of money on arrival, the husband was unable to find work and they were compelled to apply for relief within six months. Relief was refused, but they were offered transportation back to the town from which they had moved. A Vancouver doctor advised that the wife was not in fit condition to be returned and Mr. X was informed by letter from the authorities of his former home town that he would not be eligible for relief there. The man then refused to return to the prairie and relief was eventually given to him.

L. Richter, Canada's Unemployment Problem, p. 212

FINDINGS OF AN ONTARIO STUDY ON RELIEF 1932:
The chief concern of the relief offices has been to supply destitute families with food and fuel. . . Most of the cities did not issue new clothing, but a number arranged for the distribution of second-hand clothing that was donated, . . . the value of food orders for a family of five varied from $3.50 to $8.50 weekly in eleven cities. This is one of the clearest indications of variation in relief policy from place to place that can be pointed out. Certainly it would appear that if a $3.50 order was sufficient for a family in one Ontario town an order of $8.50 must have been more than enough elsewhere. Or if the large order was necessary to provide destitute families with sufficient food the smaller order was far too low. . . the minimum retail cost of adequate food orders in some Ontario cities can scarcely be lower than $6.00 or $7.00 per week for a family of five. . . it would appear that the minimum cost of food and maintenance for a family of this size must be at least $65 or $75 per month in most Ontario towns and cities. In view of the fact that the scale of public relief that was issued did not approach this level in any of the cities that were studied, it appears that dependent families which were entirely lacking in private resources must have been compelled to obtain supplementary assistance or to endure such privations as would lead to deterioration in health, morale and efficiency.

H. M. Cassidy, Unemployment and Relief in Ontario, pp. 180-181

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DOLE

The "Moving of Dirt"

The nature of the works undertaken by the municipalities to provide employment was very much alike in most places. First in importance came sewers, water mains and trench-digging jobs, and then street and highway grading. In addition there were some park improvement and flood prevention works. One of the leading regulations of the governments in giving out grants was that they should be expended upon works that would require a high proportion of expenditure on labour.

All of these jobs involved the "moving of dirt" in large quantities, work that could be done by men without special training, although, in the case of the unemployed, armed with picks and shovels, were commissarised.

H. M. Cassity, Unemployment and Relief in Ontario, p. 133

LETTERS TO PRIME MINISTER BENNETT:

Upsalquitch, N.B., 1934
Dear Sir as I'm a widow and have five children I have to recourse to you I try everything regarding the Parish relief and it is impossible for me to live with what they gave me I suffer with hunger cold etc. I listen to this I have a great confidence to you after God you are the only one who can help me, in the month of January they gave me $3.00 to live 6 persons I don't know how I could give my children three meals a day with so small quantity. I will tell you we are suffering and a great many Upsalquitch I think I have more right than anybody else to complain as I am a widow and I have an awful trouble for the wood.

My husband is dead a year ago he took is death in the Dalhousie Jail or Prison they put him in for an account of $29 and he took a lung inflammation he ask for the doctor and they told him it was not an hospital the prison was wet on account of having washed in and he slept in that state I went to a lawyer told me if I had the money I will have my right but I was too poor to go with that in a process I wrote to the Provincial Government without any Success I hope that you will understand and help me I don't think it a reason to lot your voters die because they are poor a great many are Intelligent people and dies in distress.

Dear Sir, a great many people here understand your Wisdom I am one who respect you and hope you in remain yours in noble am in confidence Bennett Papers

Ferguson, N.B., 1933
Dear Sir,
The respectable people of this country are fed up on feeding the bums for that is all they can be called now. This "free" relief (free to the bums) has done more harm than we are altogether aware of. The cry of those who get it is "Bennett says he won't let anyone starve". They don't consider the people (many poorer then themselves but with more spunk) have to foot the bill. The regulations (which are only a poor guide after all) were too loose from the start and could be and were easily side stepped many times.

Getting relief has become such a habit that the majority think only of how to get it regularly instead of trying to do without once in a while. Nearly all of them have dogs too which are fed by the country and are of no practical use. One family near me has three and another has two and others and 1 and I know it is the same everywhere. I also know that food enough to keep one dog will keep at least four hens and keep them laying. The family that has the three dogs ate at least 350 pounds of meat from the second week in November until the first part of March. There are the parents, two 10 years old and four children from one year to eight. Who but the dogs get a good share of that Also dogs everywhere are chasing and catching deer but if a man tries to get one for the family he is either fined or jailed if found out.

Bennett Papers
This day I walked in, and in the kitchen I heard the most terrible fight. Screaming. Yelling. This is what it was. They were on the dole, money from the county and that was the most terrible and humiliating experience. My friend’s father had done the shopping and he had bought a package of tobacco. Ten cents. That was the argument. How dare he buy tobacco! The money should have gone for something else. Yell, scream, curse. To young and quiet little me, this was horrifying. Two people I loved in such a terrible fight over 10 cents.

Finally the father yelled, “Okay, I’ll never buy tobacco again as long as I live, but I won’t buy tea either! Not even a dime’s worth.”

That ended the argument right there. You see, she was a woman who loved tea, to sit at the table in the living room and sip tea and read, or gossip with a friend or just to contemplate the day, or her life, or tomorrow. He was telling her she’d have to give that up.

Oh, it is a small story, I imagine, and not very interesting, but here were two lovely people at each other’s throats. Their nerves must have been worn raw. They must have been near the breaking point, trying to live on the few cents a day they were given and to keep up a front, keep up a facade of being one of the town’s important families.

If he couldn’t have his beloved tobacco, then she couldn’t have her beloved tea. How sad, and yet that’s what the Depression must have been like for so many people.

B. Brodhead, Ten Lost Years, p. 189

Mr. T. Tikarski rescues sleeping family from burning Toronto house, 6 April 1932

[The Depression has caused] the lowered morale and broken spirits of the unemployed. As a group they are discontented and unsettled in mind. Many have lost confidence in themselves, have lost their feeling of self respect, have developed bitterness towards established institutions, and are living in hopeless despair. In addition, the fact of existing on relief appears to have developed pauper attitudes in substantial numbers of working people. Practically all of the relief officers and social workers who were consulted in the course of this study commented upon the remarkable growth of dependent attitudes. The doling out of relief, it was said, was having a definite pauperizing effect. Fears were expressed by a number of relief officers and social workers regarding the effect of relief upon young children. It was said that in many instances parents were falling into the habit of sending the children to the relief office or the social agency to ask—or demand—food, clothing or other assistance; and it was felt that this experience of getting something for nothing was a very bad one for the children.

H. M. Cosway, Unemployment and Relief in Ontario, p. 223

TO MARRY, OR NOT TO MARRY?

...young people who would normally marry and have children have been forced to give up plans of this nature, at least for the time being. In the nature of things this involves a certain amount of mental stress and strain, which is far from wholesome...

Many working-class housewives, in order to obtain some ready cash, have taken in boarders or roomers, a practice which frequently involves serious overcrowding in the home...

Particularly serious is the problem of the boy or girl of 16 or 17 who has left school and who would normally be at work but who is unable to find a job. Such young people have nothing to do with themselves, have no money, and are denied the ordinary opportunities of taking part in various recreations and amusements. In consequence, it is easy for them to develop bad habits. Moreover, they quite naturally (if unjustly) come to feel resentment against their parents who are unable to supply them with money and clothes; and against conditions in general, which deny them an opportunity of earning wages which would bring them in the things which they desire.

H. M. Cosway, Unemployment and Relief in Ontario, pp. 250-251

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<td>1927</td>
<td>63,885</td>
<td>1936</td>
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L. Richter, Canada’s Unemployment Problem, p. 141
In addition to all this government provision we have had much direct relief (thanks to the United Church in Ontario) for which no repayment is asked. Rev. T. worked like a Trojan in this distribution, opening a store in the old presbyterian church. The church at Brussels, Ontario, sent us a car of mixed fruit and vegetables, 57,000 pounds of it in all, apples, potatoes, beets, carrots, onions, cabbage... There was quite a quantity of beautiful preserved fruit... Clothing, mostly second hand, but all good, was also received in immense bales and T, personally handed out every garment. He told me that he had given out 2,430 articles, ranging from fur coats to baby's diapers. There were a number of good fur coats both men's and women's—and much new underwear, donated. T told me he was very much tempted to grab off a coat for himself which drew my attention to the fact that he did need one badly so I gave him father's old "Goon Coat"...

The United Church surely responded nobly—particularly from Ontario. Over 130 car loads of fruit and vegetables donated to Sask. and the railways transported all free.

M. Hene, The Dirty Thieves, p. 99

**A WASTED YOUTH?**

As the nights got colder I would build a fire in the fireplace and let the kitchen stove go out. Then I'd pull up my old Boer War rocking chair and sit watching the fire while the cat snoozed at my feet. Sitting there watching the flames, I thought of the future and wondered what it held for me. The economy was in a turmoil and the struggle for, mostly uppermost in everybody's mind. If you didn't work you went short on groceries. Unemployment Insurance benefits were not even in embryo then. The big question that confronted young single fellows was how to make a buck. I had quite a lot of grub in my cupboards, no rent to pay and my land taxes were payable in the far distant future. Living this kind of life was ideal for an elderly person with an income, but too serene and placid for me.

J. B. Vought, The Wandering Years, p. 149

My whole life has been spent in my native town and for more than fifty years I have been connected with the coal and steel activities at New Glasgow and Trenton (Nova Scotia), during all that time I have never seen the situation to change as it is at the present time.... There is a great deal more distress here than we have ever known. My house is heated from door, back door and side door from early in the morning to long past the dewey eve. A couple of evenings ago I had a visit from three different women who have boys between the ages of six, ten and twenty years without employment and who are absolutely destitute. My daughter... has given away all the spare clothes we have and I find myself reduced to one pair of trousers and two pairs of shoes.

Bennett Papers

**LETTERS TO PRIME MINISTER BENNETT:**

Harney, Saskatchewan
Dear Mr. Bennett,
I just thought I would write to you because I thought you would write Santa for me and tell him I was a good girl all the time. And Mama tells me her and Daddy has no money to give Santa for my little brother and me and we cant hang up our stockings. Would you send me some money and I will send it to him or do you think Mr. Bennett he would forget Bracy and me? I hope he don't wish you write and tell him Im here and Im till be so good, but if Daddy has no money to give him he cant come. Will you write and tell me if you wrote to Santa.

Bennett Papers

Winnipeg, Manitoba
Dear Sir:
Sometime ago I wrote a letter to you appealing for help or employment.
It is now forty months since I had the pleasure of a pay check.
My family, are all undernourished, ill clothed and ill sheltered and are in need of Medical Assistance.
How long do you think we can carry on under these circumstances.
You stated that there would be no one starving in Canada I presume you meant not starve over night but slowly out family amongst thousands of others are doing the same slowly and slowly.
Possibly you have never felt the Pangs of a Wolf. Well become a Father have children then have them come to you asking for a slice of bread between meals and have to tell them to wait. Wait until five of humanitys humans sleep all in one room no larger than nine square feet with one window in it....
I do not believe I am crazy but am reaching the breaking point.
My body, my muscles, my brain are like staled wood crumbling under this strain. Through the lack of illness.
I have knowledge of Electrical work—Chafftyes—Sailor Telephone and Telegraph work.
For God's sake please make a personal effort to assist me toward a brighter outlook immediately.
Bennett Papers
I could go about 10 feet beyond the house fence and pick up a cloud of dirt, as big as this fist. I'd lay it on my hand and you could see the wind picking at it. Pick, pick, pick. Something awful about it. The dry dust would just float away, like smoke. Like twisting smoke from that piece of land. If I tightened my grip, if I squeezed and crumbled her, then it would blow faster and right before your eyes in a few minutes that hank of dry dirt would just blow away, even the bits of dust which collected into the wrinkles of your hand. I used to say the wind would polish your hand shiny if you left it out long enough. B. Broadbent, The Lost Years, p. 38.

The land had reached the point where it had been worked and worked and harrowed and ploughed so much that it was very fine. There was nothing to hold it and it just picked up and blew across the countryside. You look out and see this great cloud of dust coming and then you're in it and you can hardly see twenty feet ahead. The grit gets into your nose and mouth and into the houses, drifting in under the doors and windows. By 1936 the sky in Moose Jaw and Regina had a permanent overcast and the sidewalks were gritty with dust under your feet.

1. Phillips, How the Depression Hit the West, p. 27.

**THE WEATHER IN THE DECADE OF “THE DUST BOWL”**

1930 - Blizzard and bitter cold in winter (30°F in Calgary).
1931 - Lack of snow causes drought in spring; dust storms begin; summer hot and dry; crops fail in Palliser Triangle.
1932 - Worst grasshopper plague in 50 years hits Manitoba.
1933 to 1935 - Very severe winters; drought in summers; crops destroyed.
1936 - Winter cold reaches -50°F in Edmonton; many cattle frozen to death; prolonged summer heat reaches 108°F in Winnipeg; great fields with.
1937 - Worst year ever in the Palliser Triangle: cold, snowless winter; lack of rain in spring and summer causes worst dust storms; prolonged summer heat reaches 108°F in Regina.
1938 - Good spring weather followed by summertime heat and worst grasshopper blizzards ever; crops destroyed.
1939 - Return to normal.

**DROUGHT...**

**SASKATCHEWAN WHEAT PRODUCTION**

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<th>Yield</th>
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J. W. Gray, Men Against the Storm, p. 56.
As the depression years hit us we found that good crops only meant more work and not necessarily prosperity. Prosperity, we found, was dependent on "price." By bitter experience we learned that even if we raised No. 2 wheat, top steers, special grade cream and prize-winning hogs and sheep, we were always hard up if the price was low. It did not matter if our hens laid 150 eggs or even 200 eggs per year when the price was 5 cents per dozen, even when the fact that they were a good grade of eggs did not bring in sufficient to even pay for putting straw into the hen house. The mortgage interest began to go unpaid and we tried to make our underwear and overalls last for four years instead of two.

J. H. Gray, *The Winter Years*, p. 155

Sometimes the infestation built up slowly. In other places, a sudden invasion out of nowhere of clouds of hoppers would devour every scrap of garden greens, strip every leaf from Caragana hedges, and whirl on to devour the heads of a ripening grain crop in a strip a mile wide. In Winnipeg the hoppers even made the golf courses unplayable.

J. H. Gray, *The Winter Years*, p. 165

The hoppers spoiled everything. If chickens ate grasshoppers—well, they ate them by the thousands—yes, thousands...you couldn't eat the chickens or the eggs.

J. H. Gray, *The Winter Years*, p. 28

But grasshoppers. Trillions. They would black out the sky and when they passed, nothing would be left. I've seen an ordinary kitchen broom leaning up against the side of a granary where we were crushing oats and when the hoppers were finished, all that was left of that broom was the handle and you couldn't tell it had been a handle because it was so chewed up except for the metal band which kept the bristles held together. Grasshoppers didn't eat machinery, but by God, I've seen them eat the leather off the seat of a John Deere tractor.

B. Broadfoot, *Two Little Years*, p. 40

AND

GRASSHOPPERS
SOME PEOPLE LIVED WELL

EASY STREET...

If you had $12, you were on Easy Street. Remember, no income tax.

Some, you had to be making more than $2,000 to pay income tax, and then it was very little. How the country got along I don't know. Yes, I was making $1,000, and I was doing well. We had a house, and my parents were about $35 a month in interest. Of course, it took years and years to pay it, but nobody thought about that. After things got better, after 1939, $35 was a lot cheaper, then every once in a while, they'd buy a house and things would be better, then there were those who paid off the whole thing. One thing they all did was in 1933, they bought a Ford, yes, a Model A, and then they drove it.

Clothes! I have bought good suits with a vest and an extra pair of pants for $20. The best suit. Off the rack, of course, but good, Scottish material. I have bought good suits out the best, but good, for $13 which would wear like iron and I still have an old overcoat that I bought in 1936 and it cost me $10.95 and I remember that price well, and when I die that coat will go to the Good Will or the Salvation Army and some down-and-out will wear it for another few years. Underwear, socks, shoes, shirts, more, they were almost giving them away. Suits, say $4, and good ones too. Shirts, 95 cents over at Eaton's.

But you know how everything was going. What I mean was that you had your eggs in all the nests, then you could do fine, but if you were a man, a person who was conscientious, then it worried you.

B. Broadnax, The Lou Years, pp. 230-231
We moved to Montreal in 1933 and we found what we were looking for the first day, a perfectly lovely house in Westmount. There were houses waited for our furniture to come out from the coast we all stayed at the Rat. A grand hotel then, and it still is.

I phoned an employment agency and told them I wanted some staff and they asked a few questions and the next day a woman came over to the best servants she could find. We drove over to the house and she worked it out this way. A chef and a woman who could be my maid and also serve the meals, and two domestics and a yardman, we had perfectly huge grounds, and a laundress who would come in Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

When our furniture moved in, this agency had people for us. The chef got $40 a month and his board and room. My maid got $30 and board and room. The first domestic maid got $25 and the second maid got $15. The gardener got two dollars a day, and she scrubbed by hand and ironed by hand and she lived at home. I paid her carfare too. Ten cents a chief, for $10 a week, or a small maid for 50 cents a day. Nobody thought anything of it.

B. Broadbent, Ten Last Years, p. 6
“Who is the most popular bandleader to come out of Canada?” The question is unfair. Guy Lombardo and His Royal Canadians have topped the list since they left for the United States in the twenties. Guy and his brothers, Carmel, Lebert and Victor, all natives of London, Ontario, arrived at a style that became known as “The sweetest music this side of heaven”. Maybe the tunes have changed, but the style? Never.

That Lombardo sound has given its leader and his men some of the highest salaries in the dance band business. H. McNamara and J. Loomis, The Dance Centurion, December 6, p. 106

H. McNamara and J. Loomis, The Band, Canadians Dance To
The well-paid Romanelli musicians, an exclusive group that at one time or another included Horace Lapp, who later led his own orchestra, and arranger-composer Johnny Burt, sometimes made as much as $100 a week, a huge salary for depression days. Sometimes they played non-stop. As Trump recalls those hectic years: “When Eaton’s College Street Store opened in the fall of 1930 we played three sessions a day on the main floor, then went on to the King Edward from 10:30 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. We did the same thing when the Bank of Commerce on King Street opened the same year.”

H. McNumans and J. Lerman, The Bands Canadians Owned To, p. 4.

Beer Barrel Polka
Look for the Silver Lining
Student
September Song
When My Dreamboat Comes In
Buddy Can you Spare a Dime?
Pennies From Heaven
Flat Foot Floogey with the Frog Fling

POPULAR SONGS IN THE THIRTIES
I’ll Never Smile Again
The Lady is a Tramp
Happy Days Are Here Again
Just Around the Corner
There’s a Rainbow in the Sky
Stormy Weather
The World is Waiting for the Sunrise
The West, a Nest, and You Dear

Moonlight dance cruises on Lake Ontario aboard the Cayuga were very popular.
The census gives a total of 288,000 farms for the three Prairie provinces and 192,000 for Ontario, and contains a brief record of farm facilities in all the provinces. Of the 288,000 farms of the Prairie provinces, 5,036 have water piped in the kitchen; or one out of every 57.20 farms in western Canada in contrast with one out of every 9.54 in Ontario. In the west one out of every 72.8 has water piped in the bathroom (it would be interesting to know how many have a bathroom of any kind) as compared with one out of 15.76 in Ontario. One out of every 34.44 western farmhouses is lighted by gas or electricity as compared with one out of 5.95 in Ontario. In proportion to farms Ontario has more than twice as many rural telephones and over 40 per cent more rural automobiles than western Canada. Of these automobiles four out of five in Ontario, four out of seventy-six in western Canada, may travel on paved or gravelled highways, or 20 per cent of Ontario farms and 94.7 per cent of all western farms are located on dirt roads.

At the Auto Show, 1931

In the days before hard-surfacing, hand-operated graders were pulled by horses, and it took days to grade a small stretch of road. With the pounding of traffic and the winds helping, a wash-board effect was created on these gravel roads, and when you had been driving along on a fair piece of road, and all of a sudden hit a stretch of this wash-board, all hell broke loose. You’d swear that the car was coming apart at the seams. The four front wheels would vibrate in agony, while the hood cover danced in glee. Running boards would scream at the pounding gravel, which sounded like a machine-gun as it banged up against them. If you were riding in the front seat, you took the chance of having the windshield collapse in your lap, not to mention the roof caving in on the whole issue. However, if you had led a good life, the chances were that you’d survive, providing you weren’t travelling far. If the road had just been graded and a truck passed you, the world would be obliterated in dust. You’d survive all right, but the dust would keep your mouth shut for a while after you’d arrived.

Some drivers who were averse to putting their lives on the line would use a little caution when they ran into one of these washboard stretches.

J. B. Vaughan, The Muckraking Years, p. 218
Hitch-hiking in those days was nothing like it is now. There were no paved roads, and the gravel was darn hard to walk on. You could wear out a pair of shoes in no time; that is if you walked far. And the dust was terrible; every time a car went by, great clouds of dust would envelop you. You'd sputter and choke, cursing that driver. I will say, though, that most drivers were very considerate, and if they couldn't stop to pick you up, they'd slow down to avoid making too much dust. These drivers you appreciated. However, most drivers would stop and give you a lift if they had any room.

Furthermore, it was considered an unpardonable sin for one car to pass another and swing back in front immediately. Many windshields were broken this way, not to mention the dents caused by flying gravel. If you saw a car in trouble on the road, you would always stop to enquire if you could help, asking if the fellow needed a jack, some patching, or a pump. Courtesey was prevalent then. J. B. Vaughn, The Wandering Years, p. 263
I used to see the freight trains going through that town with the top of the cars loaded with men. Once I counted one hundred and thirty men riding on one freight. Where they were all going, they themselves didn’t know. Looking for work was the theme of the day. It was better to be a wanderer on a near hopeless journey—due to trap in one place and starve to death...

And how better to travel than ‘riding the rods’?

J. B. Vaughan, The Wandering Tramp, pp. 44-50

RIDING THE RODS

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR WORRIES

"We regard the transient problem as one of the most difficult from the standpoint of all Governments interested. A constantly increasing number of men are roaming the land, across the country, particularly on freight trains, and are increasing a menace to the peace and safety of many communities along the lines of railway. Generally speaking, these men are not in the employment of any one railway company, and are in many cases outlaws, especially among the women folk in railway divisional towns. Apparently no serious effort is being made to curtail the activities of these pilgrims...

...I do not see the importance that early and organized effort should be made in cooperation with the railway companies to discourage and discontinue this illegal method of travelling from place to place, as it is a menace to all concerned and gives rise to the exhaustion of the public’s patience and charitable inclination to relieve hungry men when the requests become too frequent.

-- Bereau Paper

Near every city, "pilgrims" grew up, in which the homeless men made their temporary headquarters before passing on to the next. Sanitary conditions in these camps beg the unacceptable: "rod-riding" on the railroad cars was considered a threat to health and property, and by 1939 the situation caused to be considered a national scandal.

L. Biddle, Child Unemployment: The Problem, p. 186

Everyone has heard the expression of "riding the rods". On each branch there are about six or seven steel rods, fourteen or sixteen feet long, with a turban-like near the middle of each, slung under the boxcar, rather like an inverted hod. These have something to do with keeping the freight on the undercarriage. But the man who rode the rods would be in a Charlie Chaplin sort of way: he would be practically impossible to get on or off these rods when the train was in motion. Not only that, but the wind blowing the dirt and the windmill up from the boxcar would certainly discourage anyone from riding a boxcar via this method. The men who tried it once would never try it again. I crossed Canada from coast to coast three times during the dirty thirties, and travelled through forty states across the line. Never once did I see a man "riding the rods."

J. B. Vaughan, The Wandering Tramp, p. 50
The plain truth was that soup-kitchen food was usually good... At the wholesale level, where the soup-kitchens bought, the food itself cost less than it cost to move it, so there was no point in buying poor food. The soup-kitchens, however, were always need-stimulating, and that the food was unsatisfying cannot be denied. The soup-kitchens always seemed to be located in unsuitable premises that some politically favored landlord had rented to the government. The odors of the food cooked last year were mixed with the odors of last month and last week. To serve such messes, heavy reliance was placed upon boiled dinner, hash, and corned beef. Everything was overcooked and usually served on metal plates with stained forks and knives. Nothing about the soup-kitchen was conducive to enjoyment of food, least of all the company of the ill-fed, unkempt, unhappy, and unsolvably legion. J. H. Gray, The Winter Years, pp. 146-147

Stuck in Sudbury for the winter...
The jail where sleeping accommodation was provided was quite a shock. It was a very old, thick-walled stone building, with two stories. Inside, each floor held the same, containing five or six large cells and the corridor. At the end of the corridor, and not enclosed in any way, stood the toilet and one wash basin. No beds or bedding were provided. The floors were black, and seemed to have a dull, oily sheen on them and the building was swarming with bed bugs, so much so that no entering or being housed at night the stench was almost overpowering, and nobody was allowed in until six in the evening. Six hundred hungry, ill-clad, destitute men, turned out to wander around that dirty small town every day, through that severe northern Ontario winter. . .

At two o'clock in the evening the men would head for the old jail crawling into that hot, dirty, verminous, smelly old building. The more faradinant would have an old newspaper to spread on the floor to lie on. The men were all suffering from gastric trouble due to hunger and the hot boiled beans, weak kidneys from the freezing cold and frozen feet. In consequence, there was a steady line-up all night through the toilet—two to three hundred men to one toilet...
The turnout in the mornings was a pathetic sight, the long line-up at the one wash basin.

K. Unwin, Jubilee, pp. 10-11

CANADA'S UNTOUCHABLES

The municipalities steer them off because if they are arrested as vagrants they become a charge on the municipality, and it costs a dollar a day to keep them. So their word is, 'Keep them moving.' The C.P.R. police advise the men that it is better travelling C.N.R. and the C.N.R. police return the compliment, and there you are... Wherever they go, they feel they are not wanted. There is no work, no home, no place for them. They are Canada's Untouchables. L. Richard, Canada: A People's History, pp. 179-180

A soup kitchen in Edmonton, 1933
RELIANCE CAMP RULES AND REGULATIONS

1. To be admitted to a government Relief Camp you must be single, male, not living at home, healthy and fit, unemployed, at least 18 years old, and not a political agitator.

2. You will be given free transportation to the camp.

3. If you decide to leave the camp for any reason except to take a job, you will not be allowed to return.

4. On entering the camp you will receive free:
   a. A set of work clothes
   b. Soap and toilet kit
   c. A bunk bed
   d. Three meals per day
   e. Use of showers, latrines and laundry facilities

5. You will work 44 hours per week on projects such as road building and tree planting.

6. You will be given an allowance of 20¢ per day plus 1 34¢ per day for tobacco.

7. No committees of camp workers may be formed. No complaints must be reported individually to the camp foreman.

Q. What was the chief complaint you had about the camp?
A. The isolation. The feeling of being a forgotten person.
   You’d never be able to have any money, or a job, or a home. No music, no entertainment. Just a diet and a bunk to sleep in. Every day the same.
   V. llours, 
   The On-to-Ottawa Trek, p. 6

...as the problem of homeless men became more acute the Dominion was forced to make special provision for this group. In the fall of 1932 agreements were made with the four western provinces whereby subsistence camps for single homeless men were authorized. These camps were to be administered by honorary commissions, appointed by the provinces, and it was agreed that the Dominion would pay the full costs of their operation at a rate not to exceed 40 cents per day per inmate. L. Richter, Canada’s Homeless Problem. p. 183

Intended initially to handle 2,000 men, a year later the camps supported over 11,000 occupants. By 1936 when they were shut down, the camps had taken in 170,248 of the unemployed of Canada. R. Littler, Recollections of the On to Ottawa Trek, p. viii

Bunkhouse at Ottawa Relief Camp

A Winnipeg Man Complains to his M.P., 1931:

“I have been asked by a committee of men, who are working at Riding Mountain Park, to bring to your attention the utterly disgraceful situation which exists there. Picture to yourself a tar paper shack 79 feet x 24 with no windows, along each side there is a row of double deck bunks, these are spaced off with 8 x 1 board so that there is room for two men in each bunk. The bunks are filled with straw and you crawl into them from the foot end. Along the front of the lower bunk a narrow board is placed upon which the men may sit. The place is very narrow but [sic] lighted and ventilated by three skylights. There are two stoves in the shack in front of which wood is piled up. So narrow is the passageway between the bunks that when the men are sitting on the bench there is scarcely room to pass between them. This shack 79 x 24 houses 88 men. There is a marked resemblance to a dog pen or a dog pound. At all times the place reeks of the foul smell and at night the air is simply filthy. The floor is dirty and at the end of the shack, where there is a trench where the men wash, the floor is caked with black mud. I asked several old-timers their opinion of it and they state in fact that it is without any question the worst camp they have ever seen in the American continent. The toilet is thoroughly filthy, unsanitary, and far too small . . .

“The terrible thing about it is that many of the men who are congregated in this camp are teen aged Canadian boys forced into close association with mature men who have tramped the streets and hummed their way through the country, with the result that the outlook for these boys stands a good chance of being completely warped and their characters so degraded and demoralized that their future is unquestionably seriously menaced.”

House of Commons Debates, 22 Nov, 1932
GOVERNMENT CAMPS: National Relief or National Disgrace?

COMMON COMPLAINTS OF THE RELIEF CAMP WORKERS

"The foreman actually expects us to work 8 hours a day and 4 hours on Saturdays. And we get paid 20¢ a day for that!"

"The camp superintendents are much too severe. It's worse than being in the army!"

"We aren't supposed to form any committees to try to improve conditions. We'll never get anywhere."

"THE FOOD IS LOUSY!"

"The doctor is giving us a cut of the work and injured. And all the diseases that are to any teeth in yoke is not."

"The tobacco allowance is not enough to pay for the increased cost."

"I don't think we should be about the right to vote."

SOME FINDINGS OF THE BRITISH COLUMBIA GOVERNMENT'S MACDONALD COMMISSION - 31 May 1935:

1. The relief camps have reasonably fulfilled their goals and have given many men the intended relief.
2. The camp superintendents have a very difficult job. They are not too severe.
3. Generally the food at the camps is good although milk is often not fresh and the meat is of poor quality in many camps.
4. Cleanliness and sanitation of most camps is excellent although washrooms and showers at the Point Grey Camp were disgracefully crude and dirty.
5. The tobacco allowance is insufficient because the price of tobacco has risen.
6. The mental attitude of relief camp workers is very poor. The critical situation is caused by several factors: the men are not paid a wage, many are not voted for physical labor, young men view the camps as a "dead-end," the workers feel forgotten, the camps are isolated from the rest of society.

PRIME MINISTER BENNETT DEFENDS THE CAMPS, 1935:

"... the camps to which reference has been made have won the warm support and approval of those who have inspected them including people well able to arrive at conclusions how single, homeless, unemployed men might be cared for, and some of the most distinguished social workers from other countries have expressed warm approval of the action that has been taken."

House of Commons, Debate, 24 June, 1935
**APRIL 4 TO MAY 30**

**THE PROTEST BEGINS IN VANCOUVER**

Throughout April and May, more than 1,500 Relief Camp workers have conducted huge demonstrations in Vancouver. They have held large parades, rallies, public meetings, tag-days, and sit-ins in department stores and in the museum. They have clashed with police a few times, but violent conflict has generally been avoided. The strikers wish to pressure the city government of Vancouver, the provincial government of British Columbia, and the Canadian government in Ottawa to improve conditions in the Relief Camps. The city and the province claim they don’t have enough money. But Prime Minister Bennett says British Columbia must solve the problem itself.

Many Vancouver citizens support the strikers. But Ottawa and the police seem to think the strike is just an attempt by the tiny communist party to make trouble.

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**MAY 30**

**Strikers Decide to Ride Freight Trains to Ottawa!**

Last night the Relief Camp strikers decided that they could accomplish little more by staying in Vancouver. They now plan to lead the biggest and most dramatic parade ever! They will ride CPR freight trains the entire distance of 2,000 miles to Ottawa to put direct pressure on Mr. Bennett’s government.

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**JUNE 4**

**TREK ARRIVES KAMLOOPS**

The train crews were cooperating with us in every possible way, and there was no attempt made to stop our march to the east. It seemed as though local and provincial authorities were leaving it to the federal government, and in the meantime we were quite a formidable force, beginning to snowball.

R. Linternage, Reflections of the On to Ottawa Trek, p. 95

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**JUNE 6**

**TREK ARRIVES GOLDEN**

We very soon marched on to a large espooze of park-like land, richly wooded, with large shade trees scattered here and there. A truly sybian setting, but what was more to the point, under a full dozen of those huge shade trees were cooking fires, and suspended over them were various kinds of make-shift cooking vessels full to the brim, with simmering, bubbling, thick, heavenly-smelling beef stew. The cooking pots were make-shift because they had to be big. Over one fire (and this is the gospel truth) was suspended a full size hashbake, also full to the brim with beef stew. There were long trestle tables with thousands of slices of golden crusted bread. Around each fire were just two or three quiet, smiling women, serving, salting, peppering, and tasting.

It was incredible, it was heartwarming, it was beautiful.

The column of men halted, a thunderous cheer arose, and the men broke ranks and rushed over to embrace those quiet smiling, wonderful women of Golden.

The people of Golden knew about us, and our struggles; they knew about the relief camps. Their welcome of us was the welcome of pioneers, heartfelt, deep, and sincere. Golden stood out in the memory of the trekkers as the most restful, triumphant episode of the whole trek.

R. Linternage, Reflections of the On to Ottawa Trek, pp. 91-92
JUNE 22
TREK REMAINS IN REGINA WHILE 8 LEADERS TRAVEL TO OTTAWA
—TALKS WITH BENNETT FAIL

In your agitating propaganda you have made it perfectly clear that you were going to illegally take possession of trains if you had to march to Ottawa. I say, for what purpose?
Mr. Evans: The purpose is to demand from you this program of works and wages.
Mr. Bennett: And we have made it perfectly clear so far as we are concerned that these camps were not established for that purpose.
Mr. Evans: That is passing the buck. We want work and wages.
Mr. Bennett: Just a moment—
Mr. Evans: You referred to us as not wanting work. Give up any of work and see whether we will work. This is an insidious attempt to propagandize the public on your part, and anybody who professes to be Premier and uses such despicable tactics is not fit to be premier of a Hottonot village.
Mr. Bennett: I come from Alberta. I remember when you embezzled the funds of your union and were sent to penitentiary.
Mr. Evans: You are a liar. I was arrested for fraudulently converting these funds to feed the starving, instead of sending them to the agents at Indianapolis, and I again say you are a liar if you say I embezzled, and I will have the pleasure of telling the workers throughout Canada I was forced to tell the Premier of Canada he was a liar. Don't thank you can pull off anything like that. You are not intimidating me a damned bit.
Mr. Bennett: I know your record in the penitentiary at New Westminster, your record in the penitentiary chowder.
Mr. Evans: I was never in penitentiary at New Westminster. You do not know what you are talking about.
Mr. Bennett: That is good enough... You ask for a programme of work and wages. That will not be carried on as far as these camps are concerned for that is not the purpose for which they were prepared. They were prepared for the purposes I have indicated (to provide food, shelter and clothing for unemployed, homeless men) and to relieve the provincial government of their responsibility. No young men have ever been treated in better circumstances than these camps provide. Everyone knows that... I am pursuing illegal trespassing upon the property of the railways involving the interruption of their mills, the loss of life, and injury to property will not be tolerated. Good-day, gentlemen.


JUNE 14
Prime Minister Bennett Orders R.C.M.P. to Stop Trek in Regina

...the present movements of these marchers upon Ottawa in defiance of the law is in reality an organized effort on the part of the various communist organizations throughout Canada to effect the overthrow of constitutional authority in defiance of the laws of the land. The government is determined to maintain law and order by all the means within its power and calls upon all law-abiding citizens to assist to that end. Definite instructions have been given to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police at Regina to assist the officials of both railways in preventing further trespasses upon railway property or upon railway trains and the marchers have been notified that they will not be permitted to continue their eastward journey by the unlawful use of railway transport.

House of Commons, Debates, 26 June 1933

JUNE 8
CONNAUGHT TUNNEL

There was one bad spot on this lap of our journey, the Connaught tunnel, a few miles east of Guelph. This tunnel, which spirals through the heart of a mountain, I believe, about seven miles long. The grade through the tunnel is fairly steep, and in it is the usual going east, and a slow, hard pull for a long freight train... It was a nightmarish trip.

I think the two locomotives pulling the train were coal burners. At any rate, the tunnel was filled with a dirty, brown, blinding, grey, warm smoke. The acid sulphurous stench was overpowering, and gave one a clothing sensation. We all lay on top of the burners, covering our mouths and noses with handkerchiefs or rolls. Some of the boys covered their heads with blankets.

The view through the tunnel took about thirty minutes, and it was a wonderful sensation to finally emerge into the fresh air.

JUNE 12
MOOSE JAW

Moose Jaw, a railroad divisional town, was then a small place, but the people wanted to welcome us, wanted us to rest up overnight in their sports ground, which we did. We marched through the city streets, thousands of people lined the sidewalks to give us a rousing welcome. At the Exhibition Grounds we were to stay as usual, and an official welcome had been prepared for us.

R. L. Limeridge, Reconnaissance of the On to Ottawa trek, p. 194
The Case for the Strikers:

"I wouldn't say it was a riot, not at all. We were behaving peacefully enough there in Regina, and then the police on one side and the Mounties on the other started to pull the guys, our speakers, off the platform. There was whistles blowing and horses charging and you could say it was the police doing the rioting, clubbing and charging. We took it for a few minutes and then we let go, against them."

B. Woodhouse, Tea Leaf Notes p. 363

MP's of all parties score Bennett's Regina tactics

Toronto Star. 3 July 1933, p. 3

Iron hand of dictatorship is seen in Bennett's Regina tactics

Toronto Star: 2 July 1933, p. 1

The meeting went on long orderly, Evans was speaking when four large automobile vans backed up, one to each corner of the Market Square. A shell whistle blew out a signal, the backs of the vans were lowered, and out poured the Mounties, each armed with a baseball bat.

They must have packed very lightly, in those vans for there were lots of them. In their first rush, shouting, club-wielding charge they piled Regina City Detective Mrller, who had obviously come onto the Square to help them. In less than minutes the Market Square was a man of writhing, groaning forms, like a battlefield.

The surprise was complete, and it was a victory for the Mounties, the only one they had that night. Even at that, they were unable to follow up, as there were also not a few Mounties wielding on the ground, and it took about half of their number to arrest Evans and the few boys on the platform.

It was to be a sperm play. We were not going to be allowed to get out of town. We were to be smashed up. How incredibly stupid. Immediately orders were given to build barricades, and there was plenty of material to work with.

The street was lined with parked cars and we simply pushed them into the street, turned them on their sides, and piled them high... Our defense was simple: in front of the barricade, two lines of us formed; one behind the other, right across the street, each with a good armful of big rocks. As the line of horses charged, we waited until they were quite close, and then the front rank let go a barrage of rocks, and as soon as their rocks were finished, down on their knees they would go, and the row of men behind had a clear field to let go their barrage.

B. Woodhouse, Recollections of the War in Ottawa 1914-1918 p. 127-130

Police Raid Started Riot Gardiner Wires Bennett

Toronto Star, 3 July 1933, p. 3

The trouble at Regina which has resulted in death was apparently precipitated by an attempt on the part of the police to break up an orderly meeting at which the trekkers were preparing to raise funds. Premier Gardiner, of Saskatchewan, makes a plain statement about it in a telegram to Ottawa:

"While we were meeting to consider their proposals and any suggestion we might make to you (the federal government) the trouble started downtown between police and strikers without notification to us of police intentions. While the Saskatchewan Government considered action, the police raided a public meeting to arrest the leaders, precipitating a riot."

Toronto Star, 3 July 1933, p. 5

J. S. Woodworth said in the House...

"I would say that these men were assembled in a perfectly peaceable way; there was no disorder whatever until the two forces of the police came upon them and ruthlessly drove into them. The minister gives us the impression that it was the strikers who started the difficulty. I say they were having a peaceable meeting, attempting to secure further funds with which to carry on their own work in their own way, because they were almost at the end of their resources, and at that legitimate meeting they had the police come upon them..."

"It may be quite true that the leadership of these men has largely come into the hands of communists. The other day I admitted, from the best information I could get, that this was true. I am sorry it is true; I think they would have been better led if they had followed other advice, but may I point out that only a comparatively small number of these people are communists. The great majority of the men are not communists: only a small proportion of them are, and unless there were very great grievances on the part of the men it is inconceivable to me that some sixty or seventy leaders, as I think the Minister of Justice (Mr. Guthrie) put it, could control these two thousand men. That statement in itself is ridiculous. If a large number of the men wanted to return to their homes; if they found that they had been misled, they would throw overboard the sixty or seventy men whom the Minister of Justice says are in a position of leadership."

House of Commons Debates. 2 July 1933
The Case for the Bennett Government:

THE R.C.M.P. POSITION

Colin Wood himself was of the opinion that, if the leaders were to be arrested, action should be taken immediately because he believed that the strikers were preparing to make some desperate move; this was also the belief of Inspector Cheeseman and Major Montour of the Canadian Pacific Railway Police. The foundation for both the beliefs was confidential information which the police officers had from a source which they considered thoroughly reliable, to the effect that the strikers were making clubs and preparing for battle with the police... he feared that they were planning demonstrations in the city which might result in stabs and he believed that, if action was not quickly taken, arresting the leaders might prevent the disturbances and make it easier to negotiate with the men for their return to the camps as to their homes.


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THE PRIME MINISTER SAID...

"To suggest that anyone on this side of the House [of Commons] desired... to use force against individuals... is... false... it is equally true that as long as we are charged with responsibility... we will discharge it."

House of Commons, Debates, 3 July 1935

The minister of justice claimed...

"Prior to the opening of proceedings at the market square meeting a number of plainclothesmen of the mounted police proceeded to the platform and arrested others of the leaders, making the total arrests on the two occasions about twenty-four. At the time these arrests were made the city police of Regina, who are under the control of the municipal corporation, came up upon one side of the platform, and the mounted police on the other side. The crowd which had gathered, both strike marchers and onlookers from the city of Regina, on the arrival of the police immediately cleared the square or the space, and it was thought that the crowd had permanently dispersed. However, after the lapse of a few minutes the strikers, having armed themselves with stones, clubs and various kinds of missiles, returned to the scene and made an attack upon the city police. The attack was made in the first instance by the strike marchers, and the city police were called upon to defend themselves. Subsequently the mounted police joined for the purpose of maintaining order. Shots were exchanged. Shots were fired by the strikers, and the fire was replied to by shots from the city police. No shot whatever was fired by the mounted police. They were armed with batons...

Regiment of the Regina Riot Inquiry Commission, pp. 109-114

The Aftermath

The conditions of settlement were that any man on the trek could proceed to his home, or wherever he wanted to go, with transportation provided, and that the original R.C. would be provided with two chartered passenger trains, one C.P.R. and one C.N.R. with adequate food for the journey back to Vancouver. All this was accepted. Many men took advantage of the offer to get back to their own provinces, some as far away as Nova Scotia.

Gradually the situation straightened out for us; the camps were absorbing the men under a new jurisdiction at forty cents per hour. Most of the camps were under the jurisdiction of the Provincial Forestry Department, with men employed building pack and camping sites.

R. Lividge, Recollections of the Os or Osweka Trail, pps. 118-120
The Soup Kitchen...

At the police station, after an interrogation and some verbal abuse, I was given a ticket for the soup kitchen which was my guarantee for two meals a day, but the ticket had to be renewed every two weeks during the winter. My two meals at the soup kitchen were a plate of white beans boiled in water, two slices of dry bread, and a mug of tea or coffee maybe, it was hard to judge. The portions were always the same (with one exception) and always served at eleven a.m. and five p.m. The exception was the drinking of a bear by a Sunday comercial who gave the bear to the city, who then sent it to the soup kitchen with the result that a few hundred men suffered violent diarrhoea for two days.

Yes, there were six hundred men on so-called relief in Sudbury during that winter, and I found out later the cost per day of maintaining each person was four cents.

The process of obtaining a meal at the soup kitchen was truly an ordeal. The long line-up of hundreds of men in sub-zero weather, slowly, very slowly, moving ahead, a few steps, and then a wait. Sometimes it took an hour to reach the house in the middle of a short row of dwelling houses (near the CPR station) where the beams were holling in the water. The line-up was worse on days when there had been a rise in temperature and a slight thaw, then one shuffled slowly ahead through a foot and a half of frozen slush. In the case of myself and many others shod only in broken-down oxford shoes, it was a very unpleasant experience.

Arriving at the house, one entered the small room just large enough to hold the stove with the two big pots, a short counter and room in front of the counter for the boys to file past. After receiving the food, the boys proceeded to the top of the staircase which led to the basement and our dining room.

On reaching the dining room, I once realized the reason for the showiness of the whole procedure. This directly lit small basement were three short tables and plank tables around which the men stood to eat. Each man coming down from the kitchen had to wait on the stairs with his rapidly cooling plate of beans. For a stand-in at this "veritable front of the passover" the atmosphere in the basement was like that in a chillly muddy crypt. The tables were covered with ice, and beans, and piece of of whole bread. The floor was little deep in it and of the "up-door left, the 9th of it at the back, there was always a spic-and-span guard on guard to see that nobody threw the valuable food into the garbage can.

THE TRANSIENT LIFE....

In the morning these boys are given a bowl of porridge each, a cup of coffee, some dry bread and a little syrup. The only other meal they receive is in the evening, when they get a bowl of thin soup, more dry bread, and a cup of coffee. It is frankly admitted by some of the Winnipeg aldermen that their purpose in giving the transients such meagre food and these horrible sleeping quarters is to force them to leave town and run the risk of being jailed in some other town for a violation of the government's order prohibiting riding on freight trains. House of Commons, Debates. 12 Nov. 1932

Eating Gophers...

We were all poverty-stricken by the depression in our district, even though we had good land and most of us had worked hard. We didn't have to wear gummy spainting for clothing and eat gophers as they did down in the dried-out Youngstown area. But I had neighbours who were living on skimmed milk and potatoes. The telephones were taken from one farm home after another, until we were finally the only farm with a telephone. The poverty was incredible.

CHEATING

Street car tickets for children were 12 for a quarter. We'd use a razor blade to start and then we'd post each one in half. So then we'd have 24. We used to pray that when they dropped in the box they'd land right side up. Some kids had the idea that if you planted the opened side with spit they'd fall right side up.

J.A. Irving, The Social Credit Movement in Alberta, p. 241

Mist. W. Williams, charged with vagrancy

B. Broadfoot, Ten Long Years, p. 200
The Aged...

It seems to be generally agreed that there exists a serious employment problem for persons between sixty and seventy years of age, and that a large proportion of those on relief are in the higher age groups. British Columbia states in a report to the Department of Labour that forty per cent of its relief recipients are fifty years of age and over.

L. Richter, Canada's Unemployment Problem, p. 40

FED JOBLESS AT DELHI ONTARIO
(Toronto Telegram, 10 August 1939)

Answering that he would carry on in the face of any criticism, Rev. Father John Uyen, parish priest of the Roman Catholic Church of St. John de Brebeuf at Delhi continues his task of feeding the hungry transients who are seeking work in the tobacco fields. Reeve Albert Wilber declared yesterday he didn't think Fr. Uyen should feed the jobless, as it would keep them in town, where they are not wanted, for a longer period. Pictures show children of the parish making sandwiches and Fr. Uyen with two of the workers after they had been given their meal.

ODD JOBS...

People who lived near cemeteries could cadge jobs cutting the grass on the graves, at so much per grave per season. However, it was a sadly overcrowded field of enterprise, and unless a prospective grave attendant was at the door soon after the funeral, he would discover a rival had taken the job. Considerate people who hesitated to barge in on the sorrowing survivors did poorly in this business.

Every winter dozens tried their hands at fishing through the ice on the Red River, but the hazards far outweighed the few cents a day's catch would yield. The only satisfactory place to fish was near open water at sewer outlets. Any sharp change in the temperature of the water made the ice unsafe. A lot of time was lost by the fishermen having to halt operations to fish one of their competitors out of the river. One dip in the Red River in January, however, was likely to discourage the dippee from further operations for the year.

Those living on the fanges of the wealthier south end of town could earn odd quarters shovelling snow off walks and driveways. The house-to-house canvassing racket played out early in the depression, but not before the unemployed by the thousands had taken a crack at it. Everything that could be carried—from home-knit socks to wax flowers, pastry, dill pickles, embroidery, patented can-openers, and shoe-laces—was hawked from door to door.

J. H. Gray, The Winter Years, p. 31
Those who became most sensitive to the depression were not the politicians but the school teachers and the preachers. Both had their own financial crosses to bear. They were underpaid at the best of times, everywhere in western Canada. School boards advertised for teachers for $500 and $600 a year and were flooded with applicants. In every city, teachers began with submarginal salaries and took all the pay cuts inflicted on everybody else. The urban teachers, however, at least collected their pay. In the country, teachers often ended a school year with nothing but promissory notes to show for a year's work. Yet the shattering blow to the teaching profession was to the heart rather than to the pocket. It was the sight of the vacated seat of the brightest pupil in the room, the seat that most of all should have been occupied... It became increasingly difficult to maintain interest in class in face of the clamorous unspoken question: What good was an education to anybody? Attention wandered from the decline of the Roman Empire to the holes in the soles of shoes, and to whether there would be any meat to go with the potatoes for supper. The teachers lived with life on relief every day, and they lived it with an intimacy that was deeper than that of those who were on relief, because their 'families' were so much larger and their experience so much broader.  J. W. Gray, The Winter Years, pp. 60-63

School Boards Save Money...

Every device has been used to secure economical management during the current year. Drastic cuts have been made in teachers' salaries in all classes of districts. The average salary of rural teachers will show a decrease from $1100.00 to $700.00 per annum. Teachers are taking notes instead of money but banks will not cash the notes. A considerable proportion of teachers are in arrears with respect to salaries. Salary schedules built up by the teachers after many years of careful publicity are almost completely disregarded. Trustees are writing and wiring that schools must close unless aid is forthcoming and questioning the advisability of retaining their teachers beyond the end of June without definite assurance of financial aid from the Government...

In addition to salary decreases, further economies have been effected. Janitors, secretary-treasurers, assessors and collectors are in many cases not being paid while in consolidated districts ratepayers are requesting the privilege of conveying the children to school themselves, receiving the Government grant alone as payment therefor. This grant is normally one-third of the cost of this service. Furniture and equipment are not being replaced, necessary repairs to property are not being made. The regulation requiring the purchase of library books to the amount of $10.00 per annum per room is in abeyance. Schools are to be closed during the winter months to save the cost of fuel.

Debenture payments are in default to an amount far exceeding the worst of former years. notwithstanding the most satisfactory conditions in this respect up to the middle of 1930. Debentures are not salable. New buildings, urgently needed, cannot be erected.

M. Harms, The Daily Citizen, pp. 18-19
The subject matter in Canadian schools suggests a respect for inherited traditions. Canada may have been a North American country but Canadian students spent little time on the history or the institutions of the United States. Even the history of Canada was not taught as national history but as part of the history of the British Empire. The emphasis was on British traditions and British institutions; the American myth of a new and unfettered society in the new world never appeared in Canadian textbooks. The “love of freedom, justice and democracy” came, not from the frontier, but from the Mother of Parliaments.

Canadian universities were, if anything even more strongly committed to hallowed traditions.


I’ll never forget the 1934 Christmas – a lot of people had to tell their kids there’d be no Santa Claus that year. At Christmas time the stores were full of people looking at presents, to see if there was something a few paltry pennies could buy.


It is not uncommon to encounter students who are apparently careless and disinterested in their work and who consistently fail classes with a minimum of compunction and remorse. When they are brought to task for their inattention and neglect, the answer elicited is often along these lines: “Why should I speed the day of my graduation? Why should I dissipate my energies in the accomplishment of a task which holds so little promise of reward for the effort involved?” Nor are these the fanciful imaginings of a cynical mind – they are actual observations based upon teaching experience in secondary schools.

But there is still another influence at work which is largely accountable on a basis of youth unemployment. There are in our schools at the present time hundreds, yes, thousands, of boys and girls who remain there for the sole reason that they have nowhere else to go.

L. Richter, Canada’s Unemployment Problem, p. 118
In a city or town where there were a lot of French and a lot of English it was usually bad for the French. Take Moncton. It is now the centre of French culture in the Maritimes and the French-English split, you could say it is about even. Fifty-fifty.

But in the Thirties, in what we call the Depression, Moncton was pretty much of an Anglo, well, an English-speaking city. At that time all the commerce was done in English and consequently all the work went to the English-speaking people. The split might have been 35 per cent French and the rest English, but all the jobs, the good ones in the city, were for the English.

R. Broadhead, Ten Lost Years, pp. 158-159

**IMMIGRATION**

Immigration into Canada is now very restricted. Chinese immigration was ended by the Dominion Chinese Immigration Act of 1923; between 1923 and 1936 only 7 Chinese were admitted. Japanese immigration is governed by the “gentleman’s agreement” of 1907, as revised in 1928, under which the number of Japanese entering the country does not exceed 150 a year. The total number admitted between 1929 and 1936 was 813. Other immigration is governed by the new regulations laid down in the Order-in-Council of March 21, 1931, which limits immigration to the following four classes:

1. A British subject entering Canada directly or indirectly from Great Britain or Northern Ireland; the Irish Free State, Newfoundland, the United States of America, New Zealand, Australia, or the Union of South Africa, who has sufficient means to maintain himself until employment is secured; provided that the only persons admissible under the authority of this clause are British subjects by reason of birth or naturalization in Great Britain or Northern Ireland; the Irish Free State, Newfoundland, New Zealand, Australia, or the Union of South Africa.

2. A United States citizen entering Canada from the United States who has sufficient means to maintain himself until employment is secured.

3. The wife or unmarried child under 16 years of age of any person legally admitted to and resident in Canada who is in a position to receive and care for his dependents.

4. An agriculturist having sufficient means to farm in Canada.

P. R. Scott, Canada To-day, p. 39
THE CANADIAN PECKING ORDER

One was a society with a well-defined pecking order of prejudice. On the top were the race-ground Anglo-Saxons, who were prejudiced against everybody else. On the bottom were the Jews, against whom everybody discriminated. In between were the Slavs and Germans. By the mid-thirties the Germans had become deeply infected with Hitler's poison and discriminated against Ukrainians, Poles, and Jews. The Poles hated the Russians, Ukrainians, and Jews, and both the Ukrainians and Jews subdivided again into 'Reds' and 'Whites' who endlessly refought the Russian revolution.

In all groups there were naturally many exceptions to the ruling prejudice. Nevertheless, racial discrimination was so much a part of life that it drove the minorities into economic ghettos. Jews tried to live off the trade of other Jews; and Ukrainians, Poles and Germans tried to live off other Ukrainians, Poles and Germans. The drive to survive in a prejudice-ridden community produced the rash of small industry and of bootstrap manufacturing that developed in Winnipeg.

J. H. Gray, The Winter Years, p. 133

DEPORTATION

Under our immigration laws, any person not a native of Canada, who has spent less than five years in this country, is liable to deportation if he becomes a public charge. This means that large numbers of immigrants, English, Scottish and Irish, as well as Europeans, are now liable to deportation, even though their only sin is that they have become destitute on account of lack of work.

Deportations have become much more numerous since the beginning of the depression, and this is undoubtedly a result of present economic conditions.

H. M. Cundell, Unemployment and Relief in Canada, p. 312

THREE LETTERS TO PRIME MINISTER BENNETT:

Nanaimo, B.C., 1933
Dear Sir:

... before we are much older there is going to be trouble in Nanaimo & Cumberland owing to the foreigners having jobs while the men & boys who are born British subjects & who rightfully belong to these jobs have to go without jobs therefore they have to go without sufficient food & clothing, in Cumberland you have Japanese & Chinese working in & about the mines also other foreigners from other countries who can neither read write or speak english & this is breaking the Coal Mines Rules & Regulation Act & they are a danger to both human life & property yet they hold the jobs which rightfully belong to us British although it is against the rules for these people to have jobs in the mines.

The same applied to Nanaimo only the Chinese are working on the surface here & not below but there are a very large number of foreigners working in the mines at Nanaimo who can neither read write or speak English & apart from that besides having our jobs & getting the wages which is ours by right the money is not only not going out of Nanaimo but it is going out of the country & that is not good for this country.

Bennett Papers

Grimby, Ontario, 1933

... why not put some of these foreigners and Indians in their own country and give a white man some show, as they are taking work away from the Canadian men and I would think the Government could do something to prevent all of this. And the people wonder in Canada why so much robbing and bootlegging is carried on. Now why is it? If we have any government at all, why not look into it so our country is overrun by foreigners.

Bennett Papers

Gadlah, Alberta, 1915

... I would like to suggest my system, of how to help solve the unemployment... First I would suggest a method or a law whereby females would not be allowed employment as long as a male can fill that or those positions.

Bennett Papers
1935—Alberta—"Bible" Bill Aberhart Leads Social Credit to a Stunning Victory over United Farmers of Alberta

**PROGRAM OF THE ALBERTA SOCIAL CREDIT MOVEMENT, 1935**

1. A basic dividend of $25 per month must be given to every citizen to buy the basic necessities of food, clothing, and shelter. It will be based on the natural wealth of the country which belongs to everyone.

2. Control of the monetary system must be taken away from the small, privileged group of bankers and financiers. It must be returned to the common people.

3. Prices must be controlled so that both producers and consumers pay a fair price, and so that inflation stops.

4. By giving every citizen a $25 dividend, we will put more money in circulation. This will cause increasing prosperity which will, in turn, create more jobs and solve the unemployment problem.

5. The government must insist in marketing agricultural and dairy products and in stimulating the agriculture industry.

6. Government departments must be re-organized to reduce waste and inefficiency.

You can strip down the appeal of Social Credit to the $25 a month. All of us farmers were in desperate straits. Here was William Aberhart promising $25 a month, and he was a minister of the gospel. I asked him about that $25 after one of his meetings, and he told me I must have faith. —J. A. Irving, *The Social Credit Movement in Alberta* p. 222

**CAN THE NEW POLITICIANS SAVE US?**

1938—Fascist Parties

Claim to have 100,000 Members!

Canadian Fascism at the moment is divided into two groups: In Ontario and the West the official title of the organization is The Canadian Nationalist Party, and its membership for the most part is made up of English-speaking Protestants. Joseph Farr is a North of Ireland man, and a member of the Orange Order. In Quebec the movement is headed by Adrien Arcand and is called the National Social Christian Party. Its membership is ninety-nine per cent French Canadian and Roman Catholic.

The movement is frankly anti-Jew, anti-Communism, and is opposed to the Masonic Order, which its leaders claim is controlled by Jews. The official "Program and Regulations" of the Party states: "Only members of the great races which have formed since its beginning a country the population of Canada, and the other Aryan members of the population who will agree to identify themselves with the mother races, can be Canadian citizens." That is, Jews, negroes, and Asiatics would be denied the franchise...

Arcand insists that "we don't attack Jews, we simply defend our country and civilization against their conspiracy." Joseph Farr says the same thing in different words. "We are not Jew haters. We do say that Christian people have a right to live decent lives." Both men support the British Fascist plan for handling the problem of what to do with the Jews after they have been thrown out. The idea is to set up an all-Jewish State on the Island of Madagascar, and leave them to work out their own destiny in their own way...

—Melvin's Magazine, 13 Apr. and 1 May 1938
1935—C.C.F. Wins 500,000 Votes in General Election!

PROGRAM OF THE C.C.F., 1934
(CO-OPERATIVE COMMONWEALTH FEDERATION)

1. All banks and financial institutions including the central bank must be owned by the people, not by private individuals.

2. The C.C.F. will prevent mortgage companies and banks from foreclosing on farmers.

3. The C.C.F. will begin a large-scale program of public works, especially housing, to relieve unemployment.

4. The C.C.F. will establish a national minimum wage and will regulate hours of work. It will guarantee the right to work and to organize workers' unions.

5. The C.C.F. will start at once a national system of social insurance.

6. The C.C.F. will develop cultural and technical education and will generally assist all people to fit into the re-organized, co-operative, socialist society.

J. S. Woodsworth became the first national leader of the C.C.F. in 1933

1936—Quebec—Union Nationale, Led by Maurice Duplessis, Defeats Liberal Government 76 Seats to 14!

PROGRAM OF THE UNION NATIONALE—1936

1. To protect and preserve the French language, religion, and institutions in Quebec, and to ensure the survival of the French culture.

2. To struggle against the English capitalists' exclusive control of Quebec industries and natural resources.

3. To improve the economic status of French Canadian workers by raising wage levels, controlling hours of work, and improving working conditions.

4. To sweep out the corrupt, inefficient, and wasteful government of the Taschereau Liberals.

5. To co-operate closely with the church and to destroy the communists in Quebec.

6. To enlarge the rights and powers of the provincial government to accomplish the above goals.

Maurice Duplessis attracted huge crowds throughout Quebec.
Laying Off Workers

When the large employers—the railways and mail order houses in particular—set the fashion for laying off staff en masse, other businesses followed the leaders. There was no longer any risk of permanently losing good employees to other jobs. There were no other jobs. So long as unemployment relief was available, there need be no concern about hardship to laid-off workers. When business picked up again they could be called back, so the cost of keeping a staff over slack periods became changed to the taxpayers instead of against company profits. Though the city council rallied against the practice, it spread and spread and the process gave rise to other practices that sharpened the unemployment crisis.

J. H. Goss, The Mirror [1930], p. 13

Within a few years, however, the prestige of businessmen had sunk to abysmal depths. Somebody was to blame for the depression and businessmen became the scapegoat. Former pillars of society were now seen as plutocrats, closing factories and foreclosing mortgages, worshipping profits with callous disregard for poverty and suffering. Business ethics had not changed but public opinion had. By 1931 the successful entrepreneurs of the Beaufort Corporation were seen as corrupt, although they had broken no laws. By 1935 a relatively minor political figure like H. H. Stevens on the Price Spreads Commission could win sudden popularity by impugning the integrity of J. S. Maclean of Canada Packers and C. L. Burton of Simpson's. Men on the breadlines, farmers in the dustbowl and even the middleclass in their white collars equated profits with profiteers and turned elsewhere for leadership.

Canadian Forum, April-May 1930, pp. 18-19

HONOURABLE H. H. STEVENS,
FORMER MINISTER OF TRADE AND
COMMERCE, PROTESTS UNFAIR
COMMERCE, PROTESTS UNFAIR
DEPRESSION BUSINESS TACTICS, 1934

Here are a few typical "mark-ups" of a given
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...He [J. D. Eaton] can remember the Depres- sion, a time when the company spent millions to shield its employees from the dep- rivation of unemployment. That was a good time for John David Eaton, and he remem- bers it with affection. "Nobody thought about money in those days," he said, "because they never saw any. You could take your girl to a supper dance at the hotel for 20, and that included the bottle and a room for you and your friends to drink it in. I'm glad I grew up then. It was a good time for everybody. People learned what it meant to work."

Maclean's Magazine June 1948, p. 13

The Eaton family at the opening of the Edmonton Eaton's store, 1919

...
BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

AN ALBERTA BANKER FORECLOSES . . .

I was dealing with the big wholesalers and the bankers on the one hand and these poor farmers on the other hand. The farmers around Brooks began to get more and more hard up; and then the merchants, too, for they had extended credit and couldn’t get at it. One of the hardest working farmers in the district had borrowed $1,300 from the bank, and he had got bailed out and couldn’t pay. Then he had to borrow more. The next year he owed the bank about $2,400. The bank manager went out to his farm and asked for a bill of sale and promised to “take care” of him. He believed the banker. But the banker then cleaned that farmer out completely! I saw that farmer standing up against the corner of my store with the tears running down his cheeks! When the depression got worse the wholesalers and bankers got the squeeze on the merchants.

J. A. Irving, The Source Credit Movement in Alberta, p. 142

Respectable Poverty . . .

You talk about exploitation! The banks have always been among the worst employers of all, poor salaries, and a man of 25 with several years service, working 10 hours a day. Monday to Friday, and half day Saturdays and some night work every month, a man of 25 could be paid seven or eight dollars a week.

Farm hands got five dollars a month, and grub. Maid’s got five or six dollars a month. I’ve seen newspapers where the only jobs offered were for domestics. Pure laborers got ten bucks or so, winter and summer, and lucky to have a job. Don’t tell me about store clerks. Paid practically nothing and expected to dress neat, look neat, always smile and go to church every Sunday. Mail men and people who worked for the government didn’t do too bad, and their jobs were fairly secure.

The banks were the worst, I think, and they kept their people in a form of slavery. Respectable poverty. You even had to get permission to marry, and I know one young fellow who was fired because he played golf every Sunday. With his father. His bank manager saw him on the course and didn’t think it was right that a young fellow should be wasting away his time on a Sunday. Hard to believe, isn’t it? The insurance companies weren’t far behind, paying wages you couldn’t keep a reasonably-sized dog now in Grinnell Dogburger. I mean it.

B. Broadhead, Ten Live Years, p. 117

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Industrial Canada, Jan. 1935, p. 96
An Investigation of Garment Industries Revealed....

There are not many points of difference between the Ontario and the Quebec factory laws. The 10 hour day prevails in both provinces for women and children, but their maximum per week in Quebec is 55 whereas in Ontario it is 60 hours. Both provinces may grant permits for a 72 hour week. On the other hand the Ontario working day ends at 6.30 p.m., whereas in Quebec it may continue until 9.00. This means that women, girls and boys in Quebec may lawfully be brought back to the factory after supper for night work, and this practice we found to be quite common in the country and in the poorer city shops. In both provinces boys and girls may be employed at 14.


While our investigations of shop conditions were not extensive or detailed, they did serve to show that in Toronto there is a distinct tendency for conditions to be worse in the non-union than in the union shops. It is quite clear that in these establishments, where low wages, irregular work, and occasional spells of long hours prevail, there is frequently little or no concern for the ordinary physical amenities. Nothing that is not absolutely necessary is done to advance the health, the comfort or the welfare of employees. F. R. Scott and M. M. Casady, Labour Conditions in the Men’s Clothing Industry, p. 68.

When the slump in buying came, its implications were immediately dumped on the factory employees. Where a dressmaker would earn $3.60 a dozen for her work on a particular voile dress, in 1933 her rate of earning was knocked down to $1.75 for the same dress, and the same work. For an eight-hour day she would, if she worked very hard, take home $2.50. Even in the depression, this bordered on the outrageous...

With styles becoming more complicated, and the dresses harder to make, the rates were not raised but drastically lowered and the women expected to produce more, not less. Witnesses speak of being “badgered and harried” and “threatened if you did not make the $12.50 you would be fired.” They were clocked by stop watches, disciplined for slow work by being sent home to sit out a week and no wages. If they came five minutes late for work, they were frequently locked out of the plant and forced to go home without earning anything that day.


T. Eaton Co. Ltd., Toronto, Annex #4, Factory 6

The larger establishments and many of the smaller ones in Toronto are located in well-constructed modern or semi-modern factory buildings which generally provide basic conditions of work, such as light, ventilation, heating, toilets and lavatory facilities, that are satisfactory. And in most of them, particularly the union shops, those conditions of work that come very directly under the control of the employer appear to be fairly good, so far as our inspection of a number of establishments and the information obtained from workers could reveal. But conditions were found in several non-union shops that were distinctly bad.

Workers from two non-union shops made serious complaints about working conditions. Those from the first, a large establishment, said that in some parts of their shop machines were placed so closely together that there was serious crowding of the workers. They claimed also that the elementary physical amenities were lacking—that neither towels nor soap were provided in the washroom, that there was no drinking fountain and that no cups were provided, so that workers had to bring their own glasses or pop bottles, and that there was not even toilet paper in the lavatories. They complained also that the ventilation in some parts of the factory was bad, that the air was often contaminated with gas which escaped from leaking gas pipes, and that when windows were opened there were serious drafts. A number of them also stated that there were cockroaches in the shop and that some employees had found it necessary to stop bringing their lunches to work because the cockroaches got into their food.


The Eaton Knitting Company, Hamilton, Ontario
OSHAWA STRIKE 1937:
ONTARIO PREMIER FAILS TO KEEP
AMERICAN UNION MEN OUT!

Union Members are Few in Number...

The total membership in Canadian unions in 1931 was only 310,644 out of a total wage-earning group of 2,570,000. Even excluding from this latter figure the professional and higher paid salaried workers, there would remain at least 2,000,000 whom a trades-union might hope to organize. This means that more than 85 per cent of the workers were unorganized. In 1936 union membership had only risen to 322,473, which is less than it was in 1919-20 despite the increase in population. (R. R. Smith, Canadian Trades, p. 57)

PRIME MINISTER BENNETT SPEAKS OUT, 1935:

"There must be an end to child labour. There must be an end to sweat shop conditions. There must be an end to the reckless exploitation of human resources and the trafficking in the health and happiness of Canadian citizens. There must be an end to the idea that a workman should be held to his labour throughout the whole day and night of every day." (R. B. Bennett, The Premier Speaks to the People, p. 14)

In January of 1937 General Motors announced record profits for 1936 of two hundred million dollars. In the same month, its employees in Oshawa suffered their fifth consecutive wage cut in five years. Worse than the low wages was the lack of job security. Periodic examinations by doctors of the insurance company used by General Motors, weeded out the "bad risks," that is, those men over fifty. In this way the company maintained a steady supply of young and strong workers. Because of these grievances, in February of 1937, when the company posted new work schedules including an overtime, the overworked, underpaid men of the body shop walked out. One of them took it upon himself to phone the United Autoworkers headquarters in Detroit for help. [The UAW was connected with the newly founded Committee for Industrial Organization, the CIO, which was organizing industry-wide unions in the U.S.A.]

However, Mitch Hepburn, the Ontario Premier, was determined to prevent the American CIO from operating in Ontario... He announced that the time had come for a "showdown" with the CIO before its demands could damage the economy of the province... There seemed to be no limits to Hepburn's attempts to crush the CIO... Meanwhile the strike continued in a peaceful, almost serene atmosphere. Hepburn had taken upon himself the rather unlikely role of mediator, but his behaviour was anything but mediating. Whenever a settlement seemed imminent he would either ask the company to break off negotiations, or else chase the union negotiators out of his office... To defend his rather partisan behaviour Hepburn again took to the air waves and claimed that his opposition to the CIO in Oshawa had "greatly handicapped the CIO's drive to dominate Canadian industry." In any case he admitted that he was "more concerned about the CIO threat in the minefields than in the automobile industry... for Oshawa it is only an attempt by the CIO to pave the way for the real drive against the fundamental wealth of the province and its mine fields." Unashamedly, he then warned... "...let me tell Lewis here and now, that he and his gang will never get their greedy paws on the mines of Northern Ontario, as long as I am Prime Minister."... For the two weeks of the strike Hepburn was in absolute command...

General Motors management had, however, had their fill of Hepburn's interference, and over the Premier's protests an agreement was signed recognizing the UAW as the sole bargaining agent for the G.M. workers in Oshawa. Hepburn was dismayed. In the words of the partisan Financial Post, he had hoped to demolish the CIO in one great stand, but had succeeded merely in "holding it at arm's length."...

The achievement of the Oshawa strikers in fighting and defeating both the power of big business and government inspired workers throughout Canada. It gave the CIO the impetus it so desperately needed to begin organization in the mass production industries of the country.

Canadian Historical Association, Historical Papers, 1964, pp. 136-137
DON'T MISS THE SPITTOON!

I knew the lobby of the hotel was always open, and I also knew the night man quite well, so thought I might as well spend the rest of the night in the lobby. After half an hour swinging away with Billy the night man, I settled down in one of those big comfortable leather chairs you never see any more, and went to sleep.

There were three rows of chairs in the lobby, one along the wall by the bar, and two back to back, facing the front windows and the desk. At the top of every third chair, Jim (the proprietors) had placed a spittoon. Maybe you don’t remember this type; they were about twelve or fourteen inches high, brass, with a high polish.

Most of the old timers, once they got lashed up in the morning, could zero in on one of these spittoons from three chairs away with an effort at all. It used to fascinate me, just watching those artists at work. It was considered, locally, that old Ho Drake was the accepted champion of the art. With a large chew of Old Snow, he could hit the jackpot from four chairs’ distance, not three.

God help you if your aim strayed and old Jim happened to see, he’d tell you to get out of there, go home and practice some more or quit chewing. With this admonition he’d send the offender the mop. What was worse, you went down several notches on the other old timers’ status polls. Imagine missing a spittoon at that range!

J. B. Vought, The Wandering Years, p. 144
I ever tell you about the preacher in Flin Flon? He had this service at eight o’clock and, correct me if I’m wrong, but that was when Fred Allen came on and he wasn’t getting too much of a congregation. So he switched it to quarter to seven to quarter to eight and that gave the congregation 15 minutes to highball it for home and hear Fred Allen, and he got in his links at the devil too. Nobody seemed to mind. The fact, is, it just sounded like a good bit of business on the part of the preacher. Radio was king for quite a number of years.

B. Broadhurst, *The Lost Years*, p. 254

I’ve often thought of this. Do you remember Jack Benny—his name always comes first because he really was good—and Fred Allen and Fibber McGee and Molly and Singing Sam and Amos and Andy and all those famous radio personalities we used to listen to as if our life depended on it? Do you recall any one of them, just once, ever mentioning the Depression, that times were tough, millions out of work, kids sleeping in ditches and barns? Can you ever recall one of them mentioning just once all those terrible things which were happening around them? Think about it. Kind of scary, isn’t it?

There were two worlds in those days, the real one and the fantasy world.

B. Broadhurst, *The Lost Years*, p. 235

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**ENTERTAIN YOURSELF!**

With boundless leisure, there was an almost infinite variety of things to be done. Along north Main Street, all the neighbourhood stores were equipped with chess tables, and the unemployed Jews and Ukrainians in the stores outnumbered the customers four to five to one. In the summer everybody had a pond, and putting around a garden could kill the better part of a day. The service stations around town operated with staffs who were mainly volunteers—men who filled gas-tanks because they had nothing else to do.

Walking itself became great fun. So was hunting mushrooms, which we did every year; so was sitting in the park where Patry played in a wading pool or made castles in the sand. Kay was an indescribable movie-fan and would go to occasional shows with her mother or sisters. Sometimes we would go up town and drop in at auction sales. The sales were not only an important source of revenue for people on relief, but they constituted a popular form of entertainment as well. There was one auctioneer on Carlisle Street whose store was always jammed. So many people came to be amused, however, and so few came to buy, that the enterprise eventually went broke. The auctioneer worked harder to get a ten-cent bid than most of the tribe worked to get a dollar...

The pool-rooms and brokerage offices were all crowded throughout the depression, though seldom with customers. The brokerage offices supplied free newspapers and the pool-rooms furnished both recreation and heat. In the downtown rooms, the unemployed congregated in such numbers that the players often had to complain to the management in order to get closer room for their cases.

J. H. Gray, *The Winter Years*, p. 52
Hockey Cut-Backs...

New York, May 11.—The times being what they are, the National Hockey League has set a limit of $7,500 on individual player salaries and reduced the player limit to 14.

Action to reduce expenses was deemed necessary at the semi-annual meeting yesterday after it was revealed that only three of the eight clubs had not finished "in the red." Figures for each club were not made public, but it was understood that the New York Rangers, Boston Bruins and Montreal Canadiens did make money.

Not only was the individual salary limit cut to $7,500, but it was decided each club should be limited to a total expenditure of $70,000 for player salaries next season. To help in this latter respect, the player limit was fixed at 14. Some clubs last season carried as many as 20 players on the payroll, although the league rules provide that not more than 16 may be used in any one game.

No action was taken on the franchises held by the Pittsburgh Pirates and Ottawa Senators, both inactive last season. These two outfits have until July 2 to decide whether they will organize teams and return to the league or sell their franchises.

Toronto Daily Star 11 May 1932

FADS...

...there was this craze for miniature golf. It was stupid, really, but it did have a few things going for it. You just needed a city lot, that size, and one man could put together 18 holes and they were only made of sand or hard packed crushed gravel or dirt. Not grass, it wouldn’t stand up. You got pipes and tiles and cans and it was all like one of those Rube Goldberg inventions, hit the ball, and it goes along and plops into a hole and runs down a pipe and knocks aside a wooden arrow and then drops into a cup. Foolishness.

But a guy, or at least his wife and him, could build one and buy a couple of dozen old putters and some beaten up balls for a few bucks and you were in business. Yeah, miniature golf.

My Dad and his brother had one in Toronto and in one season they made a fortune. On Saturday and Sunday it would be going from 10 in the morning until, yeah, until it was too dark to see and then they had these Christmas tree lights, yeah, the blue and yellow and red ones, and people would keep going until midnight. Nothing to do you see, and a dime to play, a couple could spend a twenty cents and have some fun.

I’m telling you, my old man would come home on a Saturday midnight with dollars, quarters and dimes weighing him down. Sixty, seventy a day, and all clear, was nothing. But how could it last? Next year there were dozens and my old man and his brother got smart and sold their layout, yeah, for $300 or so.

So that year everyone went broke. People were doing something else, bike races, contract bridge, fads were the things in them days. Chain letters, hopes and dreams.

B. Broadcast, Ten Lost Years, p. 252
THE BROWN BOMBER...

Radio was the big thing and boxing was radio. It was entertainment, sometimes the only entertainment; there was Joe Louis was the big one in those years. The Brown Bomber. There must be millions of guys my age, guys who were kids in the Thirties who can remember Joe Louis better than they can remember any of the modern fighters, except Ali because he's something special.

There was Joe Louis and then everybody else about half a mile down the road, Braddock, Schmeling, Galtieri. Half the people called him Joe Looney. Couldn't pronounce his last name right but they sure knew him, and yet not one of us ever had a chance to see him fight. New York, now there was the fight-town. Madison Square Garden, and all the hoop-de-doos that went with it. The sports pages were all of Joe Louis and what they called his Rum-of-the-March Club. He was fighting everybody and knocking them out, and I can still hear the announcer. Forget his name, but I should remember it. We know now that Joe never threw that many punches but the announcer threw a lot for him, to make the fight more exciting and sell more Gillette razor blades. Blue Blades. He would say, 'Get on his head, get on his head, and hit him there, left, left, left, right, right... HE'S DOWN!!!!!!' and if the poor guy got up, that was his problem. It's hard to think they were fighting a world champion for a couple of thousand.

B Broadfoot: Ten Lost Years, pp. 237-238

At the Prince's Gate,
Canadian National Exhibition,
Toronto, 1935

Bathing at Fort Dalhousie, Ontario

All Across Canada, Enthusiastic Crowds Greeted The Royal Tour of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth in 1939

General A. C. MacDonnell and friends playing golf