

1-1-1995

## Private values, public policy, and poverty in America, 1890-1940.

Margaret Orelup  
*University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations\\_1](https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_1)

---

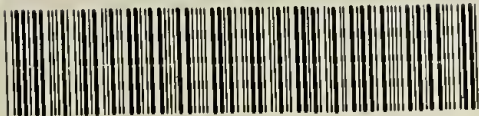
### Recommended Citation

Orelup, Margaret, "Private values, public policy, and poverty in America, 1890-1940." (1995). *Doctoral Dissertations 1896 - February 2014*. 1221.  
<https://doi.org/10.7275/v3n9-tb69> [https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations\\_1/1221](https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_1/1221)

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations 1896 - February 2014 by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@library.umass.edu](mailto:scholarworks@library.umass.edu).



UMASS/AMHERST



31206601101454



PRIVATE VALUES, PUBLIC POLICY, AND POVERTY  
IN AMERICA, 1890-1940

A Dissertation Presented

by

MARGARET ORELUP

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

September 1995

Department of History

© Copyright by Margaret Orelup 1995

All Rights Reserved



PRIVATE VALUES, PUBLIC POLICY, AND POVERTY IN AMERICA,  
1890-1940

A Dissertation Presented

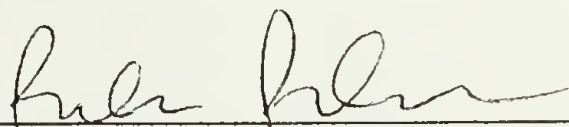
by

MARGARET ORELUP

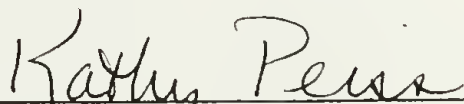
Approved as to style and content by:



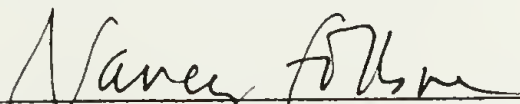
Bruce Laurie, Chair



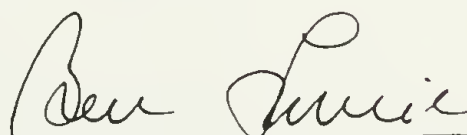
Paula Baker, Member



Kathy Peiss, Member



Nancy Folbre, Member



Bruce Laurie, Department Head  
History Department

To Anton and Victor



ABSTRACT

PRIVATE VALUES, PUBLIC POLICY AND POVERTY  
IN AMERICA, 1890-1940  
SEPTEMBER 1995

MARGARET ORELUP, B.A., BUTLER UNIVERSITY

M.A., THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Ph.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Bruce Laurie

Recent welfare histories highlighting reformers, bureaucrats, and recipients of aid have added immeasurably to our understanding of welfare policy formation, but have ignored the extent to which the parameters of change were set by public opinion. Public opinion, informed by cultural values, constrained state action in ways that have been little explored.

Examining the periodicals and newspapers of the mainstream, union, and African American presses as well as film, oral histories and autobiographies, I find differences by class and race, but also widespread and repetitive expressions of concerns shared by both races and by both the middle and lower middle classes. These included a strict standard of neediness, impatience with long-term aid, and a hierarchy of worthiness that privileged the previously middle-class over the working poor and families over unattached adults.

In the broadest generalization, the story of is one of discontent. Ambivalence and discontent were present in

the Progressive era with the inception of mothers' pensions and continued in the 1920s as social work professionalized and public and private aid increased. Discontent continued in the 1930s as public aid took on a complex and bureaucratized structure and as unprecedented need forced difficult decisions regarding worthiness and need. Throughout these changes the middle classes both created and reacted to the changing structure of welfare as they accepted or rejected programs based on a rough consensus of what constituted worthiness, need, and effective response.

Many remained convinced that programs did not aid the right people sufficiently and aided the wrong people too much. Increasingly they felt estranged from those who ran the programs, the social welfare professionals. Assumptions, based in class, proved more powerful than ideologies such as gender (or maternal) solidarity and their stigma on poor adults equally as powerful as racial assumptions would come to be.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT . . . . .	v
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II. THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF WORTHINESS . . . . .	24
III. COMMERCIALIZED HUMANITARIANISM . . . . .	74
IV. BUREAUCRATIZED HUMANITARIANISM . . . . .	133
V. CONCLUSION . . . . .	196
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	209

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In the objective definitions of government regulations the poor are persons whose income is below a certain figure. The placement of the poverty line may be determined by political agendas, but once it is set delinating the poor is straightforward. No such neutrality informs popular definitions of the poor. These are subjective constructs shaped with varying degrees of subtlety by many criteria, such as standards of appearance, behavior, foresight, and morality. They are shaped by personal values and perceptions of national values. By exploring popular definitions and concerns over time we learn not only something of the assumptions underlying public attitudes toward poverty but also how support and opposition for policy may be nurtured within in the polity.

According to Michael Katz, the prevalent images of the poor at any given time do not match the demographic characteristics of those receiving financial assistance. By this he means that poverty is structural in lower working class life yet historically large segments of the middle and upper classes have attributed it to individual



failure.<sup>1</sup> In order to refute the generalization Katz has called for demographic portraits of social groups that received assistance. In a similar vein Jacqueline Jones has argued persuasively that "embedded in the historical record of ordinary families . . . is a powerful refutation of the culture of poverty or culture of dependency thesis."<sup>2</sup> Jones has called for further research into the lives of the poor.

Katz and Jones are right; portraits of the poor are of inestimable value in sorting out the objective reality of the poor from the subjective constructs of public perception. But we need also a more subtle understanding of the subjective constructs. Generalizations about long-term perceptions of the poor may be broadly true but they also conceal fluctuation and change. Concerns about the poor and their assistance programs change over time; they respond to and influence changes in public policy.

Popular opinion adds a needed dimension to our understanding of policy formation. While studies of reform coalitions, bureaucratic concerns, and recipient

---

<sup>1</sup>Michael B. Katz, Poverty and Policy in American History Studies in Social Discontinuity (New York: Academic Press, 1983), p. 240.

<sup>2</sup>Jacquelyn Jones, "Southern Diaspora: Origins of the Northern 'Underclass'," in The "Underclass" Debate: Views from History ed. Michael B. Katz (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 38-39.

responses have added immeasurably to our understanding of welfare policy formation, they cannot disclose the extent to which the parameters of change have been set by public opinion. Public opinion, informed by cultural values, acts as a social constraint on state action in ways that have been little explored.<sup>3</sup> The limits of public opinion prompted Marion Wright Edelman to head the Children's Defense Fund, the lobbying group for children. While her goal was greater support for poor adults and children, Edelman became convinced that only children's welfare could elicit a positive response from the American public.<sup>4</sup> Another political insider, Louis Howe, Franklin Roosevelt's close advisor, constantly sought reports on "what the silent voters are thinking, the ones not organized."<sup>5</sup>

A current study of public opinion and policy data found over a forty-year period that opinion measured in a

---

<sup>3</sup>Ellis Hawley, "Social Policy and the Liberal State," in Federal Social Policy: The Historical Dimension eds. Donald Critchlow and Ellis Hawley (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988), p. 134.

<sup>4</sup>Miriam Cohen and Michael Hanagan, "The Politics of Gender and the Making of the Welfare State, 1900-1940: A Comparative Perspective," Journal of Social History 24 (Spring 1991): 469.

<sup>5</sup>Quoted in Leila Sussman, Dear FDR: A Study of Political Letter-Writing (Totowa, NJ: Bemister Press, 1963), p. 24. Sussman discusses the value Roosevelt placed on letters and press summaries on pp. 39, 64-66, and 70-73.



given year corresponded to policy changes one year later.<sup>6</sup> Theda Skocpol and Ann Orloff note that a new policy is shaped in part by public opinion regarding the perceived successes and failures of past policies. They have termed the effect of the public's response "feedback." But the linkage of opinion to policy is not always clear or direct. Agency of a social group on policy can be subtle but cumulative over time.<sup>7</sup>

Like "the poor," public opinion is both a social construct and a reality. In one sense, it is the construct of those who present themselves as spokespersons for social groups. The mainstream journals of opinion, for example, considered themselves to represent the views of the middle class. African American newspapers, such as the Defender and the Courier, claimed to speak for their race, as did the journals of the National Association for Colored People and the Urban League. Union journals and papers, such as the National Labor Tribune, claimed to represent their readership. Public

---

<sup>6</sup>Faith Lomax Cook and Edith J. Barrett, Support for the American Welfare State: The Views of Congress and the Public (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p. 33. See Benjamin I. Page and Robert Y. Shapiro, "Effects of Public Opinion on Policy," American Political Science Review 77 (1983): 175-90.

<sup>7</sup>Linda Gordon, "The New Feminist Scholarship on the Welfare State," in Women, the State, and Welfare ed. Linda Gordon (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), pp. 27-28.

opinion as constructed by media has significance for this discussion that because politicians and others who would influence policy regarded the press as reflecting the views of large numbers of their readers. The construct of public opinion influenced policy.

To some extent the construct presented by the press did match a rough consensus within its readership. Books, magazines, and newspapers are complex products that blend the views of writers, editors, publishers, advertisers and those readers who write letters. The extent to which any text "reflects" or "shapes" the views of its readers is problematic and essentially unknowable. What is certain is that they do both. They are vehicles of their producers, but they must also reflect readers' expectations in order to sell.

Some variation in interpretation will always occur since readers understand any text according to their unique values and experiences. Readers, however, do not rewrite texts freely, but according to a "limited number of coherence-producing schemata."<sup>8</sup> And ephemeral reading materials especially, such as newspapers and magazines,

---

<sup>8</sup>Mike Budd, Robert M. Entman, and Clay Steinman, "The Affirmative Character of U.S. Cultural Studies," Critical Studies in Mass Communication 7 (2): 171, quoted in Elizabeth S. Bird, For Enquiring Minds: A Cultural Study of Supermarket Tabloids (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), p. [204?].



are designed to constrain interpretation by using common symbols and images. These "shorthand" symbols, used to convey a complex of ideas in simple form, must resonate with the reader's convictions and preconceptions. As Joan Neuberger puts it, "the meanings a newspaper uses to shape reality have to reflect readers' prior experience."<sup>9</sup>

It is true the degree of congruence between the content of a publication and its readers can vary. At times, some publications were mobilized to campaigns or agendas instigated by reformers, powerful persons on their editorial board, or leaders within their readership community. At these times, editors and publishers of magazines and newspapers actively sought to shape and alter reader opinion. Analysis of popular print sources should incorporate an awareness that their's is a discourse at some remove from the readers they served. Yet, with close attention to context and with corroboration from other kinds of evidence, the constructs of opinion presented in print sources may be taken as indicative of predominant views and values among their readers.

---

<sup>9</sup>Bird, Enquiring Minds, pp. 163-66, 195-96; Joan Neuberger, Hooliganism: Crime, Culture, and Power in St. Petersburg, 1900-1914 (Berkeley: University of California Press), pp. 19-20, quotation on p. 21.

Public opinion was not simply a construct. There were also real people who voted, who wrote letters, who tried in various ways to add their voice to the conduct of government. I have sought the views of individuals and groups through letters, autobiographies, and opinion polls. Of course any effort to depict consensus within large social groups will blur distinctions and differences. I have tried to find the lowest common denominators, the views expressed repeatedly in different kinds of sources. Depicting public opinion may be problematic, but I would suggest that all historians of social problems write about it, if indirectly; it is implicit in the assumptions of accounts of reformers and institutions. While it may be impossible to capture the limitless variation in nuances among individual members of the public, it is possible to perceive and describe broad themes that appear repeatedly; it is these broad areas of consensus that defines the limits of acceptable discussion.

Because the range of my sources does not often include the unskilled working class, the public opinion I describe is that of the middle and lower middle classes with some inclusion of the African American middle class. My labeling of the beliefs I describe as those of the middle classes is not meant to imply that these beliefs



were different from or in opposition to those of the lower classes. Rather the absence of the unskilled is due to the absence of data.<sup>10</sup>

The recent scholarship on welfare and poverty has enjoyed vigorous growth due to a convergence of interest in state and policy formation from sociology, history, and political science. Moving beyond earlier debates over social welfare or social control, scholars have proposed new models for understanding policy formation and developed new research agendas. They have explored welfare history from several new perspectives, including the agency and life experience of recipients, the influence of gender and race on policy development, and the expansion of state capacity.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup>David Beito correctly notes that welfare historians, sometimes intentionally and sometimes not, have indicated that the middle class held different and more moralistic criteria of worthiness than the working class. See "Mutual Aid, State Welfare, and Organized Charity: Fraternal Societies and the 'Deserving' and 'Undeserving' Poor, 1900-1930," Journal of Policy History 5 (1993): 419-34.

<sup>11</sup>Recent historiographical essays reflect the increasing emphasis on constructing models of policy formation. For essays that categorize works by causation models see: Donald Critchlow, "Social-Policy History: Past and Present," in Federal Social Policy: The Historical Dimension ed., Critchlow, pp. 9-34; Gordon, "New Feminist Scholarship," pp. 9-35; Ellis W. Hawley, "Social Policy and the Liberal State in Twentieth-Century America," in Federal Social Policy, ed. Critchlow, pp. 117-139; and Theda Skocpol, Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1992), pp. 1-62. For chronological organization see Clarke Chambers' essay, "Toward a



The field began with an emphasis on reformers. Pioneer social workers wrote the earliest welfare histories, recording the difficulties and achievements of their profession, focusing on the development of institutions and programs. The publication of Robert Bremner's From the Depths: the Discovery of Poverty in the United States marked the beginning of the historian's interest.<sup>12</sup> Bremner's book traced the sources of awareness of poverty in Progressive era middle class culture. Although Bremner had been concerned with the middle class understanding of poverty, his followers into the field were primarily interested the efforts of reformers and in the growth and development of programs and institutions, and the social work profession. In the works of Allen Davis, Roy Lubove, Walter Trattner, Clarke

---

Redefinition of Welfare History," Journal of American History 73 (September 1986): 407-33. Berkowitz and Howard voice caution against overarching models. See Edward Berkowitz, "How To Think About the Welfare State," Labor History 32 (Fall 1991): 489-502 and Christopher Howard, "Sowing the Seeds of 'Welfare': The Transformation of Mothers' Pensions, 1900-1940," Journal of Policy History 4 (1992): 188-227.

<sup>12</sup>Raymond A. Mohl, "Mainstream Social Welfare History and its Problems," Reviews in American History 7 (December 1979), p. 469. Allen Davis credits Bremner's From the Depths as well as the founding of the Social Welfare History Group in 1956 and Merle Curti's "American Philanthropy and the National Character," American Quarterly 10 (Winter 1958). See Allen Davis, "Social Welfare History," Reviews in American History 2 (September 1974), p. 344. Clarke A. Chambers gives similar credits in "Toward a Redefinition of Welfare History," pp. 407-09.

Chambers, Daniel Nelson, and others there is an underlying assumption of social progress and humanitarian motive as reforms brought additional groups of persons under the umbrella of social provision.<sup>13</sup>

However, there emerged simultaneously a literature that challenged the progressive viewpoint. Rather than altruism, in these works it was desire for social control over the lower classes that motivated the reforms. To another group of radical historians, reforms represented the triumph of capitalist interests. The dispute over motivation of social justice or social control was further enlivened by the work of economists Piven and Cloward. Charging welfare programs functioned to regulate the labor market, Piven and Cloward described programs that extended or retracted their benefits in accommodation to the market.<sup>14</sup> While the debate over social control versus

---

<sup>13</sup>See Clarke A. Chambers Seedtime of Reform: American Social Service and Social Action, 1918-1933 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963); Allen Davis, Spearheads for Reform: The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement, 1890-1914 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967); Roy Lubove, The Professional Altruist: the Emergence of Social Work as a Career, 1880-1930 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965); Daniel Nelson, Unemployment Insurance: the American Experience, 1915-1935 (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969); Walter I. Trattner, From Poor Law to Welfare State: A History of Social Welfare in America (New York: Free Press, 1974).

<sup>14</sup>The arguments for social welfare or social control and the thesis of Piven and Cloward are well-summarized in Walter I. Trattner, Social Welfare or Social Control? Some

social justice raised valuable questions on class divisions, its emphasis on the thoughts and motives of the middle class did not permit full consideration of the dynamics of policy formulation.

In the works of those who favored social justice and those who favored social control there was an implicit model of policy-making that assumed a triumvirate of actors: reformers, government officials and politicians, and the public. Reformers and the state took center stage however. It was assumed that middle-class reformers represented the public. But reformers necessarily are in advance of public opinion. Indeed one organization of the 1930s advised those interested in passing welfare legislation that the less the public knew, the more likely success.<sup>15</sup>

Historians have given some consideration to popular views of particular social groups within the poor. Attitudes toward tramps in the late nineteenth century, homeless men and unemployed men in the early twentieth century have been described.<sup>16</sup> More recently the

---

Historical Reflections on Regulating the Poor (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983).

<sup>15</sup>William R. Brock, Welfare, Democracy and the New Deal (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 355-56.

<sup>16</sup>Kim Hopper, "A Poor Apart: The Distancing of Homeless Men in New York's History," Social Research 58 (Spring 1991): 107-132; Alexander Keysarr, Out of Work:



scholarship on women's clubs in the nineteenth century and Progressive era has provided a portrait of the grassroots level of reform that is suggestive of the views of the organized polity. In the same vein historical sociologist Theda Skocpol investigated Progressive era popular support for mothers' pensions. This literature is very helpful toward reconstructing political culture and understanding broad social movements, but at times relies rather heavily on high-level leadership and organizational publications to represent the views of the membership.<sup>17</sup>

Criticism of the disproportionate attention paid to reformers that dominated welfare history emerged in 1980s. Robert Bremner, Allen Davis, Clarke Chambers, Michael Katz noted the absence in the literature of attention to the actions of the poor.<sup>18</sup> In response historians looked

---

The first century of unemployment in Massachusetts (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

<sup>17</sup>Skocpol, Protecting Soldiers and Mothers; Haze Sorel Tischler, Self-Reliance and Social Security, 1870-1917 (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1971); Gwendolyn Mink, "The Lady and the Tramp: Gender, Race, and the Origins of the American Welfare State," in Women, the State and Welfare, ed. Gordon, pp. 92-122.

<sup>18</sup>Robert Bremner, "The State of Social Welfare History," in The State of American History, ed. Herbert J. Bass (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), p. 95; Chambers, "Welfare History," pp. 432-33; Davis, "Social Welfare History," p. 344; Mohl, "Mainstream Social Welfare History," pp. 474-75.

more closely into the lives of the poor and described their struggles for survival and advancement.

Michael Katz and Alexander Keysarr sketched portraits of poorhouse inmates and unemployed workers. Katz and Keysarr stressed the efforts of impoverished families to maintain their independence.<sup>19</sup> Linda Gordon studied poor families investigated for child abuse or neglect and found that sometimes mothers successfully utilized the agencies for their own purposes, and that other times they were manipulated or victimized by those agencies. The point of her study, and of succeeding works, was that the poor were active agents in a dynamic process of policy implementation.<sup>20</sup>

A new critique grew in part from these efforts and attached greater importance to the meanings of gender in welfare policy formation and implementation. This scholarship has taken two directions, examining both the impact of policy on poor women and the role of women in

---

<sup>19</sup>Katz, In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America (New York: Basic Books, 1986); Keyssar, Out of Work. Jones, "Southern Diaspora: Origins of the Northern 'Underclass'," in "Underclass" Debate, ed. Katz, pp. 38-39.

<sup>20</sup>Linda Gordon, Heroes of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence, Boston, 1880-1960 (New York: Viking, 1988). See also Mary Odem, "Single Mothers, Delinquent Daughters, and the Juvenile Court in Early 20th Century Los Angeles," Journal of Social History 25 (Fall 1991): 27-43.

the construction of policy. Beverly Stadum provided a detailed description of the lives of poor women in early twentieth century Minneapolis.<sup>21</sup> Like Katz and Keysarr, Stadum stressed the resourcefulness and self-reliance of poor persons. Stadum's study also supported Linda Gordon's findings regarding the interaction of poor persons with the representatives of private and public agencies of social provision.<sup>22</sup> Research into the lives of the poor, as I have argued above, is valuable for its objective information, but cannot explain how the poor are subjectively perceived by other politically powerful classes.

Sometimes research into the lives of poor women led to the second theme developing in welfare history, the role of women in developing policy. Some have asserted the role of female clients in influencing policy. Linda Gordon, in her research of mothers seeking financial assistance, argued that through seeking these women created policy by breaking down social worker resistance to mothers' pensions. The argument of client agency in

---

<sup>21</sup>Beverly Stadum, Poor Women and Their Families: Hard Working Charity Cases, 1900-1930 (Binghamton: State University of New York Press, 1991).

<sup>22</sup>Gordon, Heroes of Their Own Lives.



creation of policy has since been enunciated by Molly Ladd-Taylor and others.<sup>23</sup>

Other research has focused on the role of middle-class female reform coalitions in creating policy. First Paula Baker and more recently Kathryn Kish Sklar charted the development of women's organizations into powerful influences on public policy by the Progressive era.<sup>24</sup> Molly Ladd-Taylor and Theda Skocpol have argued that maternalism, a cross-class (possibly cross-race) bond among all mothers led women's organizations to lobby for legislation supportive of mothers, such as mothers' pensions.<sup>25</sup> Maternalism "transformed motherhood from women's primary private responsibility into public policy." When state welfare structures were rudimentary, female reformers designed institutions and programs to

---

<sup>23</sup>See also Linda Gordon, "Single Mothers and Child Neglect, 1880-1920," American Quarterly 37 (Spring 1985): 173-92 and Molly Ladd-Taylor, "'My Work Came Out of Agony and Grief': Mothers and the Making of the Sheppard-Towner Act" in Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States, eds. Seth Koven and Sonya Michel (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 321-42.

<sup>24</sup>Paula Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society," American Historical Review 89 (June 1984): 620-47; Kathryn Kish Sklar, "The Historical Foundations of Women's Power in the Creation of the American Welfare State, 1830-1930," in Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States, eds. Seth Koven and Sonya Michel (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 43-93.

<sup>25</sup>Skocpol, Protecting Soldiers and Mothers.

address the needs of children and mothers.<sup>26</sup> African American women were excluded from state-building and channeled their efforts into private systems of support for the needy and into civil rights.<sup>27</sup>

Some scholars argue that from its inception, the welfare state has been structured along gendered social roles and consequently channeled men into work-related entitlement programs and women into stigmatized welfare programs. Finding the origins of the "two-track" system in the establishment of programs of mothers' pensions and workers' compensation, scholars such as Linda Gordon and Barbara Nelson concluded the system was the result of male and female reformers wedded to prevailing gender roles which idealized the female homemaker/mother and the male worker who earned a "family wage."

While offering new perspectives on policy, their analyses, like their predecessors', sometimes wrongly assume an identity of interest between reformers and the middle class. Nor can they explain why programs such as

---

<sup>26</sup>Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, "Introduction: 'Mother Worlds'," ed., Koven, Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 2.

<sup>27</sup>Linda Gordon, "Black and White Visions of Welfare: Women's Welfare Activism, 1890-1945," Journal of American History 78 (September 1991): 559-90; Eileen Boris, "The Power of Motherhood: Black and White Activist Women Redefine the 'Political,'" ed., Koven, Mothers of a New World, pp. 213-45.



mothers' pensions became stigmatized when their touted purpose was to remove the stigma of charity. Analysis of popular attitudes will add new perspectives to a history still skewed by a focus on reformers and, by building on recent work, will further clarify interaction the interaction of gender concerns and expectations with other major social expectations, such as adult self-sufficiency.

Analysis of popular attitudes can refine our understanding of concepts like "worthiness" and "self-sufficiency" and contribute to a more subtle understanding of variations in their application. A helpful starting point is to look at the components of a welfare program: there is a donor who wishes to give money or goods through an intermediary program to a recipient. As he considers his contribution (through taxation or donation), the donor considers essentially four questions.<sup>28</sup> He must decide what level of need deserves help. He must decide what sort of person deserves help. Then he considers whether the assistance program reaches the persons he believes should be helped and whether it does so effectively and efficiently. And finally, he must consider whether the program is a reasonable financial burden on himself and society. In practice, of course, forming an opinion is

---

<sup>28</sup>Cook, Support for the American Welfare State.



seldom a clear, organized process. But the point is that our ideas about assistance to the poor are influenced by our notions of what poor people are like and by our impressions of the goals and effectiveness of assistance programs.

Each of these questions emerged in the early twentieth century discussions of poverty. At times one is more salient than another. In the broadest generalization, the story of is one of discontent. Ambivalence and discontent were present in the Progressive era with the inception of mothers' pensions and continued in the 1920s as social work professionalized and public and private aid increased. Discontent continued in the 1930s as public aid took on a complex and bureaucratized structure and as unprecedented need forced difficult decisions regarding worthiness and need. Throughout these changes the middle classes both created and reacted to the changing structure of welfare as they accepted or rejected programs based on a rough consensus of what constituted worthiness, need, and effective response.

The reasons for their discontent were rooted in frustration over a desire to create a system that would deliver prompt, short-term aid to the worthy with little waste. Despite a structural transformation in early twentieth century welfare, many in the middle classes

remained convinced that assistance programs did not aid the right people sufficiently and aided the wrong people too much. And increasingly they felt estranged from those who ran the programs, the social welfare professionals, the representatives of charities and public agencies.

Need and character together constitute worthiness and meeting both criteria places a person in the category of the "worthy poor" or the "deserving poor." The poor have traditionally been categorized as worthy or unworthy of assistance. Both character and need must be present to constitute worthiness. The meaning of character could be reduced to self-reliance, but this essential rendering misses the nuances. Cultural beliefs regarding class, race, gender, and age conditioned character standards. Worthiness and neediness were debated throughout the structural transformation of social welfare. A highly specific hierarchy of worthiness emerged in the Progressive era and was refined during the Depression which favored children over all, parents over nonparents, and couples over unattached adults.

Historians rightly have devoted substantial attention to worthiness, but have been less attentive to need, generally treating it as an implicit component of worthiness. Traditionally need meant destitution and was codified as such in some state poor laws. Progressive era

reformers and and professional social workers of the 1920s and 1930s argued that deprivation should be addressed, not only destitution. They argued for a minimum standard of living that went beyond subsistence to provide modestly for good health and social and spiritual growth. But their definition met widespread resistance in the twenties and thirties.

Program effectiveness became steadily a larger question as the system for assistance grew and professionalized. The middle classes expressed frustration over the failure of public and private charitable agencies to deliver relief promptly. They decried turning away applicants in need while investigations were undertaken. And they objected to the ongoing investigation and counseling that characterized professional casework. Yet, simultaneously and with equal bitterness the middle classes complained of frauds and malingerers bilking the agencies. Apparently agencies were not to investigate. Yet they were to detect and eject imposters of need. In the chapters below I suggest that this contradiction has several sources including ideas of character, need, therapeutic social work, and bureaucratically administered aid.

The question of reasonable cost was closely related to the other three questions. Generally when the cost of



assistance rose, it was widely assumed that it was not because large numbers of persons met the criteria of the programs. Rather many in the middle classes suggested that the system was being abused by persons who did not meet the standards of need or of character. This conclusion suggested that professional program staff were incompetent or that they judged need and character by overly generous standards. Suspicions regarding program professionals encouraged existing wariness of centralization and desires for local autonomy in dispensing relief.

This dissertation is organized chronologically, following clear shifts in the imagery and concerns apparent in the sources. Chapter two describes the Progressive era. As the twentieth century began attitudes varied somewhat with racial and class affiliation, but the middle classes were fairly united in their support for cautious extension of social welfare programs. The variety in popular imagery suggests that ideas of worthiness may have been in flux. There existed discontentment with existing organized charity which had become somewhat discredited since the 1890s depression. Activists emerged in this hospitable reform period to lead campaigns and the result was the passage of workman's compensation laws and mothers' pensions laws. The new

programs were expected to involve little government expansion and either no cost to taxpayers (workmen's comp.) or little cost (mother's pension).

Chapter three describes the changes of the 1920s. The New Era saw the expansion of charitable fundraising from personal appeals to wealthy individuals and businesses to mass promotional techniques and workplace solicitation. A concerted effort by charities and community elites began the redefinition of charity as a single donation to an the Community Chest, an organization that mediated among a community and its charities, and determined the distribution of funds. The process of redefinition is complete nowadays, represented by payroll deductions to the United Way. As the middle class grappled with a standard of living increasingly based on consumption, poverty became a relative term; "real" poverty was confirmed in its meaning as dire poverty. At odds with that definition were professional social workers who were seen either too close to their COS predecessors or too generous in their standard of need.

Chapter four recounts events of the thirties when poverty became a temporary emergency. But relief programs and their recipients suffered in public opinion because the programs met not just the emergency, but the vast unrecognized needs of the poorly paid and sporadically

employed. There was further impatience at the federal standards and regulations tied to federal grants. Relief programs seemed to many to be bureaucratized humanitarianism. The programs, often seen as capricious, fueled a sense of personal entitlement, but contempt for the system. As the emergency seemed to subside, the relief programs did not. Protests emerged over the standard of need and duration of aid. Social workers had incorporated the popular hierarchy of worthiness so there were fewer protests on this issue.



## CHAPTER II

### THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF WORTHINESS

At no time in the first half of the twentieth century were the ideas expressed in popular media about the nature of poor men and women more varied than they were during the Progressive era. The imagery and lively interest in the poor drew from three "distinct social languages" which permeated progressive discourse on social problems.<sup>1</sup>

Anger at the excesses of large corporations, concerns for social bonds, and desire for social efficiency (intertwined with gender and family ideals) implicitly and explicitly shaped definitions of the worthy poor.

The Progressive period was one of activism, but in matters of social welfare, the public voiced an essential conservatism mixed with a cautious willingness to add or modify programs for special categories of the poor. Unsure of the effectiveness of existing programs, the middle and lower middle classes sought limited change. But they wished to retain the underlying principles of a strict standard of need and adult self-help. These had been the tenets of the preceding decades when the Charity Organization Society (COS) dominated relief programs.

---

<sup>1</sup>Daniel T. Rodgers identifies and defines these "clusters of ideas" in "In Search of Progressivism," Reviews in American History 10 (December 1982): 123-27.

Like the public, some COS leaders had lost confidence in COS methods. Recanting their former stinginess, they urged more generous assistance, but retained the primacy of individualized, therapeutic casework.<sup>2</sup> Essentially the public agreed with the COS revisionists. If few gave much credence to the therapeutic value of casework, they appreciated its coercive, supervisory qualities.

However, the social welfare community of activists and charity workers was far from united. The dominance of the COS was crumbling before challenges from the social sciences and public sector relief. Some challengers to COS standards believed in a civic right to a minimum standard of living that sustained not just physical life, but psychological and spiritual well-being as well. Still others advocated social insurance. Each group struggled to shape the standards of public relief policies and their categories of worthiness. This chapter will describe the contested meanings of worthiness, highlighting those expressed by the public, particularly the middle classes.

The social construction of worthiness in the Progressive Era was a muddled affair. Separated from the poor by education, manner, and often religion, black and

---

<sup>2</sup>See for example Frederick Almy, "Public Pensions to Widows: Experiences and Observations Which Lead Me to Oppose Such a Law," in June Axinn and Herman Levin, eds., Social Welfare: A History of the American Response to Need (Cambridge: Harper & Row, 1982 ed.), pp. 164-73.

white Americans of economic security entertained a hodge-podge of impressions about the causes of poverty and the nature of the poor. They thought of the poor as callous and dull but also vital and passionate, as amoral and brutish and yet pure-hearted and meek.

For some, the poor lived more vivid lives than other classes. For example, until she found a remedy in settlement work, Jane Addams found that long educational training caused her to perceive reality through literary referents. Relief from her sense of hot-house artificiality came through working with the poor whose lives were the more immediate for lacking the buffers of security and culture. Artist Jerome Myers admired the "adventur[ous]" lives of the poor because "each day they matched their wits against destiny." Or, as Commander Eva Booth of the Salvation Army put it, "To visit a slum in America is to come into contact with the passions and vehemence of the whole world. It is extraordinarily interesting, amazingly vital . . . " At times, the poor were larger than life in ways similar to the businessmen heroes, or "idols of power," prominent in magazine biography and fiction. In their romanticized forms, the



poor and the titans lived with a roughness and intensity that eluded a wistful middle-class.<sup>3</sup>

Supposedly sheltered from the material burdens and acquisitive values of the upper classes, the poor experienced unencumbered communion with spiritual values and enjoyed the simple pleasures of life. They lived emotionally richer lives and possessed warmer hearts and purer souls than the well-to-do. As the ever-popular author, Gene Stratton Porter, declared, "Fortunes work more trouble than they do good. I believe poor folks are happiest and get most out of life . . . ." Muckraking magazines, such as McClure's and Everybody's, freighted their fiction with reform politics, often portraying immigrant poor as innocent victims betrayed by corporate greed and political corruption.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup>Robert Bremner, From the Depths: the Discovery of Poverty in the United States (New York: New York University Press, 1964 ed.), p. 131 (quotation) but see also 181-89; "The White Angel of Our Slums," Literary Digest (July 11, 1914): 66; Arthur Henry, "Mr. Jerome's Official Home on the East Side," Outlook 71 (May 3, 1902): 41-44; Elizabeth McCracken, "The Play and the Gallery," Outlook 71 (May 17, 1902): 169-78; McCracken, "The Book in the Tenement," Atlantic Monthly 90 (November 1902): 589-98; McCracken, "Pictures for the Tenements," Atlantic Monthly 98 (October 1906): 519-28. Regarding the businessman as hero, see Theodore P. Greene, America's Heroes: The Changing Models of Success in American Magazines (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

<sup>4</sup>Quoted in Erik Lofroth, A World Made Safe: Values in American Best-Sellers, 1895-1920 (Stockholm: Uppsala, 1978), p. 139. For an interesting discussion of magazine fictional portrayals of the immigrant as innocent victim,

However, while the immigrant poor appeared to some observers as a sort of peasant cousin to Rousseau's noble savage, they looked to others like "a dirty, drunken, impure, besotted mass of humanity," beasts of burden that would "eat, drink, work, breed and die," never dreaming of a better life.<sup>5</sup> Or as poet Vachel Lindsay described them in "The Leaden-Eyed,"

Not that they starve, but starve so dreamlessly,  
Not that they sow, but that they seldom reap,  
Not that they serve, but that they have not gods to  
serve,  
Not that they die, but that they die like sheep.<sup>6</sup>

In this view, so spiritually stunted were the poor, they were content to live like animals. As one skilled worker remarked of his unskilled, immigrant coworkers, "They don't hardly seem like men to me." Like animals, the poor must be driven, herded, and occasionally subdued. For this society must depend not on charity, but on priests, police, and the discipline of the market.<sup>7</sup>

---

see Steven I. Piott, "The Lesson of the Immigrant: Views of Immigrants in Muckraking Magazines, 1900-1909," Midcontinent American Studies Journal 19 (Spring 1978): 21-34.

<sup>5</sup>Charles Sheldon, In His Steps (New York: 1920 ed.), p. 78; Paul Boyer, Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 126-29.

<sup>6</sup>Quoted in Bremner, From the Depths, p. 180.

<sup>7</sup>Quotation from Peter Shergold, Working Class Life: The "American Standard" in Comparative Perspective, 1899-1913, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982), p. 226.



Social Darwinism still claimed a respectable allegiance. The pages of popular literature seldom presented Herbert Spencer in his most implacable form, but they did raise questions about programs that assisted the poor. Campaigns to reduce infant mortality in the slums and mothers' pensions perpetuated the lesser specimens of the race, when "what [was] wanted, after all, [was] not more people, but better people."<sup>8</sup> Eugenics laws proliferated, based on a belief character traits could be passed through bloodlines.<sup>9</sup>

Views of poverty were tainted by racism toward immigrants and presumably African Americans although they're seldom mentioned in popular reading. One best-

---

<sup>8</sup>"Does Poverty Kill Babies?" Literary Digest 56 (March 30, 1918): 25-26; "Bounties for Babies," Independent 73 (July 18, 1912): 160-61.

<sup>9</sup>Eugenics was the dark side of the sense interdependence, the perception of society as an organism that pervaded much of the period's thought. According to Lofroth, heredity is one of the strongest themes in progressive era best-sellers. Character was the product of generations of breeding. See A World Made Safe, ch. 2. W. E. B. DuBois voiced a similar conviction that polish and refinement were inherent qualities, impossible to teach; see William Gatewood, Aristocrats of Color: the Black Elite, 1880-1920 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 101. According to Gatewood (p. 24), "The black upper class . . . viewed themselves as the products of a natural selection from which they had emerged as the strongest and fittest of the race. They stood in sharp contrast to those who belonged to the 'submerged masses.'"



seller summarized small-town impressions of urban poverty in the following description:

. . . in the large cities most of the poverty and all of the drunkenness, crime and political corruption were due to the perverse qualities of this foreign people,--qualities accentuated and emphasized in every evil direction by the baleful influence of a false and idolatrous religion.<sup>10</sup>

There was a strong element of the fantastic in these ruminations on the poor and a note of danger. The slums could seem surreal, beyond the borders of middle-class knowledge, a place of strange smells and unknown customs; a place where people went mad from the summer heat, where children were imprisoned in chicken coops and kept like animals, and where sinister men awaited unwary women.<sup>11</sup>

Among members of the northern African American middle class, attitudes toward the poor were complicated by widespread anxiety that whites would judge the race by its

---

<sup>10</sup>Harold Frederic, The Damnation of Theron Ware (New York: Stone & Kimball, 1896), pp. 75-77.

<sup>11</sup>"White Angel of Our Slums," p. 66. With its opening allusion to the three witches of "MacBeth," its evocative color and light, its sinister atmosphere and prophetic ending, Stephen Crane's short story, "A Desertion" is one of the best examples descriptions of the slums as a harboring their own discreet and disorganized social systems and as inhabited by men who prey on young women, two themes common in popular periodicals and occasionally in best-sellers. See Harpers 101 (November 1900): 938-39. See also the autobiography of Rose Cohen, Out of the Shadow (New York, 1918), pp. 3 and 240-41. A tenement dweller herself, Cohen comments bemusedly on a settlement worker's advice to her to wear a veil in the streets as protection against male harassment and worse.

lowest class. A new stridency entered class relations as elites blamed the uncouthness of the masses for the spread of segregation.<sup>12</sup> Their rhetoric reflected efforts to distance themselves from poorer blacks while simultaneously reforming them. The Defender, reporting that a restaurant had taken on black waitresses, added some gratuitous advice to the new hires: "All that you do/Do with your might:/Things done by halves/Are never done right."<sup>13</sup> Toward the impoverished of their own race, middle-class African Americans felt shame and compassion. Both emotions are revealed in a short story published in the Crisis and written as the diary of Joan, a young black woman.<sup>14</sup>

Even as a child, the crowded, "unclean, degrading atmosphere" of her neighborhood pained her, as did the "loud, coarse bickering" of her father and brother. Thanks to her uneducated mother, Joan completes eleven grades of school and is sheltered from the "evil and filth around her" (the loose sexuality of her uneducated peers).

---

<sup>12</sup>Gatewood, Aristocrats of Color, pp. 24, 86, 91, , 170, 344; Nancy J. Weiss, The National Urban League, 1910-1940, (New York: Oxford University press, 1974), pp. 121-23.

<sup>13</sup>S. Adams, "Hotel News," Defender 19 September 1911, p. 7.

<sup>14</sup>Lewin, Rose Dorothy, "A Fragment," Crisis 12 (September 1916): 222-29.

Joan grows into adulthood keenly feeling that her purity and refinement unfit her for marriage or friendship with any Negro man or woman.<sup>15</sup> For Joan believes most Negroes exist in a "half animal state" because of the monotonous work they do. Noble qualities present at birth lie fallow and die. Joan thinks her brother, for example, "would have made a worthwhile man, but he ran an elevator most of his life and . . . stagnated."<sup>16</sup>

A nanny in a wealthy white home and secretly in love with the adult son of the household, she longs for a refined home of her own and for a chance to make a social contribution with her life. But these joys are not to be found within her race:

God knows, I'm white and pure underneath. I've a right to be white of skin. Oh, I want a chance. I want to work at worth-while things--I want to love and be loved--I want to live! Why haven't we Negroes a chance?<sup>17</sup>

Although rarely publishing reader comments on fiction, the Crisis printed three responses to Joan's story, a departure from the norm which may suggest an unusually strong reaction from readers. One letter commented that the story theme of inter-racial love was not a wise editorial choice. The other two were radically

---

<sup>15</sup>Lewin, "A Fragment," p. 223.

<sup>16</sup>Lewin, "A Fragment," p. 229.

<sup>17</sup>Lewin, "A Fragment," p. 228



different in their reactions, but both perceived it as accurately portraying the feelings of the mulatto aristocracy that felt itself apart from working class blacks.<sup>18</sup>

Thus far we have considered the poor as an undifferentiated mass of humanity. And often that is how they were seen, in broad perspective. But when specific action was contemplated--when a new organization formed, when a voter considered a public welfare or social insurance scheme, or when an individual considered a private donation--at these times, the poor were no longer a mass. As within a kaleidoscope, a chaos of images suddenly gave way to a pattern of clusters. Implicit values built from life experience, class-bound perceptions, and religious beliefs enabled an individual to categorize the myriad of claims to his sympathy. As we shall see, these categories were deeply conditioned by cultural ideals of gender and family.

---

<sup>18</sup>See Maggie A. Caldwell, "Outer Pocket," Crisis 12 (October 1916): 291; C. P. Duncan, "Outer Pocket," Crisis 13 (January 1917): 122; Alexina Carter Barrell, "Outer Pocket," Crisis 13 (January 1917): 122. An educated Bostonian African American described the mulatto aristocracy as a people " . . . who are neither Negroes nor whites, but an ambiguous something-between;--a people not yet known or named. While our sympathies tend to unite us with the Negroes and their destiny, all our aspirations lead us toward white." John Daniels, In Freedom's Birthplace: A Study of Boston Negroes (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1914), p. 183, quoted in Gatewood, Aristocrats of Color, p. 110.

Children formed a distinct category, as they had since the late nineteenth century. But the Progressive era was, as the Outlook declared, "The Epoch of the Child."<sup>19</sup> Sociologists considered "the boy problem." Consumer awareness campaigns and campaigns to pass legislation mobilized public opposition to child labor. The White House convened its 1909 Conference on Dependent Children, and in 1913 Congress authorized the Children's Bureau.

Several considerations made poor children the subject of public sympathy and assistance. Perhaps most important was their innocence; their poverty was an accident of birth, not their own doing. Also important, especially to those who held that society was the sum of its interdependent or who thought in terms of social efficiency, was the value of children as future citizens. In order to grow to adulthood capable of working productively and raising a spiritually healthy next generation, children must have a proper home life. They needed sufficient food, light, air and sanitation; they needed parents with leisure to read and participate in

---

<sup>19</sup>Frank Marshall White, "The Epoch of the Child," Outlook 95 (May 28, 1910): 214-25.

community life; and they needed an elementary education.<sup>20</sup>

How to help the child? First, society must end child labor. Arguments for regulating child labor often assumed that parents forced children to work because they were greedy and shortsighted; they did not understand that keeping a child in school would translate into higher wages later. Such arguments gained sympathy for poor children, but also appealed to a lack of trust in the emotional and intellectual adequacy of poor parents.<sup>21</sup> Second, society must ensure an adequate family income without resorting to child labor. Organized labor urged that through the family wage a worker would have "the means to provide for and educate his family properly so that the children for whom he is responsible may live to be good, strong, men--mentally, morally, and physically good citizens."<sup>22</sup>

Some social workers went further to argue that a minimum standard of living was a child's right, an

---

<sup>20</sup>Axinn, Social Welfare, p. 9, 138-41, 145-48.

<sup>21</sup>Even so tireless a worker for the poor as Florence Kelley, could deliver a virtual diatribe against the parents of working children, see "The Family and the Woman's Wage," Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections, 1909; quoted in Axinn and Levin, Social Welfare, pp. 160-63.

<sup>22</sup>Graham Hood, "Underpaid Labor: Society's Worst Crime," The Plasterer V (July 1908): 13-14.



entitlement ideally met by a father's wages, but ultimately incumbent upon the state. A family wage was all very well for homes with a male breadwinner, but what of homes where the man was dead or absent or unemployed? Earlier opinion had favored removing children from impoverished homes. Foster homes and institutions were no longer the clear solution; whatever proponents they retained were silenced by the 1909 White House Conference on Dependent Children.<sup>23</sup>

In their new emphasis on homelife social workers were in agreement with the trend of public opinion. Victorian idealization of home life resonated throughout the early twentieth century. Changing conceptions of child nurture and citizenship combined with anxieties about women's roles to produce incessant talk of home life. Rather than remove children to institutions and foster homes, progressives increasingly preferred to rely on mother love, regardless of the mother's class. Yet keeping a child in his home through a stipend to the parent(s) could encourage their dependency on continued support. The process of becoming dependent was known as "pauperization," a term most associated with men.

---

<sup>23</sup>Axinn, Social Welfare, p. 148; Lubove, Struggle for Social Security, p. 97-98; Lynn Y. Weiner, From Working Girl to Working Mother: The Female Labor Force in the United States, 1820-1980 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1985), p. 123.

In the eyes of society, men held full responsibility for their own self-sufficiency and for the provision of their families. In contrast to its efforts on behalf of children, society was little disposed to help men as a class. Indeed, homeless men without women or children, such as paupers and tramps, aroused a singular degree of public fear and anger. Middle-class blacks and all classes of whites appear to have believed that these men were unemployed by choice. They were assumed to have deserted their families in order to live off the generosity of the public, and were considered "the dregs of society," and "human junk."<sup>24</sup> Although magazine articles never reported crimes by paupers (except panhandling), they were nevertheless described as "vicious" by popular writers and reformers alike. Even

---

<sup>24</sup>Richard T. Ely, "Pauperism in the United States," North American Review 152 (April 1891): 406-09; Jacob H. Hollander, "The Abolition of Poverty," Atlantic Monthly 110 (October 1912): 493, 496; Jacob Riis, How the Other Half Lives (New York: Hill & Wang, 1957 ed.), p. 17; Alvan Francis Sanborn, Moody's Lodging House and Other Tenement Sketches (Boston: Copeland and Day, 1895), p. 4; Owen Kildare, My Old Bailiwick, p. 5; "Getting a Living," The Plasterer 1 (June 1907): 1-2. Regarding urban, middle-class African American opinion of paupers and tramps, see the Defender. The paper had plenty to say about men who loafed about corners. Male beggars appear rarely, see "Practical Gift for Beggar," 30 March 1912, n.p. Tramps appear rather often as minor characters in fiction and in occasional human interest news articles. See "Tramp Not Wholly Lost," 17 February 1912, n.p.; "Stranger in Distress," 21 September 1912, n.p.



union journals assumed that tramps were criminals rather than men in search of work.<sup>25</sup>

Men with dependents fared better. For example, taking a summary of the New York Times annual Christmas list of the city's one hundred neediest charity cases, we find that in 1915 it did include family men, but not those who were unemployed or underpaid. Rather the Times' breadwinners were those whose doctors had certified them as temporarily too ill or too injured to work. The men were not objects of sympathy, though; for appeals to the public heart, the Times relied on the suffering of their women and children.<sup>26</sup>

The men functioned as reassurance that aid would be short-term. The breadwinners of the Times had successfully supported their families and would soon do so again. Even in families with a male breadwinner permanently incapacitated, the aid requested was still short-term: perhaps a few month's assistance while an ill mother recovered the strength to work, or perhaps a year until a boy qualified for a newsboy's license. The worthy family was an independent family even if independence

---

<sup>25</sup>"Getting a Living," pp. 1-2; "A Tramp's Conversion," National Labor Tribune 9 January 1913; Edmund Brown, "Broke": The Man Without a Dime, (Chicago: Browne & Howell Co., 1913), pp. 91, 127, 149, 162, 190, 215, and 291.

<sup>26</sup>"Empty Stockings," Literary Digest 15 (December 25, 1915): 1501-02.



meant sending mother and adolescent child into the labor force, and thus sacrificing the societal ideals of sheltering mothers within a home, safe from the corruption and physical stress of the market and of sheltering and training youth in schools until they were ready to take their place in the world.

Poverty still served as proof of masculine degeneracy, despite growing awareness of structural unemployment and starvation wages. According to Collier's, fathers who failed to provide "would not deny themselves Coney Island or the saloon."<sup>27</sup> A union journal agreed; they were "the ignorant, the intemperate, . . . they [made] their own bed and must lie in it."<sup>28</sup> Belief in the male ability to provide drew on the cultural mythology of success as available to all who were sufficiently masculine. In magazine biographies the successful, even clergy, had the "square shoulders of an athlete, the firm face of a fighter." Powerful physiques and dominating energy characterized individuals of achievement. The most popular heroes of the period were

---

<sup>27</sup>"Opportunity," Collier's XLI (July 4, 1908): 8; quoted in Theodore P. Greene, America's Heroes: The Changing Models of Success in American Magazines (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 229.

<sup>28</sup>"The Kindom of God and Modern Industry," Plasterer I (August 1907): 2.

Napoleon and Theodore Roosevelt, men who lived "the strenuous life."<sup>29</sup>

To manly men, poverty was not an obstacle, but an advantage because necessity spurred ability<sup>30</sup>. Will-power could carry any man to material success. Despite anxiety about the closing of opportunities by modern conglomerates, or perhaps because of it, popular literature from best-sellers and the solidly middle-class Saturday Evening Post to the more working-class Success insisted that in America every man was free to find his own level of success, according to his own level of ability.<sup>31</sup>

It is impossible to say to what extent different strata of society accepted the cultural male ideal of financial success. For the lower working-class, especially, there are only scraps of evidence.<sup>32</sup> The

---

<sup>29</sup>The quotation is from Greene, America's Heroes, p. 113; see also 126-45.

<sup>30</sup>"As They See It: the Question Whether It Is More Desirable to be Born to Poverty or to Wealth," Munsey's, XIV (November 1895): 138-46.

<sup>31</sup>Regarding character, opportunity and success, see Suzanne Ellery Greene, Reading for Pleasure: Popular Fiction, 1914-1945, (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1974); Greene, America's Heroes, pp. 126-45; and Lofroth, A World Made Safe. "How to Get Rich," National Labor Tribune 9 January 1913, n.p..

<sup>32</sup>In Through the Mill: the Life of a Mill-Boy (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1911), using a pseudonym of Al Priddy, Frederic Kenyon Brown recounts his lower working class youth

ideal of the male provider, however, appears to have permeated all levels of society. According to Susan Kleinberg, "In all settings, it became a mark of pride for a man to have a wife who did not work." Middle class and union men rhetorically equated manliness with family provision.<sup>33</sup>

The working poor also appear to have accepted some version of the family wage ideal. This is surprising in view of the economic realities of working-class life at the bottom. In New York City, for example, two studies between 1905 and 1907 concluded a five-person family required \$600 per year. At this wage, the family could eat a minimally healthy diet, send its children to school and allow the mother to work within the home. But the average male factory worker earned a maximum of \$416 per year (\$8 per week, assuming no lay-offs; and there were always lay-offs). And even with the wives and children earning, the U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations

---

when he believed the formulas of Success would lead him to wealth and prestige. As he writes his memoirs with the advantage of age and experience, he is aware the advice of Success was insufficient. In particular, see p. 219.

<sup>33</sup>Susan J. Kleinberg, "The Systematic Study of Urban Women," eds. Milton Cantor and Bruce Laurie, Class, Sex, and the Woman Worker (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977), p. 22. For union workers see Michael Kazin, Barons of Labor: the San Francisco Building Trades and Union Power in the Progressive Era, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), pp. 76-78.



estimated that 50 to 66 percent of working-class families were poor, a third of them abjectly so.<sup>34</sup>

Yet, according to social workers, the working poor regarded dependency with the shame of personal failure, a generalization which Rose Cohen verifies in her autobiographical description of her father.<sup>35</sup> Beverly Stadum found in her study of Minneapolis that in two-parent families, the woman were twice as likely as the man to request public aid for their family.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup>Axinn and Levin, Social Welfare, p. 130. Salary figures from John Ehrenreich, The Altruistic Imagination: A History of Social Work and Social Policy in the United States (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 23.

<sup>35</sup>Dorothy Richardson [Rose Cohen], Out of the Shadow (New York: Century Co., 1905).

<sup>36</sup>Poor Women and Their Families: Hard Working Charity Cases, 1900-1930 (Binghamton: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 47, 131. Men may have sent women to request public assistance because they believed women could elicit greater sympathy, but accounts from the 1920s and 1930s indicate that men avoided asking for help because of the shame and resentment they felt in the request and in the anticipated investigation and supervision. The fact that most social workers were female added an additional and uncomfortable dynamic. On this, see anecdotal reports on responses to unemployment in the 1920s and 1930s in Clinch Calkins, Some Folks Won't Work (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1930) and E. Wight Bakke, The Unemployed Worker: A Study of the Task of Making a Living Without a Job (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940). But Alexander Keyssar in Out of Work: The first century of unemployment in Massachusetts (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986) suggests that lower working class men did not experience unemployment as personal failure because they could see that many persons in their fields were also unemployed.

Middle class African Americans, while recognizing the difficulties of prejudice, shared the popular belief in individual responsibility. As the Defender headlined, "If You Are of the Right Caliber There is No Need to Be an Object of Charity." The paper inveighed regularly against "loafers" and only occasionally against lily-white trade unions.<sup>37</sup> A short story from the Crisis captured the message of major African American periodicals.

In the story a young boy, Robert Hilton, inspires himself with the words of Abraham Lincoln, a self-taught, self-made man and emancipator of the race. Hilton posts Lincoln's motto on his wall: "I will study and make ready and maybe my chance will come." Somehow he teaches himself electronics. He lives in a remote area, but through pluck and luck acquires the necessary components and builds a wireless. Now he has studied and made ready and, yes, his chance comes. He saves the firm of a vacationing electronics executive by conveying an

---

<sup>37</sup>At times laboring classes appeared in "humorous" human interest items such as "Hurls Wife From A Window." Angered that his dinner was poorly prepared because his wife had tarried at a meeting of the Ladies' Auxiliary of the Colored Eagles, the husband dropped her from a second story window with the remark, "If you is an Eagle, den fly." The wife shooed away a concerned policeman saying, "It's just a little fuss." The identification of the man as a laborer in a subheadline, the use of dialect and the description of domestic violence as a "fuss" suggested the poor were a funny, inferior, and separate species. Defender, 16 September 1911, p. 7.



emergency message on his homemade wireless. When the executive spies Lincoln's motto on the wall, sincerity overwhelms prejudice and he offers Hilton a professional position.<sup>38</sup>

Although perseverance may have rewarded some lucky Robert Hiltons, most African American men met with singular difficulties in finding employment. Their high rate of unemployment led some in both races to perceive African American men as irresponsible, an attitude noticeable in the Progressive era, but which would find increasing public expression in the coming decades. It was a view deeply tangled in sexual issues. As one reader wrote to the Crisis, "You know the Negro man has always demanded the service of his women and confiscated their money which accounts for their desire for the love of the white man."<sup>39</sup>

The unskilled, working class may have perceived poor men with greater sympathy than their economically more fortunate compatriots. If the silent films of the century's first decade may be accepted as demonstrating working class values, then most certainly they did. Films were very popular with the lower working-class, who,

---

<sup>38</sup>Lottie Burrell Dixon, "His Motto," Crisis 8 (April 1914): 188-90.

<sup>39</sup>Duncan, "The Outer Pocket," p. 122.



according to contemporary observers, outnumbered viewers of other classes. In contrast to media that were marketed to a single class, such as the self-consciously middle-class periodicals and the union journals, film presented an heroic image of impoverished husbands and fathers. Notably, the Boston Pilot was the only periodical I reviewed that shared with film a viewpoint consistently at odds with that of the mainstream press. As the paper of Boston area Catholics, the Pilot's audience was also one of mixed classes, including a large percentage of the lower working class.<sup>40</sup>

To judge from these media, the lower working class believed poverty to be the consequence of a flawed economic system governed by venal individuals. Under such a system, a man was not to blame if he could not find work, or if his wages could not pay the rent and buy the groceries. Film suggests the poor may have tempered their apparent acceptance of a man's responsibility for provision with a recognition of the odds against his

---

<sup>40</sup>Regarding the class of film audiences until c. 1910-1913, see Kay Sloan, The Loud Silents: Origins of the Social Problem Film (Urbana, Ill: University of Chicago Press), p. 51 and Kathy Peiss, Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), pp. 145-48, and 154. My assessments of silent film are based on reading the synopses for three thousand films compiled in Kemp R. Niver, Early Motion Pictures: the Paper Print Collection in the Library of Congress (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1985).

success. In sharp contrast to print media, film offered positive images of poor men. On the silent screen, sober men struggled devotedly to protect their families. Bill Slade, for example, the unemployed iron worker of "The Burglar's Baby," determinedly searches for work and even applies for charity. Growing desperate, he burglarizes a doctor's house. Surprised in the act by the owner, Dr. King, Slade barely makes his escape. Happily the mills reopen, Slade is rehired, and briefly all is well. But his baby falls sick. Slade summons a doctor; by cinematic coincidence it is Dr. King. King recognizes Slade, but listens to his story, forgives the burglary, saves the baby, and becomes a treasured family friend.

Unable to find work or to bear their families' suffering, other film fathers resort to burglary. But in each case the robbed men not only forgive, but offer friendship and restitution of money or a job, suggesting that society is the true thief, robbing the working man of his right to provide for his family.<sup>41</sup>

In film, poor men could be heroes and stars. In popular literature, however, they played walk-on roles as drunks and deserters. Generally they functioned as

---

<sup>41</sup>In Niver, Early Motion Pictures, see the synopses for "In the Watches of the Night," p. 156; "The Exconvict; "One is Business, the Other Crime," p. 230. See Sloan, The Loud Silents, ch. 1.

background or moved the action forward by threatening children and young women, a literary device that could only have furthered negative impressions of poor men. No literary masculine stereotype conveyed the positive associations of the mother who took in washing, the poor little matchgirl, or the spunky newsboy. An exception might be made if one considered the frontiersmen of popular novels as poor men, but the wide separation of setting and lifeways suggests readers would not have associated these characters with contemporary poverty. Independent, outdoor life endowed the materially poor Zane Grey hero or "Virginian" with spiritual riches not popularly vouched to the urban slum-dweller.<sup>42</sup>

A short story by Stephen Crane published in Harper's provides examples of two stereotypes, the brutish father/guardian and the sexual predator. A young woman's father is sullen, "filled with unspeakable hatred," and (the story implies) has been violent in the past. But to his daughter he represents protection from sexual assault by her job foreman and unknown men on the streets. Crane presents the slums as threatening to women, "a succession of passing dangers, with menaces aligned at every corner."

---

<sup>42</sup>The perennial best-selling author, Gene Stratton Porter was especially guilty of using degenerate poor men to advance her plots; the device appears in The Harvester, Michael O'Halloran, and Girl of the Limberlost.



The "menaces" of course are men; the perception, common in fiction, may have been widely held. In her autobiography Rose Cohen describes a friendly settlement house worker who feared the streets and urged Cohen to wear a veil when she walked. Chicago's visiting nurses wore white crosses as their protective talisman for safe transit in the slums.<sup>43</sup>

The absence of positive images of masculine poverty also prevailed in African American fiction. The short stories of the Crisis, for example, offered two stereotypes of poverty. There were maternal, wise, contented women of middle-age and older. And there were young, educated men struggling to begin their professions. The absence of older men suggests some onus of success; the admirable fictional black man achieved financial success or died trying. Gracefully growing old in poverty was women's fate.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup>Stephen Crane, "A Desertion," Harper's 101 (November 1900): 936-39; Cohen, Out of the Shadow, pp. 3 and 240-41; Kathleen McCarthy, Noblesse Oblige: Charity and Cultural Philanthropy in Chicago, 1849-1929 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 123.

<sup>44</sup>See, for example, fiction in The Crisis: M. W. O., "Protection," 4 (March 1911) p. 144; Jessie Fauset, "Emmy," 5 (February 1912): 79-87 and (March 1913): 131-42; Harry H. Pace, "The Man Who Won," 5 (June 1913): 293-95 and 6 (January 1914): 33-36; Martha Gruening, "The Hoodoo," 7 (April 1915): 195-97; M. Budd, "The Shell Road Witch," 8 (February 1914): 90-93; and Mrs. Paul Lawrence Dunbar, "Hope Deferred," 8 (May 1914): 238-42. The short stories in the Defender with very few exceptions were romances among

Overall, for both races, fictional poor women fared markedly better than men. Indeed authors sometimes contrasted poor women and men as a means of heightening female worthiness. The Defender, for example, nominated "the Ordinary Woman" for a Carnegie Medal as the "Highest Type of Hero." The "battle scarred veteran" might well be humbled by the valor of the Ordinary Woman who cooked and cleaned without ceasing, made one dollar do the work of five, nurtured her children, and never thought of herself. And what of her husband, the Ordinary Man?

At his worst he was cross and querulous. At his best he was silent, and would gobble his food like a hungry animal and subside into his paper, leaving her to spend a dull and monotonous evening after a dull and monotonous day.<sup>45</sup>

Scarcely a domestic icon, the Ordinary Man yet outperformed many of his ordinary brothers by bringing home a paycheck. Many would have told the Ordinary Woman to count her blessings that her husband had not deserted.<sup>46</sup>

---

members of the middle and upper middle classes.

<sup>45</sup>C.F. Nichol, "'The Ordinary Woman' Highest Type of Hero," Defender 18 November 1911, p. 1. Poor women are also compared to soldiers, to their advantage, in Richard Washburn Child, "What Shall We Do With the Old?" Outlook 21 (October 1909): 356.

<sup>46</sup>Desertion became a great concern to social workers during the Progressive era, and was picked up by the popular press. Concerns about desertion were not groundless, according to Beverly Stadum one-third of the women in her Minneapolis sample of 300 faced desertion at some time



These negative stereotypes of poor men conditioned public discussion of social welfare programs. Perhaps it is no coincidence that the beneficiaries of workmen's compensation matched exactly with the men from the New York Times list; both were employed family men, certified by doctors as unfit for work.<sup>47</sup>

Workmen's compensation spread across forty-three states by 1920.<sup>48</sup> Credit for the legislation is generally given to two organizations, the American Association for Labor Legislation (AALL) and the National Civic Federation (NCF). For AALL, composed primarily of academics and social workers, workmen's compensation was the opening wedge of a larger social insurance program.

---

between 1900 and 1930; some were deserted repeatedly as desertion served as an informal marital separation. According to one contemporary source, in 1906 there were 60,000 women deserted, so that "one hundred thousand children" lacked "all parental support." Although the author makes the point that the desertions come from all classes, he does so as a conscious iconoclast, protesting what he believes to be the majority view, that desertion was a poor man's crime. See R.W. Shufeldt, M.D., "The Whipping-Post for Wife-Beaters," Arena 35 (February 1906): 168. See also Adriana Spadoni, "In the Domestic Relations Court," Collier's 47 (August 26, 1911): 15. Regarding social workers and desertion, see Martha May, "The 'Problem of Duty': Family Desertion in the Progressive Era," Social Service Review 62 (March 1988): 40-60.

<sup>47</sup>Although women and single men benefitted from workmen's compensation, the assumed beneficiary in popular articles was the family man.

<sup>48</sup>Roy Lubove, The Struggle for Social Security (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 53-54.



The AALL tended to use broadly social language, to speak of the interdependence of the physical and moral well-being of each member of society. They argued for the potential contribution of each citizen, an argument more often associated in the popular mind with children. To the business and labor representatives of the NCF, workmen's compensation was a reformation of employer liability law. As such, it performed an important but limited function of making compensation for injury more predictable and perhaps more equitable.<sup>49</sup>

The middle-class press supported workmen's compensation from a viewpoint similar to the NCF. The most common argument advanced workmen's compensation as an effort to shift the cost of supporting disabled workers from the taxpayer to the consumer. Since "danger to life and limb [was] inherent in modern industry and inalienable from it," compensation proponents suggested its cost should be reckoned in the same way as the pay-roll or the repair account. As one writer asked, "If human life goes into the mining of coal or the manufacturing of steel, why

---

<sup>49</sup>Hace Sorel Tishler, Self-Reliance and Social Security, 1870-1917 (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1971), ch. 6.

should not I, the consumer of coal, the user of steel, pay the cost?"<sup>50</sup>

Defining injury as an industrial cost would lighten the burden of public welfare taxation; and it was not a small burden, considering a half million workers per year were injured or killed. If one estimated only ten percent remained on relief for the rest of their lives, at a cost of about \$6,000 per man, then "private and public charities [were] called on every year to contract to pay out some three hundred million dollars in the future."<sup>51</sup> Reducing the number of disabled, argued the mainstream press, was the other justification of workmen's compensation. Just as fire insurance punished negligence with higher premiums and had wrought a dramatic decrease in fires, workmen's insurance would reduce industrial accidents.<sup>52</sup>

This viewpoint was far more consonant with the limited goals of the NCF than the AALL. It provided a

---

<sup>50</sup>Arthur B. Reeve, "Is Workman's compensation Practicable?" Outlook 85 (March 2, 1907): 509.

<sup>51</sup>Reeve, "Is Workmen's Compensation Practicable?" p. 508-09.

<sup>52</sup>"Federal Employees' Compensation Commission," Outlook 115 (April 4, 1917): 601-02; Reeve, "Is Workman's Compensation Practicable?" p. 508-09; "Insurance and Democracy," Nation 92 (June 15, 1911): 596; Robert W. Bruere, "Compensation and Business Ethics," Harper's 131 (July 1915): 210; Louis D. Brandeis, "The Road to Social Efficiency," Outlook 98 (June 10, 1911): 295.

measure of justice for the sympathetically inclined, but allowed the public to wash its hands of the matter. Under this argument workmen's compensation was an industrial problem, not a social problem. As long as they were kept off the tax rolls, injured workers were of very limited social concern.

Historians have commented on the lack of stigma attached to workers' compensation (relative to mothers' pensions), but have overlooked two important factors. First the public perceived workmen's compensation as removing dependents from the tax rolls, while mothers' pensions added them. Second, the campaign for workmen's compensation used a rhetoric of rationalizing society through "patient, unbiased adjustment," not a rhetoric of pity; programs borne of pity retain a connotation of a favor bestowed, a connotation incompatible with norms of masculine self-reliance.<sup>53</sup>

Men were to be self-reliant; their personal predicament could not excite sympathy. A discussion of old-age pensions, for example, begins with a spry seventy-three year old scrubwoman. Growing stiffer each year with

---

<sup>53</sup>The quotation is from Bruere, "Compensation and Business Ethics," p. 210. See Lubove, Search for Social Security, ch.3; Trattner, Poor Law to Welfare State, p. 214; Linda Gordon, "The New Feminist Scholarship on the Welfare State," in Linda Gordon, ed., Women, the State, and Welfare (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), pp. 9-35.



rheumatism, she fears the day she can no longer scrub, for then the poorhouse will claim her. But after describing her case, the author concludes, "But dismiss her. She is too pitiful [for nonemotional, logical discussion]." The scrubwoman appeals to sentiment; Americans want their discussion based on logic. So the author presents instead as a typical but nonpitiful case, an old man whose life history is identical to the woman's. Each fulfilled their respective roles as homemaker and provider to a family. Each is abandoned in later years by children too distant and too poor to help. They are different only in gender. The woman's gender generates pity, while the man's stifles it.<sup>54</sup>

For women suffering was a special sign of worthiness. Differing from the print media of the middle classes, film presented men as suffering. But even in film, women out-suffer men. Poor men must struggle, but sometimes they win. Not so, women. One jaded reviewer summarized the genre of women's poverty films thus: "mother is still unable to pay the rent in a large number of recent photo-sobs."<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup>Child, "What Shall We Do With the Old?" p. 356.

<sup>55</sup>Sloane, Loud Silents, reviews about seventy films that features plots built around poverty, many around women's poverty. The quotation is from pp. 48-49.

"Photo-sobs" aim for the heart with unabashed vignettes of terrible human suffering. Mothers too beautiful for this world end their struggles in incarceration or death. Arrested for stealing bread or shoes for their children, they are imprisoned. Confronted with a loved one's fatal illness, they fail to earn enough money for medicine. Evicted into the snow, they give their children away to richer homes. Without a male breadwinner, women and children faced certain doom.<sup>56</sup>

The New York Times' annual list of one hundred neediest cases, featured self-sacrificing mothers so prominently that it seemed to this reader that three-quarters of the list was simply the same anecdote with new names. And so completely had the mother sacrificed herself to provide for her children that she was inevitably "broken," "tubercular," "delicate, devitalized, and overworked," or "going blind from overwork."<sup>57</sup>

Yet other words appeared with a frequency equal to the pathetic adjectives attached to the mothers. These were "starvation," "penniless," "vital needs." These women and their children already met a major criterion of worthiness--starvation. Virtually every appeal contained

---

<sup>56</sup>See the following synopses in Niver, Early Motion Pictures: "The Kleptomaniac," pp. 176-77; "Song of the Shirt," pp. 304-05; "The Waif," p. 352.

<sup>57</sup>Empty Stockings," pp. 1501-02.

an assurance that the aid would be short-term--even to suggesting the oldsters "could not live long." Like men, women must give assurance of an immediate return to self-reliance. Unlike men, their suffering had merit, especially if it was self-sacrifice on behalf of their children. While single women and old women could be worthy, society was far more interested in helping women with children. With juvenile institutions discredited after the 1909 White House Conference on Dependent Children, reformers and the public united to assist children and worthy mothers. But who was a worthy mother?

If the public judged poor men based on their gendered role as provider, it judged women based on their role as homemaker. The ideal woman, according to one best-seller, was "kind and well-bred and gentle mostly, and never be bold or conspicuous, and [she loved her home]." Through these qualities a woman could guide her children to constructive citizenship. Generally exempted from these stringent standards, poor mothers were considered sufficient in their calling if they met standards of cleanliness and virtue.<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>58</sup>Quotation from Frank Norris, The Pit: A Story of Chicago (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1900), p. 224; See also Sheila M. Rothman, Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to Present (New York: Basic Books, 1978), ch. 3. Regarding lower middle-class women, see the women's column in union periodicals such as the National Labor Tribune or the Railroadman.



Sometimes they did. The romanticized view of the poor as somehow closer to the spiritual truth of life and as emotionally rich favored notions of poor women as devoted mothers and good neighbors. There were the mothers of Mr. Dooley's neighborhood, women in clean aprons, who curtsayed to figures of authority, who "nursed the' sick an' waked the dead, an' niver had a hard thought in [their] simple mind[s] f'r any iv Gawd's creatures." There were the mothers of African American fiction, women who reach their later years in dignified, wise serenity. Recognizing life's realities, they were not so innocently simple as Mr. Dooley's Irish acquaintances, but shared with them housewifely capability and maternal devotion.<sup>59</sup>

A clean house and self-sacrificing spirit might ennoble a poor woman of any race, creed, or national origin. If immigrants, these were women who wished their children to adopt American standards. They might even be taught American standards themselves through a Mothers' Improvement Club such as one settlement worker described. The discussion topic for the first meeting (selected by settlement house staff) was "How long after the hair is out of curling-papers is it becoming?"

---

<sup>59</sup>Dunne, Mr. Dooley, p. 125; Fauset, "Emmy," pp. 79-87 and 131-42; Budd, "The Shell Road Witch," pp. 90-93; M. W. O., "Protection," p. 144.

This of course gave the opportunity of laying stress on a wife's personal appearance; the necessity of being as attractive as possible to one's own husband and children. That was, is, the keynote of the club, its creed, its religion . . . <sup>60</sup>

It was not a creed that could be taught to all poor women and the settlement worker describes her anxieties at the club's first meeting.

At once a problem was faced. Some of the mothers came without hats, wearing not overclean aprons . . . Others were alert, well-dressed . . . How could these two types be brought into a common social relation, when they held nothing in common but the experience of living under the same roof with many?<sup>61</sup>

The presence or absence of a hat symbolized an unbridgeable social gulf. On one side, beneath her hat, was a woman of refined sensibilities; on the other side was a bare-headed peasant, hopeless of instruction and unworthy of friendship.

In an era when the genteel performance still defined the ideal of womanhood, lack of refinement in manner and dress took on importance greater than a difference in taste or custom. Unmodulated voices, bold or familiar manners, peculiar dress, and an ungraceful walk all marked poor women as failing in the standards of decent human society. The much remarked upon dirtiness of the poor was ascribed to the laziness of women. To many dirt and

---

<sup>60</sup>Lillian Betts, "A Social Experiment," Outlook 72 (November 15, 1902): 642.

<sup>61</sup>Betts, "A Social Experiment," p. 641.



sloppiness of appearance or manner implied stunted human development.<sup>62</sup>

The National Labor Tribune carried a regular feature for women, "Mabel's Chit-Chat," in which Mabel advised readers on current fashions in clothing and manners and entertained them with chatty descriptions of the social crises surmounted in her own life. Mabel had little use for lower working class women, at least when they appeared in the guise of a "servant problem." Searching for a new cook, she declares herself willing to accept "anything" that can cook potatoes. The criteria for categorizing a person as "thing" is revealed when the applicant enters with a "shambling walk." She is wearing a sweater and skirt that clash. Perhaps worse, she lacks an important signifier of refinement, a hat.<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup>Jacob Riis, How the Other Half Lives (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1907; New York: Hill & Wang, 1957), p. 37; Tom Girdler and Boyden Sparks, Bootstraps: The Autobiography of Tom Girdler (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943), p. 167. The importance of manners and dress is vividly expressed in the autobiography of a young Pennsylvania schoolteacher. As she tries her hand at flower-making, box-making, and laundry work, "Rose Fortune" repeatedly reacts to her poor working class colleagues with shock and distaste. See Richardson, The Long Day. On African Americans, see Gatewood, Aristocrats and "Helen's Independence," Defender 20 January 1912, p. 5. John Kasson discusses the importance of manners as a social device to distinguish classes in Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990).

<sup>63</sup>"Mabel's Chit-Chat," National Labor Tribune 9 January 1913, n.p.



Poor mothers often appeared in popular magazines, newspapers, and books of the middle and skilled working classes as slovenly, callous, and morally ignorant. In a kind view, poor women were underdeveloped mentally and spiritually, but teachable.<sup>64</sup> In a view less kind, however poor mothers were no better than animals. As the popular press praised organizations formed to protect children (who, in these articles were always the children of the poor), it fostered the impression that the poor treated their children so cruelly that special organizations must rescue them.

Popular literature did not portray poor mothers to their advantage. One best-seller is particularly interesting for its notably sympathetic view of the poor. In the novel a slum child dies from adulterated milk. A kindly young man just graduated from Harvard law school happened to live in the neighborhood. He had been acquainted with the little girl and is outraged by her wrongful death. Meanwhile her parents, though sad, are also proud of the attention they receive from their neighborhood and the fine wake they provide. The young lawyer sues the dairy. Her mother then completely forgets her grief as she delights in the neighborhood fame conferred upon her by the trial. Her reaction contrasts

---

<sup>64</sup>Stadum, Poor Women, p. 141.

unfavorably with that of the young lawyer whose grief for the little girl is so great that he can assuage it only by promising himself to dedicate his life to helping the poor.<sup>65</sup>

Even sympathetic portraits distanced poor mothers from their middle class counterparts by emphasizing ethnic appearance or dialect, or worse, by portraying poor mothers as objects of pity, but not respect. Here for example, is champion of the poor, Judge Ben Lindsey writing for the progressive Everybody's Magazine. He is describing a poor mother's response as her boy is sentenced to the Colorado State Reform School:

There had been sitting at the back of the court room an old woman with a shawl on her head, huddled up like a squaw, wooden-faced and incredibly wrinkled. She waddled down the aisle . . . and began to talk to the court interpreter in an excited gabble . . . [she emitted] the most soul-piercing scream of agony that I ever heard from a human throat. The old woman stood there, clutching her shawl to her breast, her toothless mouth open, her face contorted as though she were being torn limb from limb, shrieking

---

<sup>65</sup>Paul Leicester Ford, The Honorable Peter Stirling and What People Thought of Him (New York: International Book and Publishing Co., 1899), p. 59. See also The Damnation of Theron Ware (New York: Stone & Kimball, 1896) by the popular Harold Frederic. The book portrays witnessing a death as a life-changing experience for a middle class onlooker, but of little importance to the poor woman who loses, in this case, her husband. The Ladies Home Journal pictured two drunken women dancing while a friendly visitor ministered to a dying woman. The picture caption read: "Even Death Does Not Halt the Revelry." See William W. Nichols, "A Changing Attitude Toward Poverty in The Ladies' Home Journal: 1895-1919," MidContinent American Studies Journal (Winter 1964), p. 7.

horribly. She grasped her poor thin gray hair and pulled it . . . she ran to the wall and beat her head against it . . . They dragged her out into the hall . . . She continued to scream.<sup>66</sup>

Humane readers no doubt cheered when Lindsey rescinded the sentence. But what was the impact of images like these when voters considered mothers' pensions? Pensions provided a monthly stipend for single mothers with children under working age (usually age fourteen). The amounts were small, allowing generally between six and ten dollars per month for the first child, and a smaller sum for each additional child. Pensions have attracted substantial interest recently, but popular opinion has not been carefully examined. In most accounts the mild tale of the public's response has been obscured by the far more dramatic epic of war within the social welfare community.<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup>Ben Lindsey, "The Beast and the Jungle," Everybody's Magazine 21 (November 1909): 588. another good example is Alice Maxwell Appo, "House Bill No. 626: A First Step Toward the Endowment of Motherhood," Collier's 49 (August 17, 1912): 20-21.

<sup>67</sup>Discussions of mothers' pensions may be found in Linda Gordon, "Social Insurance and Public Assistance: The Influence of Gender in Welfare Thought in the United States, 1890-1935," American Historical Review 97 (February 1992): 19-51; Lubove, Struggle for Social Security, ch. 5; Skocpol, Protecting Soldiers and Mothers, ch. 8; and Ann Vandepol, "Dependent Children, Child Custody, and the Mothers' Pensions: The Transformation of State-Family Relations in the Early 20th Century," Social Problems 29 (February 1982): 221-35. Sometimes overlooked is Tishler's shrewd analysis in Self-Reliance, ch. 7. Jo Goodwin provides the detail and context missing from national overviews in her based study



The community split into two factions, the private charities, especially the COS, and a coalition of settlement workers, public welfare officials, juvenile court judges, and interested nonprofessionals, especially women's clubs. At issue was the nature of a mother's dependency, the cause of her poverty. Was she a demoralized incompetent or canny fraud in need of expert counsel and close investigation, as claimed by many social workers, particularly those of the COS? Or, as many settlement workers and nonprofessional activists insisted, was she a morally healthy and capable woman victimized by uncontrollable events? According to this coalition, society expected the single mother to do the impossible--support a family like a male provider, but on a woman's wages, and simultaneously make a home. Inevitably, through her low wages and long work hours, her children suffered until society officially intervened with charges of neglect or juvenile delinquency.

Some blamed the COS for withholding the aid that could keep mothers with their children, referring to its casework method as the "blood red tape of charity." To the COS and its allies, mothers did not differ

---

of the evolving policies and implementation of pensions in Chicago. See "Gender, politics and welfare reform: Mothers' pensions in Chicago, 1900-1930," (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1991).

significantly from fathers--each needed the benefits of the case-work method more than they needed money. As the fight went on, amidst the economic downturn of 1914-15, most private charities deserted the COS, becoming pragmatic converts to mothers' pensions. As a representative of one charity commented, "Modern standards of control are fine, but a hungry widow cannot eat a friendly visitor."<sup>68</sup>

The press gave sympathetic, but qualified coverage to the idea. African American journals said little about the pensions; the Chicago Defender, for example, ignored the Funds for Parents Act in Illinois. African American indifference may reflect low expectation that mothers of their race would be recipients.<sup>69</sup> The mainstream press presented poor mothers much as the New York Times had presented them. That is, poor mothers would work

---

<sup>68</sup>The New York State Commission on Relief to Widowed Mothers Report (Albany, 1914), p. 130, quoted in Tischler, Self-Reliance, p. 154.

<sup>69</sup>The Defender did report on a Missouri law. Recipient mothers drew an approving nod as concerned about their children's education and "too sensitive" to accept private charity, but the overwhelming bulk of the article was concerned with rules and costs. The article's illustration showed a mother who appeared to be white, suggesting perhaps that the editors did not expect pensions to be granted to black mothers. "Pension System for Widows a Success," 6 January 1912, n.p. The Crisis did not cover mothers' pensions at all, to judge from a careful skimming of appropriate years and a check of the listings in Analytical Guides and Indexes to The Crisis: 1910-1960, vol. I (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975).



themselves to death to keep their children. But mother-love did not ensure honesty or capability. Invariably popular magazines stressed investigation before the pension was granted and supervision after.

"Every case is investigated and found to be as represented before the pension is granted," assured The Independent. "Penalties for false information are imposed by several States," soothed The Outlook. "The 'pensions' are not to be spent at the free will of those who receive them, as an old soldier may spend his, but under strict regulation by the courts," The Nation reminded its readers. Other articles quoted laws verbatim and emphasized the involvement of the justice system (many mothers' pensions were administered through the juvenile court).<sup>70</sup>

Through the expert oversight of social workers, worthy families would be cared for, but with the minimum possible expenditure. Investigation would eliminate applicants with financial resources. Continued supervision would discourage malingering at financial contribution. Since the family wage earned by a male breadwinner prevailed as the ideological norm, women

---

<sup>70</sup>"The Mother's Pension in Michigan," Independent 78 (June 1, 1914): 424; "The Needy Mother and the Neglected Child," Outlook 104 (June 7, 1913): 283; Editorial, The Nation 96 (April 17, 1913): 378; Appo, p. 21.



logically should not have been accountable for providing for their family. Yet, the degree of provision expected from the woman was open to debate. Women occupied a netherland between a man's self-reliance and a child's dependency. Some felt mothers with one child should be self-supporting. As one legislator commented: "Its a poor hen that can't scratch for one chicken."<sup>71</sup> Others feared pensions would be unfair to those that today we would call the "working poor." Given the low wages of unskilled labor, many mothers in two-parent families were compelled to work. Thus to confer on the women of single-parent households a full living would be to create a "loafing aristocracy" within the working class.

Supervision must also detect malingering at motherhood. If pensions were payment, the recipient mother must render demonstrable service to the state in the form of keeping a neat house and inculcating approved values in her children. As the Literary Digest noted in its review of the New York State law, pensions went only to mothers who were above "institutional grade," that is mothers who could raise their children more effectively than a reform school would. Only continued oversight could guarantee that the public received value for its

---

<sup>71</sup>"State Aid for Widowed Mothers," Outlook 105 (September 27, 1913): 156.

dollar. Each pension recipient would be investigated every six months, lest she become slovenly, spendthrift, and immoral. The logic of this fear is puzzling. If the woman previously had been supported by her husband and she had worked at home, then personal discipline, not market discipline had governed her labor. Why should a woman's character change because the source of her income changed? Perhaps she was assumed to have been driven previously by fear of desertion if she failed to meet housekeeping standards. For whatever reason, supervision was thought necessary lest funded mothers lower their standards.<sup>72</sup>

To win support, pension proponents promised not only that the system would be fraud-proof, but that it would save money for the state. Pensions cost less than institutionalizing children. By some estimates the cost of a pension was one-third or even one-quarter that of institutionalization. Others argued that the trend was already away from institutions and toward foster homes; this being the case, was it not more rational, they asked, that the state pay the child's own mother rather than pay a foster mother and the bureaucracy required to match her with appropriate children. Sometimes writers assumed a

---

<sup>72</sup>"Mothers' Pensions in New York," Literary Digest 50 (April 10, 1915): 796. Social workers blamed poor housekeeping for some desertions.

decrease in juvenile delinquency, and included these savings in discussions of the fiscal attractiveness of pensions. Occasionally numbers bolstered the arguments:

Working mothers and the consequent lack of care are what has sent many of the city children on the way toward failure in life. The child that doesn't have enough of his mother is likely to get that way. The institutional child, separated entirely from her is more than likely to. Statistics from the Elmira Reformatory in New York State show that 60 per cent of the inmates were brought up in institutions. Of four young men at the age of eighteen hanged in Cook County, Ill., early in 1912, all had been raised in charitable or reformatory institutions. The motherhood pension way is to form children by home raising so that they will not have to be reformed.<sup>73</sup>

"Home raising" the young served the interests of society, according to proponents of mothers' pensions and their opponents who favored charitable relief. Home life, governed by nurturing mothers should be preserved, encouraged, protected. The National Congress of Mothers constructed an ambitious and political outlet for middle-class concern about the home. The organization resolved to "carry mother-love and mother-thought into all that

---

<sup>73</sup>"Some writers argued further financial benefits would accrue through the pursuit of deserting fathers. Several states did include in their application process the swearing out of an arrest warrant for an absent father. The outcry against deserters finds some parallel in today's talk of "deadbeat dads." See Appo, "A First Step," p. 21; "Pensioning Mothers," Literary Digest (March 1, 1915): 445-46; "The Needy Mother and the Neglected Child," p. 282; "Both Sides, A Debate: Mothers' Pensions," Independent (September 9, 1914): 206; and "The Mother's Pension in Michigan," p. 424.



concerns or touches childhood in Home, School, Church, State, or Legislation" and subsequently participated in various reform campaigns at local, state, and national levels, as did their colleagues in the General Federation of Women's Clubs. Some historians have interpreted the support of these organizations for mothers' pensions as evidence of a grassroots campaign of "maternalism;" women of the middle classes supported pensions for the lower classes because of their unique cross-class bond of motherhood.<sup>74</sup>

But maternalism did not always take such a political turn, nor was mothering always a cross-class bond. As we have seen, images of poor mothers varied. Popular reading material not only presented quite varied assessments of poor mothers, but also warned against too lively an intervention in social problems. Some maternalist arguments suggested women best served their country by an unpoliticized and domestic devotion to family. After cataloging the troubles of the country, one of the most popular novelists of the period pronounced the solution:

---

<sup>74</sup>Theda Skocpol credits grassroots action by women's clubs, particularly the National Congress of Mothers (NCM), with pushing pension legislation through legislatures across the country. They were motivated, according to Skocpol, by a desire to "honor motherhood," trying to "embrace as sisters, as fellow mothers, the impoverished widows who would be helped by mothers' pensions. Skocpol, Protecting Soldiers and Mothers, p. 333.

"As I figure it, it's homes that count. Homes suggest men to support them, women to control them." The hope of the nation lay in good homes, controlled by women of correct values. Certainly in the author's mind, these categories included neither lower-working class homes nor poor women. The frequency of negative imagery of poor women suggests middle and skilled working class women did not accept them as peers or as trustworthy recipients of tax dollars.<sup>75</sup>

It is possible, as some have suggested, that bureaucrats and social workers thwarted the intention of the mothers' pensions movement by imposing COS-style investigation and supervision. This, the argument goes, resulted in mothers' pensions acquiring the stigma associated with outdoor relief. However, it seems at least equally likely that these were political responses to public expectations. The stigma of poverty preceded the stigma of relief and therefore voters required

---

<sup>75</sup>The quotation is from Gene Stratton Porter, Michael O'Halloran, p. 231-32. Lofroth, finds a consistent pattern of warnings against over-involvement in social issues; over-involvement seems to mean any action beyond a personal, individual response to the persons encountered in daily life. Charity, when given, is sparing and preferably takes the form of a loan or a job. See Lofroth, World Made Safe, pp. 123-33.

recipient supervision as the price of their support for the new program.<sup>76</sup>

Maternalism may not suggest a concern for the dignity of mothers so much as for the well-being of children. Mothers' pensions were in great part a protest against the prevailing system of juvenile care; they represented an alternative to institutionalization and to the irrationality of the foster home system. Jo Ann Goodwin has found that as early as 1914 the National Congress of Mothers was distancing itself from its earlier rhetoric of universal maternal bonding and from its representations of pensions as a maternal entitlement. While continuing, to some extent, to support pensions, the NCM now deemed them a means of controlling juvenile delinquency.<sup>77</sup>

In popular perception mothers' pensions served multiple purposes. Sometimes, as mere enabling statutes without appropriations, they could be harmless gestures of social justice. In operation, they were expected to

---

<sup>76</sup>Nelson, "Gender, Race, and Class," p. 145; Skocpol, Protecting Soldiers and Mothers, p. 479; Tischler, Self-Reliance, p. 155.

<sup>77</sup>The role of grassroots activism in the passage of mothers' pensions remains problematic. While Theda Skocpol credits the NCM with pushing pensions through legislatures across the country, Goodwin found no evidence of their involvement in Illinois. Ben Lindsey, the famed juvenile court judge, complained that both the NCM and the Woman's Club deserted him in his struggle for Colorado legislation. Goodwin, "Gender, Politics, and Welfare Reform," p. 60-62.



rationalize juvenile care at little or no cost. Pensions would be cheaper than institutional care; and it seemed more rational to pay the natural mother rather than a foster mother. Plus home-raising was expected to decrease juvenile delinquency. Thus mothers' pensions offered social control, tax savings, rationalization of a chaotic system of juvenile care, and sentimental satisfaction. Pensions promised something to everyone.

Popular culture reveals a greater contest of values in the population at large than may be discerned in the rhetoric of reform coalitions. Among the most prevalent portraits of the poor were those which suggested that poor women did not love their children or that they loved fiercely, but ignorantly. These images must be considered alongside the rhetoric of maternalist reformers. Poor men appeared in popular reading material not simply as workers (or nonworkers) but within the context of personal relationships; they were depicted as degenerate, violent, and sexual. Clearly gendered expectations and sexual fears were operative in perceptions of both sexes; historians have begun to explore their meanings for women, but have yet to turn their attention to men.

The progressive era saw the beginnings of three new entitlement programs (although this phrase did not exist). Mothers' pensions, workmen's compensation, and WWI

veteran's benefits. Society had cared for the groups which appeared most worthy: children with their mothers and employed men who had been injured in the service of their family or their country.

The new programs were sanctioned in the belief that they required little increase in public spending or state administration. Workmen's compensation was to remove injured workers from public responsibility. Mothers' pensions were to be paid for through savings within the system. Government already paid and supervised the institutions and foster homes that cared for the children of destitute mothers. Why not transfer money and supervision to the natural mothers? This was the sort of limited change the middle classes sought.

In the coming decade, the middle classes would come to believe that those who administered the programs did not share their sense of limits. The story of the 1920s is one of disappointment and of hostility toward both the poor and the professionals of social provision.

## CHAPTER III

### COMMERCIALIZED HUMANITARIANISM

The 1920s saw the coalescing of changes begun in the Progressive era and accelerated by World War I: the commercialization of charitable fund-raising and the professionalization of social work. Rapidly proliferating charitable organizations adapted the commercial marketing techniques of public relations, advertising, direct mail, "stunts," and celebrity endorsements. For the first time, the general public became the target of aggressive and multiple appeals for contributions; previously these had been the dubious privilege of businessmen and the wealthy. The competition and methods increased the number of givers but made the poor a market commodity and created distrust among the public.

The distancing of the public from the poor was furthered by the professionalization of social work. The trend, which began early in the Progressive era, was unmistakably visible to the general public in the 1920s. Many questioned whether a spiritual value was being lost to society and whether it was necessary or healthy for so many to make a living off helping the poor. They questioned the claim of social work to rehabilitate its clients. The increasing use of professional staff in social service organizations pushed out volunteers, further distancing the middle classes from the poor they



were being asked to help. Had the professionals inspired public confidence, the damage might have been slight. But professionals in the field admitted that the public remained overwhelmingly skeptical of "paid uplifters." One Midwestern social work executive stated that the "average citizen" possessed an "unreasoning prejudice against trained 'charity workers'."<sup>1</sup> As the 1920s closed and the Depression began, there was little confidence in the effectiveness of social service programs.

Prior to the Progressive era, charitable organizations were mostly local and devoted to relieving the physical ordeals of poverty. During the Progressive era the definition of social good and goals of collective action expanded to include character building and public health for all classes. New national federated organizations multiplied with thirty new groups emerging between 1906 and 1922. These included Boy and Girl

---

<sup>1</sup>The quotation is from Norton, Cooperative Movement, p. 44. Regarding the transition from volunteer charity workers to professional social workers see John Ehrenreich, The Altruistic Imagination: A History of Social Work and Social Policy in the United States (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985); Kathleen D. McCarthy, Noblesse Oblige: Charity and Cultural Philanthropy in Chicago, 1849-1929 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Daniel Walkowitz, "The Making of a Feminine Professional Identity: Social Workers in the 1920s," American Historical Review 95 (October 1990): 1051-75; and Stanley Wenocur and Michael Reisch, From Charity to Enterprise: The Development of American Social Work in a Market Economy (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989).

Scouts, Goodwill Industries, the American Cancer Society, the Big Brother and Big Sister Federations, and the Jewish Welfare Board. World War I added momentum to their growth. In small cities across the country these organizations became operative in the late teens and early twenties, partly as a result of war drives. In Sioux Falls, South Dakota, during and immediately after the war, two national affiliations were established and ten local units of national organizations formed.<sup>2</sup>

A study headed by Porter Lee in the early twenties counted one hundred national social welfare organizations active in the United States. Lee examined the dynamics of forty-six of these organizations among each other and their communities in fourteen cities. Of the cities studied, St. Louis had the highest number with thirty-three. Wilson County, North Carolina, and Memphis tied at fourteen for the lowest number. The cities averaged twenty-two active national organizations. The

---

<sup>2</sup>Eleanor Brilliant, The United Way: Dilemmas of Organized Charity (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p. 21; Scott M. Cutlip, Fund Raising in the United States: Its Role in America's Philanthropy (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1965), pp. 206-07; Porter R. Lee, Walter W. Pettit, and Jane M. Hoey, Report of a Study of the Interrelation of the Work of National Social Agencies in Fourteen American Communities (New York: National Information Bureau, n.d.), pp. 95-98, 133-48; and John R. Seeley, et. al., Community Chest: A Case Study in Philanthropy (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957), pp. 18, 103;



organizations were diverse. Of the twenty-five most popular ones, seven were devoted to character-building, seven to children, four to relief and counseling, and four to health and disease prevention.<sup>3</sup>

Although benevolent societies began proliferating in the Progressive era, they did not compete for contributions from the general public. Penny collections at church and personal letters or visits from the organization's financial secretary had been the accepted means of solicitation. There were a few exceptions, such as the YMCA publicity-driven building campaigns. At Christmas season there were newspaper appeals and the Christmas seal campaign conducted jointly by the Red Cross and the National Tuberculosis Association. But in general only businessmen and the wealthy faced frequent requests for donations.<sup>4</sup> One pioneer in fund-raising recalled the

---

<sup>3</sup>There is some overlapping in the categorization because the children's organizations were generally devoted to either character-building or relief. Found in all fourteen of the communities were Red Cross, YMCA, and National Tuberculosis Association. Thirteen communities had chapters of Boy Scouts, YWCA, and National Congress of Mothers/Parent-Teacher Association. Twelve had American Association for Family Work, National Association of Travelers' Aid, and Salvation Army. In eleven of the communities were Child Welfare League, Girl Scouts, and the NAACP. Ten communities had American Association for Community Organization, American Society for Control of Cancer, and National Women's Christian Temperance Union. See Lee, Report, pp. 17-19.

<sup>4</sup>Brilliant, United Way, 24-25; Norton, Cooperative Movement, pp. 10-11. Cutlip, Fund Raising, ch. 2.



tenor of the years before World War I when the average citizen encountered very few appeals:

It is true that the tag days growing up in the early years of the twentieth century had expanded this [giving] habit somewhat; but its application was sporadic and haphazard through this medium. It is true that the churches, particularly the Catholic Church, took up collections for parochial charities among their parishioners; but at this time a little less than one-half of the American population acknowledged allegiance to any church; and the ways and means of gathering these collections was not very productive. The Christmas seal also had come into widespread vogue, and in a small way was reaching a larger constituency than previous methods had permitted.<sup>5</sup>

World War I changed fund-raising forever. The public met an onrush of appeals from major national organizations and a host of smaller fry. By the time the U.S. entered the war there were 14,855 volunteer organizations formed for specific segments of war relief such as the Serbian Aid Fund, American Friends of Musicians in France, Fatherless Children of France Organization, Italian War Relief Fund, and the Chocolate Fund for the American Expeditionary Forces.<sup>6</sup> In an effort to impose order on the delivery of services and the raising of funds, in 1917 the U.S. Council of National Defense consolidated the

---

<sup>5</sup>Norton, Cooperative Movement, p. 127. See also Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, Middletown: A Study in American Culture (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1956, 1921), p. 465.

<sup>6</sup>Cutlip, Fund Raising, ch. 4.

competing groups to 159. But demands for funds remained numerous, urgent and confusing.

In the single year of 1918 the National Catholic War Work Council raised \$30 million, the War Camp Fund raised \$4.8 million; the Jewish Welfare Board \$3.5 million, and the Salvation Army \$3.5 million.<sup>7</sup> The years from 1917 to 1920 were remembered as a time of generous, even imprudent giving.<sup>8</sup> A study of a quarter-century in New Haven, Connecticut, revealed that charitable giving in that city peaked during the war years.<sup>9</sup> Most important were the big campaigns by the Liberty Loans, the Red Cross, and the

---

<sup>7</sup>Cutlip, Fund Raising, pp. 138-39.

<sup>8</sup>Florence Nesbitt, "The Significance of the Rise in Relief-Giving During the Past Five Years: Its Relation to Standards of Case Work," National Conference of Social Work, 1922, p. 236; Theodore Waters, "The Charity that Begins at Home," Collier's 71 (January 13, 1923): 22.

<sup>9</sup>Willford Isbell King, Trends in Philanthropy: A Study in a Typical American City (New York: National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc., 1928), pp. 66-67. New Haven showed regular peaks and troughs in its philanthropic contributions, but 1918 was a notable peak. Measured against the total wealth of the city the "people of New Haven were contributing annually to philanthropy a quarter of a century ago about one-quarter of one per cent of their wealth. [The estimates of total wealth involved some problematic assumptions. But the assumptions were constants, and therefore comparisons between years are valid.] From time to time, bursts of generosity have sent the fraction as high as one-half of one percent, and, in the war year of 1918, it actually passed six-tenths of a per cent." Estimated in per capita contributions, residents gave \$12.24 each in 1918 as compared with 7.75 in 1917, 6.74 in 1916, 8.23 in 1915 and 10.50 in 1914. Total contributions equaled \$3,153,512, as against 1,606,510 in 1914, another peak year.

YMCA. In its five Liberty Loan drives the U.S. Treasury Department raised \$13,856,484,000. The first American Red Cross (ARC) campaign raised \$114 million in only eight days. By the end of the war, the ARC had gathered over twenty million new members and four hundred million dollars. The YMCA raised thirty million.<sup>10</sup>

Run by bankers, corporation executives and public relations experts, these large campaigns were the training ground of the fund-raising and public relations professions that emerged in the 1920s.<sup>11</sup> The campaigns shared techniques that would become the hallmarks of post-war fund-raising. These included intensive advertising, efforts to create a widespread and emotional response; solicitation of corporate gifts; encouragement of rivalry among collection teams; and solicitation in the workplace.

Under John Price Jones, Liberty Loan campaigns orchestrated speakers, posters, pamphlets, and press releases to build a "wave of emotion." A central element of the build-up was the special event, sometimes known as a "feature" or "stunt." Campaign coordinators relied on these events to focus and direct the emotions created by

---

<sup>10</sup>Cutlip, Fund Raising, pp. 35-38.

<sup>11</sup>Robert Bremner, American Philanthropy, 2nd ed., Chicago History of American Civilization series (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 124; Cutlip, Fund Raising, ch. 5.



the other gimmicks. Jones recruited Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, Charles Chaplin, and other movie stars to urge the cause. In the New York City area, utilities and milk companies printed the campaign slogan on bills and bottle caps. Banks inserted campaign literature with their monthly statements. Fraternal lodges, churches, and workplaces promoted the bonds. Ethnic leaders urged their compatriots to prove their Americanism and to help besieged homelands.<sup>12</sup> Meeting the goal quickly became a point of civic pride. Years later residents of Muncie, Indiana, recalled how they had raised one and one-half million dollars in a single day.<sup>13</sup>

Under leadership of Ivy Lee, the Red Cross campaigns, like the Liberty Loan drives, were models of organized hoopla. On the Sunday designated to open one campaign, two-thousand parades took place; President Wilson led seventy-thousand New Yorkers down Fifth Avenue. Newspapers carried a message from General Pershing. Stars from stage and screen contributed benefit performances and published endorsements. Theaters showed special Red Cross

---

<sup>12</sup>According to Lizabeth Cohen, during the Fourth Liberty Loan Drive 46.5 percent of the subscribers were of foreign birth or parentage although they made up only 33 percent of the American population. See Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 74-79 and 84.

<sup>13</sup>Lynd, Middletown, p. 465.

movies such as The Spirit of the Red Cross, a battlefield romance of a soldier and Red Cross nurse. Throughout the campaign week, in the New York City area at least, church bells and factory whistles blew for one-half minute at three p.m. to signal the beginning of the Red Cross report. After five seconds of silence, they sounded one time for each million dollars raised. The froth of these publicity gimmicks rested on a solid collections infrastructure. Each Red Cross chapter received a quota based on population, bank clearings, and other economic indices.<sup>14</sup> Local leaders mapped out collections territories, recruited teams, and encouraged competition with rival cities.

Sincerity and fear of appearing a wartime slacker ensured recruitment of leading citizens to committees; in small cities and towns they were likely to be the same persons who ran the Liberty Loan campaigns and perhaps solicited for the YMCA and smaller organizations as well. In 1918 the federal government mandated that communities combine their fund drives into a single War Chest; three hundred communities were already doing so. War Chest drives won the right to solicit in the workplace, a right eagerly inherited by the War Chest's successor, the Community Chest. Community Chests were federated fund

---

<sup>14</sup>Cutlip, Fund Raising, p. 129-34.

drives at the municipal or county level for social service organizations. By 1929 there were 350 Community Chests.<sup>15</sup> Planned as a rationalizing force, a means of unifying fund appeals and screening out unworthy organizations, Community Chests gained popularity in response to increasing public concerns regarding charity fraud and the number of charitable appeals.<sup>16</sup> The community chest idea also reflected the "New Era" emphasis on cooperation.<sup>17</sup>

In Middletown, as in many small cities, civic leaders used the organizational and publicity skills trained in Liberty Loan or Red Cross drives to create an all-out intensive fund-raising campaign. The city was "districted name by name, publicity workers turned loose--and the city 'went over the top.'" A "colonel" led the volunteer force of "shock troops" which were divided into men's and women's teams. Gendered teams appear to have been common to many cities, with greatest reliance placed on male

---

<sup>15</sup>Bremner, American Philanthropy, p. 133.

<sup>16</sup>Cutlip discusses the "sense of harassment felt by local business and civic leaders" that led wartime fund-raisers to voluntarily unite their campaigns; see Fund Raising, p. 150. On Community Chests, see Lynd, Middletown, p. 464.

<sup>17</sup>Bremner, American Philanthropy, p. 134.



teams.<sup>18</sup> In Middletown the male teams were designated with further military terminology such as "buck privates" and "noncoms." Team captains enforced mandatory attendance at pep rallies where the colonel urged the troops to equal the wartime collections for Liberty Loans.<sup>19</sup>

A compilation of reports from the nineteen most successful cities of 1931 suggest the Community Chest personnel became increasingly inventive and assertive throughout the twenties. They created dramatic ways to keep the fund's progress before the community. Winning teams in some communities rode fire trucks to the town center to update the day's record. They used threats of public shame and lures of public glory. Jacksonville, Florida, for instance, published the name of every donor with his contribution. With an added finesse of psychology, the contribution appeared not as its annual total but broken into its smaller monthly value. Thus a twelve-dollar donation appeared as one dollar. The device increased small gifts by twenty percent. Springfield,

---

<sup>18</sup>Community Chest: Campaign Narratives from Nineteen Cities, 1930-31: Helpful Ideas for Campaign Directors Issued at the Request of Chest Executives (New York: Association of Community Chests and Councils, 1931), p. 142. Louisville did not include women until 1931 when the Junior League participated; the chair felt the presence of the women's team spurred competition that year.

<sup>19</sup>Lynd, Middletown, p. 464.

Massachusetts, took a daily ad in the newspaper to publish the name of each team captain with his quota, balance to date, and the amount needed to go over the top. Every team met its quota. A fairly standard device was a "ratings" committee or "banking and investment" committee composed of bankers and others competent to judge a family's financial status and affix a sum to the prospect card. The prospect cards were then distributed to collection teams. Lists of prospects were compiled by consulting social registers, retail merchants and druggists, and auto accessory dealers or by hiring the job out to a city directory. Solicitors carried two quotas, one for sum of money to be raised and the other for the percentage of prospects who became givers.<sup>20</sup>

Quotas and publicity applied in the workplace as well. Wilkesbarre, Pennsylvania, increased contributions by using billboards in the town square to post each factory's running per capita total. For each firm the total donation, less any executive contributions, was divided by the total number of persons on the payroll and that total posted on the billboard. Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, achieved steady increases from their Industrial Division when they went to a five-dollar

---

<sup>20</sup>Community Chest: Campaign Narratives, pp. 44, 109, 119, 142-43; Norton, Cooperative Movement, p. 208.

minimum donation; workers who wished to give less were told by their foremen that if they honestly could not afford five dollars, they need not give at all. In Birmingham, Alabama, department stores closed while each department solicited its workers. In addition store managers collected the workers' pledge cards and sent personally signed letters to each of employee authorizing payroll deductions.<sup>21</sup> By the end of the 1930s payroll deductions became a common workplace option.<sup>22</sup>

Previously directed at wealthy givers and businesses, fund-raising expanded after the war to include all but the poorest classes.<sup>23</sup> Massive publicity combined with methodical solicitation, especially solicitation in the workplace, dramatically broadened the base of charitable contributions. The Lynds estimated that in its inaugural year the Muncie Community Chest achieved a tenfold increase in the number of donors to local welfare

---

<sup>21</sup>Community Chest: Campaign Narratives, pp. 38, 97, 125.

<sup>22</sup>Brilliant, United Way, p. 26.

<sup>23</sup>Regarding the shift in the targets of charitable appeals, see Norton, Cooperative Movement, pp. 10-11; Elwood Street, Sympathy and System in Giving (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1921), p. 41; Cutlip, Fund Raising, p. 203; and Brilliant, United Way, pp. 24-25.



work.<sup>24</sup> A study of New Haven's Community Chest does not indicate the number of subscribers who donated under fifty dollars. However, it does indicate the annual amounts given in that category, which more than doubled in four years. Gifts under fifty dollars totaled \$86,508 in 1921 and rocketed to \$197,142 in 1924. The huge increase in dollars strongly suggests a significant increase in the number of donors.<sup>25</sup>

The increase in the number of givers may have come at an intangible price. Robert Bremner has suggested that the "chest made giving less an act of personal charity than a form of community citizenship, almost as essential as the payment of taxes."<sup>26</sup> This could be positive or

---

<sup>24</sup>The Community Chest, with its extensive recruitment of volunteer solicitors, is an exception to the decade's tendency toward professional staffing of social service organizations. The chests funded many different kinds of activities. Health, character-building, education, and recreation had surged forward during the war and continued to grow during the 1920s, supported by the chests. See King, Trends in Philanthropy; Seeley, Community Chest, pp. 95, 119-20; and Lynd, Middletown, pp. 464-65.

<sup>25</sup>King, Trends in Philanthropy, pp. 72-73. Accurate figures on the number of charitable givers that include organizations outside the chests do not exist. Estimates of total philanthropic donations show a steady climb from \$1,719,000,000 in 1921 to \$2,219,700,000 in 1927. Dollar amount increases suggest only in a very general way increases in the number of givers since one-time large donations can swell totals. In 1928 there were 500 gifts of a million dollars or more. See Bremner, American Philanthropy, p. 134 and Cutlip, Fund Raising, p. 202.

<sup>26</sup>Bremner, American Philanthropy, p. 134.

negative depending on the degrees of obligation or coercion felt and the satisfaction with the programs purchased. Opponents of the federated fund-raising campaigns argued their coercive tactics amounted to unofficial tax collection.<sup>27</sup> Local taxes rose dramatically in the 1920s and were widely perceived as unfairly burdensome.<sup>28</sup> The chests also accelerated the drift of charities toward commercial tactics of solicitation. Organizations outside the chests increasingly adopted their techniques of intensively organized personal solicitation combined with extensive publicity.<sup>29</sup> Philanthropic enterprises sought ever more effective ways to solicit financial support. "Public Opinion" became a regular session at National Council of Social Work (NCSW) annual meetings. Trade periodicals published stories of successful outreach.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup>Norton, Cooperative Movement, p. 207.

<sup>28</sup>David Beito, Tax Revolt; Lynn Dumenil.

<sup>29</sup>"Slumping Benevolences," Literary Digest 94 (July 9, 1927): 30-1.

<sup>30</sup>Clarence Monroe Bookman, "A Unified Program of Social Work as a Creator of Public Opinion," National Conference of Social Work, 1923, pp. 516-20; Geddes Smith, "Public Opinion: Seventh Day of the Conference," Survey 50 (June 15, 1923), p. 348 and "Behemoth Walks Again: Impressions of the National Conference of Social Work," Survey 56 (June 15, 1926): 362; Leigh Mitchell Hodges, "Which Way Publicity?" Survey 62 (July 15, 1927): 457-58; Paul S. Bliss, "Interpreting Standards to the Public," Survey (January 15, 1927): 532-33.

Charitable fundraising grew more ubiquitous, high-pressure, and commercialized as increasing numbers of organizations turned to professional fundraisers, public relations experts, and business advertising techniques. By the end of the 1920s colleges, churches, and community chests could support 20 fund-raising firms in New York City alone.<sup>31</sup> The fundraising profession initially met resistance. The intrusion into social good of a mercenary motive and the additional overhead gave offense. Perhaps, too, people felt fundraisers might manipulate information, giving it a public relations gloss. When Ivy Lee joined the Red Cross he refused the titles of "publicity director" and "press agent" because, as he put it, "the public is suspicious."

Direct mail, a business fad, was quickly adopted by the not-for-profit sector. Comparing junk mail of 1922 with that of ten years previous, a journalist noted that mailings from nonlocal organizations had dramatically increased and that charitable appeals now equaled about a quarter of the total. One woman, queried about her support for charity, complained dramatically of the daily delivery of "hundreds, literally hundreds of appeals for everything under Heaven." She may have exaggerated only

---

<sup>31</sup>Bremner American Philanthropy, p. 133; Cutlip, Fund Raising, ch. 5.



slightly; a publicity expert in the field declared that the annual quantity of charitable direct mail exceeded the human imagination.<sup>32</sup>

Direct mailings sometimes relied on pathos, such as one for a hospital building fund campaign which included photographs of "Smiling Joe," a child with a "dazzling, unfading grin" despite his "tortured little body strapped to a board." Case histories could be very effective. Because of their effectiveness, case histories were among the most popular techniques of appeal despite the ambivalence expressed by social workers.<sup>33</sup> "Smiling

---

<sup>32</sup>Elizabeth C. Billings, "The Follow-Up," Survey 48 (September 15, 1922): 709; Florence Melbaugh, "The Givers Talk Back," Survey 60 (October 15, 1928): 100-106; Mary Swain Routzahn and Evart G. Routzahn, Publicity for Social Work (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1928), p. 133. See also Stella Akulin Koenig "The Art of Giving," Saturday Evening Post 203 (January 31, 1931): 24 and Sophie Kerr, "Kind Heart Are More Than Coronets--Maybe," Saturday Evening Post 204 (February 27, 1932): 25. Helpful tips on direct mail could be found in the Survey; see, for example, Bernard C. Roloff, "A Money-Raising Plan for Social Agencies," 58-59 (July 15, 1927): 422-423 and "Direct Mail Suggestions," 62 (September 15, 1929): 621.

<sup>33</sup>Organizations were aware that case histories made effective publicity. (At some point they learned which types of case histories were most effective. The New York Times List of One Hundred Neediest Cases was recently found to contain phony case histories. Agencies had recycled previously successful cases and created composite cases that combined successful fund-raising qualities.) See Theresa Funiciello, Tyranny of Kindness: Dismantling the Welfare System to End Poverty in America (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1993), p 230. Some social workers expressed ambivalence about case histories as a public relations tool for several reasons. They raised the ethical questions attendant on making known an individual's private life.

Joe," for instance, recieved full credit for the success of the building campaign.<sup>34</sup> Case histories may have succeeded in part because they lent a versimilitude and concreteness to social problems that were otherwise abstract and invisible to the increasing numbers of suburbanites. As Century magazine commented in 1924, "We have no personal information about the lame, the halt, and the blind unless they put themselves in front of us, at the street corner or in a doorway."<sup>35</sup> Case studies provided a facsimile of personal knowledge.

Sometimes direct mailings relied on drama, such as a playground association's letter written to "Dear Mr. Automobile Man" from "THE BOY YOU NEARLY RAN OVER".<sup>36</sup> Sometimes the focus was statistics and annual reports intended to bolster consumer confidence. Sometimes "gifts" like calendars and cards were enclosed, a

---

They also felt case histories, or "sob stories" encouraged emotional giving and the too-prevalent idea that the worthy needed only money, not professional, preventive therapy. Barrow, "Support and Interpretation," pp. 134-135; Norton, Cooperative Movement, p. 284-87; and Paul S. Bliss, "Interpreting Standard to the Public," Survey (January 15, 1926): 532-33.

<sup>34</sup>William Preston Beazell, "Public Opinion and Social Progress," National Conference of Social Work, 1923, p.474.

<sup>35</sup>Quoted in Kathleen McCarthy, Noblesse Oblige: Charity and Cultural Philanthropy in Chicago, 1849-1929 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 164.

<sup>36</sup>"Adventures in Publicity," Survey 7 (February 18, 1922): 792.

technique one journalist likened to "collecting by means of a blackjack and a pair of brass knuckles."<sup>37</sup>

One businessman described his response to the direct mail he received from social service organizations:

The stenographer brings in the morning mail. On top she has put the most important letters, so that my mind is increasingly engaged. Then I come to a letter signed with a rubber stamp with a name I never heard before that starts out with, 'At this joyous Easter season--' or 'Remember when you were a little chap and your Daddy--' and goes on and on. Of course what they want is money. But I never get that far. . . we know we're on all the sucker lists in town, and we know a lot of this stuff is fake anyway. We give to organizations that we know are honest because of the names behind them. We don't fall for a lot of emotional guff, and the fancy, trick printed stuff creates a prejudice in our minds.<sup>38</sup>

In common with direct mail advertisements of commercial services, social service solicitations were "junk" mail, attempting to sell an unsought commodity. Direct mail was discomfiting in its content and volume. Recipients were troubled to see charities mimic business; good works ought not compete like marketplace entities. Also, aware that the senders intended to generate uncomfortable emotions--guilt, outrage, sadness, or pity--some recipients developed an emotionally detached skepticism. The volume of mailings sabotaged the

---

<sup>37</sup>Elsie McCormick, "Tracked to Her Lair," Survey 62 (August 15, 1929): 536. The article originally appeared in "A Piece of Her Mind," McCormick's column in the New York World, 31 October 1928.

<sup>38</sup>Melbaugh, "Givers Talk Back," p. 101.



credibility of each of the individual appeals. As one beleaguered recipient explained, "You can't get six letters in one day telling how each of six particular causes is going to save society without beginning to question each of them."<sup>39</sup>

In addition to direct mail, social service agencies adopted the business advertising technique of "stunts." Favored by the advertising and public relations agencies that mushroomed in the years surrounding World War I, a stunt was an event which the press would cover as news thereby providing free publicity. Edward Bernays, the public relations pioneer, for example, created the National Small Sculpture contest. Hopeful participants entered their Ivory soap sculptures of Lincoln, Venus de Milo, Warren G. Harding, and other likely subjects in local, state and national contests judged by famous artists. The contest achieved free publicity nationwide for Ivory Soap.<sup>40</sup>

Few philanthropies could rival Bernays's flair or resources, but some consciously went in for stunts. A report published by the Child Welfare League in New York

---

<sup>39</sup>McCormick, "Tracked to Her Lair," p. 536; Billings, "Follow-Up," pp. 709-10, 734; C. M. Bookman, "A Unified Program of Social Work as a Creator of Public Opinion," National Conference of Social Work, 1923, p. 517; Melbaugh, "Givers Talk Back," pp. 100-106, quotation from p. 102.

<sup>40</sup>"Mass Psychologist," American Mercury \* (\*): 161.

recommended them and recounted the success achieved in Westchester County. There an essay competition within the schools was the proud flagship of "a flotilla of stunts." The children wrote on the theme "the dependent child." Announcing the prize-winners at the organization's annual meeting ensured a record attendance by the public and local press. The organization next sponsored a May Day pageant, again dragooning schoolchildren in order to capture their parents. In Philadelphia the Children's Bureau and Welfare Federation cooperated in a puppet show melodrama performed in the window of a downtown department store during the Welfare Federation's fund drive.<sup>41</sup> At movie theaters fund-raisers targeted people who neither read nor attended community functions. Trailers might show animated dollar bills rushing to various community services or a giant "Kindness Cup" pouring out "child welfare." Speakers between shows urged contributions to their agencies.<sup>42</sup>

In the perception of charity fundraisers, children remained the preeminent sympathetic category. One fund-raising executive reckoned that there were more agencies

---

<sup>41</sup>"Adventure in Publicity," Survey 7 (February 18, 1922): 791-92; "Telling the Story With Puppets," Survey 60 (July 15, 1922): 440. See also Routzahn, Publicity for Social Work, ch. 15.

<sup>42</sup>Routzahn, Publicity for Social Work, pp. 334-35.



for helping children than all other charities combined.<sup>43</sup> Community chests used children for their posters, allowing children to symbolize the social good to be affected by the broad range of member organizations.<sup>44</sup> The authors of the handbook, Publicity for Social Work, cited "love and protection of children" as a fundamental motivating force in fundraising, equal to fear, pleasure, vanity, cost-savings, neighborliness, public spirit, and duty. Their recommendations on photography included a clear hierarchy of subjects. The best subject was children--one child or a few--and if their pets were included so much the better. Women ranked as poor second. Men were not recommended at all. In their five examples of effective plays, three centered on child health, on women and children on Ellis Island, and one on working girls. An unsympathetic tough was the only significant male character.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup>Norton, Cooperative Movement, p. 59.

<sup>44</sup>The most famous chest symbol was a little girl on crutches. The poster bore the legend "Suppose Nobody Cared." By the mid-twenties, an upbeat emphasis becoming apparent. More of the children looked healthy and happy. Cleveland used a beaming little boy and the legend "The Making of a Man. Many of your fellow workers and citizens got their start through Community Fund Settlements." See "Suppose Nobody Cared," Survey 53 (December 15, 1925): 334 and "Changing Styles in Community Chest Posters," Survey 57-58 (January 15, 1927): 530-31.

<sup>45</sup>Routzahn, Publicity for Social Work, pp. 44-57, 90, and 260-64.



Charity became further blurred with business when it embraced the celebrity endorsement. Testimonials by nationally known celebrities were an enormously popular advertising technique of the 1920s. The October 29, 1927 issue of Liberty featured movie actress Constance Talmadge in ads for nine different products, ranging from an obesity remedy to a radio tube. Famous Names, Inc., marketed about a dozen film stars charging \$200 to \$275 per testimonial. Customers could specify poses used in photographs and dictate the endorsement signed by the star.<sup>46</sup>

Charity adopted the celebrity endorsement. The New York Evening Post, for example, published a Christmas season column that featured brief, pathetic case histories of selected worthy poor. But these were not generic poor. Aware of competition from the similar lists published by the Times and American, the Evening Post found its market niche by specializing in "Old Couples," and presented its cases with testimonials by celebrities like Fannie Hurst, Edna Ferber, Rube Goldberg, and Gene Tunney. Sixty couples were presented. They tell the same story--devotion to each other through long years of labor, then disability inevitably followed by destitution, and finally

---

<sup>46</sup>Arthur J. Cramp, "Testimonials--Mainly Medical," American Mercury 17 (August 1929): 446.

the imminent horror of separation in gender-segregated poorhouses. It is a sad story, but it's the same story sixty times. Thus "selling" each old couple depended on pathos, on writing stuffed with adjectives, and on personality, the couple's and the celebrity's.

The celebrities provided two unique services in charitable fund-raising. They offered disinterested verification of the Post's charities. Written in the first-person purportedly by the celebrity, each article described a celebrity's visit to an old couple's home. Having witnessed first-hand the couple's need and character, the celebrity then endorsed the Post's plea for contributions. Since the celebrities presumably were unpaid, their appeals may have been perceived as trustworthy, at least more so than those of organizations whose existence depended on stimulating donations. The celebrities verified the legitimacy of the appeal and also glamorized contributions; sending a few dollars to Gene Tunney's couple created a subtle bond with a famous man whose life appeared exciting and enviable. The articles emphasized the special status of the celebrities and often read like public relations press releases:

Here's a side of the new heavyweight champion you've never really seen before! Young, sought-after, busy piling up his first millions--Gene Tunney journeyed over to an East side tenement, an Evening Post reporter for a day . . .

His wide-shouldered, slim-flanked form was snug in a brown, double-breasted suit. He wore a camel's hair overcoat. His fine teeth showed in a smile, and his eyes were glowing for we had been discussing his pleasant controversy with George Bernard Shaw and a projected trip to Europe in the spring. . . . He found time in the incredibly busy day of a champion of the world to go to a hurt fellow creature and hold out to him a friendly hand.<sup>47</sup>

The celebrity at a minimum shared the headline with the featured poor person: "Neysa McMein Finds Tragedy in Old Louis and Blind Marie. Famous Illustrator Stares in Frozen Torture at Spectre of Aged Woman Stricken in Her Poverty . . . "<sup>48</sup> When Rube Goldberg acted as an "Evening Post reporter for a day," there appeared not only the usual first-person column, but also a story by the

---

<sup>47</sup>Quotation from "Gene Tunney Writes of an Heroic Fight," New York Evening Post (December 8, 1926): 1 and Jack Kofoed, "Plight of Needy Saddens Tunney," New York Evening Post (December 9, 1926): 9. For the series, see the Evening Post for December, 1926. Columns usually appeared on page one, although occasionally if there was not a celebrity endorsement they moved back to page five or seven. Celebrities for 1926 included: authors Konrad Bercovici, Anne Parrish, Somerset Maugham, and Edna Ferber; illustrator Neysa McMein, humorist Rube Goldberg. Heavy-weight champion Gene Tunney was at the peak of his fame, having defeated Jack Dempsey only a few months previous. In addition to the one hundred and forty-five thousand persons who watched, forty million listened on the radio--10 reportedly dying from physical collapse attributed to the excitement of the fight. See Frederick Lewis Allen, Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920's (New York: Harper and Row, 1964 ed.), p. 175.

<sup>48</sup>Neysa McMein, "Neysa McMein Finds Tragedy in Old Louis and Blind Marie," New York Evening Post December 11, 1926, pp. 1 and 12.



reporter who accompanied Goldberg: "Humorist in Tears in Squalid Street."<sup>49</sup>

The campaign was a successful promotion of three products: the Evening Post which scooped other papers through its association with celebrities (invariably referred to as "New York Evening Post reporters for a day"), the celebrities who achieved free and positive press coverage, and the poor who were certified as worthy. Perhaps the Evening Post was the biggest winner. Its annual campaign regularly renewed its public association with celebrity and philanthropy. For celebrities, the good deed was a small, ephemeral component of their image unless they returned annually, creating the sort of relationship common today and best exemplified by "Jerry's kids." Even occasional appearances could be helpful to maintain visibility when combined with other activities, such as Gene Tunney's famous Yale lecture on Shakespeare and his endorsement of a brand-name laxative. The poor benefitted. The sums requested in their case histories were for one calendar year; if they received the full amount they escaped the poor house one more year.

---

<sup>49</sup>Rube Goldberg, "No Fun in Poverty for Rube Goldberg," New York Evening Post, December 20, 1926, pp. 1 and 6 and in the same edition "Humorist in Tears in Squalid Street," p. 6.

As charities multiplied and as they grew more similar to business in their outreach techniques, they created a degree of skepticism among the middle classes. Skepticism was augmented by stories about charity scams. As charities began to leave their own locale and solicit regionally and nationally, they became harder to police. Imposters used direct mail and door-to-door sales of common household items at high prices. The sales pitches included photographs of orphaned or crippled children and the promise that some part of the profit went to charity. Discoveries of fraud generated publicity that caused givers to question other organizations of which they knew nothing but the information presented in the solicitation for funds.<sup>50</sup> One popular magazine warned, "there are 'sucker lists' in fake charity circles just as there are in the fake investment world, and well-meaning people all over the country are being constantly importuned to contribute toward various pseudo charities."<sup>51</sup>

The merchants of Chicago's Black Belt felt that charitable solicitations were driving away customers. They appealed to city police for protection from "tag days." On such days volunteers stood on the streets and

---

<sup>50</sup>Norton, Cooperative Movement, pp. 16-17.

<sup>51</sup>McCormick, "Tracked to Her Lair," p. 536; Sparks, "Capitizing Kindness," pp. 184-85; Waters, "Charity that Begins at Home," pp. 12, 22.

asked passersby for contributions; those who gave were given a tag which hung from a coat button and protected its wearer from further solicitations. The Defender urged readers to refuse to give and thereby reduce the number of "parasites obstructing our street corners."<sup>52</sup>

Even the Red Cross and YMCA, lionized during the war, were now charged with waste, mismanagement, and wartime profiteering. Despite campaigns in the wartime style, membership in the Red Cross declined steadily from 20,832,000 in 1918 to a low of 3 million in 1926.<sup>53</sup> Following passage of a state law to regulate charitable fund-raising, the California State Board of Charities and Corrections reported receiving many inquiries regarding the legitimacy of charitable organizations appealing for funds. The major social welfare organizations formed the National Information Bureau to act as a Better Business Bureau for charities, investigating complaints and dispensing information.

Vast expansion in the machinery of voluntarism with its concomittant demands for funding from the middle classes may have been poorly timed. The twenties brought a mood of political and fiscal conservatism. Local taxes

---

<sup>52</sup>Seeley, Community Chest, p. 20; "Trends in Social Service," Survey 47 (November 12, 1921): 252; Editorial, "Tag Days," Defender (July 7, 1923): no pag.

<sup>53</sup>Cutlip, Fund Raising, p. 209-11.



were rising at a rate that inspired rebellion in many areas.<sup>54</sup> Jane Addams and others who had once spoken for the poor were discredited by their wartime efforts for peace. The Catholic Bishops' social program was shelved as inflammatory. Some in the middle classes felt impatient with schemes for ameliorating poverty. They had seen too many plans for "organized helpfulness" come and go.<sup>55</sup> Old friends of charity fell away.<sup>56</sup> Some were lured by the new organizations for public health and character-building.<sup>57</sup> Others may have lost interest. The Progressive era campaigns on behalf of the poor had culminated in legislation. The frailty of mass movements is such that victories often bring disintegration.

---

<sup>54</sup>David Beito, Taxpayers in Revolt: Tax Resistance during the Great Depression (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), pp. 1-6; Lynn Dumenil, "'The Insatiable Maw of Bureaucracy': Antistatism and Education Reform in the 1920s," Journal of American History 77 (September 1990): 499-524.

<sup>55</sup>Norton, Cooperative Movement, p. 284.

<sup>56</sup>McCarthy, in her study of Chicago's wealthy philanthropic leaders and donors, describes Louise de Koven Bowen, Chicago's Juvenile Protection agency president, bemoaning a generational shift. Old friends of charity died and their children did not take their place; rather the next generation donated to cultural organizations. See Noblesse Oblige, p. 157.

<sup>57</sup>A study of New Haven, Connecticut, from 1900 to 1925 found that the fraction of total charitable contributions used for poor relief remained about constant at twenty-five percent of the total; the share going to health grew from seventeen percent in 1900 to thirty-five percent in 1925. See King, Trends in Philanthropy, p. 76.

The best-selling fiction of the twenties suggests impatience with the poor. Progressive era novels hardly celebrate the poor, but they do portray middle-class uplifters. In the novels of Eleanor Porter and Gene Stratton Porter waifs blossom under middle-class protectors. Paul Leceister Ford, Upton Sinclair, and, to a lesser degree, Harold Frederic depict successful and educated men who become political leaders of the poor.<sup>58</sup>

Novels of the twenties dismiss the poor.<sup>59</sup> Carol Kennicott's Gopher Prairie women's club maintain that the poor were only pretending as a strategy to avoid paying their bills. Molly Penwreath announces with satisfaction, "I am not an improver . . . I'm cheerfully and intelligently selfish." Roland of Sorrell and Son

---

<sup>58</sup>Gene Stratton Porter, The Harvester (New York: Doubleday, Page, 1911) and Michael O'Halloran (New York: Doubleday, Page, 1915); Eleanor H. Porter, Pollyanna (Page, 1913); Paul Leicester Ford, The Honorable Peter Stirling (New York: International Book & Publishing Co., 1899); Harold Frederic, The Marketplace (Stokes, 1899); Upton Sinclair, The Jungle (New York: Doubleday, Page, 1906).

<sup>59</sup>As Suzanne Greene has noted, the lower working class has a greater presence in popular novels during the twenties. There is for example Dere Mable, written as a collection of letters by a forerunner of television's Gomer Pyle. The courtship and early married years of Dot Hayley and radio repairman Eddie Collins were chronicled in Bad Girl, made into a movie of the same name. See Edward Streeter, Dere Mable (Stokes, 1918) and Vina Delmar, Bad Girl (Harcourt, Brace, 1928). See Suzanne Ellery Greene, Reading for Pleasure: Popular Fiction, 1914-1945 (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1974), p. 54.

declares, "How I loathe that class . . ." <sup>60</sup> Even Christ, as portrayed in a best-seller biography, pities but does not love the poor. <sup>61</sup>

Popular magazines denied the existence of poverty and referred to slums in the past tense. <sup>62</sup> Stories of colorful, stereotyped urban poor vanished. The imagery of the poor as possessing special vitality or spirituality would not return. Magazine fiction now favored stories in which Walter Mitty fantasies came true and brought riches to humble heroes. <sup>63</sup>

Poverty in the twenties became a highly relative term as the middle classes denied that dire poverty existed. There were many who agreed with 1928 presidential nominee Herbert Hoover when he declared, "We in America today are nearer to the final triumph over poverty than ever before

---

<sup>60</sup>Greene, Reading for Pleasure, p. 54.

<sup>61</sup>Giovanni Papini, Life of Christ (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1923), pp. 200-01.

<sup>62</sup>"Fewer Paupers," Literary Digest (November 20, 1920): 61-62. Scribner's asserted that "only a few of the earth's unfortunate ones find it difficult to earn enough to buy the actual necessities of life." Edwin A. McAlpin, "Rich Relations," Scribner's 84 (November 1928): 593.

<sup>63</sup>Charles R. Hearn, The American Dream in the Great Depression Contributions in American Studies, Robert H. Walker, ed., (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977), pp. 21 and 29. Hearn read how-to-succeed guidebooks, inspirational books, fiction and nonfiction from popular magazines, and the drama and fiction of major writers in the 1920s and 1930s.



in the history of any land." Even social welfare reformer Homer Folks announced to the National Conference of Social Work, "The slums have gone. They now exist only in fiction and in the moving pictures."<sup>64</sup> Certainly poverty and insecurity existed in the 1920s. As Frank Stricker has demonstrated, much of the unskilled working class struggled for a bare subsistence.<sup>65</sup> In Middletown, one-third of the Lynd's semi-skilled respondents had been laid off or notified that their lay-off was imminent.<sup>66</sup> As technology displaced an estimated 250,000 workers each year of the decade the average unemployed worker remained jobless for nine months.<sup>67</sup> Re-employment often meant reduced wages; in one study about half the men re-employed lost ten to forty percent of their previous wage.<sup>68</sup>

Yet there remained a core belief among the middle classes that involuntary unemployment occurred only during hard times and affected only those who had been too

---

<sup>64</sup>Homer Folks, "Prevention Succeeds," Presidential Address, National Conference of Social Work, 1923, p. 5.

<sup>65</sup>Frank Stricker, "Affluence for Whom?--Another Look at Prosperity and the Working Classes in the 1920s," Labor History 24 (Winter 1983): 5-33.

<sup>66</sup>Calkins, Some Folks, p. 76.

<sup>67</sup>Nelson, Unemployment Insurance, p. 25.

<sup>68</sup>Calkins, Some Folks, pp. 90-91.

thriftless to save.<sup>69</sup> Prohibition and high wartime wages supposedly had enabled the working class to acquire savings.<sup>70</sup> Among the mainstream journals, only the Literary Digest recognized unemployment as a problem. The Digest generally equated unskilled labor's unemployment with laziness while attributing middle and skilled working class men to have been involuntarily replaced by middle class women or machines operated by unskilled girls.<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup>Keyssar finds a "sea change" in middle-class opinion on unemployment between 1908 and 1922, a "recognition that unemployment was a fundamental social problem." He is cautious about this change, noting that this recognition was limited to talk and brought little action. I would be more cautious still. It is true that there was greater recognition of the obligation of industry to rationalize production. But it is possible to blame both the employer and the employee--to fault the mill for its regular lay-offs and to assume that workers could find interim employment if they tried. On the perceived opportunities and responsibilities of the worker, see for example Clinch Calkins, Some Folks Won't Work (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1930) and E. Wight Bakke, Citizens Without Work, p. 61.

<sup>70</sup>Calkins, Some Folks Won't Work; National Labor Tribune (December 21, 1922); the Literary Digest suggested that unemployment could be a golden opportunity for self-improvement in "New Opportunity for the Church," 97 (June 23, 1928): 30. Quotation from New York Times quoted in "'Mr. Zero's' Jobless Army," p. 31.

<sup>71</sup>See the following articles in the Literary Digest: "Millions Always Out of Work," 83 (November 15, 1924): 12; "'Mr. Zero's' Jobless Army," 84 (January 24, 1925): 30-31; "A New Opportunity for the Church" 97 (June 23, 1928): 30; "Revolt of the Jobless Middle-Aged" 94 (October 27, 1928): 9; "American Unemployment Seen by Foreign Eyes," 96 (March 31, 1928): 9; "Our Jobless Millions," 97 (April 7, 1928): 5-6; "Unemployment in the Midst of Prosperity," 98 (February 25, 1928): 9.



Even the union press seemed unaware of the rate of unemployment during the 1920s. The National Labor Tribune on several occasions gave over its front page to speeches by prominent industrialists pleading for revision of immigration laws in order to increase labor supply.<sup>72</sup>

Business success was a source of race pride for African Americans in the 1920s. The growth of African American businesses and Booker T. Washington's and Marcus Garvey's messages of self-help encouraged black newspaper editors to conflate racial economic successes with racial progress.<sup>73</sup> Thus the business success ideology prevalent in the white press also appeared in the black, and carried with it the same onus of failure for nonachievers.<sup>74</sup> As the Defender asserted, "the hod-

---

<sup>72</sup>Regarding the National Labor Tribune and immigration laws, see the front page for February 15, 1923 and March 8, 1923 and "Where are the Unemployed," May 3, 1923, pp. 1 and 4. Skimming the journals of the Teamsters and Plasterers and the National Labor Tribune at five year intervals yielded no articles on unemployment.

<sup>73</sup>Walters, "The Negro Press," p. 42. Some versions of race pride did suggest collective achievement; these drew on the achievements of black civilizations and on physical beauty and spiritual purity of the race. Short stories in the 1920s Crisis and Opportunity as well as more famous literature of the Harlem Renaissance, promoted racial solidarity by asserting the innate spiritual superiority of blacks over whites.

<sup>74</sup>Ronald Walters, "The Negro Press and the Image of Success: 1920-1939," MidContinent American Studies Journal 7 (Spring 1966): 42. William Gatewood speculates in Aristocrats of Color (pp. 333-35) that the twenties ushered in a closer identification between the elite and the masses



carrier is not the associate of the banker." Always written with the verve of a tabloid, the Defender's brashness edged into callousness in the 1920s. Poverty, when it appeared, was treated breezily. "Babe's Tootsie Wootsies Bitten by Hungry Rats," headlined a report of an infant attacked in its crib by rats.<sup>75</sup> While constantly exposing the injustice and poverty in the south, its campaign to encourage northward migration led the Defender to insist that all northern African Americans prospered. The paper asserted that only the most recent migrants suffered poverty.<sup>76</sup>

Not all papers denied northern poverty. The Pittsburgh Courier reported some social welfare news.<sup>77</sup>

---

based on a shifting of emphasis from the desire for assimilation to pride in black culture. Since his study concludes in 1920, however, he does not pursue or substantiate the hypothesis.

<sup>75</sup>"Babe's Tootsie Wootsies Bitten by Hungry Rats," Defender 22 September 1923, p. 3.

<sup>76</sup>For articles and cartoons typical of the campaign, see the following items from the Defender: "Two Pictures: One North, The Other South," 27 October 1923, p. 14; "Would You Go North to Join This Line?" and "Burned Hog Meat Given to Uncle Toms," 1 September 1923, p. 1; "It Must Be Discouraging," 8 September 1923, p. 12. The paper also ran advertisements offering quick fixes for poverty--courses in Mental Science and dubious investments. See "Handicapped," p. 12; "Race Grasping Opportunity" and "Are You Tired of Being Poor?" in 27 October 1923. See also Walters, "Negro Press," pp. 45-46.

<sup>77</sup>See for example "Governor Appoints Race Men on Interracial Commission," Pittsburgh Courier 7 June 1924, p. 1; "Noted Speakers to Address Social Work Conference" and

Generally the African American press protested racism but maintained that anyone with "pluck, energy, perseverance, and determination" could achieve anything--they could be wealthy as newspaper publisher Robert Abbott or comedian Bert Williams.<sup>78</sup> More radical papers like the Messenger were short-lived.<sup>79</sup> Black women's clubs did important work, but were imbued with firm ideas about worthiness as was the Urban League with its motto of "Not Alms But a Friend."<sup>80</sup>

There are some indications of dissent with prevailing views. The Catholic newspaper, the Boston Pilot,

---

"Negro Commission Bill is Favorably Reported," both in Pittsburgh Courier 31 May 1924, p. 3.

<sup>78</sup>Quotation from Editorial, "Handicapped," Defender 2 June 1923, p. 12. See also Walters, "Negro Press," p. 41.

<sup>79</sup>The Messenger ranked unemployment as the African American's greatest problem, noting that, "While one Negro may be lynched every three or five days, one million Negroes are starving slowly every day." But as post-war militancy did not deliver perceptible gains for African Americans, the Messenger's readership of white intellectuals and black workers drifted away. The paper began to shift its target audience to the Talented Tenth, but declined rapidly and folded in 1928. The quotation is from the July, 1921 issue, p. 214. See Walter C. Daniels, Black Journals of the United States (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press), p. 149 and Theodore Korweible, No Crystal Stair: Black Life and the Messenger, 1917-1928 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975), pp. 50-51.

<sup>80</sup>Joe William Trotter, Jr., "Blacks in the Urban North: The 'Underclass Question' in Historical Perspective," in The "Underclass" Debate: Views From History, ed. Michael B. Katz (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 78.

continued its long-standing dualistic policy of fiery rhetoric against industry abuses in its articles combined with adherence to formulaic worthiness in its Catholic Charities column.

A prominent social worker believed that constant talk of prosperity and high wages had caused poverty to seem "vague and unreal." People wondered, "'Are the poor really poor?'" They suspected the poor of indulging themselves with luxuries like cars.<sup>81</sup> To be "really poor" meant to be without any comforts, not even furniture, bedding, or a change of clothes. It meant being hungry and cold. But modern poverty meant merely "to live without plumbing or a proper kitchen sink; to wear cotton and eat coarse food."<sup>82</sup>

Poverty had become a relative term which many in the middle classes applied to themselves. By the 1920s the "American standard of living" had emerged as a common if undefined index of well-being. As a national standard, it seemed oddly elusive, a goal which all desired but few attained. Even the relatively well-off believed they had

---

<sup>81</sup>Karl De Schweinitz, "The Charity Level," in American Standards and Planes of Living: Readings in the Social Economics of Consumption, ed. Thomas D. Elliot (Boston: Ginn & Co., 1931), pp. 157-58, 161.

<sup>82</sup>Editorial, "Modern Poverty," Saturday Evening Post 190 (July 4, 1925): 22; Henry Ford and Samuel Crowther, "Toward Abolishing Poverty," Saturday Evening Post 203 (April 16, 1930): 118.



been left behind while others prospered. At the University of California at Berkeley and at Yale faculty expressed frustration.<sup>83</sup>

Those with salaries of \$2,500 reported that "a man and his wife must live with extreme frugality." At \$3,000, the group in question felt that "for a man and wife it is life on the simplest plane," although probably not even 5 percent of all American families enjoyed this level of income. A faculty family with young children that made \$4,000, must "live with extreme economy in the cheapest obtainable apartment." At the \$5,000 level they achieve nothing better than 'hand to mouth living'." At \$6,000, "the family containing young children can barely break even . . ."<sup>84</sup>

A rising standard of living based on consumption had upped the ante on membership in the middle class. The popular and scholarly presses testified to financial strains felt by families at nearly all economic levels. Popular magazines protested the high cost of living in fiction and essays and increased the number of advisory articles on budgeting. They indulged a vogue for articles in which authors confessed their poverty.<sup>85</sup> These

---

<sup>83</sup>Winifred Wandersee, Women's Work and Family Values 1920-1940 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), ch. 1. Wandersee describes a rising standard of living in terms of cars and household appliances. The financial demands of a high school youth culture centered on parties, dances, and clothes are described by the Lynds in Middletown, pp. 162-64 and 210-15.

<sup>84</sup>Wandersee, Women's Work, pp. 21-22.

<sup>85</sup>William Chase Greene, "Contentment in Poverty," North American Review 214 (November 1921): 650. See also Anonymous, "Living on the Ragged Edge: Family Income vs. Family Expenses," Harper's Magazine 152 (December 1925):

ranged from the poverty of underwear made from flour sacks and a phonograph purchased on the installment plan to the poverty of "the men who run their own furnaces and the women who 'do their own work.'"

Confessional authors wrote of the pain of denying their children and the anxiety of debt. Membership in the middle class depended on taste and manner and these intangibles might be given to one's children only through the amenities of their environment and education.<sup>86</sup> Efforts to provide the accoutrements of their class led to debt. Some writers recounted how they got out of debt and the contentment that attended solvency.<sup>87</sup> Others accepted debt philosophically. Said one delivery truck

---

54-59; Archie Chadbourne, "Debt is the Only Adventure a Poor Man Can Count On," American Magazine 104 (December 1927): 44-45 and "My Ship Must Have Got Sunk," American Magazine 105 (April 1928): 32-33; Jean Carter Cochran, "Poverty and Riches," Outlook 125 (July 21, 1920): 534-39; Contributors' Club, "My Lady Poverty," Atlantic Monthly 148 (September 1931): 385-88; "How the American Middle Class Lives (By One of Them)," Scribner's 86 (December 1929): 694-99; McAlpin, "Rich Relations," pp. 592-95; Karl Sebestyen, "The Philosophy of Poverty," Living Age 332 (June 15, 1927): 1091-94; Edward Moth Woolley, "Scraping By on a Few Thousand a Year," Collier's 74 (October 25, 1924): 12-13.

<sup>86</sup>Emily Newell Blair, "Why We Live Beyond Our Means," in Eliot, American Standards, pp. 214-15 reprinted from Forum 77 (June 1927): 892-99.

<sup>87</sup>In 1918 American Magazine sponsored a contest for the best narratives of adapting one's family living standard to limited income. Three are reprinted in Eliot, American Standards, pp. 165-69. See also Cochran, "Poverty and Riches," pp. 534-39 and Greene, "Contentment in Poverty," p. 648-54.

driver, "Debt is the only adventure a poor man can count on."<sup>88</sup>

In best-sellers of the 1920s living happily ever after often means accepting the limitations of the ordinary life. For example, Booth Tarkington's Alice Adams schemes and struggles to secure a wealthy husband. But at the end of the book, Alice acknowledges her family's lower status, gains inner peace, and enters a secretarial school.<sup>89</sup> Popular authors like Tarkington, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, and Mary Roberts Rinehart affirm the rewards awaiting one who accepts his prosaic struggles. Life is "work and trouble and a long sleep at the end for which let us be duly thankful," Rinehart tells her readers.<sup>90</sup>

In True Story, a magazine especially popular with young lower middle-class and working-class women, a clear message came through the stories--anyone can become poor. Employment was chancy and advancement required luck as well as hard work. In the True Story of the 1920s protagonists struggled for modest financial security and

---

<sup>88</sup>Chadbourne, "Debt is the Only Adventure," p. 44.

<sup>89</sup>Booth Tarkington, Alice Adams (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1921); Dorothy Canfield Fisher, The Brimming Cup (New York: Penguin Press, 1987 ed.).

<sup>90</sup>Mary Roberts Rinehart, The Breaking Point (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1922).



family happiness. They considered themselves lucky if they achieved them.<sup>91</sup>

Thus, despite an overall rise in the number of givers termed by one observer as "spectacular," the post-war years saw an increasing distance between the poor and the middle-classes. Help for those in need had been commercialized through aggressive promotion. Increasingly numerous organizations had, as one charity executive enthused, sold the poor as corporations sold "collars or breakfast foods." The poor were becoming commodities or check-offs on an annual pledge card by the Community Chest. The middle classes were contributing to the upkeep of the poor as never before, but had little personal

---

<sup>91</sup>Ilene DeValt has suggested that the twenties were a decade of financial insecurity for the skilled working class. See Sons and Daughters of Labor: Class and Clerical Work in Turn-of-the-Century Pittsburgh (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990). In True Story see, for example, "A Soul for Sale" 10 (February 1924): 36 and "He Married for Money," 10 (February 1924): 33. This interpretation of True Story in the 1920s differs from that of magazine historians Alan and Barbara Nourie and Theodore Peterson, and from Maureen Honey who used True Story in a study of women's images in World War II. Each of these authors mentions describes a formula of sin-suffer-repent. The Nouries characterize the story formula as a fall from grace due to the narrator's willfulness. This interpretation holds true by the 1930s. But in the initial decade of publication, the magazine favored stories in which the narrator was buffeted by circumstances or let down by someone trusted. See Maureen Honey, Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda During World War II (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984); Alan Nourie and Barbar Nourie, eds., American Mass Market Magazines, Historical Guides to the World's Periodicals and Newspapers (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990).

contact and few trusted sources of information. Mistrust of social services organizations increased as competition, coercion, and fraud took their toll on a public which prior to the war had been seldom asked for money. The mistrust felt toward social welfare organizations was not assuaged by the professionalization of social work.

Charity volunteers metamorphosed into professional social workers during the teens and twenties. More and more persons made their living by assisting the poor, including social workers, sociologists, and organization executives. Schools of social work were well-established, with seventeen formally affiliated with the American Association of Schools of Social Work. By the end of the Progressive Era, social work's major professional associations were in place.<sup>92</sup> By the twenties social work was visible as a new occupation. One labor union journal unhappily estimated "organized charity" to be the sixth largest industry in the country. In New York City there were over four thousand salaried social workers

---

<sup>92</sup>Stanley Wenocur and Michael Reisch, From Charity to Enterprise: The Development of American Social Work in a Market Economy (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), p. 89. The American Association of Medical Social Workers was established in 1918, the National Association of School Social Workers in 1919, the American Association of Social Workers in 1921. A final important association, the American Association of Psychiatric Social Workers (AAPSW) was established in 1926.

employed by private philanthropic agencies, and at least one earned ten thousand dollars a year.<sup>93</sup>

The trend away from volunteers began as early as the 1890s. By 1907 over half of the major Charity Organization Societies had eliminated volunteer field workers. By the war years, most volunteers had abandoned the field.<sup>94</sup> One 1920s would-be volunteer complained:

About the only activity to which I am really welcome is money-raising. Oh, of course I can put in my time sitting on boards and committees if I want to--but that all shakes down to money-raising too. The only job outside of money-raising that could be found for me this winter by the three local organizations to which we contribute most consistently--the Y.W., the Family Welfare and the T.B.--was to lend my car and chauffeur.<sup>95</sup>

Not all were pushed out. Suburbanization insulated many of the well-off and discouraged their involvement with the primarily urban charitable organizations.<sup>96</sup> But whether

---

<sup>93</sup>Henry Somerville, "The Tension Between Volunteers and Professionals in Catholic Charities" in American Catholic Thought on Social Questions, ed. Aaron I. Abell, American Heritage series (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1968), p. 288.

<sup>94</sup>According to Wenocour and Reisch, the number of friendly visitors had declined by 1917 to twenty-five percent of that the "peak years of voluntary activity." See From Charity to Enterprise, p. 36. Kathleen McCarthy traces the shift of the wealthy elite of Chicago from active participation in charitable organizations to dilettante fund-raising by the 1920s in Noblesse Oblige.

<sup>95</sup>Melbaugh, "Givers Talk Back," p. 102.

<sup>96</sup>Clarence Elmer Glick, "Winnetka: A Study of a Residential Suburban Community," (M.A. thesis, University of Chicago, 1928), p. 210.



volunteers jumped or were pushed, the end result was the same. Social work became salaried.

The transition to salaried workers came hard. The need for training and professionalism would not be readily conceded in a field where moral qualifications had ruled for generations.<sup>97</sup> And the salaries were a problem. Charity had been considered its own reward. A salary placed a question mark on the commitment and motives of social workers, as can be seen in references to the "paid uplifter" and the "professional uplifter."<sup>98</sup> Henry Ford railed against "commercialized humanitarianism" in his 1923 autobiography:

I have no patience with professional charity or with any sort of commercialized humanitarianism. The moment human helpfulness is systematized, organized, commercialized, and professionalized, the heart of it is extinguished, and it becomes a cold and clammy thing. . . . It hurts more than it helps.<sup>99</sup>

The Catholic lay organization for family relief, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, also questioned whether salaried workers and modern methods would destroy the

---

<sup>97</sup>Norton, Cooperative Movement, p. 287.

<sup>98</sup>"Downing the Uplifters," Literary Digest 86 (August 22, 1923): 30; Dorothy Canfield Fisher, The Brimming Cup (New York: Penguin Press, 1987 ed.), p. 140; Regarding complaints of overhead and red tape, see T. J. Edmonds, "The Man in the Street and the Chest," Survey 59 (November 1927): 145-48; and Routzahn, Publicity for Social Work, pp. 40-41.

<sup>99</sup>Henry Ford with Samuel Crowther, My Life and Work, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1923), pp. 206-07.

spiritual values in Catholic charity. The salaried worker introduced worldly, perhaps even mercenary motives into the work. Vincentians suspected she would also push out the volunteers. They looked askance at the methodology taught in colleges (including Catholic ones) which sought to establish casework, budget plans, and extensive case-records as prerequisites to financial aid. Many volunteers found budgets obnoxious and dictatorial. They believed poor persons should retain their right to manage their own households. Nor did the Society use case records that detailed economic, social, mental, and medical histories. Extensive records violated confidentiality and syphoned relief money into investigation and clerical tasks. Further Vincentians realized that budgets and records would require far more time and training than most volunteers had available. Adoption of professional techniques would require hiring professional workers.<sup>100</sup>

---

<sup>100</sup>Somerville raises the intriguing suggestion that Catholic laity divided along gender lines. In his observation Catholic lay women, organized in leagues and societies, favored the professionals and case-work methods. Somerville does not speculate on the reasons for the gendered disagreement. The women's societies may have included graduates of college social welfare programs. The women may have had greater confidence in the predominantly female profession of social work or perhaps less confidence in lower-class housewives. See Somerville, "Tension Between Volunteers and Professionals," pp. 293-95.

The public resented and repeatedly complained of overhead, salaries, and red tape (a complaint directed against the number of staff as well as the delay in delivering aid).<sup>101</sup> Overhead in professionalized organizations averaged a hefty thirty cents on the dollar in addition to the fundraising overhead.<sup>102</sup> The costs of raising money varied significantly. The average cost was fifteen percent. A survey of Cincinnati organizations found the older, well-established charities spent the least, from one to four cents per dollar, while one newer group spent a whopping sixty-six cents.<sup>103</sup>

As the pioneer generation of professionals, social workers needed to displace volunteers and justify their work and their salaries. In that effort they struggled against several handicaps. They were paid not by their clients (the poor), but by a benefactor class (their donors), a fact that augmented the need to justify the validity of social work. They worked with a stigmatized population, the poor. The profession's enthusiastic embrace of psychological counseling and work above the poverty line was in part an effort to exchange this

---

<sup>101</sup>Edmonds, "The Man in the Street," p. 145-48; Routzahn, Publicity, pp. 40-41; and Street, Sympathy and System, p. 18.

<sup>102</sup>Street, Sympathy, p. 48.

<sup>103</sup>Norton, Cooperative Movement, pp. 13 and 218.



stigmatizing association with the poor for the reflected dignity of the self-sufficient client.

Social workers were usually women. It was an era when many regarded "female professional" as an oxymoron. Professionalism was associated with male qualities of objectivity and rationality. These qualities were in opposition to supposed womanly emotions, intuitions, and nurturing instincts.<sup>104</sup> Thus female social workers assuming rational and autonomous work identities attracted gender-based criticisms and were often described as either emotional (too womanly for the work) or as callous (desexed). Few contemporaries, however, recognized these culturally imposed burdens. According to survey respondents the problems of social work lay not in the magnitude of the task, but in the judgment and personality of social workers.

---

<sup>104</sup>At some point, perhaps during the Depression, social workers acquired the additional stigma of being government employees. By 1930 four of every five persons "in or preparing for a career either in teaching or social work were female," according to Daniel J. Walkowitz who explores the tensions between femininity and a culture of professionalism in "The Making of a Feminine Professional Identity: Social Workers in the 1920s," American Historical Review 95 (October 1, 1990): 1051-75. In her history of another struggle for professional status Barbara Melosh asserts that "Because women are the 'second sex,' I would argue, there can be no women's profession. . . . nursing by definition cannot be a profession because most nurses are women." See "The Physician's Hand: Work, Culture, and Conflict in American Nursing" (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), p. 20.

What were the specific problems identified in the popular press and the comments of survey respondents? Many complained of the social workers' righteousness, the "superior air" that Walter Lippmann noted.<sup>105</sup> Even social workers shared this complaint; they frequently rebuked each other in the pages of the Survey as in this poem satirizing paradoxical pride in selflessness:

He serves . . . and struts; he cannot give  
Himself and leave himself unsung . . .  
He'd gladly die that they might live  
Who less from life's rare stores had wrung;  
But of his dying hour, half  
He'd use to write his epitaph.

There's no questioning his great  
Unflagging service to his neighbors;  
But like a child whose drawings wait  
For names, he labels all his labors . . .  
He serves and struts, as peacocks must,  
Trailing his glory in the dust.<sup>106</sup>

A popular novelist described social workers who couldn't "help being priggish and self-conscious."<sup>107</sup> State legislators found social workers consistently in advance

---

<sup>105</sup>LeRoy E. Bowman, "How Far Has Social Work Influenced Public Opinion," National Conference of Social Work, 1923, p. 478; "From Social Work to Social Science," New Republic 47 (June 2, 1926): 47-49; Routzahn, Publicity, p.40.

<sup>106</sup>Jesse Perlman, "A Social Worker I Know," Survey LIII (Oct. 15, 1924): 108.

<sup>107</sup>Fisher, Brimming Cup, p. 140. The Brimming Cup was a 1921 best-seller.

of public opinion and unbending in their point of view.<sup>108</sup> An editor of the popular women's magazine, The Delineator, stated that of all professional groups, only doctors and college professors were more snobbish than social workers. A businessman ranked them second only to ministers for "narrow mindedness."<sup>109</sup>

Social worker competence was often called into question. According to a businessman interviewed in Survey, agency executives were: " . . . business failures who can't make good at anything else and have found a soft snap."<sup>110</sup> A respondent in a survey of journalists stated categorically that soon into their careers all social workers became narrow, faddish, and useless. A politician included in an opinion survey believed the young female field workers too inexperienced in life to be of use. His advice was to "keep the dollbaby home, the girl with the tassels, just out of college."<sup>111</sup> The American Association for Organizing Family Social Work became sufficiently concerned regarding complaints about

---

<sup>108</sup>"Are Social Workers 'Nuts'?" Literary Digest 77 (June 16, 1923): 32;"Downing the Uplifters," p. 30; Smith, "Behemoth Walks," p. 360.

<sup>109</sup>Smith, "Public Opinion," p. 350.

<sup>110</sup>Edmonds, "The Man in the Street," pp. 145-48, quotation from p. 146.

<sup>111</sup>Bing, "What the Public Thinks of Social Work," p. 486.



the youthful inexperience of field workers to include a yes/no question in a 1923 questionnaire: "It is my impression that most family social workers are too young or inexperienced to be helpful in the situations they deal with." The same questionnaire confronted other stereotypes, asking if social workers were "too sentimental," "too cold and lacked heart," or "too meddlesome."<sup>112</sup>

To some extent social service professionals earned their reputation for arrogance. To judge from the pages of their professional journals, many social workers regarded the public with contempt. This particularly egregious example is a social worker describing her survey respondents. Believing them to be amazingly stupid, she felt compelled to explain them to her readers:

"these are real people talking, people who are uncommonly successful in their business, family and social relationships. Of course some of them seem dumb--but there were some who were dumber--some who simply hadn't let our ideas get a foot in the door of their brain."<sup>113</sup>

---

<sup>112</sup>Overall the questionnaire had an embarrassing air of humility. Sent as a prototype to eight member organizations of the American Association for Organizing Family Social Work, it was refused by two. One objected to its negativity, the other to its anxious self-consciousness, like "an adolescent who is concerned to know whether or not people think he is grown up." See Swift, "An Experiment in Sounding Public Opinion," pp. 652-55.

<sup>113</sup>Florence Melbaugh, "The Givers Talk Back," Survey 60 (October 15, 1928): 100.

Another social worker described her efforts at public outreach to her "backward county" and an individual official whom she "made to see the light."<sup>114</sup> In a book written for general readership, a social work executive expressed not appreciation but scorn for the previous generation of untrained charity executives; they were "broken-down preachers, poor relatives, business men who had failed in everything else . . ." <sup>115</sup>

But if some of the abuse directed at social workers was earned, much of it was irrelevant and oddly personal. Survey respondents did not shrink from criticizing the social worker person or personality. Given cultural gender norms, it is not surprising that female social workers especially drew complaints for their lack of charm. One egalitarian respondent, however, voiced a condemnation of both male and female social workers for "dowdy clothes, shabby homes, rattly cars, if any, and poor table manners."<sup>116</sup> One candid respondent summarized bluntly the social workers' perceived social

---

<sup>114</sup>Virginia B. Handley, "The Interpretation to the community of a Public Agency," National Conference of Social Work, 1925, p. 139.

<sup>115</sup>Street, Sympathy, pp. 120-22.

<sup>116</sup>Edmonds, "The Man in the Street," p. 146.

awkwardness: "only those who are queer, or who soon become queer do it [social work]."117

Social workers were caught between two derisive stereotypes. They were on one hand heartless, bureaucratic meddlers. On the other hand, they were impractical, sentimental visionaries. One newspaper reporter summarized the dichotomy, personified in the social workers he had met; they were "either of the emotional or the hidebound 'service' type." The public did not want much to do with either type. The emotional types had "pets." They coddled undeserving malingerers and lobbied legislatures for the means to further coddle them. They were "90 percent sentiment. They "slobbered over and [made] a mess of the work." According to one popular magazine, they saw substandard housing if the windows did not face south and the doorbell was out of

---

<sup>117</sup>Quotation from "What is Social Work?" Survey, LIII (January 15, 1925): 460-61. For other surveys see Edmonds, "The Man in the Street," pp. 145-48; Bowman, "What the Press Thinks of Social Work," pp. 477-83; Lucia Johnson Bing, "What the Public Thinks of Social Work," National Conference of Social Work, 1923, pp. 483-87; Linton B. Swift, "An Experiment in Sounding Public Opinion," National Conference of Social Work, 1927, pp. 652-55. Otto G. Wismer claims to present his profession's viewpoint in "A Lawyer Looks at Social Workers," Survey LIII (February 15, 1925): 585-87 and Haven Emerson, M.D., does the same for public health professionals in "Cards on the Table," Survey LV (January 1926): 465-66. Nelson Antrim Crawford, Director of Information in the U.S. Department of Agricultural, claimed to present the view of the "typical farmer" in "The Farmer Looks at Social Work," National Conference of Social Work, 1927, pp. 662-68.



order. And although their reasons were sound and humane, social workers did not help their case when, as in Chicago, they set relief standards higher than the salary of unskilled labor.<sup>118</sup> In a sample of sixteen cities, outdoor relief, that is general aid exclusive of mothers' pensions, increased by 110%. Between 1916 and 1925, relief in "a large cross-section of American communities" tripled, then remained at the new plateau until the Depression's onset.<sup>119</sup>

---

<sup>118</sup>Bowman, "What the Press Thinks of Social Work," pp. 482-83; Bing, "What the Public Thinks of Social Work," pp. 485-87; Edmonds, "The Man in the Street," p. 145; Stephen Leacock, "Throwing down the Uplift," Collier's 77 (January 9, 1926): 22. Regarding rising relief standards, see William R. Brock, Welfare, Democracy and the New Deal (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 22-24; John. B. Dawson, "The Significance of the Rise in Relief-Giving During the Past Five Years: Its Relation to Increased Costs and the Adequacy of Relief Based on a Study of Relief-Giving in Forty-Seven American Cities With a Population of 100,000 and Over," National Conference of Social Work, 1922, pp. 237-41. A joint committee of national agencies found that in thirty-six cities of more than 100,000, the average relief expenditure was in 1925 was "more than twice that of 1916, even when corrected for the purchasing power of the dollar." See Smith, "Behemoth Walks," p. 362.

<sup>119</sup>See Brock, Welfare, pp. 22-24 and Bernard Sternsher, "Victims of the Great Depression: Self-Blame/Non-Self-Blame, Radicalism and Pre-1929 Experiences," Social Science History I (Winter 1977): 164. The cost of public social welfare programs remained modest, despite the increases. Taking a national average, spending per capita for welfare between 1913 and 1922 rose by eleven percent while spending tripled on highways and on health and sanitation and increased one and one-half times for education. See Brock, p. 34 and Axinn and Levin, Social Welfare, p. 151.

The service types supposedly spent relief money on investigating and prying. Like the emotional types, they were slaves to a material standard of living. But unlike the emotional types they were snobs who believed a "hotel was holier than a cathedral because it [had] better plumbing." and who "would sneer" at Jesus Christ because he was born in a manger. In Sinclair Lewis's fictional city of Zenith charity staff includes an icy, "aged virgin" and female interrogator who have the manner of "vermin exterminators."<sup>120</sup> The caricature resonates with another supplied by a survey respondent: "[Their] Methods are commercial. The milk of human kindness has been extracted from true human charitable instincts. In its place is efficiency, minus sympathy. Most social workers are unsexed humanitarians who are attempting to sublimate their parental instincts."<sup>121</sup>

The service types appeared more often than the emotional types in the fiction and movies of the 1920s.<sup>122</sup> Famous for Pollyanna and other protagonists of unrelenting pluck, Eleanor Porter was one of the

---

<sup>120</sup>Sinclair Lewis, Elmer Gantry (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1927), p. 386.

<sup>121</sup>Bowman, "What the Press Thinks of Social Work," p. 482.

<sup>122</sup>Walkowitz, "Making of a Feminine Professional Identity," pp. 1065.

period's most popular authors. Porter believed in bloodline and bootstraps as the only prerequisites for success. Here, however, she overflows with uncharacteristic sympathy for the man temporarily down on his luck and subjected to "service":

. . . if you'd lost heart and friends and money, and were just ready to chuck the whole shooting-match, how would you like to become a 'Case,' say number twenty-three thousand seven hundred and forty-one, ticketed and docketed, and duly apportioned off to a six-by-nine rule of 'do this' and 'do that,' while a dozen spectacled eyes watched you being cleaned up and regulated and wound up with a key made of just so much and no more pats and preachments carefully weighted and labeled? How would you like it?<sup>123</sup>

Porter's complaint is not on behalf of the men and women who spent their lives in or near poverty. It is the same complaint on behalf of previously good providers that had been voiced during the Progressive era and the campaign for workmen's compensation. Underlying it was a belief that the previously independent needed only a leg up. They did not need rehabilitation.

But rehabilitation is what social workers offered. The middle classes thought in terms of charity, material aid given for a brief period of time. Social workers thought in terms of "mental hygiene," and "constructive

---

<sup>123</sup>Eleanor Porter, Oh, Money! Money! (New York: Grossett & Dunlap, 1918), p. 4. Note the reference to "spectacled eyes" which is probably intended to suggest an impersonal attitude and a lack of warmth and femininity.



work." It appears many of the middle classes believed that if there were people who needed more than a brief assistance, they were either beyond help, or else could not be helped by the methods of social work. One prominent social worker suggested that "much of the public holds its tongue in its cheek when constructive work is under discussion . . ."<sup>124</sup> One of the trade journals ruefully commented, ". . . a strike of social workers would be considered somewhat humorous!"<sup>125</sup>

Some social service organizations made a point of their lay status and their freedom from the interference of professional social workers.<sup>126</sup> This suggests that the programs administered by professionals were seen as serving the wrong clientele or as serving the right clientele, but ineffectively. Given their druthers, the middle classes preferred to help certain kinds of people and in certain ways. The middle classes had not opted out of charity. Indeed professionals lamented the irrepressible outbreaks of "popular charities" such as service club programs. The Loyal Order of the Moose and the American Legion gave stipends to maintain fatherless

---

<sup>124</sup>Norton, Cooperative Movement, pp. 287-88.

<sup>125</sup>The Compass (May 1926): 1; quoted in Wenocur, p. 126.

<sup>126</sup>Burns, "Everyman's Chest," p. 141; McCarthy, Noblesse Oblige, p. 143.

children either in their own homes or in institutions. Kiwanis aided underprivileged youth. Popular charities often emphasized children, were often performed in a sociable setting, required brief commitment, produced in-kind assistance, and flowed directly from benefactor to recipient.<sup>127</sup>

During the twenties several forces encouraged the middle classes to regard the poor and their helpers with skepticism. As opportunities for consumerism increased and standards of living rose, definitions of "need" and "poverty" became increasingly relative. When middle class families felt themselves to be in "need," they might view the neediness of others with greater suspicion. Believing that dire need did not exist, many in the middle classes perceived the poor to be somewhat like themselves, that is sacrificing on basics in order to buy luxuries like cars.

The professionalization of social work removed volunteers from fieldwork. But more importantly the

---

<sup>127</sup>The service organizations so popular in twenties were effective combinations of sociability and local welfare. Some of these had rules or policies intended to discourage the adoption of welfare programs of longer than a year's duration. See Jeffrey A. Charles, Service Clubs in American Society: Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); C. W. Areson, "Significance of Social Service Activities of Noonday and Fraternal Groups in Relation to Community Organizations, As Viewed by a Social Worker," National Conference of Social Work, 1927, pp. 434-35; and Glick on Winnetka Neighborhood Circles in "A Study of a Residential Suburban Community," p. 207.

troubled perception of the professional social worker guaranteed weak confidence in program effectiveness. Competitive and commercialized philanthropic fund raising created suspicions that the poor were packaged for profit or sinecures by social service organizations. At a minimum many people suspected that organizations overstated their usefulness. Social good had entered the marketplace of caveat emptor.

Businessmen and celebrities emerged as go-betweens for the middle classes and their philanthropies. They appeared successful and disinterested and therefore their judgement was to be trusted. Moreover outreach of members of society with the highest status assisting those with the lowest status may have conveyed reassuring implications of a neighborly, classless society. Although coercion played a part in Community Chest campaigns, the businessmen who ran them were trusted by large segments of their communities to distribute funds among competing organizations. The organizations recruiting celebrities believed them to be effective spokespersons. They were very likely correct to judge by the continued growth of the partnership between celebrities and fundraisers. Lacking the endorsement of businessmen or celebrities, the middle classes liked to give concrete aid--eyeglasses, food, or clothing. In this way they maintained some



control and met visible, tangible needs. One problem recognized by charitable organizations was the intangible, unquantifiable nature of case work. Finally poverty now had to compete for donations within a broadly defined sphere of social welfare.

In short, the twenties saw no improvement in popular perceptions of the poor but did see a clear weakening of confidence in paid spokespersons for the poor. In the decade ahead these professionals would be entrusted with the disbursement of unprecedented sums of tax monies. Relief programs, their administrators, and their recipients would become major political issues.

CHAPTER IV  
BUREAUCRATIZED HUMANITARIANISM

It frequently has been said that the New Deal and the strength of the Roosevelt elections demonstrated that the majority of Americans had come to support an activist government. Implicit in the assumption is that the activist state was embraced in all its guises, including as the guarantor of social welfare.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes this conclusion is drawn explicitly, accompanied by the observation that the middle class learned from experience that poverty is not the fault of the individual.<sup>2</sup> Recent local studies have suggested that acceptance of the activist state represented in the New Deal may have been more uneven than earlier histories portrayed.<sup>3</sup> A vote

---

<sup>1</sup>Leuchtenburg, p. 331; George Wolfskill, "New Deal Critics: Did They Miss the Point?" Essays on the New Deal The Walter Prescott Webb Memorial Lectures (Austin, TX: University of Texas at Arlington, 1969), pp. 64-68.

<sup>2</sup>Faith Lomax Cook and Edith J. Barrett, Support for the American Welfare State: The Views of Congress and the Public (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p. 8; Andrew J. Polsky, The Rise of the Therapeutic State (Princeton, 1991), p. 154; Walter I. Trattner, From Poor Law to Welfare State: A History of Social Welfare in America (New York: Free Press, 1974), 276.

<sup>3</sup>Local studies of the Depression include: Mary Cochran Grimes, "From Emergency Relief to Social Security in Nebraska," Nebraska History (Fall 1990): 126-41; Peter Fearon, "From Self-Help to Federal Aid: Unemployment and Relief in Kansas, 1929-1932," Kansas History 13 (1990): 107-122; Jo Ann E. Argersinger, Toward a New Deal in Baltimore: People and Government in the Great Depression

for FDR did not necessarily signal a change in an individual's view of government's obligation to poor people.<sup>4</sup> The Depression may have stimulated a growing sense of entitlement on the part of the "new poor" but left relatively untouched their views of the "usually poor."

Attitudes toward relief programs reveal conflicting currents of beliefs and values. They were shaped by the desire to be generous and by the need to husband one's resources against an uncertain future. They were shaped by clear evidence that the economic system had failed and by residual confidence that hard work and ability must

---

(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Roger Biles, Memphis in the Great Depression (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986); Heinemann, Depression; Catherine McNicol Stock, Main Street in Crisis: The Great Depression and the Old Middle Class on the Northern Plains (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Trout, Boston; Jerome Tweton, The New Deal at the Grass Roots: Programs for the People in Otter Tail County, Minnesota (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1988); James F. Wickens, Colorado in the Great Depression (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1979). John Braeman, Robert H. Bremner, and David Brody, The New Deal: The State and Local Levels (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1975).

<sup>4</sup>Leila A. Sussman describes the election issues salient to voters who wrote to Roosevelt in 1932 and 1940 in Dear FDR: A Study of Political Letter-Writing (Totowa, NJ: Beminster Press, 1963). According to William Leuchtenburg, the 1936 election hinged on economic recovery and the importance of the Farm Credit Administration, HOLC, and FHA in winning votes. See Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1963), pp. 193-94. See also Paul Conkin, New Deal, Crowell American History Series (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1934), pp. 83-102.



prevail. Action by a new centralized government bureaucracy, while necessary, could not be viewed with complacency by much of the public. Confronted with problems that required systemic solutions and innovation, the American public was quite reasonably uneasy and ambivalent.

In the early thirties, support for federal intervention in state relief programs was relatively strong. But complaints about high taxes and chiseling relief recipients revealed underlying tensions. The fears described above were added to existing misgivings about social workers (who were now in charge of federal and state programs). By 1935 the complaints become louder and more insistent.<sup>5</sup>

In 1936 changes in the structure of relief added new concerns, making the years of 1935-1937 the probable peak in vocal criticism of relief programs. Removing itself from state direct relief programs, the federal government began the well-known work relief program, the Works Progress Administration. There were at least three important consequences. First, federal relief was now administered through bureaucrats and was more vulnerable to excessive political patronage. Second, under-funding of state programs and the WPA led to increasing organized

---

<sup>5</sup>The complaints will be described in detail below.

militancy by relief recipients. Third, WPA was an expensive program, compared to direct relief, a fact which aroused increasing discontent.<sup>6</sup>

As Roosevelt embarked on a third term, and economic recovery seemed to gain ground, support for relief programs ebbed. The issue did not seem to carry the emotional force of the years immediately preceding, but steadily accumulated additional criticism. Perceptions of the New Deal and its political orientation influenced attitudes toward relief. Events in Europe and labor turmoil at home had stimulated a generalized fear of radicalism that pervaded the country.<sup>7</sup> Roosevelt himself was widely perceived as leaning left. In a 1938 Gallup poll, seventy-two percent of the respondents wanted the administration to become more conservative.<sup>8</sup> In this context, the WPA worker militancy in the face of program cuts served to heighten concerns that the New Deal was too radical and that organized relief recipients could become

---

<sup>6</sup>Barry D. Karl, The Uneasy State: The United States From 1915 to 1945 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 133-36; James T. Patterson, The New Deal and the State: Federalism in Transition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969; reprint ed., Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), p. 193; Richard M. Vallely, Radicalism in the States: The Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party and the American Political Economy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 130-35.

<sup>7</sup>Karl, Uneasy State, p. 161.

<sup>8</sup>Vallely, Radicalism in the States, p. 134.

a formidable political force. The political power of a centralized bureaucracy had gained salience with many in the wake of 1936 and 1938 patronage scandals. By 1939 three-quarters of those polled thought the administration should reduce spending on the WPA. By 1943 the WPA was defunct.<sup>9</sup>

The considerations described above of partisanship and policy mixed with the more constant concerns over character, need, program effectiveness, and cost. Early in the Depression, the severity of need was apparent enough that to some extent it overrode other concerns. By 1932, the Depression had overwhelmed the funds of private agencies and local and state agencies.<sup>10</sup> In this crisis atmosphere, there was a feeling on part of many that the federal government must do "something."<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup>Argersinger, Toward a New Deal, p. 140; Karl, Uneasy State, pp. 173-78; Patterson, New Deal, p. 84; Valelly, Radicalism in the States, pp. 130-35.

<sup>10</sup>See, for example, Trout, Boston, pp. 88, 188.

<sup>11</sup>The strength of this consensus may be seen in the Catholic community. Although Catholics had generally opposed any extension of federal power and had fought secular encroachment on their social welfare network, in 1932 "almost all Catholics" broke sharply with their previous positions and welcomed federal intervention in relief. Unanimity, however, disappeared by mid-decade. Roosevelt bought the cooperation of Chicago's Catholic hierarchy by allowing the Church to dispense federal relief funds. See David J. O'Brien, American Catholics and Social Reform: the New Deal Years (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 68-72, 213, 226-27; regarding Chicago, see Elizabeth Cohen, Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in



But although perceived need earned relief programs the benefit of the doubt for a time, other concerns asserted themselves quickly. Along with victims of economic catastrophe, the safety net caught those who had long been poorly paid and sporadically employed.<sup>12</sup> As the decade continued, the relief rolls remained high and the funds ever insufficient. With their own security or living standards in jeopardy, many people began to question program standards of eligibility and the level and duration of assistance.<sup>13</sup> The federal government urged the standards of professional social workers and sought a minimum standard of living that provided "health and decency." The stage was set for conflict over standards and costs.

Before proceeding with a detailed analysis of popular views of poverty and relief, a word about sources is in

---

Chicago, 1919-1939 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 269.

<sup>12</sup>In an article praising the Virginia relief program generally, the Times-Dispatch complained that subsistence farmers who were no worse off than they had been for past ten years were now eligible for relief. See Ronald L. Heinemann, Depression and New Deal in Virginia: The Enduring Dominion (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983), pp. 83-4. Other publications raised the same complaint about unskilled urban workers who had lived at a subsistence level before the Depression.

<sup>13</sup>Robert S. McElvaine, ed., Down and Out in the Great Depression: Letters from the "Forgotten Man" (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), pp. 13, 26.

order. Since my evidence is drawn in part from popular magazines, it would be well to consider the relationship of the press to the New Deal. Roosevelt often complained that the press was biased against the New Deal. Dubbing it the "Tory press," Roosevelt believed it represented the views of its wealthy owners. Historian Graham White, however, finds that Roosevelt's claims were wildly exaggerated. The public felt the press was generally fair. In polls by Gallup and Elmo Roper seventy to ninety percent of respondents believed that newspapers had been fair to FDR. The Saturday Evening Post and the American Mercury were frankly anti-New Deal. But that stance did not always translate directly into reports on relief programs or the unemployed. The Post was often, but not always, critical of relief recipients. The American Mercury published powerful descriptions of blameless poverty among all classes and both sympathetic and satirical analyses of relief. Magazines like Nation and New Republic which favored the New Deal were sometimes as harsh toward relief as their more conservative competitors.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup>Graham White, FDR and the Press (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), pp. 1, 98-9. An additional study of Roosevelt's relations with and presentation by the press--in this case columnists--is Gary Dean Best, The Critical Press and the New Deal: The Press versus Presidential Power, 1933-1938 (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1993). Best perceives the critical columnists as an heroic

The views of African Americans toward relief programs were ambivalent but relatively positive, especially as ongoing prejudice within relief programs fostered a sense of support toward those who would claim relief. Relief was not discussed in Crisis or Opportunity with the frequency of other New Deal programs.<sup>15</sup> Both journals condemned the discrimination found in relief programs and generally praised the WPA for its egalitarianism.<sup>16</sup> The Defender initially praised Chicago's relief program, noting the large number of African American staff and listed each of their names. Early articles described relief protesters as communists wielding iron bars and red pepper powder against restrained and dutiful police. By

---

opposition to policies that assaulted capitalism and constitutional government and Roosevelt as a potential dictator driven by a disability psychology that resulted from his crippling by polio.

<sup>15</sup>According to Dwight Ernest Brooks, Paul Edwards found in a 1932 survey of urban southern blacks that only a small percentage were regular readers of white mainstream magazines. But Africans Americans in business and professional occupations "demonstrated significant readership of magazines published by Blacks" and most professional African Americans read Crisis and Opportunity. See "Consumer markets and consumer magazines: Black America and the culture of consumption, 1920-1960," (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1991), p. 25.

<sup>16</sup>See for example, Jesse O. Thomas, "The Negro Looks at the Alphabet," Opportunity XII (January 1934): 12; Robert Weaver, "New Deal and the Negro," Opportunity XIII (July 1935): 202; Crisis 43 (November 1936): 337; Gustav A. Stumpf, "Harlem Tops New York WPA Classes," Crisis 45 (January 1938): 10-11.



1935, however, the paper had become critical of prejudice in relief programs and friendly toward communists.<sup>17</sup> At times the paper took on the roll of advocate, urging readers to contact the Urban League.

At the national level the NAACP and National Urban League moved toward greater involvement with economic issues. Both organizations endeavored to curtail racism in the AFL and to support the CIO. The Urban League attempted to defend the rights of blacks from discrimination in relief programs.<sup>18</sup>

Because historically the federal government had intervened on their behalf, and because the long-standing

---

<sup>17</sup>See the following articles in the Defender: "American Liberty League," 5 October 1935, p. 16; "Discrimination Given a New Life Under WPA," 4 January 1936, p. 5; Howard D. Gould, "Race and Work Relief," 17 August 1935, p. 10; "Fight for Bread Erases Color Line," 31 August 1935, p. 3; "Minister Shot as Mob Storms Relief Office," 17 April 1937, pp. 1, 3; "Mothers' Aid Cited as Prejudiced," 14 September 1935, p. 4; "New York Communist Expelled for Discrimination Practices," 28 December, 1935, p. 3; "Race Urged to Report All Discrimination in WPA," 16 November 1935, p. 1; "Race Workers are Facing Starvation in Alabama," 1 June 1935, p. 1; "Soaking the Rich," 10 August 1935, p. 16; "WPA Revokes High Post of J. W. Johnson," 2 January 1935, p. 1. The Defender generally praised the CCC. Edgar G. Brown, "Name 6 More Race Men to CCC Posts," 28 September 1935, p. 5; "Race Well-Represented on the CCC Corps," 2 November 1935, p. 2; "Ten Get Jobs as U.S. CCC Supervisors," 2 November 1925, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup>Harvard Sitkoff, A New Deal for Blacks: The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue Volume I (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), ch. 10; Nancy Weiss, Farewell to the Party of Lincoln: Black Politics in the Age of FDR (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), ch. 3.

anti-lynching campaign looked to federal protection, black Americans may have had less philosophical difficulty than whites with an active and centralized state.

But local studies do not indicate deep involvement by the NAACP or the Urban League in the problems of those without income. Whether inaction stemmed from bewilderment at the scale of the need and deficient resources or from apathy is difficult to assess. According to Robin D. G. Kelly and Roger Biles in their accounts of Birmingham and Memphis, the economically better off were indifferent to the plight of the poor.<sup>19</sup> Throughout the decade, the Crisis expressed shame felt by middle class African Americans toward the lower-class of their race.<sup>20</sup> Reflecting an urban-rural division as well as a class division, Crisis fiction repeatedly depicted young women of achievement striving to reconcile feelings of shame toward their impoverished relatives. Typical were the feelings this college woman expressed to her middle-class fiance.

---

<sup>19</sup>Robin D. G. Kelly, Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), pp. 109-16 and "The Black Poor and the Politics of Opposition in a New South City, 1929-1970," in The "Underclass" Debate: Views From History ed. Michael B. Katz (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 303-04; Biles, Memphis, ch. 5.

<sup>20</sup>W.E.B. DuBois, "On Being Ashamed of Oneself: An Essay on Race Pride," Crisis (September 1933): 199-200.



Everything is crude--even my mother and father--things will seem primitive to you. You will hate everything--the roughness and uncouthness of these people, their ignorance will jar on your nerves. I can imagine how you will feel towards me when you see how things are. I've thought of it until I'm sick--I'm so ashamed for you to see--!<sup>21</sup>

The Defender urged support for the American Liberty League and condemned the Soak-the-Rich tax, indicating its preference for limited government. Anger at prejudice and exclusion in relief programs did not completely displace older beliefs in the negative impact of relief on character. Some feared that relief would demoralize a large segment of the race.<sup>22</sup>

Much of the discussion in the mainstream press was of the antagonism of taxpayers toward "reliefers." Journalist Dorothy Thompson believed the U.S. was becoming a divided country of employed versus relief recipient.<sup>23</sup> To many, perhaps most, of the middle class, "taxpayers" and "reliefers" were nonintersecting sets. This

---

<sup>21</sup>Quotation from Bruce Schuyler, "The Moving Finger: A Story," Crisis (April 1931): 127. See also the following stories in the Crisis: Lillian Beverton Mason, "Honor" 38 (July 1931): 229-30; Harvey M. Williamson, "The Old Woman" 41 (November 1934): 324-35; Bertram A. Lewis, "Winship and the Gleam," 40 (June 1933): 133-34; Jessie Bernard, "Alycia's Grandchildren" 40 (October 1933): 225, 238; Octavia B. Wynbush, "Conjure Man" 45 (March 1938): 71-73; Joyce N. Reed, "Hate is Nothing" 45 (December 1938): 388-90.

<sup>22</sup>Weiss, Farewell to the Party of Lincoln, pp. 296-97.

<sup>23</sup>Dorothy Thompson, "Our Ghostly Commonwealth," Saturday Evening Post 208 (July 27, 1935): 77.



perception persisted although many "taxpayers" received funds through federal programs and many relief recipients had paid taxes for a lifetime and continued to pay indirectly through their rent payments to landlords.<sup>24</sup>

A woman writing to radio editorialist Boake Carter characterized those persons not on relief as having paid taxes all their lives and having lost their savings through no fault of their own. Those on relief she described as having "never contributed to the upkeep of the government."<sup>25</sup> An Indiana woman asked FDR, "Do you President Roosevelt think it just for the man who has never cared about owning his home and paying taxes to keep up our Community, be given a job and orders for Food both. And the Tax payer nothing?"<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup>A College Graduate, "I'm On Relief," Harper's Monthly Magazine 172 (January 1936): 201; Hugo Johanson, "Bread Line," Atlantic Monthly 158 (August 1936): 165.

<sup>25</sup>Boake Carter, "Johnny Q. Public" Speaks! The Nation Appraises the New Deal, (New York: Dodge Publishing Co., 1933), p. 247. Carter was one of the country's most popular radio news commentators. From 1936 to 1938 he ranked with Lowell Thomas of NBC at the top of the ratings. By the time he left radio in 1938, he was heard by an estimated five to ten million listeners and had been voted the most popular radio commentator by readers of Radio Guide. His syndicated newspaper column, begun in 1937, appeared by 1938 in fifty-two newspapers with an estimated readership of seven million. See Irving Fang, Those Radio Commentators (Ames, IA: 1977), pp. 6-7 and 107-11.

<sup>26</sup>Miss Amanda Schroeder to President Roosevelt, January 4, 1934. RG9 Entry 23, Box 493.

By the 1935 the Gallup poll reflected the perception of relief recipients as a distinct subset of society by singling them out as a focus group (as it occasionally did with women, farmers, and others). The poll reported the views of relief recipients on diverse questions. Some, such as the propriety of women jurors, bore no connection to relief or economic issues.<sup>27</sup>

At least one county, Kent County, Michigan, home to the city of Grand Rapids, codified the divide between taxpayers and relief recipients. For one month the county cut relief from four grocery orders to two and even these were pegged to the number of small children in the family. At the end of the month, the county reinstated to full relief only those recipients who produced the signatures of three taxpayers willing to swear to their need.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup>The results of polls suggested that relief recipients were more socially conservative than the general public; they were disinclined toward women jurors and the availability of birth control information in larger numbers than the general public. They were less conservative in economic matters, tending to favor in larger numbers than the general public pump priming, federal administration of relief, and sit-down strikes. Although as a group relief recipients voted overwhelmingly for FDR, thirty-two percent said they would be no worse off under a Republican administration. George Gallup, The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971 (New York: Random House), pp. 13, 19, 42-3, 49, 50, 52-3, 81, 148, 161.

<sup>28</sup>Dorothy Thompson, "Vitamins and the Green-Plush Rabbit," Saturday Evening Post 208 (August 24, 1935): 50.

The imagery of popular magazines often separated relief recipients from working adults through metaphors of child-like dependence. Federal programs became "government maternalism" as the administration gathered "the destitute to its bosom."<sup>29</sup> Relief was compared to "giving milk to babies twenty-three and twenty-four years old."<sup>30</sup> The New York State Emergency Unemployment Relief Committee named one of its divisions "Adopt-a-Family." The parental connotations of the name were captured in a Literary Digest photo of the division chief. Captioned "Mothering the Unemployed," the photo depicted Mrs. August Belmont, an older woman of magisterial bearing, whose academic cap and gown appeared quasi-judicial. The visual presentation of Mrs. Belmont suggested state authority, while the caption suggested nurturance. Repeatedly the imagery of relief united officialdom with maternity. By implication, adult beneficiaries became minors, subject to authority and in need of training and protection until they attained maturity.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup>Thompson, "Our Ghostly Commonwealth," p. 7.

<sup>30</sup>Hubert Kelley, "Good Men Plowed Under," American Magazine 120 (November 1935): 16-17.

<sup>31</sup>"Farewell to Gibson Alms," Literary Digest 115 (June 24, 1933): 17.



In an autobiographical article, a woman described how she and her brothers and mother had met the Depression with panache. Brave-hearted, even gay, they stood by each other through years of poverty. Then the brothers and mother went on relief. With swiftness the author depicts as inexorable, they abandoned all efforts at courage and family unity; they were reduced to sniveling, dependent egoists, each concerned only with making others support him. To make clear the linkage between relief and reversion to childhood, the author suggested that character change was underway even as her mother announced the decision to apply for relief: "She made her eyes round and innocent, clasped her hands girlishly, a gesture I did not recognize in her."<sup>32</sup>

Except in confessional articles written by middle-class persons on relief, relief recipients depicted in popular magazines were working class or lower working class. They were relatively young--in their twenties and thirties.<sup>33</sup> At times their manliness was undermined with descriptions of soft physique, a "high piping voice,"

---

<sup>32</sup>Anonymous, "What Relief Did to Us," American Mercury 38 (July 1936): 279.

<sup>33</sup>Eleanor Kinsella McDonnell, "Unemployed! But Who's to Fix the Little House?" Saturday Evening Post 208 (July 4, 1936): 76-77. See also comments in Carter, "Johnny Q. Public", such as on p. 264 regarding "young people who think the world owes them a living."

or a smirking countenance.<sup>34</sup> They were portrayed frequently as flawed in morality or marginal in ability. The relatively liberal Nation commented, "the relief rolls are the sediment, not a cross section of society."<sup>35</sup>

It was this perception that authors of confessional articles strove to combat when they signed themselves "A College Graduate" or recounted their previous social responsibilities and financial achievements. One former business executive cited statistics and offered his personal history to dissuade his readers from "lumping all reliefers as people 'you couldn't possibly know.'" Another recipient protested that the only difference between her and those not on relief was their luck in the choice of savings banks and employers. The confession of still another carried an italicized blurb under the title: "An actual experience of a college graduate and member of the middle class".<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup>"Good Men Plowed Under," pp. 17, 131, 133-34.

<sup>35</sup>Quoted in "From Doles to Jobs," Literary Digest 120 (November 16, 1935): 8.

<sup>36</sup>A College Graduate, "I'm on Relief," pp. 201-09; Anonymous, "I Know What Poverty Is," American Mercury 38 (July 1936): 201-06; Ruth L. Porterfield, "Agony in the C.W.A.," American Mercury pp. 96-101; Mrs. C. H. Dirlam, "We Sowed Plans and Reaped Relief," Saturday Evening Post 207 (May 25, 1935): 38+; Hugo Johanson, "Bread Line," pp. 164-176; Ann Rivington, "We Live on Relief," Scribner's 95 (April 1934): 282-85.

In their efforts to alter their pariah status, these authors of confessional articles appealed to middle-class solidarity, to the vein of sympathy that has existed for the proven achiever down on his luck. They left untouched perceptions of the lower working class and even drew a line between themselves and the "pre-Depression poor." They suggested that the "unwashed masses" that formed the stereotype of charity recipients might well be poor from personal failures.<sup>37</sup> Certainly the public suspected as much. Suspicions of malingering tarred relief recipients as a group, and drove a wedge between recipients and self-perceived taxpayers. A woman writing to radio editorialist Boake Carter stated that she and her husband had gone into debt to stay off relief, unlike relievers who, when times got better, would "go free from any debt to the city or to the people that kept them."<sup>38</sup> Another correspondent agreed that hard work and sacrifices were wasted on undeserving and ungrateful beneficiaries:

We still have a boy in school and a girl in the grades and my boy earned his school clothes, his books, and helped us pay rent all summer, while their children had vacations. They had money for every kind of indigestible food, while we went with only the necessities. They drove their car without a license, while we walked. They have medical care even, and order for the woman around \$44 worth of

---

<sup>37</sup>A College Graduate, "I'm on Relief," pp. 201-09; Rivington, "We Live on Relief," pp. 282-5.

<sup>38</sup>Carter, "Johnny Q. Public", p. 269.



'vitality shots,' while we had to wait until we got well when we were sick.<sup>39</sup>

Discontent could be summarized in the accusation that the relief rolls harbored "chiselers." Chiseling could mean that recipients hid assets, or misspent their assistance, or didn't try to find work. Each accusation is worth exploration.

Relief administrators repeatedly asserted that only five percent of the recipients were fraudulent, and that they were as honest in their applications as taxpayers were on their tax returns.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless the public suspected fraud. Fears of hidden assets were fueled by stories such as one in the Saturday Evening Post of Mexican immigrants on relief who hid their ownership of a restaurant by collecting rent through an intermediary.<sup>41</sup>

Relief administrators responded to public concern over fraud by repeated investigations conducted by staff and by hiring independent auditors. Convinced fraud was rampant, Cleveland commissioned a commercial credit corporation to audit their relief program. The

---

<sup>39</sup>Carter, "Johnny Q. Public", p. 251.

<sup>40</sup>The five percent figure appeared in estimates made within the social work profession and in the popular press. See John F. Bauman and Thomas H. Coode, In the Eye of the Great Depression: New Deal Reporters and the Agony of the American People (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1988), p. 47.

<sup>41</sup>McDonnell, "Unemployed!" p. 77.

corporation report indicated that a total of two per cent of the cases examined should not have received aid. The cost of the fraudulent two percent about equaled the cost of the audit. Cleveland's experience went unreported by major news periodicals.<sup>42</sup>

Small-scale fraud also was of great concern. People on relief were to have no assets. To qualify for relief recipients were required to cash in their insurance policies, sell valuable possessions such as radios or musical instruments, and confiscate any salary earned by their children. Because destitution was the prerequisite of relief, any luxury suggested either hidden assets or misuse of relief monies. Anecdotes circulated of women on relief getting permanent waves and of relief recipients picking up their food orders in cars.<sup>43</sup> The farmers adjacent to Muncie, Indiana, protested that relief recipients bought cigarettes and malt.<sup>44</sup> A Nebraska man asked his governor to prohibit relief recipients from buying liquor, playing pool, or going to the movies. "The taxpayers here are sure mad the way some people do that

---

<sup>42</sup>Milwaukee newspapers also agitated for an investigation of relief fraud. Benjamin Glassberg, Across the Desk of a Relief Administrator (Chicago: American Public Welfare Assoc., 1938), p. 19.

<sup>43</sup>Carter, "Johnny Q. Public", p. 264.

<sup>44</sup>Lynd, Middletown, p. 109.

are on relief," he warned.<sup>45</sup> Some activities were especially inflammatory. Relief directors received many complaints about the movies, but even more about cars.<sup>46</sup>

The County Welfare Board in Otter Tail County in Minnesota encouraged citizen participation in monitoring recipients' behaviors. The Board ordered published in local newspapers the names of all the recipients of direct relief so that citizens could report those who frequented beer parlors or liquor stores, used cars unnecessarily, or refused employment.<sup>47</sup>

The invitation was probably unnecessary. Across the country, many people already considered themselves the watchdogs of the system. Anonymous complaints ousted one

---

<sup>45</sup>Grimes, "Emergency Relief to Social Security," p. 136.

<sup>46</sup>Relief directors who wrote to the Survey sometimes investigated reports of movie-going, especially if attendance was regular. One family was found to have made a deal with the manager where the father swept up in exchange for tickets for his family once a week. The relief office allowed the arrangement to continue without affect on the relief allotment. In another instance the manager was paying off in tickets a debt he owed to the family. The relief office counted the debt as an asset and removed the family from the relief roll. See Gertrude Springer, "What Price the Power of the Food Order," Survey 69-70 (May 1933): 182-83. Regarding cars, see Gertrude Springer, "When Your Client Has a Car," Survey 69-70 (March 1933): 103.

<sup>47</sup>Tweeton, New Deal at the Grass Roots, p. 47.



family from the relief rolls three times in six months.<sup>48</sup> People wrote to Roosevelt in surprising numbers to inform on allegedly fraudulent relievers and families with more than one member in NRA-regulated jobs (although the NRA had no such prohibition).<sup>49</sup> Relief directors complained of a constant flow of complaints from both taxpayers and disgruntled recipients.<sup>50</sup>

Public opinion had a direct impact on local relief policies. As early as 1933, a Survey column that served as a clearinghouse for relief directors noted that "public disapproval" had led to ever-tighter restrictions on

---

<sup>48</sup>The author did not identify her state beyond its Northwest location. Policies toward informant tips varied. New York city investigated before taking action, but Baltimore often did not. Dirlam, "We Sowed Plans," p. 116; Anonymous, "Life on Relief," p. ; Argersinger, Toward a New Deal, p. 34.

<sup>49</sup>See for example the following letters in the National Archives, Washington, D.C., RG9, Entry 23, Box 489, to Franklin Roosevelt: Lillian Stingerland dated March 7, 1934, Colorado folder; H.W. Geffert, Jr. dated December 5, 1934, Virginia folder; Mrs. L.R. Smith dated June 22, 1934, Texas folder; Mrs. Stella Seward dated February 24, 1934, Iowa folder; and in the same record group, G.W. Sample to Hugh Johnson dated October 24, 1933, Oregon folder. In a random sample of fifty letters, five informed on specific persons and/or contained offers to spy. See also RG 29, folder 20-1, Anonymous to the National Unemployment Census, dated December 8, 1937.

<sup>50</sup>Springer, "What Price the Power of the Food Order," p. 2; Springer, "When Your Client Has a Car," pp. 103-04; "Relief by Ingenuity," Survey 69-70 (January 1933): 15-16.

recipients.<sup>51</sup> One Massachusetts town required applicants to choose between relief and their pets. In Kansas attendance at the movies was cause for terminating relief.<sup>52</sup> Toledo and Milwaukee considered barring car owners from relief in direct response to complaints. After strong presentations by social work executives, Toledo opted for a flexible policy while Milwaukee allowed the recipient to keep his car if it enabled him to earn a sum equal to his rent. A number of jurisdictions required applicants for relief to turn in their license plates or to sell their cars.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup>Springer, "What Price the Power of the Food Order," pp. 182-83.

<sup>52</sup>G. S., "What? Clients With Bank Accounts!" Survey 69-70 (October 1934): 348.

<sup>53</sup>In 1933 some counties in Pennsylvania required the license plate to be turned in, while others required proof of wage-earning work dependent on the car. In New Jersey communities also varied; the state administration favored flexibility, but in some communities "local opinion [had] forced rules" requiring plates to be turned in. By 1933 Denver had changed from a no-car rule to a flexible policy; Gertrude Springer credited the change to the numbers of car-owners on relief. In Cincinnati a flexible policy prevailed with plates generally requested if income could not be demonstrated. Springer reports a flexible policy in New York City (where relief investigators were on work relief and needed cars to cover their territory). But in 1935 an intake worker reported that residents of New York City who owned a car or any property were ineligible for relief. Some Minnesota counties banned cars by 1936. Anonymous, "Life on Relief," p. 422; Glassberg, Across the Desk, p. 36; Tweton, New Deal at the Grass Roots, p. 47; Springer, "When Your Client Has a Car," pp. 103-04.

One of the most serious complaints, that relief recipients did not want work, was voiced by this Minnesota township board in its 1937 letter to neighboring townships.

Our town Board is planning on firing every man on WPA and direct relief. . . . I was wondering if our neighboring Town Boards would be willing to cooperate in firing this bunch of tax-eating loafers, as it would not help very much just to fight them in Oak Valley Township.

There is no reason why these men could not get private employment, as there is going to be a big crop of hay and grain. . . .

If we permit these men to stay on WPA and direct relief, there never will be any reduction in the relief expenditures and I believe that now is a good time to start house cleaning.

The Board received a favorable response from Inman Township which promised to "take up the question of firing that bunch of loafers."<sup>54</sup>

In 1936 Middletown, the Lynds found the business class "in a mood of anxious resentment toward those on relief." The charitable concern of the early thirties had given way to irritation. A local editorial captured the mood in its characterization of those on relief as "utterly worthless" people who "would not work if they had jobs." A plague that "wipe[d] them all out" would not be "a tragedy, but a big relief."<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup>Tweton, New Deal at the Grassroots, pp. 85-86.

<sup>55</sup>Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, Middletown in Transition: A Study in Cultural Conflicts (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1937), p. 142-43.



According to Fortune magazine, many people believed by 1935 that large numbers of "reliefers" were "bums," loafers who "wouldn't take a job if you sent the sheriff to give it to them."<sup>56</sup> Workers in New Haven and businesswomen in Milwaukee asserted that those who tried would find work.<sup>57</sup> Sociologist E. Wight Bakke found that even wives suspected husbands of loafing.<sup>58</sup>

The belief that jobs existed for the willing was fueled in part by experiences of people who sought temporary, low-wage help. Because accepting a temporary job meant being removed from the relief rolls and because getting back on was an arduous and uncertain business, relief recipients often refused handyman work and similar offers. They also refused jobs that paid even less than relief (which was calculated to be less than subsistence).

---

<sup>56</sup>"Unemployment in 1937," Fortune 16 (October 1937): 106; Donald S. Howard, The WPA and Federal Relief Policy (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973), p. 46.

<sup>57</sup>E. Wight Bakke, Citizens Without Work: a Study of the Effects of Unemployment Upon the Workers' Social Relations and Practices (n.p.: Archon Books, 1969), p. 61; Glassberg, Across the Desk, p. 18.

<sup>58</sup>Bakke describes the disbelief by wives in the unavailability of work in the context of creating a model of the stages through which unemployed families progress. It occurs in the second stage, when husband and wife blame each other for past mistakes in judgement, when the family savings are exhausted, serious reductions have been made in family standards, and relief or charity is being contemplated, but has not yet been applied for. Bakke, Citizens Without Work, pp. 209-10.

Housewives looked for servants to work for room and board or for very small sums. A Baltimore committee of businessmen considered whether relief should continue to mothers who refused to leave their children to work as live-in housemaids for three-dollars a week. Home-owners looking for handymen and farmers looking for harvest hands could not find labor at prices they could or would pay. Frustrated in their search for cheap or temporary labor, would-be employers generalized from their experiences to a conviction that relief recipients had lost their initiative and sense of responsibility.<sup>59</sup>

It was a belief easily confirmed by the loose talk of larger employers who couldn't get workers, at least not on their terms. People might hear that jobs were going begging at Montgomery Ward, but not that they were part-time and netted fifty cents a day after carfare. In some establishments, mechanics and waitresses were required to be present a full day, but they were paid only for the time spent with customers. Lorena Hickock listed what she termed "classic examples" in a report to FERA chief Harry Hopkins:

New Mexico sheep growers publicly howling that they couldn't get herders for \$40 a month, but secretly

---

<sup>59</sup>Thompson, "Our Ghostly Commonwealth," p. 7; Lowitt, One Third of a Nation, p. 359; On black domestics in Baltimore see Argersinger, Toward a New Deal, p. 76; Lynd, Middletown in Transition, p. 143.

trying to get them for \$25; South Carolina truck gardeners highly incensed at relief and CWA because Negroes were unwilling to work in their truck gardens for 25 cents a day whenever they happened to need them; an Up-State New York apple grower, who blamed it all on relief when he was unable to persuade men to come out from Niagara Falls to pick his apples, providing their own transportation at a cost which would have exceeded their earnings!<sup>60</sup>

Stories of relief recipients turning down jobs continued despite investigations. One FERA investigation of 220 persons alleged to have refused work found only four guilty. A stunning number--sixty-five--had never been on relief. Another sixty-five were working or were unemployable temporarily or permanently. Fifteen didn't get the call to work or weren't hired after the interview. Ten had extenuating circumstances, usually having to do with the wage offered. These included mothers offered housework at wages too low to pay for childcare and a skilled worker who would not work in his trade at sixty percent of the standard wage. Of these ten, a number were cut off relief pending further investigation, a serious discipline for penniless families.<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup>Lowitt, One Third of a Nation, p. 359.

<sup>61</sup>Paul W. Ward, "It Pays to Stay on Relief," Nation 143 (October 17, 1936): 439; "They Won't Work," Nation (August 28, 1935): 229-30. In an independent, six-year study of New Haven, sociologist E. Wight Bakke found that "cases of refusal of jobs with any claim to minimum standards" were "so unusual as to be of no real concern for public administration." See Bakke, Unemployed Worker, p. 369.



If the Defender is representative, then black Americans may have been less suspicious of malingering than white. The paper stated that charges of refusing jobs were made most frequently against African Americans and were "usually false". The paper urged its readers to learn who in their neighborhoods were the subject of rumors and to report the facts of the matter to the Workers' Bureau of the Urban League.<sup>62</sup>

The best-sellers and magazines of mainstream culture echoed the calls for self-reliance expressed by much of the middle class.<sup>63</sup> One best-seller flatly asserted that there was a job ready for anyone not "too high-hat about the kind of work they do."<sup>64</sup> Another claimed relief was opposed to the teachings of Jesus who, if alive, would refuse to promise "security in a material world."<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup>"Relief Chiselers," Defender 17 August 1935, p. 10.

<sup>63</sup>Suzanne Greene, Reading for Pleasure: Popular Fiction, 1914-1945 (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1974). See also Catherine Stock's analysis of the popular fiction of Edith Eudora Kohl, Laura Ingalls Wilder, and Rose Wilder Lane as "distinctly political parables" in Main Street, pp. 200-05.

<sup>64</sup>Marjorie Hillis, Orchids on Your Budget, or Live Smartly on What Have You (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1937), p. 163.

<sup>65</sup>Henry C. Link, The Return to Religion (New York: MacMillan, 1937), p. 139.

Magazine fiction favored didactic stories that drummed on themes of persevering ambition and self-help.<sup>66</sup> In lower middle class and working class magazines such as American Magazine and True Story, biographical accounts of triumph over adversity increased during the Depression. American Magazine, in addition to frequent fiction of that type, also ran regular features spotlighting persons of career achievement.<sup>67</sup> In True Story celebrities offered their autobiographies as testaments to persevering effort rewarded. Ginger Rogers encouraged readers that "where the work has been done, the results may be expected." Comedic actor Harry Langdon confessed that he had been so poor that he had decorated his Christmas tree with tinfoil from cigarette packages. But faith and effort won the job of his dreams as the acting partner of comedy star Oliver Hardy.<sup>68</sup>

Belief in rewards for the hard-working were contradicted, however, by the existence of self-help organizations for the unemployed numbering 100,000

---

<sup>66</sup>Charles R. Hearn, The American Dream in the Great Depression (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977), p. 79.

<sup>67</sup>Hearn, American Dream, p. 60.

<sup>68</sup>Ginger Rogers, "Ginger Rogers' Own Story," True Story (June 1937): 25; Harry Langdon, "Three Wives--Three Lives," True Story (June 1939): 106. See also an autobiography by radio columnist Nellie Revell, "My Life Began With a Broken Back," True Story (February 1937): 138-139;

members. Given their initiative and abilities, one might have expected them to become the model poor, the standard by which the press might measure all others. Instead, they were virtually ignored by the press. In some localities the groups dramatically reduced relief costs. The state of Illinois calculated in 1935 that a self-help cooperative saved the Cook County relief budget about \$4,000 each month.<sup>69</sup> The groups cut timber for fuel. Sometimes they negotiated with landlords to exchange leases for labor. Some ran businesses, producing such items as furniture and clothing.<sup>70</sup>

Local responses to these activities ranged from "high praise to utter condemnation." Some local labor unions feared wages and working condition would be depressed. Some local businesses felt economically threatened.<sup>71</sup> The national response was indifference. There may have been a sense of discomfort in the face of obviously resourceful persons who remained unemployed. It is also probable that the collectivism inherent in cooperative

---

<sup>69</sup>"Self-Help Movement: Activities of Federally Aided Self-Help Cooperatives During 1935," Monthly Labor Review 42 (March 1936): 609, 616-17, 619.

<sup>70</sup>"Cooperative Self-Help Activities Among the Unemployed--General Summary," Monthly Labor Review XXXVI (June 1933): 1229-1231.

<sup>71</sup>"Cooperative Self-Help Activities," p. 1240; Nichols, Ernie's America, pp.147-49; Lowitt, One Third of a Nation, pp. 259-60.



effort was unnerving in a decade where concern over radicalism was steadily increasing.<sup>72</sup>

Despite their seeming conformance to the American ideals of ingenuity and self-reliance, self-help groups did not make the news or become symbols of exemplary poor. The model poor were formerly middle-class and struggled alone without recourse to public relief or self-help organizations. Charitable appeals in the Boston Pilot "fine, sturdy, reliable fathers of families" who "never dreamed that a day would dawn when they should be unable to provide for themselves."<sup>73</sup> In Ernie Pyle's popular syndicated column, readers met teachers and ranchers who didn't preach, plead, or "squawk," but confronted their troubles with stoicism and dignity.<sup>74</sup> According to a Muncie, Indiana, editorial, the man who staved off relief by finding odd jobs and skipping meals possessed "the original spirit that is America." Doing without evoked

---

<sup>72</sup>The emphasis on cooperation caused them to be perceived as "visionary" according to a Dayton newspaper editor. See Lowitt, One Third of a Nation, p. 257. According to the Lynds, the business class of Middletown vetoed a proposed subsistence homestead near the city. "'because of socialistic features.'" Lynd, Middletown in Transition, p. 135.

<sup>73</sup>See the column, "Catholic Charitable Bureau," in the Boston Pilot for 4 February 1933, p. 8 and 11 March 1933, p. 9.; "To Help Our Poor," Boston Pilot (January 21, 1933): 4.

<sup>74</sup>David Nichols, Ernie's America: The Best of Ernie Pyle's 1930s Travel Dispatches (New York: Random House, 1989), pp. 121-23, 132.

vague associations with pioneers and national progress.<sup>75</sup> With the attention focused on the individual, the malingerer of corporations went virtually unnoticed. Companies well able to support themselves relied on supplementary relief programs to subsidize their poverty-level wages. As Lorena Hickok exclaimed to Harry Hopkins when she discovered this to be the case at the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, "In other words, we are right now in the position of subsidizing John D. Rockefeller!"<sup>76</sup> In 1935 about one-sixth of the households on relief had at least one member working.<sup>77</sup> In some areas dominant business interests dictated who could get relief.<sup>78</sup>

Many Americans, including FERA chief Harry Hopkins, worried recipients would lose their self-reliance, become dependent on relief, and believe themselves to be entitled to it. The Atlantic Monthly warned that relief recipients

---

<sup>75</sup>Lynd, Middletown in Transition, p. 142.

<sup>76</sup>Supplementary relief programs paid a stipend to workers whose wage was grossly insufficient to support their families. Lowitt, One Third of a Nation, p. 291.

<sup>77</sup>C. Hartley Grattan, "Who Gets Supplementary Relief?" Nation 141 (July 31, 1935): 125.

<sup>78</sup>In Colorado for nearly a year Great Western Sugar company approved each beet worker family that applied for relief. See Lowitt, One Third of a Nation, p. 289.

refused "to recognize the fact that relief is charity."<sup>79</sup> Anecdotes circulated, such as the story of the domestic who gave up her job with the announcement that she and her husband intended to see the World's Fair and then go on relief.<sup>80</sup> Social workers writing for mass-circulation magazines warned that recipients applied for relief in a misery of shame, but within months they became hardened, belligerent, and demanding, and transmitted their attitude of entitlement to their children.<sup>81</sup>

To the fear that dependency might be transmitted through generations was added the fear of political power. Organized militancy on the part of relief recipients increased in 1936 when the federal government withdrew from direct relief. The number of organized protests remained high through 1937 due to inadequate funding of both state direct relief and the WPA.<sup>82</sup> The WPA and the

---

<sup>79</sup>George E. Sokolsky, "The Political Burden of Relief," Atlantic Monthly 158 (September 1936): 338.

<sup>80</sup>Newton D. Baker, "Decay of Self-Reliance," Atlantic Monthly 154 (December 1934): 731.

<sup>81</sup>Wayne, "Does the World Owe John Doe a Living?" p. 27, 32; Evelyn Harvey, "The Unbudgeted Cost of Relief," Saturday Evening Post 207 (February 16, 1935): 23.

<sup>82</sup>Harold R. Kerbo and Richard A. Shaffer, "Lower Class Insurgency and the Political Process: The Response of the U.S. Unemployed, 1890-1940," Social Problems 39 (May 1992): 139-53, see especially p. 150.



states, each short of money, made categorical rulings of ineligibility. Fourteen states gave little or no relief to employables regardless of WPA's capacity to employ them. Most major cities denied aid to some employables not receiving relief from WPA, ranging from one-quarter in Chicago, St. Louis, and New Orleans to one-half in Atlanta.<sup>83</sup>

Relief recipients who participated in organized protests were widely condemned as presumptuous ingrates and dangerous radicals.<sup>84</sup> A 1937 poll regarding WPA strikes for higher wages found seventy percent of respondents had "no sympathy" for the strikers. In the same poll, the majority of poor and unemployed said they had "no sympathy" for the strikers; perhaps like the prosperous, they feared radicalism, or perhaps they feared that the protests would cause the programs to be reduced or curtailed.<sup>85</sup> Even those sympathetic to the sufferings of relief recipients, such as the nationally recognized leader in charitable fund-raising, Newton D.

---

<sup>83</sup>Throughout the South, relief was denied to any family with an employable member, according to a 1938 study. See Howard, WPA, p. 84.

<sup>84</sup>"Shall Americans Starve?" Nation 135 (November 30, 1932): 518; Wickens, Colorado in the Great Depression, p. 75; Sokolosky, "The Political Burden of Relief," p. 339; Argersinger, Toward a New Deal, p. 118.

<sup>85</sup>"Fortune Survey: WPA Strikes," Fortune 15 (October 1934): 159.

Baker, repudiated organized pressure groups with alarmist rhetoric.

In every city of the United States, groups are already formed to bring pressure to bear upon governments to enlarge distributions. . . . The pressures such groups seek to bring are at the outset political. They rapidly degenerate into violence and exhibitions of sturdy truculence and sometimes of actual violence to attendants in relief stations are increasingly frequent.<sup>86</sup>

To a some extent, African Americans and unionized labor supported organized protests by relief recipients. Early in the Depression, the Defender portrayed relief protesters as radicals who incited violence. However, by 1935 the paper had grown cognizant of the discrimination structured into relief programs. In the late thirties particularly, as CIO strength increased, unions increased their support for unemployed workers. Unions intervened with relief administrators on the behalf of their members.<sup>87</sup> Unions also supported organized protests and the claims of entitlement that the protests represented.<sup>88</sup>

---

<sup>86</sup>Baker, "The Decay of Self-Reliance," p. 730-31.

<sup>87</sup>Cohen, Making a New Deal, p. 320; Glassberg, Across the Desk of Relief Administrator, p. -. In Baltimore the CIO sought a permanent seat on the Department of Welfare Advisory Board; see Argersinger, Toward a New Deal, p. 137.

<sup>88</sup>Elizabeth Faue, Community of Suffering and Struggle: Women, Men, and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915-1945 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), ch. 6; Cohen, Making a New Deal, p. 320.

The depth of conviction behind expressions of entitlement is hard to gauge. They were widespread. As government extended assistance, feelings of entitlement were often stimulated by perceived favoritism or prejudice. Expressions of entitlement could be highly particularized. They did not necessarily indicate an underlying political belief regarding the nature of poverty or the obligation of government toward poor citizens. Instead they looked to precedents of other entitlements and argued their cause was equivalent. In effect they argued that they had been left out through legislative oversight or the ineptitude of bureaucrats.

The recognition that resources existed and were dispensed according to capricious decisions could fuel both an individual's belief in his own entitlement and his skepticism toward welfare programs. Many people voiced their own entitlement by questioning that of others and suggesting they were equally or more worthy of aid. Homeowners turned down for relief, although their monthly mortgage did not exceed their area's relief rent allotment, asked why renters should be favored over homeowners.<sup>89</sup> Farmers refused relief funds to repair a house or outbuilding could not understand why their

---

<sup>89</sup>It was illegal to use relief funds to build or maintain assets. Therefore relief could not be used for mortgage payments of any amount.



neighbors received relief funds to feed their cows.<sup>90</sup>

The woman whose husband was paralyzed wondered why they could not have a pension like blind persons received.<sup>91</sup>

Nonveterans questioned why draftees should be rewarded. When policies favored families with three or more children, parents of two children protested an entitlement based on fecundity.<sup>92</sup> Newly poor middle-class applicants resented that their previous record of social contribution and taxes paid did not gain them preference over lower class applicants, especially immigrants. Many U.S. citizens of all classes believed their entitlement to be stronger than that of aliens.<sup>93</sup> Many first and second-generation immigrants believed relief was for "Anglos."<sup>94</sup> African Americans protested their inequitable treatment. In cities like Boston and New York where ethnic groups contended for political power, some groups felt victimized and cheated in favor of

---

<sup>90</sup>"Relief by Ingenuity," Survey (January 1935): 16.

<sup>91</sup>National Archives RG 9, Entry 23, Stella Seward to Franklin Roosevelt, February 24, 1934.

<sup>92</sup>Trout, Boston, p. 187.

<sup>93</sup>See for example letters to Roosevelt at the National Archives, RG 9, Entry 23, Box 493, such as Amanda Schroeder dated January 4, 1934, in the Indiana folder; McElvaine, Down and Out, pp. 13, 26; "Unemployment in 1937," p. 106.

<sup>94</sup>John Bodnar, Workers' World: Kinship, Community, and Protest in an Industrial Society, 1900-1940 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), p. 71.

other groups.<sup>95</sup> It was widely believed by persons in all classes that political "pull" was the criteria for receiving relief. In some areas they were correct.<sup>96</sup>

The complications and inconsistencies of social welfare programs baffled professionals and the general public. Depending on the program to which it was assigned, a family with seven children might receive seventy-one dollars each month, or forty-two dollars each month, or in-kind relief consisting of a grocery order.<sup>97</sup>

Inconsistencies fostered a conviction of entitlement in relief recipients. Some clients professed a unique bond with their case worker. But bitter articles by middle-class relief recipients suggest that while many

---

<sup>95</sup>Trout, Boston, p. 191; Small cities as well experienced competition and tension among social groups divided by ethnicity. See the sociological study of Burlington, Vermont: We Americans, p. 236.

<sup>96</sup>Hickok reported the state work-relief in 1933 Pennsylvania to be heavily politicized and West Virginia to be just as bad. See Lowitt, One Third of a Nation, pp. 9, 15. According to Trout, many in all classes of Boston's population saw relief offices as "political anthills." See Trout, Boston, p. 186.

<sup>97</sup>Gertrude Springer, "Children Aren't Trash," Survey 73 (March 1937): 76. The Director of the Washington State Department of Public Welfare, Charles F. Ernst, suggested that social workers should resist thinking in categories--the blind, children, single persons, etc.--and instead assist the organized pressure groups of each category to forge a united front. See Charles F. Ernst, "We Demand . . . " Survey 73 (February 1937): 36.

were grateful for the aid, they found little to admire in the organization or staff of relief programs. Callous treatment encouraged them to develop new assertiveness.<sup>98</sup> Eileen Barth recalled the mortification of social work:

The father was a railroad man who had lost his job. I was told by my supervisor that I really had to see the poverty. If the family needed clothing, I was to investigate how much clothing they had at hand. So I looked into this man's closet--(pauses, it becomes difficult)--he was a tall gray-haired man, though not terribly old. He let me look in the closet--he was so insulted. (She weeps angrily.) He said, "Why are you doing this?" I remember his feeling of humiliation . . . this terrible humiliation. (She can't continue. After a pause, she resumes.) He said, "I really haven't anything to hide, but if you really must look into it. . . ." I could see he was very proud. He was so deeply humiliated. And I was, too. . . .<sup>99</sup>

Another caseworker described relations between social worker and client as a "drawn out duel."<sup>100</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup>Regarding positive relationships with case workers, see "Does the World Owe Me a Living?" p. 426 and A College Graduate, "I'm on Relief," pp. 201-02. On the response of working class men to social workers see Sternsher, "Victims of the Great Depression: Self-Blame/Non-Self-Blame, Radicalism, and Pre-1929 Experiences," Social Science History I (Winter 1977): 149. On the response of middle class men and women to social workers, see Lowitt, One Third of a Nation, p. 207. On perceptions by clients of complicated bureaucracy and mismanagement in the WPA, see Tweton, New Deal at the Grassroots, p. 73; Heinemann, Depression and New Deal, p. 97; and McElvaine, Down and Out, p. 12.

<sup>99</sup>Studs Terkel, Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression (New York: Avon Books, 1970), p. 482.

<sup>100</sup>Anonymous, "Life on Relief," p. 423.



Ann Rivington learned through a social worker acquaintance that her caseworker had withheld funds. Her acquaintance explained:

We're under pressure to give as little help as possible, to refuse relief on the slightest excuse, to miss some families with the checks occasionally. At the same time, if cases complain, the whole blame is thrown on us. So if we lie to people, or 'put the fear of God into them,' it's all in self-defense. The only ones who get what they're entitled to are those who know what is their quota and demand it, especially if they make their demands in an organized way.<sup>101</sup>

Rivington, her husband, and newborn had lived through most of a winter with virtually no heat, eating one meal per day, and constantly fearing eviction. After learning their legal entitlement, they got money toward rent, a little more food money, and surplus food relief by "demanding them fearlessly."<sup>102</sup>

Implicit in Rivington's view is a sense of entitlement that began in pragmatic efforts to keep her family alive. Most expressions of entitlement remained within the parameter of either a secure subsistence or a

---

<sup>101</sup>Rivington, "We Live on Relief," p. 285. Gertrude Springer, in her alter ego as the Survey's popular "Miss Bailey," agreed, saying that the strong, continual emphasis on economy naturally convinced social workers in the field that the best (and therefore most job-secure) worker was the most economical. See Springer, "What Price the Power of the Food Order," p. 182.

<sup>102</sup>"Does the World Owe Me A Living," p. 426-28.

job.<sup>103</sup> A minority of recipients voiced their right to a minimal quality of life, symbolized by the ability to purchase special foods for holidays or occasional new clothes.<sup>104</sup>

With the exception of African Americans, the social group least successful in asserting its entitlement was childless adults. Because of the weight of sympathy for children, and therefore for families, men and women who were not in a family received little attention from the press or politicians. Public and private relief programs openly discriminated against them. Discrimination against adults without dependents had firm public support. Instances of preference to unattached adults met an "uproar from public, press, and relief officials."<sup>105</sup>

Single men were often assumed to be deserters, men who had abdicated their families. They received little

---

<sup>103</sup>I include the word "secure" here because for many relief recipients the uncertainty of relief was nearly as terrible as its insufficiency. The rules of relief changed frequently; recipients realized that benefits could alter or stop entirely at any time. Some areas "churned" the rolls periodically. Regarding entitlement to subsistence, see Rivington, "We Live on Relief," p. 285; McElvaine, Down and Out, p. 11.

<sup>104</sup>Mrs. Samuel Pappas, for example, responded to the unemployment census with a letter. Her husband's job covered rent and food, but holidays were coming and she needed "extras" and "pleasures." See National Archives, RG 29, Entry 23, Mrs. Samuel Pappas to Office of the Administrator, dated November 18, 1937.

<sup>105</sup>Howard, WPA, p. 418.



sympathy.<sup>106</sup> Single men, unlike family men or single women, received tickets to shelters instead of food orders. Congregant shelters cost only pennies per man per day. Toledo's actually returned money to the city when the winter labor of the men on city streets was deducted.<sup>107</sup> Shelters earned their reputation for hostile staff, pervasive stench, and verminous bedding. Some cities and private charities provided better facilities for middle class and skilled workers.<sup>108</sup>

---

<sup>106</sup>"Better than Bread Lines," Literary Digest 11 (February 14, 1931): 19-20; Argersinger, Toward a New Deal, p. 125; Amateur on the Bum," Literary Digest 115 (April 15, 1933): 26-30.

<sup>107</sup>One unattached man calculated the total cost of his upkeep over nearly four and a half years of unemployment spent in bread lines, shelters, labor camps, the CWA, fire patrol, SEAR, and WPA. Subtracting the value of his unpaid labor from the total of programmatic expenditures, he estimated that the public owed him \$1428.50. See Hugo Johanson, "Bread Line," p. 176. See McMillen, "Single Blessedness," Survey 70 (March 1934): 75; Joanna C. Colcord and Russell H. Kurtz, "Unemployment and Community Action," Survey 69 (February 1933): 86-87; Jesse Walter Dees, Jr., Flophouse: An Authentic Undercover Study of "Flophouses," "Cage Hotels," Including Missions, Shelters and Institutions Serving Unattached (Homeless) Men (Francestown, NH: Marshall Jones Co.), p. x.

<sup>108</sup>Various localities experimented with making relief easier for the middle class in different ways. Some, like Birmingham, Alabama, set up a separate intake system in a separate building. Initially there were not even home investigations, merely phone calls to references furnished by the applicant. New Orleans allowed white collar people to make an appointment for their intake interview. Others scaled the relief allotments a little higher. Tucson, Arizona, ran a four-tiered system: Class A received \$50 per month, Class B which had some white-collar clericals and skilled labor received \$36, Class C with unskilled whites



Insistence on congregant shelter for unattached men appears to have taken a toll. A count of New York City starvation deaths and hospitalized starvation cases in 1934 revealed the "large majority" to be homeless men of middle age. The shelters were not full, suggesting that some destitute men would not use them.<sup>109</sup>

Single women also met discrimination. They were not a very visible group; they did not often appear in press coverage of relief. But when they did, single, middle-class women received a sympathy not granted to single men of any class. They were praised for their pride and their willingness to near starvation before applying to relief.<sup>110</sup> Single women encountered discrimination in qualifying for relief, but once accepted, unlike single

---

and Mexicans received a mix of cash and food orders with a total value of \$25, while in Class D the "low-class" Mexicans and Indians received \$10 worth of in-kind aid. The favoritism reflected social worker sympathy for the "new poor" rather than public outcry. Preferential systems were generally not publicized for fear the federal government would enforce equality and for fear that the skilled working class would demand to be included; then the unskilled and so on. Bauman, Eye of the Great Depression, p. 73; Lowitt, One Third of a Nation, p. 221.

<sup>109</sup>"Relief: 1837-1934," Survey 69-70 (Sept. 1934): 291.

<sup>110</sup>Marlise Johnston, "The Women Out of Work," Review of Reviews 87 (February 1933): 30-33; "Women Without Work," New Republic 75 (May 31, 1933): 63-64; "Lady Unemployed," New Republic 78 (February 28, 1934) 67-68; Meridel Le Sueur, "Women Are Hungry," American Mercury 31 (March 1934): 322-324; "Women at the Breaking Point," Survey 70 (September 1934): 291.

men, they received aid similar to families--perhaps because there were few congregant shelters available for women.<sup>111</sup> This is not to say that women on relief had a comfortable time. When the federal government was not involved in direct relief, many, possibly most, large cities did not help with rent at all. Some made a partial payment after eviction proceedings were underway, and some paid the first month's rent for a new room after eviction.<sup>112</sup> The lack of congregant shelters had important consequences; when women were denied direct aid, they had even fewer options than men.

Single persons of both genders met discrimination in federal work relief programs. Both CWA and WPA gave preference to married men.<sup>113</sup> WPA policy called for preference to be shown to those without income, but allowed for exceptions to be made in the case of single persons without dependents. By 1940 sixteen states had

---

<sup>111</sup>Earl G. Harrison, "Women Without Work," Survey 69-70 (March 1934): 73-74.

<sup>112</sup>According to Howard, unattached adults were generally the last to receive direct aid, and the first to be denied when funds ran low. After the start-up of the WPA, employable unattached men and women were the last to receive WPA assignments and were sometimes categorically denied; because they were classed as employables they were sometimes denied direct relief as well. See WPA, p. 65.

<sup>113</sup>McMillen, "Single Blessedness," pp. 74-75.

received approval to defer all unattached men and women.<sup>114</sup> Local direct relief programs also discriminated. Following the withdrawal of federal money from direct relief in 1936, one quarter of New Jersey towns withheld all relief from single men.<sup>115</sup> Only African Americans met with greater categorical discrimination than nonfamily adults.<sup>116</sup>

The family wage assumption harmed family women and their dependents as well as single men and women. The CWA placed women predominantly into jobs paying the lowest rate, thirty cents per hour. As Lois Scharf has noted, the "skills of male recipients were often downgraded in work relief, [but] they were seldom dismissed outright as often happened to women." Over half the women on WPA labored in the sewing rooms, graded as unskilled labor. Qualifying for WPA could be difficult in some localities. Louisiana ruled that any woman with an employable husband was categorically ineligible, regardless of the husband's

---

<sup>114</sup>Howard, WPA, pp. 65, 418-20.

<sup>115</sup>"Local Relief in New Jersey," New Republic 87 (July 15, 1936): 285.

<sup>116</sup>Argersinger, Toward a New Deal, pp. 31-33 and 37; Biles, Memphis, ch. 5; Heinemann, Virginia, p. 99; Holmes, New Deal, p. 114.



prospects for private work or WPA assignment.<sup>117</sup> In some areas WPA categorically denied mothers on the assumption that they qualified for mothers' pensions or Aid to Dependent Children (ADC). As the underfunded WPA and state programs each struggled to place population groups outside their responsibility, mothers sometimes were caught in the middle. In Arkansas thousands of widows with young children found themselves denied state aid, classed by the state as "employable," yet categorically denied by the WPA.<sup>118</sup>

During the Depression, the right of women to work was challenged on all sides. In this atmosphere, single women were perceived as family members who could return to their families for aid. Mothers were shunted into ADC and denied work relief. As Elizabeth Faue has argued, social programs for women were "vulnerable to cutbacks in light of the 'marginal' need." The Depression reinvigorated the cultural norm of a family wage earned by a male head of the household.<sup>119</sup>

---

<sup>117</sup>Lois Scharf, To Work and to Wed: Female Employment, Feminism, and the Great Depression Contributions in Women's Studies, Number 15 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980; paperback ed. 1985), pp. 122-24.

<sup>118</sup>Howard, WPA, p. 80.

<sup>119</sup>Elizabeth Faue, Women, Men, and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915-1945, Gender and American Culture (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), p. 153.

In 1935 and 1936 a confluence of events created a crisis of confidence in relief. Perhaps most significantly, the administration asked for four billion dollars to fund the WPA. A request for such a large sum inevitably triggered debate over the standards and methods of relief. Roosevelt's refusal to conduct an official census of the unemployed undermined public confidence in the administration's motives and competence.

While estimates of unemployment ranged from four to ten million, even the more pessimistic count indicated unemployment had dropped by three million since May 1933. Yet relief had risen by almost one million cases.<sup>120</sup> The administration failed to explain legitimate reasons for this apparent anomaly and much of the public concluded that a large percentage of relief recipients were malingering.<sup>121</sup> Many believed their suspicions to be

---

<sup>120</sup>"Raging Relief: Controversies Splutter as Senate Ponders WPA's Thumping Appropriation," Literary Digest 121 (May 23, 1936): 7; Sokolsky, "The Political Burden of Relief," p. 332.

<sup>121</sup>Reasons for the high relief enrollments included the following. Landlords, grocers, and other merchants were less willing to extend credit for long periods, being less sanguine about the economic prospects of their customers. People who had "held out" for one to three years had reached the end of their resources and were applying. Large numbers on relief were not victims of an economic emergency. Rather they were populations stranded by a defunct local industry or they were lower working class and always had lived in poverty or on its margins. Finally relief recipients were not always unemployed in the conventional sense and would not be affected by recovery in industry. Looking at the

confirmed by widely publicized labor shortages during the 1936 harvest season. Cries of malingering grew loud and despite the WPA commitment to security wages, Harry Hopkins placated southern Democrats by deleting large numbers of southern relief recipients from the rolls during cotton-picking season. In the north at least eleven states from North Dakota to New Jersey halted relief throughout the state or in some counties in order to force recipients into the fields, usually at miserable wages.<sup>122</sup>

Part of the backlash against relief emerged as rebellion against the federal relief standards set by social workers. Local commissions and boards hostile to state staff and policies may have been the rule rather

---

relief load for January of 1935, the eight states with the highest ratio of relief recipients to total population were all farming states west of the Mississippi. The eight states with the lowest ratio were states east of the river, many based in manufacturing. See Economist, The New Deal, p. 8; Bauman, Eye of the Great Depression, p. 75.

<sup>122</sup>Roger Biles, A New Deal for the American People (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1991), p. 113. South Dakota, Illinois, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, Missouri, Michigan, and New Jersey took various actions. "Jobless Would Rather Reap Relief than Wheat," Newsweek 6 (July 27, 1935): 9; "Local Relief in New Jersey," New Republic (July 15, 1936): 285; "Halt Relief to Aid Harvest," Literary Digest 120 (July 27, 1935): 6, 9; "Purging the Relief Rolls," Literary Digest 120 (August 3, 1935): 8; "Good Men Plowed Under," American Magazine, pp. 134-35.



than the exception.<sup>123</sup> Social work veteran, Porter Lee, reckoned that criticism of professional social workers had "never been as acute."<sup>124</sup>

Lorena Hickock found "a growing resistance to social work." In California's Imperial Valley a vigilante committee warned the relief administrator to "play this game" the local way rather than "the Federal Government's way."<sup>125</sup> In Omaha even the pro-New Deal paper complained that relief had been "placed in the hands of narrowly-trained social workers who had throughout emphasized what is ethical at the expense of what is practical."<sup>126</sup> Mistrust increased when the social worker was an imported expert from outside the community or state.<sup>127</sup>

---

<sup>123</sup>See Brock, Welfare, chs. 6, 7, 8 and Lowitt, One Third of a Nation, passim. Also see Argersinger, Toward a New Deal, p. 24, regarding continued tension between Catholic charities and social workers and p. 31 regarding tension between businessmen and social workers.

<sup>124</sup>Porter R. Lee, "What Is the Basis of Public Confidence in Social Work," p.1, reprinted from Bulletin of the New York School of Social Work, 28 (July 1933).

<sup>125</sup>Lowitt, One Third of a Nation, p. 305, 332.

<sup>126</sup>Grimes, "Emergency Relief to Social Security," p. 136.

<sup>127</sup>Judd, New Deal in Vermont, 225-8; Holmes, New Deal, pp. 13, 87; Stock, Main Street, p. 113; and Trout, Boston, p. 271.

At the heart of the schism between social workers and the public was their difference in defining need and the concomittant standard of assistance. A minimum standard of living was not an operative concept in most localities.<sup>128</sup> For decades social workers had labored to establish scientifically budgeted, minimum standards of living as a cornerstone of relief. The concept had not won firm public acceptance, however, and now the scarcity of Depression resources pushed many toward a more ancient standard of relief, preventing starvation.<sup>129</sup> Prominent charity organizer Newton D. Baker stated that, "Public opinion united on a principal need: No one should starve."<sup>130</sup> In Baltimore the citizen board in charge of relief debated whether to "simply to keep people alive or

---

<sup>128</sup>Lee, "What Is the Basis of Public Confidence in Social Work," p. 4.

<sup>129</sup>Regarding the field's efforts toward an accepted standard of living, see Daisy Lee Worthington Worcester, Grim the Battles: A Semi-Autobiographical Account of the Twentieth Century (New York: Exposition Press, 1954), p. 68-76; John B. Dawson, "The Significance of the Rise in Relief-Giving During the Past Five Years: Its Relation to Increased Costs and the Adequacy of Relief Based on a Study of Relief-Giving in Forty-Seven American Cities With a Population of 100,000 and Over," NCSW, pp. 233-36; and Florence Nesbitt, "The Significance of the Rise in Relief-Giving During the Past Five Years: Its Relation to Standards of Case Work," NCSW, pp. 236-37.

<sup>130</sup>Newton D. Baker, "Can Uncle Sam Do Our Good Neighboring? Saturday Evening Post 207 (October 13, 1934): 23. See also "The Appeal from the White House Lawn," Literary Digest 116 (September 30, 1933): 19.



to do more than merely maintain life." The city's inadequate funding made even sustaining life impossible. There were twenty-five cases of starvation in Baltimore in 1936.<sup>131</sup> Saturday Evening Post protested the efforts of social workers to move beyond starvation in their relief policies.<sup>132</sup>

Federal intervention had raised the average relief grant steadily from \$15.15 per family per month in 1933 to \$30.45 per family per month in 1935.<sup>133</sup> With the departure of FERA, however, most states began immediate retrenchment in relief amounts and eligibility requirements.<sup>134</sup> The starvation standard again emerged,

---

<sup>131</sup>Argersinger, Toward a New Deal, pp. 44, 48.

<sup>132</sup>Garet Garrett, "Unemployment--What We Do About It," 205 (March 11, 1933): 14. See also the American Mercury's proposal to reduce relief rolls by giving recipient unemployables "just what they deserve--sustenance." The journal suggested giving only vouchers for food, rent, fuel, and necessary clothing was the answer to corruption in politicians and fraud in recipients and claimed the system had never been tried. It is an odd claim, since that is exactly the relief given in many cities, such as New York, the first several years of the Depression. Recipients received food and food vouchers only. Any purchase of postage stamps, razor blades, subway fare, or other nonfood required a negotiation with one's neighborhood grocer. "The Dole," American Mercury 38 (July 1936): 351-2.

<sup>133</sup>Editors of the Economist, New Deal, pp. 4-6.

<sup>134</sup>The arithmetic average is deceiving, according to Howard, because they are heavily weighted by a few states that did not drop their standards by much. The median average is a better indicator. In April 1935, the median average was \$22.98 per month, while in April 1939 it was only \$13.57. Howard, WPA, p. 765.



symbolized in the triumphant headline of the anti-New Deal New York Herald Tribune: "Hoboken Stops Relief to 5,000; No One Starves."

Unfortunately the Herald Tribune's claim would be disputed hours after it was printed. The announcement of a young boy's death called into question the standards of New Jersey's relief. In the spring of 1936 angry voters had forced the repeal of the sales tax that paid for state poor relief. Five thousand families had been cut from relief rolls, among them the Hastie family. Several months later three year old Donald Hastie died--of starvation said his parents; of lead-poisoning said the state of New Jersey. Analyzing the response of national media, the Literary Digest concluded that, "If Donald starved, then Hoboken's attempt to minister to its poor without outside aid was a failure." But if Donald had not starved then "Hoboken could point with pride to the reduction of relief by 5,000 persons since April." The Hasties, a family of five, had been living on \$2.65 per week, but their standard of living was immaterial to the debate. Starvation was the standard by which relief was judged.<sup>135</sup>

---

<sup>135</sup>"Cuts in Relief and Disputed Results," Literary Digest 121 (July 25, 1936): 3-4; "Relief: Jersey Baby's Death Develops Into National Issue," Newsweek 8 (July 25, 1936): 21-22.

Although FERA had worked to raise the standard of direct relief, Harry Hopkins condoned the stigma attached to direct relief for the able-bodied unemployed. A "dole" inevitably pauperized its recipients, according to Hopkins. The professional community and the public largely agreed on this point. The first choice of states was work relief. Throughout the South, most relief was work relief. Virginia and Tennessee initially gave only work relief, administered by their highway departments.<sup>136</sup> Even after only the supposed unemployables were left in the care of states, some localities required recipients of direct relief to "work off" their food allotments or medical care.<sup>137</sup>

In response to the popular conviction that relief recipients should work, the Roosevelt administration created a new federal work program, the WPA. It inspired strong responses. In a 1939 poll respondents "most often chose the WPA when asked to name both the New Deal's 'greatest accomplishment' and the 'worst thing' it had

---

<sup>136</sup>Following the election of a new governor, Tennessee made allocations for direct relief to four cities and some counties, but the bulk of relief remained road work. Joanna C. Colcord and Russell H. Kurtz, "Unemployment and Community Action," Survey 69-70 (March 1933): 123; Joanna C. Colcord and Russell H. Kurtz, "Unemployment and Community Action," Survey 69-70 (April 1933): 168.

<sup>137</sup>Tweton, New Deal at the Grassroots, p. 52.

done."<sup>138</sup> The WPA won approval for some projects and for providing work instead of a dole. But it was also the butt of popular jokes: a WPA worker was someone "who does nothing, and that wrong." It was the program for which the word "boondoggle" was invented.<sup>139</sup>

Like all federal relief programs the WPA suffered from general disapproval of government "projects," governmental expansion, and government experts. As Ernie Pyle noted, "The idea of a project makes farmers contemptuous, makes Republicans snort with rage, brings sneers from the townspeople. A project is Brain Trust--experimenting, regimenting people."<sup>140</sup> Bureaucrats and experts had created the CWA leaf-raking projects.<sup>141</sup>

---

<sup>138</sup>Biles, New Deal, p. 114.

<sup>139</sup>Hugo Johanson, "Bread Line," p. 176. Even ditch-digging could be done wrong, and was, according to a member of the Florida State Board of Health who protested that WPA mosquito-control crews were digging flat-bottomed drainage ditches perfect for mosquito breeding. Lowitt, One Third of a Nation, p. 174.

<sup>140</sup>The dispatch was written in March of 1939; see Nichols, Ernie's America, p. 339. A historian of Colorado in the 1930s believes that the majority of voters in that state agreed with the successful gubernatorial candidate that "soon half of our people will be paid to regulate the other half." See Wickens, Colorado in the Great Depression, p. 40.

<sup>141</sup>Extraordinary as a relief program in that it was not means-tested--to be unemployed was the only prerequisite--the CWA expended \$900 million and employed four million persons. The program produced 255,000 miles of roads and city streets, 12,000 miles of sewers, and 469 airports and many projects contrived solely to make work. Harry



WPA projects were to average a mere \$1,142 per man, including materials. PWA projects had cost \$2,132 per man.<sup>142</sup> Low expenditures ruled out major public works. Many projects had to be make-work in order to match the skills of the unemployed and the funds available and to avoid competing with private industry. But make-work encouraged the perception of WPA as relief, not employment.

The decision to require all WPA workers to go through relief intake and declare themselves paupers pushed the program further from public acceptance as work and increased its stigma as relief. When radio editorialist Boake Carter expressed his surprise that all WPA workers would be drawn from the direct relief lists, several listeners wrote to express their bitterness and humiliation. Said one:

I voted for Roosevelt, have been a Democrat for forty-two years and would like to remain one, but I have seen my farmer neighbors have to go on relief before they could get work under the WPA. It is

---

Hopkins's team of traveling reporters wrote of the conviction expressed by people in Detroit, Philadelphia, Birmingham, Augusta (Georgia), and Ohio that the CWA wasted tax money and that CWA workers loafed on the job. Bauman, Eye of the Great Depression, p. 49-50.

<sup>142</sup>"Current Opinion: Press Disbelieves Politics Can Be Kept Out of Work-Relief Spending," Literary Digest 120 (June 29, 1935): 10.

making a nation of beggars and dependents out of a nation of self-respecting citizens.<sup>143</sup>

According to these correspondents, with the requirement of a pauper's oath the fragile distinction between work and relief crumbled and so did the morale of the program's beneficiaries.

The WPA was harmed further by charges of political corruption.<sup>144</sup> In the spring of 1936, accusations from the Senate floor sustained a political feeding frenzy for some weeks, filling newspapers with charges and counter-charges. A popular magazine cataloged the revelations of press:

Thus you have ambitious Democratic county chairmen levying campaign fund assessments against WPA workers. You have forged certificates for relief applicants. You have party bosses controlling appointments, so that only those who can be depended upon for political campaign work receive jobs. You have huge funds dumped into a state before election. You have, in a thousand and one different ways, state

---

<sup>143</sup>Carter, "Johnny Q. Public", p. 252. Veterans were exempted from this requirement. Hopkins also exempted the state of Vermont after a conversation with Senator Ernest Gibson who urged that Vermonters would refuse to take a pauper's oath. See Richard Munson Judd, The New Deal in Vermont: Its Impact and Aftermath (New York: Garland Publications, Inc., 1979), p. 371.

<sup>144</sup>Keeping politics out of relief had presented a thorny problem to those appointed to the first federal work-relief program, the CWA. Hopkins's traveling observers reported problems in varying degrees throughout the south and especially in Florida. Bauman, Eye of the Great Depression, p. 170-71.

and local politicians seeking to muscle-in on the relief money . . .<sup>145</sup>

Congress had ensured the politicization of the WPA with enabling legislation that required Senate approval of all personnel earning over \$5,000. Consequently state directors, who owed their appointments to their Senators, were vulnerable to party pressures. In addition, politically appointed administrative staff in some states amounted to several thousands, potentially an irresistible campaign army.<sup>146</sup> The North Carolina WPA became a valuable weapon in the factional intra-party contests of that one-party state. In Missouri WPA foremen and timekeepers encouraged workers to vote the Pendergast machine ticket. In Pennsylvania all WPA workers received a Democratic fund-raising letter. Political involvement was also serious in West Virginia, and Kentucky and accusations flew in several more states.<sup>147</sup> Delegating

---

<sup>145</sup>Albert Shaw, "The Progress of the World," Review of Reviews, 93 (April 1936): 23. A Gallup poll in April of 1936 found that sixty-five percent of the respondents believed that "politics played a part" in their local relief. Eighteen percent said no, while seventeen percent had no opinion. Most convinced of the politicization of relief were Republicans (eighty percent) and farmers (seventy percent). Gallup, Gallup Poll, p. 19.

<sup>146</sup>Ronald Marcello, "The Politics of Relief: The North Carolina WPA and the Tar Heel Elections of 1936," North Carolina Historical Review 68 (January 1991): 18-19, 24.

<sup>147</sup>Marcello, "Politics of Relief," p. 17. Even states with a politically independent WPA program saw charges of corruption; perhaps some politician could not resist the



relief to the states, perhaps with federal loans, was the solution suggested by some periodicals and the Republican party and favored by fifty-five percent of Gallup poll respondents--inexplicably since state and local politics were the source of the problem.<sup>148</sup>

A repeated round of patronage scandals in 1939 resulted in the Hatch Act which banned political activity by government employees. The WPA had other troubles besides. The powerful southern Democrats in congress did not like WPA interference in regional labor markets and wage levels, nor did they care for the freedom of expression allowed to the Federal Theatre Project. When WPA workers protested repeatedly in 1936 and 1937 and struck in 1939 response to program cuts, they further angered this powerful faction and alienated some of their popular support as well.<sup>149</sup> A 1939 Gallup poll asked "Do you think there are any persons on relief in your community who could get jobs in private industry if they tried?" Fully sixty-nine percent thought so. In fact,

---

easy points to be scored by tarring their opponents with charges of manipulating relief monies. See F. Alan Coombs, "The Impact of the New Deal on Wyoming Politics," in Braemen, The New Deal, p. 216.

<sup>148</sup>Gallup, Gallup Poll, p. 19.

<sup>149</sup>Karl, Uneasy State, pp. 169-78; Patterson, New Deal, p. 84.

they thought that one quarter of those on their local relief rolls could get work.<sup>150</sup>

Aubrey Williams had hoped the WPA would evolve into a permanent work program, establishing a universal male right to work. But its popular association with patronage politics, centralized government, radicalism, and free-loading citizens outweighed the support it enjoyed for doing useful work and providing an alternative to the dole.

The Economist declared that the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was "the one section of the whole relief programme of which there has been virtually no criticism."<sup>151</sup> The Corps put about a half million young men to work in forests and national parks. The popular impression of the CCC was of young men living in camps under military-style discipline and laboring out-of-doors. The program thus offered the positive associations of work, nature, and surveillance. Participants were further ennobled by the enforced self-sacrifice of sending home all but five dollars of their monthly pay. Finally they were for the most part safely out of the public's sight so

---

<sup>150</sup>Gallup, Gallup Poll, pp. 151-52, Survey 154-A, Interviewing date April 8-13, 1939. The estimate of the proportion of relief recipients who could get work was reported as the median average.

<sup>151</sup>Editors of the Economist, New Deal, p. 12.

their reputation was little damaged by visible errors in recipient conduct or program management.

But it was not the young men of the CCC but the thirty-something family men, the "reliefers," who served as the prevailing image of relief during the Depression. If asked to summon to mind impressions of Depression America, many persons now would think of the powerful and sympathetic scenes of rural poverty in Grapes of Wrath and famous Farm Security Administration (FSA) photographs like Dorothea Lange's "Migrant Mother." But although they are pivotal to our current emotional responses to the Depression, these images did not appear until late in the decade as recovery was already beginning. Indeed FSA photographs may have not reached a large audience during the Depression at all.<sup>152</sup> The success of Grapes of Wrath may indicate an increasing sympathy by the end of

---

<sup>152</sup>By 1938 FSA had placed some photos with national magazines. But FSA was much more successful with magazines of limited circulation, such as the Survey Graphic and U.S. Camera Annual. Government reports consumed the greatest number of images. There are not precise accounts of the media to which FSA distributed photographs due in large part to the agency's record-keeping. Vicki Goldberg makes the most thoughtful evaluation of the FSA's impact in The Power of Photography: How Photographs Changed Our Lives (New York: Abbeville Press, 1991). See also Frank Curtis, Mind's Eye, Mind's Truth: FSA Photography Reconsidered (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989) and Maren Stange, Symbols of Ideal Life: Social Documentary Photography in America 1890-1950 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), ch. 3. Grapes of Wrath, the book and movie, appeared in 1938 and 1939 respectively.



the decade. But equally representative is the prejudice Steinbeck described in the book which resonates with the views of the small Midwestern town of "Plainville."

According to sociologist James West, Plainville residents characterized the local poor as immoral and ignorant of "how to live . . . dress . . . eat . . . act," and as "people who live like animals."<sup>153</sup>

It is possible that the stresses of the thirties strengthened negative beliefs about the poor. Both Leuchtenberg and McElvaine have speculated that the strain furthered divisions within the working class.<sup>154</sup>

According to E. Wight Bakke, half of the unemployed workers of his sample never applied for relief, despite destitution and suffering.<sup>155</sup> One wonders how they regarded those who did apply, or those who drew relief for the two-year average duration. Letters to journalist Boake Carter suggest that sacrifices made in order to

---

<sup>153</sup>Carl Withers (James West, pseud.), Plainville, USA (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945). Withers was a sociologist studying class in the U.S. The book is written from data gathered in 1939.

<sup>154</sup>Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt, p. 109; McElvaine, Down and Out, pp. 13, 26.

<sup>155</sup>John Garraty, The Great Depression: An Inquiry into the Causes, Course, and Consequences of the Worldwide Depresssion of the Nineteen-Thirties, As Seen by Contemporaries and in the Light of History (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1986), p. 112.

avoid relief could quicken negative feelings toward those who more readily accepted public help.

In his study of Virginia, Ron Heinemann describes a confused mixture of generosity and fear.<sup>156</sup> For large numbers of Americans fear militated against revising ideas about the character of poor persons and social obligations toward them. As the relief rolls remained high year after year, the desire to reduce their cost encouraged the suspicious viewpoint that had long dominated welfare assistance.

If social workers had hoped that Depression relief programs would establish new standards of welfare payments and greater confidence in the abilities of their profession, they were to be disappointed in large measure. Male state and local politicians resented community outsiders who were in addition often young and female. As William Brock has noted, "Among the public at large, social workers were at best tolerated for meaning well and at worst resented for being officious."<sup>157</sup> Their standard for relief lasted only as long as federal dollars could force a measure of compliance. A former state director of relief in Maryland believed the dominant

---

<sup>156</sup>Heinemann, Depression and New Deal in Virginia, p. 42.

<sup>157</sup>Brock, Welfare, p. 335.

opinion of that state to be that federal control of relief "sets up unnatural standards, stimulates demand far beyond need, [and] increases the cost to the point where it is a threat to the taxpayer's security."<sup>158</sup>

Despite all carrots and sticks proffered by the federal government, 564 New Jersey local governments failed to apply to the State Financial Assistance Commission for funds.<sup>159</sup> In Nebraska twenty-three counties had not requested any state or federal funds as of 1935; at least three counties never participated in the federal relief program.<sup>160</sup> Local studies suggest that state and local governments which participated often modified federal programs, reducing their standards and increasing their inequities. The New Deal relieved the disastrous immediate consequences of the Depression. The extent to which it altered indifference toward the most economically vulnerable members of society is debatable.<sup>161</sup>

---

<sup>158</sup>Quoted in Brock, Welfare, p. 311.

<sup>159</sup>Lowitt, One Third of a Nation, p. 37.

<sup>160</sup>Grimes, "Emergency Relief to Social Security," pp. 138, 131.

<sup>161</sup>Roger Biles suggests that the infusion of federal relief dollars enabled the residents of Memphis to ignore the consequences of their inequitably distributed wealth; in this view, the New Deal protected pre-Depression views of self-reliance. See Memphis, p. 123. See also Argersinger, Toward a New Deal, p. 216; Brock, Welfare, p. 356;



The middle classes and many within the working class appear to have experienced an increasing sense of entitlement to government assistance but with two important qualifications. In their view entitlement was set within the context of a national economic emergency and it was earned. Because they had previously paid property taxes, contributed to their communities, or served in the military, they claimed the right to protection from the society that had benefitted from their efforts. They also claimed entitlement because they were equally or more worthy than the beneficiaries of other government programs. None of these reasons suggest recognition of a social obligation toward those who lived on the margin of poverty. On the other hand, the concept of citizen entitlement and a positive state became firmly established in the political culture through the debates of the decade and the popular programs of mortgage assistance. Entitlement became a legitimate concept, available for use by those who could muster the political wherewithal to use it.

---

Heinemann, p. 104; and Trout, Boston, p. 231.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

The middle classes regarded the transformation in the public and private institutions of social welfare with perplexity and doubt. Far from adhering to simple, time-worn truisms of worthiness, they juggled a myriad of concerns as they considered the expansion and direction of social welfare programs. They puzzled over changes in definitions of character and need. They puzzled over the value of expertise and the necessity for bureaucratization.

The poor were perceived through a lens clouded with goals and values. Perceptions of character worthiness were made from varying ratios of good intentions and censure. Highly particularistic identification of the worthy and fluctuating ratios of good intentions to censure can explain the malleability of reform rhetoric and movements.

In this respect, my findings both fit and modify the recent scholarship on gender and welfare programs. Mothers' pensions and workmen's compensation have been blamed for establishing a two-track welfare system in the

United States.<sup>1</sup> On the first track, programs designed primarily for single mothers are fitted out with means-testing, stigmatizing supervision, and inadequate stipends. In short, they resemble relief programs. Mothers' pensions are examples of the first track.

On the second track, programs designed primarily for men are given straightforward systems for compensation that do not require means-testing or supervision. Workmen's compensation has been cited as an example of the second track. It is a problematic example, however. As I have argued above, major argument in favor of workmen's compensation was that it removed the costs of dependents from the tax-paying public and shifted them to the consumer. It does not compare easily to mothers' pensions, a program that required tax-payers to assume support of a new population group.

The two tracks looks more similar to each other and less predetermined when the analysis is carried forward through the Depression to include Unemployment Compensation (a male program) and Aid to Dependent Children (a female program). As we have seen, during the Depression public concerns focused on the father, the male

---

<sup>1</sup>Barbara Nelson, "The Origins of the Two-Channel Welfare State: Workmen's Compensation and Mothers' Aid," in Women, the State, and Welfare, ed., Linda Gordon (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), pp. 123-51.



family provider. Remaining constant from the Progressive era were male standards of worthiness. Men with track records of self-sufficiency who had met with a temporary set-back were sympathetic figures. But the qualifiers placed on the sympathy were important. They were clearly operative in the drafting of Unemployment Compensation, a program designed with family men in mind. Unemployment Compensation required a record of previous independence. Employment for a specified length of time was a prerequisite for benefits. Its recipients were supervised and required to provide proof of an ongoing, active search for work. The program was not means-tested, but it was time-tested. Benefits lasted for a specified period of time on the assumption that the sincere seeker would find work. There was no recourse or extension of benefits should the assumption prove false.

In the Progressive era poor mothers appeared variously as pure-hearted and hard-hearted, as loving and as callous.<sup>2</sup> The variety of imagery suggested that mothers' pensions did not have strong mass support based on the character worthiness of the recipients. As the

---

<sup>2</sup>Paul Leicester Ford, The Honorable Peter Stirling and What People Thought of Him (New York: International Book and Publishing Co., 1899), p. 59; Ben Lindsey, "The Beast and the Jungel," Everybody's Magazine 21 (November 1909): 588; Alic Maxwell Appo, "House Bill No. 626: A First Step Toward the Endowment of Motherhood," Collier's 49 (August 17, 1912): 20-21.

campaign for mothers' pensions progressed, the argument increasingly shifted away from justice for poor mothers. Instead proponents turned to children, who, unlike mothers, were universally perceived as moral innocents. Proponents emphasized a child's right to live with his natural parent. They also favored arguments of social control (reduction of juvenile delinquency) or of simplifying government and even reducing taxes (paying mothers instead of institutions or foster mothers).<sup>3</sup>

Multiple and even competing arguments are common to reform movements. But in the case of mothers' pensions, there were serious consequences. Support had been amassed based somewhat on recipient character worthiness, but at least equally on the basis that the program would be cheap or free. Thus there was little basis for building on the initial victory of legislation. During the 1920s, mothers' pensions did not expand significantly in their standards of eligibility or compensation.<sup>4</sup> Rather, lack of a strong public consensus on the worthy character of

---

<sup>3</sup>"Mothers' Pensions in New York," Literary Digest 50 (April 10, 1915): 796; "Pensioning Mothers," Literary Digest 46 (March 1, 1915): 445; "Both Sides, A Debate: Mothers' Pensions," Independent (September 9, 1914): 206; Jo Goodwin, "Gender, politics, and welfare reform: Mothers' pensions in Chicago, 1900-1930," (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1991), pp. 60-62.

<sup>4</sup>Howard, "Sowing the Seeds of 'Welfare,'" pp. 200-05.

poor mothers doomed mothers' pensions to stigmatizing procedures and low funding.

Positive stereotypes of the poor as spiritually pure or as vitally alive vanished from popular literature at the end of the Progressive era, signaling a further weakening of popular perceptions of poor mothers. With the onset of the Depression, attention, both good and bad, turned to fathers, who were viewed as family providers. Thus mothers did not have a strong constituency in the mid-thirties when Roosevelt turned his attention to social security. The lack of a strong lobbying voice such as old-age pensions had in the Townsend movement, or unemployment compensation had through unions, made a crucial difference.

The absence of a lobby exacerbated the weak position of the bureau charged with drafting ADC, the Children's Bureau. The Bureau was already faring badly in administration turf wars.<sup>5</sup> Without a vocal base of popular support, the Bureau had little leverage with which to negotiate for a larger or more generous program. This explains in part the secondary attention given to Aid to Dependent Children as the Social Security Act was drafted,

---

<sup>5</sup>Linda Gordon, Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890-1935 (New York: Free Press, 1994), ch. 9; Christopher Howard, "Sowing the Seeds of 'Welfare': The Transformation of Mothers' Pensions, 1900-1940," Journal of Policy History 4 (1992): 205-19.



and make more understandable it's retention of the characteristics of a relief program--low funding and supervision of recipients.

Questions about character undercut public support for poor mothers, but were a problem for single men as well. From the Progressive era through the Depression, the middle classes regarded nonfamily men with hostility, suspicious of both their character and their need. Thus in the Depression single men receive discriminatory and wholly inadequate relief. Given the extremely positive view of single middle-class women represented in the 1930s press, it seems strange that they should have met with treatment as cavalier and callous as that accorded single men who were widely perceived as derelict. But single women were perceived as having minimal need. It was widely assumed that women could return to their extended families.<sup>6</sup>

The prejudice against nonfamily adults appears to remain today. In her analysis of current popular attitudes toward welfare, Faith Lomax Cook and Edith Barrett discovered strong support for two of the three social insurance programs, Social Insurance and Medicare. The third, however, Unemployment Insurance, enjoys

---

<sup>6</sup>Elizabeth Faue, Women, Men, and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915-1945, Gender and American Culture (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), p. 153.

comparatively low support. Cook speculates that the drop is explained by the association of Unemployment Insurance with men. Cook's survey respondents ranked able-bodied men lowest in worthiness.<sup>7</sup> Poor able-bodied, childless adults of both sexes have no federal means-tested cash program.<sup>8</sup>

In creating worthiness, the standard of need is as important as character. The concept of need has been neglected generally. Usually it is briefly considered; the stringency of the usual standard is noted and accounted for as a discouragement to possible malingerers. This certainly is part of the story. There was an intention to make aid less attractive than any form of labor.

But standards of need were also expressions of class awareness. Need is a subjective construct. It was affected by what the middle class chose as the material signifiers of their own class status. Thus in the twenties there were protests that the poor were not really poor because they owned cars or furniture. With its

---

<sup>7</sup>Faith Lomax Cook and Edith J. Barrett, Support for the American Welfare State: The Views of Congress and the Public (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), pp. 72 and 221.

<sup>8</sup>Theodore R. Marmor; Jerry L. Mashaw; and Philip L. Harvey, America's Misunderstood Welfare State: Persistent Myths, Enduring Realities (New York: Basic Books), p. 40.

shortage of resources, the Depression brought a sharp edge to this argument. Any consumer luxury defined the purchaser as not poor. Owning a car, seeing a movie, or buying cigarettes became defined as chiseling. Even surplus food was inappropriate if it was a high status item, like herring roe.<sup>9</sup>

Social workers believed in a minimum standard of living. They believed that a minimal level of refinement in a person's environment could lift morale. For the same reason it was important for relief recipients to have enough income that they might budget and plan. In other words, social workers felt that money could inculcate middle class values. The middle class, however, reversed the equation. They believed values enabled one to make the money that ensured middle class status. Despite the efforts of social workers to define and enforce minimum standards, the middle class continued to define poverty as destitution.

Just as important as what people think about the character and need of poor people is what they think about the effectiveness of assistance programs. There are many fine studies of the origins of social welfare programs but histories of their implementation are just beginning to

---

<sup>9</sup>Jo Ann E. Argersinger, Toward a New Deal in Baltimore: People and Government in the Great Depression (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), p. 54.



appear. They will add considerably to our understanding of public response to programs. Meanwhile some lessons are apparent from this overview.

The middle classes felt that social work enjoyed an inflated role in relief-giving. They appear to have been impatient with therapeutics. "Constructive work" or "mental hygiene" was the foundation of the case work method that guided social work. But much of the middle classes appeared to agree with Eleanor Porter's characterization. As we have seen, Porter compared therapeutic social work to winding mechanical dolls "with a key made of just so much and no more pats and preachments carefully weighted and labeled."<sup>10</sup> Complaints of overhead for social worker salaries, audible in the twenties, grew louder in the cash-poor thirties. In Houston, city and county officials agreed to fund a relief program only if the staff were unpaid.<sup>11</sup>

What are we to make of the middle-class dismissal of therapeutic social work? Possibly the gendered prejudice toward professional women discussed in chapter three accounts for the many patronizing and hostile responses. If male psychologists had been given charge of counseling

---

<sup>10</sup>Eleanor Porter, Oh, Money! Money! (New York: Grossett & Dunlap, 1918), p. 4.

<sup>11</sup>Lowitt, One Third of a Nation, p. 222.

relief applicants, perhaps they would have been accepted as constructive and necessary. But it doesn't seem likely. When given free reign, middle-class charity turned to the tangible. Shoes for schoolchildren, eyeglasses, crutches, old clothes and boxes of food were favored. It seems that poverty was the absence of basic material goods, not a demoralized psyche.<sup>12</sup> Or remediable poverty was. The scorn for therapeutics and preference for the tangible may suggest a view that character is fixed: people either want to work or they don't. Social workers cannot counsel them into it.

There was similar disjuncture in attitudes toward investigation. From the Progressive era through the Depression, there are repeated expressions of frustration over the hurdles of paperwork and investigation placed between an applicant and his assistance. Opponents of the Progressive era COS characterized its procedures as the "blood red tape of charity." Some years later the complaints continued. The Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Welfare Federation (the equivalent of a community chest) attributed much of the success of its 1931 campaign to a pledge extracted from the city's primary relief agency,

---

<sup>12</sup>Respondents to a recent poll still favored concrete relief. Queried about existing welfare programs, respondents preferred in-kind aid--food (not food stamps) and medical care. See Cook, Support for the American Welfare State.

the Family Services Association. The Association promised "to adopt a definite policy, and to make this policy public, that it would give emergency relief immediately and then make whatever investigation was necessary."<sup>13</sup>

There was substantial feeling in favor of a presumption of worthiness. But during the Depression at least, the prejudice could reverse itself quickly; once on the rolls, recipients were presumed fraudulent. Perhaps long-term aid was tantamount to malingering by definition. The defense of applicants for aid followed by suspicion of recipients of aid suggests those who received more than brief or intermittent aid were suspected as not trying to find work. Eventually the WPA incorporated a time-test much like that of Unemployment Compensation. However, those ejected from the program were allowed to reapply after a specified amount of time had passed.

In the twenties opposition and ambivalence to assistance programs was rooted in mistrust of recipients and social workers. In the thirties, feelings about relief were complicated additionally by the growing power of the federal government and its bureaucracy. Despite widespread recognition of the necessity for the federal

---

<sup>13</sup>Community Chest: Campaign Narratives from Nineteen Cities, 1930-31: Helpful Ideas for Campaign Directors Issued at the Request of Chest Executives (New York: Association of Community Chests and Councils, 1931), p. 84.



government to assist in direct relief, once programs were underway, that recognition was tempered by frustration at the loss of local control. Federal guidelines were negotiable, but mandated qualified social workers in key staff positions and set standards for relief and eligibility.

In 1936 the federal government ended its supervision of direct relief and began the WPA, a program which increased popular awareness of bureaucracy. WPA workers were not supervised by social workers. Assigned to a project, they received an hourly wage which they could spend according to their judgement. It was relief administered through bureaucrats rather than social workers. As Lynn Dumenil and others have noted, substantial anti-bureaucratic sentiment existed in the twenties. Roosevelt's successful and unsuccessful efforts to strengthen the executive branch enlivened fears of the centralized state. The popularity of jokes about WPA ineptitude may indicate uneasiness with growing bureaucracy. Since the thirties, attitudes toward relief have been intertwined with attitudes toward bureaucracy and centralized government. It is a necessary association, but not one likely to ingratiate welfare programs to the public.

An overview of popularly held views of the poor and their assistance programs suggests that middle-class ideas of worthiness were more complex than historians have indicated. They drew from class awareness and social context and therefore change over time. Social obligation is a nexus of many competing values, individual and cultural. By examining the components, it is possible to elucidate competing values and self-definitions among social groups and to trace their political ramifications.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup>W. Andrew Achenbaum, Shades of Gray: Old Age, American Values, and Federal Policies Since 1920 (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1983).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### PRIMARY SOURCES

- Adams, S. "Hotel News." Defender 19 September 1911, p. 7.
- "Adventures in Publicity." Survey 47 (February 18, 1922): 792.
- Allen, Frederick Lewis. Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920's. New York: Harper and Row, 1931; Perennial Library. 1964.
- Almy, Frederick. "Public Pensions to Widows. Experiences and Observations Which Lead Me to Oppose Such a Law." In Social Welfare: A History of the American Response to Need, pp. 164-73. Edited by June Axinn and Herman Levin. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1975; second ed., Cambridge: Harper & Row, 1982.
- "Amateur on the Bum." Literary Digest 115 (April 15, 1933): 26-30.
- "American Unemployment Seen by Foreign Eyes." Literary Digest 96 (March 31, 1928): 16-17.
- Anderson, Elin L. We Americans: A Study of Cleavage in an American City. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938.
- "Appeal from the White House Lawn: Call for Mobilization of Charity Agencies." Literary Digest 116 (September 30, 1933): 19.
- Appo, Alice Maxwell. "House Bill No. 626: A First Step Toward the Endowment of Motherhood." Collier's 49 (August 17, 1912): 20-21.
- "Are Social Workers 'Nuts'?" Literary Digest 77 (June 16, 1923): 32.
- "Are You Tired of Being Poor?" Defender, 2 March 1923, p. 8.



- Areson, C. W. "Significance of Social Service Activities of Noonday and Fraternal Groups in Relation to Community Organizations, As Viewed by a Social Worker." National Conference of Social Work, 1927, pp. 434-35.
- "As They See It: The Question as to Whether It Is More Desirable to be Born to Poverty or to Wealth." Munsey's XIV (November 1895): 138-46.
- "Babe's Tootsie Wootsies Bitten by Hungry Rats." Defender. 22 September 1923, p. 3.
- Baker, Newton D. "Can Uncle Sam Do Our Good Neighboring?" Saturday Evening Post 207 (October 13, 1934): 23.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Decay of Self-Reliance." Atlantic Monthly 154 (December 1934): 726-33.
- Bakke, E. Wight. Citizens Without Work: a Study of the Effects of Unemployment Upon the Workers' Social Relations and Practices. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940; Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1969.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Unemployed Worker: A Study of the Task of Making a Living Without a Job. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940.
- Barrell, Alexina Carter. "The Outer Pocket." Crisis 13 (January 1917): 122.
- Beazell, William Preston. "Public Opinion and Social Progress." National Conference of Social Work, 1923, pp. 469-74.
- "Better than Breadlines." Literary Digest 108 (February 14, 1931): 19-20.
- Betts, Lillian. "A Social Experiment." Outlook 72 (November 15, 1902): 641-48.
- Billings, Elizabeth C. "The Follow-Up." Survey 48 (September 15, 1922): 709-10.
- Bing, Lucia Johnson. "What the Public Thinks of Social Work." National Conference of Social Work, 1923, pp. 483-87.
- Blair, Emily Newell. "Why We Live Beyond Our Means." Forum 77 (June 1927): 892-99.

- Bliss, Paul. "Interpreting Standards to the Public." Survey 57 (January 15, 1927): 532-33.
- Bookman, Charles Monroe. "A Unified Program of Social Work as a Creator of Public Opinion." National Conference of Social Work, 1923, 516-20.
- "Both Sides: A Debate--Mothers' Pensions." Independent 80 (November 9, 1914): 206.
- "Bounties for Babies." Independent 73 (July 18, 1912): 160-61.
- Bowman, LeRoy E. "How Far Has Social Work Influenced Public Opinion." National Conference of Social Work, 1923, pp. 477-83.
- Brandeis, Louis D. "The Road to Social Efficiency." Outlook 98 (June 10, 1911): 291-94.
- Breitenback, H.P. "Converting Wartime Experiments in Publicity to Community Use." National Conference of Social Work, 1919, pp. 683-89.
- Brown, Edmund. "Broke": The Man Without a Dime. Chicago: Browne & Howell Co., 1913.
- Brown, Frederic Kenyon [Al Priddy]. Through the Mill: the Life of a Mill-Boy. Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1911.
- Bruere, Robert W. "Compensation and Business Ethics." Harper's 131 (July 1915): 210-19.
- Budd, M. "The Shell Road Witch." Crisis 8 (June 1914): 90-92.
- "Budget Balancing Perturbs Capital: Will Taxes be Raised or Relief Cut?" Literary Digest 123 (April 17, 1927): 5-6.
- "Burned Hog Meat Given to Uncle Toms." Defender, 1 September 1923, p. 1.
- Burns, Allen T. "Everyman's Chest." Survey 59 (November 1, 1927): 139-43.
- Caldwell, Maggie A. "The Outer Pocket." Crisis 12 (October 1916): 291.

- Calkins, Clinch. Some Folks Won't Work. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1930.
- Carter, Boake. "Johnny Q. Public" Speaks! The Nation Appraises the New Deal. New York: Dodge Publishing Co., 1933.
- "Catholic Charitable Bureau." Boston Pilot 4 February 1933, p. 8.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Boston Pilot 11 March 1933, p. 9.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Boston Pilot 21 January 1933, p. 4.
- Chadbourne, Archie. "Debt is the Only Adventure a Poor Man Can Count On." American Magazine 104 (December 1927): 44-45.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "My Ship Must Have Got Sunk." American Magazine 105 (April 1928): 32-33.
- "Changing Styles in Community Chest Posters." Survey 57 (January 15, 1927): 530-31.
- Child, Richard Washburn. "What Shall We Do With the Old?" Outlook 21 (October 1909): 545-51.
- Clapper, Raymond. "Politics in the WPA." Review of Reviews 93 (April 1936): 35-36.
- "Clothing Collection." Survey 69 (July 1933): 263.
- Cochran, Jean Carter. "Poverty and Riches." Outlook 125 (July 21, 1920): 534-39.
- Cohen, Rose. Out of the Shadow. New York: George H. Doran Co., 1918.
- Colcord, Joanna C. and Kurtz, Russell H. "Unemployment and Community Action." Survey 69 (February 1933): 86-87.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Unemployment and Community Action." Survey 69 (March 1933): 123-24.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Unemployment and Community Action." Survey 69 (April 1933): 168-69.
- College Graduate. "I'm on Relief." Harper's 172 (January 1936): 200-09.



- Community Chest: Campaign Narratives from Nineteen Cities, 1930-31: Helpful Ideas for Campaign Directors Issued at the Request of Chest Executives. New York: Association of Community Chests and Councils, 1931.
- Contributor's Club. "My Lady Poverty." Atlantic Monthly 148 (September 1931): 385-88.
- "Cooperative Self-Help Activities Among the Unemployed--General Summary." Monthly Labor Review XXXVI (June 1933): 1229-40.
- Cramp, Arthur J. "Testimonials--Mainly Medical." American Mercury 17 (August 1929): 444-51.
- Crane, Stephen. "A Desertion." Harper's Monthly 101 (November 1900): 936-39.
- Crawford, Nelson Antrim. "The Farmer Looks at Social Work." National Conference of Social Work, 1927, pp. 662-68.
- Crowell, Chester T. "Babies, Just Babies." New Republic 83 (May 27, 1935): 71.
- "Cuts in Relief and Disputed Results in New Jersey." Literary Digest 122 (July 25, 1936): 3-4.
- Daniels, John. In Freedom's Birthplace: A Study of Boston Negroes. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1914.
- Dawson, John. "The Significance of the Rise in Relief-Giving During the Past Five Years: Its Relation to Increased Costs and the Adequacy of Relief Based on a Study of Relief-Giving in Forty-Seven American Cities With a Population of 100,000 and Over." National Conference of Social Work, 1922, pp. 237-41.

- Dees, Jesse Walter, Jr. Flophouse: An Authentic Undercover Study of "Flophouses," "Cage Hotels," Including Missions, Shelters, and Institutions Serving Unattached (Homeless) Men. Frankestown, NH: Marshall Jones Co., 1948.
- "Direct Mail Suggestions." Survey 62 (September 15, 1929): 621.
- Dirlam, Mrs. C. H. "We Sowed Plans and Reaped Relief." Saturday Evening Post 207 (May 25, 1935): 38.
- Dixon, Lottie Burrell. "His Motto." Crisis 8 (August 1914): 188-90.
- "Does the World Owe Me a Living?" Scribner's Magazine 95 (June 1934): 425-28.
- "Dole." American Mercury 38 (July 1936): 351-52.
- "Downing the Uplifters." Literary Digest 86 (August 22, 1925): 30.
- DuBois, W. E. B. "On Being Ashamed of Oneself: An Essay on Race Pride." Crisis 40 (September 1933): 199-200.
- Dunbar, Mrs. Paul Lawrence. "Hope Deferred." Crisis 8 (September 1914): 238-42.
- Duncan, C. P. "The Outer Pocket." Crisis 13 (January 1917): 122.
- Dunne, Finley Peter. Mr. Dooley in Peace and War. Boston: Small, Maynard & Co, 1898.
- Eberle, Louise. "Esther Learns Her Lesson." Collier's 47 (September 9, 1911): 22.
- "Editorial." Nation 96 (April 17, 1913): 378.
- Editors of the Economist. The New Deal: An Analysis and Appraisal. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1937.
- Edmonds, T. J. "The Man in the Street and the Chest." Survey 59 (November 1, 1927): 145-48.
- Eliot, Thomas D., ed. American Standards and Planes of Living: Readings in the Social Economics of Consumption. Boston: Ginn & Co., 1931.

- Ely, Richard T. "Pauperism in the United States." North American Review 152 (April 1891): 395-09.
- Emerson, Haven, M.D. "Cards on the Table." Survey 55 (January 1926): 465-66.
- "Empty Stockings." Literary Digest 15 (December 25, 1915): 1501-02.
- Ernst, Charles F. "We Demand . . ." Survey 73 (February 1937): 35-36.
- Evans, Bergen. "Demos." Atlantic Monthly 154 (September 1934): 314-17.
- "Farewell to Gibson Alms." Literary Digest 115 (June 24, 1933): 17.
- Fauset, Jessie. "Emmy." Crisis 5 (December 1912): 79-88 and 6 (January 1913): 131-42.
- "Federal Employees' Compensation Commission." Outlook 115 (April 4, 1917): 601-02.
- Fess, Simeon D., "What Shall the Harvest Be?" Saturday Evening Post 208 (April 25, 1936): 27.
- "Fewer Paupers." Literary Digest 87 (November 28, 1925): 61-62.
- Fisher, Dorothy Canfield. The Brimming Cup. Virago Modern Classics. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1921; New York: Penguin Books--Virago Press, 1987.
- Ford, Henry and Crowther, Samuel. My Life and Work. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1923.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Toward Abolishing Poverty." Saturday Evening Post 203 (April 16, 1930): 18-19.
- Ford, Paul Leicester. The Honorable Peter Stirling and What People Thought of Him. New York: International Book & Publishing Co., 1899.
- "Fortune Quarterly Survey: VI." Fortune 14 (October 1936): 130.
- "Fortune Survey: WPA Strikes." Fortune 15 (October 1937): 152.



- Frazer, Elizabeth. "Bill Meade, Brass Tag Man: A Storm of Emergency Relief." Saturday Evening Post 206 (March 10, 1934): 31.
- Frederic, Harold. The Damnation of Theron Ware. New York: Stone & Kimball, 1896.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Marketplace. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1899.
- "From Doles to Jobs." Literary Digest 120 (November 16, 1935): 8.
- "From Social Work to Social Science." New Republic 47 (June 2, 1926): 47-49.
- Gallup, George. The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1935-1971. New York: Random House, 1972.
- Garrett, Garet. "Unemployment--What We Do About It." Saturday Evening Post 205 (March 11, 1933): 14-15.
- "Gene Tunney Writes of an Heroic Fight." New York Evening Post, 8 December 1926, p. 1.
- "Getting a Living." The Plasterer 1 (June 1907): 1-2.
- Gillin, J. L., "Popular Presentation of Public Social Work." National Conference of Social Work, 1925, pp. 565-70.
- Girdler, Tom and Sparks, Boyden. Bootstraps: The Autobiography of Tom Girdler. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943.
- Glassberg, Benjamin. Across the Desk of a Relief Administrator. Chicago: American Public Welfare Association, 1938.
- Glick, Clarence Elmer. "Winnetka: A Study of a Residential Suburban Community." M.A. thesis, University of Chicago, 1928.
- Goldberg, Rube. "No Fun in Poverty for Rube Goldberg." New York Evening Post 20 December 1926, pp. 1 and 6.
- Grattan, Hartley. "Who Gets Supplementary Relief?" Nation 141 (July 31, 1935): 125-26.

- Greene, William Chase. "Contentment in Poverty." North American Review 214 (November 1921): 648-54.
- Gruening, Martha. "The Hoodoo." 7 (April 1915): 195-97.
- Hahn, E. "Women Out of Work." New Republic 75 (May 31, 1933): 63-664.
- "Halt Relief to Aid Harvest." Literary Digest 120 (July 27, 1935): 6.
- "Handicapped?" Defender, 2 June 1923, p. 12.
- Handley, Virginia B. "The Interpretation to the Community of a Public Agency." National Conference of Social Work, 1925, pp. 137-41.
- Harrison, Earl G. "Women Without Work." Survey 69-70 (March 1934): 73-74.
- "Jobless Would Rather Reap Relief Doles than Wheat." Newsweek 6 (July 27, 1935): 9.
- Harvey, Evelyn. "The Unbudgeted Cost of Relief." Saturday Evening Post 207 (February 16, 1935): 23.
- "He Married for Money." True Story 10 (February 1924): 33.
- "Helen's Independence." Defender, 20 January, 1912, n.p.
- Henry, Arthur. "Mr. Jerome's Official Home on the East Side." Outlook 71 (May 3, 1902): 41-44.
- Hillis, Marjorie. Orchids on Your Budget, or Live Smartly on What Have You. Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill Co., 1937.
- Hodges, Leigh Mitchell. "Which Way Publicity?" Survey 62 (July 15, 1927): 457-58.
- Hollander, Jacob H. "The Abolition of Poverty." Atlantic Monthly 110 (October 1912): 492-96.
- Hood, Graham. "Underpaid Labor: Society's Worst Crime." The Plasterer V (July 1908): 13-14.
- "How the American Middle Class Lives (By One of Them)." Scribner's 86 (December 1929): 694-99.

- "Humorist in Tears in Squalid Street." New York Evening Post 20 December 1926, p. 6.
- "Hurls Wife From a Window." Defender, 16 September 1911, p. 7.
- "I Know What Poverty Is." American Mercury 38 (July 1936): 201-06.
- "Insurance and Democracy." Nation 92 (June 15, 1911): 596.
- "Is It Safe to Marry on \$20 a Week? Omaha Says Yes." Literary Digest 76 (January 2, 1923): 46-51.
- "It Must Be Discouraging." Defender, 8 September 1923, p. 12.
- "Jobless Would Rather Reap Relief Doles Than Wheat." Newsweek 6 (July 27, 1935): 9.
- Johanson, Hugo. "Bread Line." Atlantic Monthly 158 (August 1936): 164-76.
- Johnston, Marlise. "The Woman Out of Work." Review of Reviews 87 (February 1933): 30-33.
- Josephson, M. "Other Nation." New Republic 75 (May 17, 1933): 14-16.
- Kelley, Florence. "The Family and the Woman's Wage." In Social Welfare: A History of the American Response to Need, pp. 160-63. Edited by June Axinn and Herman Levin. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1975; second ed., Cambridge: Harper & Row, 1982.
- Kelley, Hubert. "Good Men Plowed Under." American Magazine 120 (November 1935): 16-17.
- Kerr, Sophie. "Kind Hearts Are More Than Coronets-- Maybe." Saturday Evening Post 204 (February 27, 1932): 25.
- Kildare, Owen. My Old Bailiwick: Sketches From the Parish of "My Mamie Rose." New York: F. H. Revell Co., 1906.
- King, Willford Isbell. Trends in Philanthropy: A Study in a Typical American City. New York: National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc., 1928.



- "Kingdom of God and Modern Industry." The Plasterer 1 (August 1907): 2.
- Koenig, Stella Akulin. "The Art of Giving." Saturday Evening Post 203 (January 31, 1931): 24.
- Kofoed, Jack. "Plight of Needy Saddens Gene Tunney." New York Evening Post, 9 December 1926, p. 9.
- "Ladies of the Road." Literary Digest 114 (August 13, 1932): 33.
- "Lady Unemployed." New Republic 78 (February 28, 1934): 67-68.
- Langdon, Harry. "Three Wives--Three Lives." True Story (June 1939): 106.
- Leacock, Stephen. "Throwing Down the Uplift." Collier's 77 (January 9, 1926): 22 and 45.
- Lee, Porter R.; Pettit, Walter W.; Hoey, and Jane M. Report of a Study of the Interrelation of the Work of National Social Agencies in Fourteen American Communities. New York: National Information Bureau, n.d.
- Lee, Porter. What is the Basis of Public Confidence in Social Work. Reprinted from Bulletin of the New York School of Social Work 28 (July 1933).
- Le Suer, Meridel. "Women Are Hungry." American Mercury 31 (March 1934): 316-26.
- Lewin, Rose Dorothy. "A Fragment." Crisis 12 (September 1916): 222-29.
- Lewis, Bertram A. "Winship and the Gleam." Crisis 40 (June 1933): 133-34.
- Lewis, Sinclair, Ann Vickers. New York: Grossett & Dunlap, 1918.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Elmer Gantry. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1927.
- "Life on Relief." American Mercury 35 (August 1935): 419-28.

- Lindsey, Ben. "The Beast and the Jungle." Everybody's Magazine 12 (November 1909): 579-98.
- Link, Henry C. The Return to Religion. New York: MacMillan, 1937.
- "Living on the Ragged Edge: Family Income vs. Family Expenses." Harper's Magazine 152 (December 1925): 54-59.
- "Local Relief in New Jersey." New Republic 87 (July 15, 1936): 285.
- Lynd, Robert S. and Lynd, Helen Merrell. Middletown: A Study in American Culture. New York: Harcourt: Brace & World, Inc., 1921; reprint ed., 1956.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Middletown in Transition: A Study in Cultural Conflicts. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1937.
- "Mabel's Chitchat." National Labor Tribune, 9 January 1913, n.p.
- McAlpin, Edwin A. "Rich Relations." Scribner's Magazine 84 (November 1928): 592-95.
- McCormick, Elsie. "Tracked to Her Lair." Survey 62 (August 15, 1929): 536-37.
- McCracken, Elizabeth. "The Book in the Tenement." Atlantic Monthly 90 (November 1902): 589-98.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Pictures for the Tenements." Atlantic Monthly 98 (October 1906): 519-28.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Play and the Gallery." Outlook 71 (May 17, 1902): 169-78.
- McDonnell, Eleanor Kinsella. "Unemployed! But Who's Going to Fix the Little House?" Saturday Evening Post 208 (July 4, 1936): 14.
- "Machines Driving Men Out of Work." Literary Digest 96 (March 24, 1928): 26-27.
- McMein, Neysa. "Neysa McMein Finds Tragedy in Old Louis and Blind Marie." New York Evening Post 11 December 1926, pp. 1 and 12.

- McMillen, Wayne. "Single Blessedness." Survey 70 (March 1934): 74-75.
- Mainwaring, Daniel. "Fruit Tramp." Harper's 169 (July 19, 1934): 235-42.
- Melbaugh, Florence. "The Givers Talk Back." Survey 60 (October 15, 1928): 100-06.
- "Millions Always Out of Work." Literary Digest 83 (November 15, 1924): 617.
- "Mobilizing the Nation for Relief and Warfare." Literary Digest 116 (November 4, 1933): 18.
- "Modern Poverty," Saturday Evening post 190 (July 4, 1925): 22.
- "Mothers' Pension in Michigan." Independent 78 (June 1, 1914): 424.
- "Mothers' Pensions in New York." Literary Digest 50 (April 10, 1915): 796.
- "Mr. Zero's Jobless Army." Literary Digest 84 (June 24, 1925): 30-31.
- "Needy Mother and the Neglected Child." Outlook 104 (June 7, 1913): 280-83.
- Nesbitt, Florence. "The Significance of the Rise in Relief-Giving During the Past Five Years: Its Relation to Standards of Case Work." National Conference of Social Work, 1922, pp. 236-41.
- "New Opportunity for the Church." Literary Digest 97 (June 23, 1928): 30.
- New York State Commission on Relief to Widowed Mothers Report. Albany, 1914.
- Nichol, C. F. "'The Ordinary Woman' Highest Type of Hero." Defender, 18 November 1911, p. 1.
- Norris, Frank. The Pit: A Story of Chicago. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1900.
- Norton, William J. The Cooperative Movement in Social Work. New York: MacMillan Co., 1927.



- O., M. W. "Protection," Crisis 4 (March 1911): 144.
- "Opportunity." Collier's XLI (July 4, 1908): 8.
- "Ordinary Woman." Defender 18 November 1911, p. 1.
- "Other Nation." New Republic 75 (May 17, 1933): 14-16.
- "Our Jobless Millions." Literary Digest 97 (April 7, 1928): 5-6.
- Pace, Harry H. "The Man Who Won." Crisis 5 (April 1913): 293-95 and 6 (May 1913): 33-36.
- Papini, Giovanni. Life of Christ. Translated by Dorothy Canfield Fisher. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1923.
- "Pension System for Widows a Success." Defender, 6 January 1912, n.p.
- "Pensioning Mothers." Literary Digest 46 (March 1, 1915): 445-46.
- "People Do Starve." New Republic 72 (October 5, 1932): 192-94.
- Perlman, Jesse. "A Social Worker I Know." Survey LIII (October 15, 1924): 108.
- Porter, Eleanor. Oh, Money! Money! New York: Grossett & Dunlap, 1918.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Pollyanna. Boston: Page & Co., 1913.
- Porter, Gene Stratton. The Girl of the Limberlost. New York: Grossett & Dunlap, 1909.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Harvester. New York: Doubleday, Page & Co. 1911.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Michael O'Halloran. New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1915.
- Porterfield, Ruth. "Agony in the C.W.A." American Mercury 32 (May 1934): 96-101.
- "Practical Gift for Beggar." Defender, 30 March 1912, n.p.

- "Press Disbelieves Politics Can be Kept Out of Work-Relief Spending." Literary Digest 119 (June 29, 1935): 10.
- Procter, William Cooper. "A Chest Commander's Vision." Survey 59 (November 1, 1927): 138.
- "'Purging' the Relief Rolls." Literary Digest 120 (August 3, 1935): 8 and 37.
- "Race Grasping Opportunity." Defender, 1 June 1923, p. 3.
- "Raging Relief: Controversies Splutter as Senate Ponders WPA's Thumping Appropriation." Literary Digest 121 (May 23, 1936): 6-7.
- Reckless, W. C. "Why Women Become Hoboes." American Mercury 31 (February 1934): 175-80.
- Reed, Joyce N. "Hate Is Nothing." Crisis 45 (December 1938): 388-90.
- Reeve, Arthur B. "Is Workman's Compensation Practicable?" Outlook 85 (March 2, 1907): 508-11.
- "Relief." Survey 70 (September 1934): 291.
- "Relief: An Unreceding Tide." Literary Digest 121 (March 27, 1937): 5.
- "Relief by Ingenuity." Survey 71 (January 1936): 15-16.
- "Relief Chiselers." Defender 17 August 1935, p. 10.
- "Relief: Congress Debates a Campaign Issue that has Grown for Four Years and Swallowed Twelve Billion Dollars." Newsweek 7 (May 23, 1936): 7-10.
- "Relief: Jersey Baby's Death Develops Into National Issue." Newsweek 8 (July 25, 1936): 21-22.
- Revell, Nellie. "My Life Began With a Broken Back." True Story (February 1937): 138-39.
- "Revolt of the Jobless Middle-Aged." Literary Digest 94 (September 10, 1927): 9.
- Richardson, Dorothy [Rose Fortune]. The Long Day: the Story of a New York Working Girl as Told by Herself. New York: Century Co., 1905.

- Riis, Jacob. How the Other Half Lives. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1907; New York: Hill & Wang, 1957.
- Rinehart, Mary Roberts. The Breaking Point. New York: George H. Doran Co., 1922.
- Rivington, Ann. "We Live on Relief." Scribner's 95 (April 1934): 282-85.
- "Road to Social Efficiency." Outlook 98 (June 10, 1911): 295.
- Rogers, Ginger. "Ginger Rogers' Own Story." True Story (June 1937): 25.
- Roloff, Bernard C. "A Money-Raising Plan for Social Agencies." Survey 58-59 (July 15, 1927): 422-23.
- Routzahn, Mary Swain and Routzahn Ewart G. Publicity for Social Work. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1928.
- Sanborn, Alvan Francis. Moody's Lodging House and Other Tenement Sketches. Boston: Copeland & Day, 1895.
- Scheyer, D. "Flophouse." Nation 139 (August 22, 1934): 216-18.
- Schuyler, Bruce. "The Moving Finger: A Story." Crisis 39 (April 1931): 127.
- Sebestyen, Karl. "The Philosophy of Poverty." Living Age 332 (June 15, 1927): 1091-94.
- "Self-Help Movement: Activities of Federally Aided Self-Help Cooperatives During 1935." Monthly Labor Review 42 (March 1936): 609-19.
- "Shall Americans Starve?" Nation 135 (November 30, 1932): 518.
- Shaw, Albert. "The Progress of the World." Review of Reviews 93 (April 1936): 23.
- Shufeldt, R. W. "The Whipping-Post for Wife-Beaters." Arena 35 (February 1906): 168.
- Sinclair, Upton. The Jungle. New York: Doubleday & Page, 1906.



"Skeleton History of Federal Relief." Fortune 15 (May 1937): 174-75.

Smith, Geddes. "Behemoth Walks Again: Impressions of the National Conference of Social Work." Survey 56 (June 15, 1926): 359-63.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Public Opinion: Seventh Day of the Conference." Survey 50 (June 15, 1923): 348-50.

Sokolsky, George E. "The Political Burden of Relief." Atlantic Monthly 158 (September 1936): 331-40.

Somerville, Henry. "The Tension Between Volunteers and Professionals in Catholic Charities." In American Catholic Thought on Social Questions, pp. 286-300. Edited by Aaron I. Abell. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, Co., Inc., 1968.

"Soul for Sale." True Story 10 (February 1924): 36.

Spadoni, Adriana. "In the Domestic Relations Court." Collier's 47 (August 26, 1911): 15.

Sparks, Boyden. "Capitalizing Kindness." Saturday Evening Post 200 (December 3, 1927): 184-85.

Springer, Gertrude. "Children Aren't Trash." Survey 73 (March 1937): 75-76.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Men Must Work." Survey 70 (November 1934): 342-44.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Step Children of Relief." Survey 69 (June 1933): 212-13.

\_\_\_\_\_. [G. S.]. "What? Clients With Bank Accounts!" Survey 70 (October 1934): 347-48.

\_\_\_\_\_. "What Price the Power of the Food Order." Survey 69 (May 1933): 182-83.

\_\_\_\_\_. "When Your Client Has a Car." Survey 69 (March 1933): 103-04.

"State Aid for Widowed Mothers." Outlook 105 (September 27, 1913): 156.

Stinson, M. B. "I Am a County Relief Director." Survey 71 (October 1935): 296-97.

- "Stranger in Distress." Defender, 21 September 1912, n.p.
- Street, Elwood. "Current Methods of Social Service Publicity." National Conference of Social Work, 1919, pp. 679-82.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Sympathy and System in Giving. Chicago: A. C. McClung & Co., 1921.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Why Do People Give." Survey 46 (August 16, 1921): 611-12.
- "Suppose Nobody Cared." Survey 53 (December 15, 1925): 334.
- Swift, Linton B. "An Experiment in Sounding Public Opinion." National Conference of Social Work, 1927, pp. 653-55.
- "Tag Days." Defender, 7 July 1923, p. 12.
- Tarkington, Booth. Alice Adams. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1921.
- "Telling the Story With Puppets." Survey 60 (July 15, 1928): 440.
- "They Won't Work." Nation 141 (August 28, 1935): 229-30.
- Thompson, Dorothy. "Our Ghostly Commonwealth." Saturday Evening Post 208 (July 27, 1935): 5-7.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Vitamins and the Green Plush Rabbit." Saturday Evening Post 208 (August 24, 1935): 14-15.
- "Tramp Not Wholly Lost." Defender, 17 February 1912, n.p.
- "Tramp's Conversion." National Labor Tribune, 9 January 1913, p. n.p.
- "Trends in Social Service." Survey 47 (November 12, 1921): 252.
- "Two Pictures: One North, the Other South." Defender, 27 October 1923, p. 14.
- "Unemployment in the Midst of Prosperity." 98 (February 25, 1928): 9.

- "Unemployment in 1937." Fortune 16 (October 1937): 106.
- Ward, Paul W. "It Pays to Stay on Relief." Nation 143 (October 17, 1936): 439.
- Waters, Theodore. "The Charity that Begins at Home." Collier's 71 (January 13, 1923): 12, 22.
- Wayne, Priscilla. "Does the World Owe John Doe a Living?" Saturday Evening Post 27 (May 4, 1935): 27.
- "What is Social Work?" Survey LIII (January 15, 1925): 460-61.
- "What Relief Did to Us." American Mercury 38 (July 1936): 279. \*pg.
- "Where Are the Unemployed?" National Labor Tribune 3 May 1923, pp. 1, 4.
- "White Angel of Our Slums." Literary Digest 49 (July 11, 1914): 66.
- White, Frank Marshall. "The Epoch of the Child." Outlook 95 (May 28, 1910): 214-25.
- Wisner, Otto. "A Lawyer Looks at Social Workers." Survey LIII (February 15, 1925): 586-87.
- Withers, Carl [James West]. Plainville, USA. New York: Columbia University Press, 1945.
- "Women at the Breaking Point." Survey 70 (September 1934): 291.
- "Women Out of Work." Review of Reviews 87 (February 1933): 30-32.
- Woolley, Edward Moth. "Scraping By on a Few Thousand a Year." Collier's 74 (October 25, 1924): 12-13.
- Worcester, Daisy Lee Worthington. Grim the Battles: A Semi-Autobiographical Account of the Twentieth Century. New York: Exposition Press, 1954.
- "Work Relief Fiasco." Nation 141 (October 23, 1935): 453.
- "Would You Go North to Join This Line?" Defender, 1 September 1923, p. 1.



Wynbush, Octavia B. "Conjure Man." Crisis 45 (March 1938): 71-73.

## SECONDARY SOURCES

Abell, Aaron I., ed. American Catholic Thought on Social Questions. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1968.

Argersinger, Jo Ann E. Toward a New Deal in Baltimore: People and Government in the Great Depression. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988.

Axinn, June and Levin, Herman. Social Welfare: A History of American Response to Need. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1975; second ed., Cambridge, MA: Harper & Row, 1982.

Bauman, John F. and Coode, Thomas F. In the Eye of the Great Depression: New Deal Reporters and the Agony of the American People. De Kalb, IL: Northern Illinois Press, 1988.

Beito, David T. "Mutual Aid, State Welfare, and Organized Charity: Fraternal Societies and the 'Deserving' and 'Undeserving' Poor, 1900-1930." Journal of Policy History 5 (1993): 419-34.

\_\_\_\_\_. Taxpayers in Revolt: Tax Resistance during the Great Depression. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989.

Berkowitz, Edward. "How to Think About the Welfare State." Labor History 32 (Fall 1991): 489-502.

Best, Gary Dean. The Critical Press and the New Deal: The Press versus Presidential Power, 1933-38. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993.

Biles, Roger. Memphis in the Great Depression. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986.

\_\_\_\_\_. A New Deal for the American People. DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1991.

Bird, S. Elizabeth. For Enquiring Minds: A Cultural Study of Supermarket Tabloids. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992.

Bodnar, John. Workers' World: Kinship, Community, and Protest in an Industrial Society, 1900-1940. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982.

Boris, Eileen. "The Power of Motherhood: Black and White Activist Women Redefine the 'Political'." In Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States, pp. 213-45. Edited by Seth Koven and Sonya Michel. New York: Routledge, 1993.

Boyer, Paul. Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978.

Braeman, John; Bremner, Robert H.; and Brody, David, eds. The New Deal: The State and Local Levels. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1975.

Bremner, Robert. American Philanthropy. Chicago History of American Civilization Series. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960.

\_\_\_\_\_. From the Depths: the Discovery of Poverty in the United States. New York: New York University Press, 1956.

Brilliant, Eleanor. The United Way: Dilemmas of Organized Charity. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990.

Brock, William. Welfare, Democracy and the New Deal. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Brooks, Dwight Ernest. "Consumer markets and consumer magazines: Black America and the culture of consumption, 1920-1960." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1991.

Budd, Mike; Entman, Robert M; and Steinman, Clay. "The Affirmative Character of U.S. Cultural Studies." Critical Studies in Mass Communication 7 (2): 169-84.

Chambers, Clarke. Seedtime of Reform: American Social Service and Social Action, 1918-1933. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Toward a Redefinition of Welfare History." Journal of American History 73 (September 1986): 407-33.



- Charles, Jeffrey A. Service Clubs in American Society: Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993.
- Cohen, Lizabeth. Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Cohen, Miriam and Hanagan, Michael. "The Politics of Gender and the Making of the Welfare State, 1900-1940: A Comparative Perspective." Journal of Social History 24 (Spring 1991): 469-84.
- Conkin, Paul K. The New Deal. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1967.
- Cook, Faith Lomax and Barrett, Edith J. Support for the American Welfare State: the Views of Congress and the Public. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992.
- Critchlow, Donald T. "Social-Policy History: Past and Present." In Federal Social Policy: The Historical Dimension, pp. 9-34. Edited by Donald T. Critchlow and Ellis Hawley. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988.
- Curtis, Frank. Mind's Eye, Mind's Truth: FSA Photography Reconsidered. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989.
- Cutlip, Scott M. Fund Raising in the United States: Its Role in America's Philanthropy. New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1965.
- Daniel, Walter C. Black Journals of the United States. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982.
- Davis, Allen. "Social Welfare History." Reviews in American History 2 (September 1974): 344-47.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Spearheads for Reform: The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement, 1890-1914. New York: Oxford University Press, 1967.
- DeValt, Ilene A. Sons and Daughters of Labor: Class and Clerical Work in Turn-of-the-Century Pittsburgh. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990.



- Dumenil, Lynn. "'The Insatiable Maw of Bureaucracy': Antistatism and Education Reform in the 1920s." Journal of American History 77 (September 1990): 499-524.
- Ehrenreich, John. The Altruistic Imagination: A History of Social Work and Social Policy in the United States. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.
- Fang, Irving. Those Radio Commentators. Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1977.
- Fearon, Peter. "From Self-Help to Federal Aid: Unemployment and Relief in Kansas, 1929-1932," Kansas History 13 (1990): 1070-124.
- Fraser, Nancy and Gordon, Linda. "A Genealogy of Dependency: Tracing a Keyword of the U.S. Welfare State." Signs 19 (Winter 1994): 309-36.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," Social Text 8-9 (1990): 56-80.
- Funiciello, Theresa. Tyranny of Kindness: Dismantling the Welfare System to End Poverty in America. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1993.
- Gatewood, William. Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880-1920. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.
- Goldberg, Vicki. The Power of Photography: How Photographs Changed Our Lives. New York: Abbeville Press, 1991.
- Goodwin, Jo Ann. "Gender, politics and welfare reform: Mothers' pensions in Chicago, 1900-1930." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1991.
- Gordon, Linda. "Black and White Visions of Welfare: Women's Welfare Activism, 1890-1945." Journal of American History 78 (September 1991): 559-90.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Heroes of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence, Boston, 1880-1960. New York: Viking, 1988.

- \_\_\_\_\_. Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare 1890-1935. New York: Free Press, 1994.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Single Mothers and Child Neglect, 1880-1920." American Quarterly 37 (Spring 1985): 173-92.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Social Insurance and Public Assistance: The Influence of Gender in Welfare Thought in the United States, 1890-1935." American Historical Review 97 (February 1992): 19-51.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The New Feminist Scholarship on the Welfare State. In Women, the State and Welfare, pp. 9-35. Edited by Linda Gordon. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990.
- Gray, William S. and Munroe, Ruth. The Reading Interests and Habits of Adults: A Preliminary Report. Studies in Adult Education. New York: MacMillan Co., 1929.
- Greene, Suzanne Ellery. Reading for Pleasure: Popular Fiction, 1914-1945. Bowling Green: University Popular Press, 1974.
- Greene, Theodore P. America's Heroes: The Changing Models of Success in American Magazines. New York: Oxford University Press, 1970.
- Grimes, Mary Cochran. "From Emergency Relief to Social Security in Nebraska," Nebraska History 71 (Fall 1990): 126-41.
- Hansen, Miriam. Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991.
- Hart, Stephen. What Does the Lord Require: How American Christians Think About Economic Justice. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Hawley, Ellis W. "Social Policy and the Liberal State in Twentieth-Century America." In Federal Social Policy: The Historical Dimension, pp. 117-140. Edited by Donald T. Critchlow and Ellis W. Hawley. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988.



- Hearn, Charles R. The American Dream in the Great Depression. Contributions in American Studies. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977.
- Heinemann, Ron. Depression and New Deal in Virginia: The Enduring Dominion. Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1983.
- Helmbold, Lois Rita. "Beyond the Family Economy: Black and White Working Class Women During the Great Depression." Feminist Studies 13 (Fall 1987): 629-55.
- Holmes, Michael S., The New Deal in Georgia: An Administrative History. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975.
- Honey, Maureen. Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda During World War II. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984.
- Hopper Kim. "A Poor Apart: The Distancing of Homeless Men in New York's History." Social Research 58 (Spring 1991): 107-32.
- Howard, Christopher. "Sowing the Seeds of 'Welfare': The Transformation of Mothers' Pensions, 1900-1940." Journal of Policy History 4 (1992): 188-227.
- Howard, Donald S. The WPA and Federal Relief Policy. New York: Da Capo Press, 1973.
- Jones, Jacquelyn. "Southern Diaspora: Origins of the Northern 'Underclass.'" In The "Underclass" Debate: Views from History, pp.27-54. Edited by Michael B. Katz. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Judd, Richard Munson. The New Deal in Vermont: Its Impact and Aftermath. New York: Garland Publishing, 1979.
- Karl, Barry D. The Uneasy State: The United States From 1915 to 1945. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.
- Kasson, John. Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America. New York: Hill and Wang, 1990.



- Katz, Michael B. In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America. New York: Basic Books, 1986.
- Kazin, Michael. Barons of Labor: the San Francisco Building Trades and Union Power in the Progressive Era. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. The "Underclass" Debate: Views From History. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Kelly, Robin D. G. "The Black Poor and the Politics of Opposition in a New South City, 1929-1970." In The "Underclass" Debate: Views From History, edited by Michael B. Katz, pp. 293-333. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990.
- Kerbo, Harold R. and Shaffer, Richard A. "Lower Class Insurgency and the Political Process: The Response of the U.S. Unemployed, 1890-1940." Social Problems 39 (May 1992): 139-53.
- Keyssar, Alexander. Out of Work: The first century of unemployment in Massachusetts. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Kleinberg, Susan J. "The Systematic Study of Urban Women." In Class, Sex, and the Woman Worker, edited by Milton Cantor and Bruce Laurie, pp. 21-42. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977.
- Kornweible, Theodore. No Crystal Stair: Black Life and the Messenger, 1917-1928. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975.
- Koven, Seth and Michel, Sonya. "Introduction: 'Mother Worlds'." In Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of the Welfare States, pp. 1-42. Edited by Seth Koven and Sonya Michel. New York: Routledge, 1993.

- Ladd-Taylor, Molly. "'My Work Came Out of Agony and Grief': Mothers and the Making of the Sheppard-Towner Act." In Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins Welfare States, pp. 321-42. Edited by Seth Koven and Sonya Michel. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Leuchtenburg, William E. Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940. New American Nation Series. New York: Harper & Row, 1963; New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1963.
- Lofroth, Erik. A World Made Safe: Values in American Best-Sellers 1895-1920. Stockholm: Uppsala, 1978.
- Lowitt, Richard and Beasley, Maurine. One Third of a Nation: Lorena Hickok Reports on the Great Depression. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981.
- Lubove, Roy. The Professional Altruist: the Emergence of Social Work as a Career, 1880-1930. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Struggle for Social Security. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968.
- McCarthy, Kathleen D. Noblesse Oblige: Charity and Cultural Philanthropy in Chicago, 1849-1929. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.
- McElvaine, Robert S. Down and Out in the Great Depression: Letters from the "Forgotten Man." (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983.
- Marcello, Ronald. "The Politics of Relief: The North Carolina WPA and the Tar Heel Elections of 1936." North Carolina Historical Review. 68 (January 1991): 17-37.
- Marmor, Theodore R.; Mashaw, Jerry L.; and Harvey, Philip L. America's Misunderstood Welfare State: Persistent Myths, Enduring Realities. New York: Basic Books, 1990.
- May, Martha. "The 'Problem of Duty': Family Desertion in the Progressive Era." Social Service Review. 62 (March 1988): 40-60.



- Melosh, Barbara. The Physician's Hand: Work, Culture, and Conflict in American Nursing. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982.
- Mink, Gwendolyn. "The Lady and the Tramp: Gender, Race, and the Origins of the American Welfare State." In Women, the State, and Welfare, pp. 92-122. Edited by Linda Gordon. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990.
- Mohl, Raymond A. "Mainstream Social Welfare History and its Problems." Reviews in American History 7 (December 1979): 469-76.
- Muncy, Robin. Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Nelson, Daniel. Unemployment Insurance: the American Experience, 1915-1935. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969.
- Neuberger, Joan. Hooliganism: Crime, Culture, and Power in St. Petersburg, 1900-1914. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.
- Neuman, W. Russell. The Paradox of Mass Politics. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986.
- Nichols, David. Ernie's America: The Best of Ernie Pyle's 1930s Travel Dispatches. New York: Random House, 1989.
- Niver, Kemp R. Early Motion Pictures: the Paper Print Collection in the Library of Congress. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1985.
- Nourie, Alan and Nourie, Barbara. American Mass-Market Magazines. Historical Guides to the World's Periodicals and Newspapers. New York: Greenwood Press, 1990.
- O'Brien, David J. American Catholics and Social Reform. New York: Oxford University Press, 1968.
- Odem, Mary. "Single Mothers, Delinquent Daughters, and the Juvenile Court in Early 20th Century Los Angeles." Journal of Social History 25 (Fall 1991): 27-43.



- Page, Benjamin I. and Shapiro, Robert Y. "Effects of Public Opinion on Policy." American Political Science Review 77 (1983): 175-90.
- Patterson, James T., America's Struggle Against Poverty, 1900-1985. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The New Deal and the States: Federalism in Transition. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969; reprint ed., Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981.
- Peiss, Kathy. Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986.
- Piott, Steven I. "The Lesson of the Immigrant: Views of Immigrants in Muckraking Magazines, 1900-1909." Midcontinent American Studies Journal 19 (Spring 1978): 21-34.
- Polsky, Andrew J. The Rise of the Therapeutic State. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.
- Radway, Janice. Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984.
- Rodgers, Daniel T. "In Search of Progressivism." Reviews in American History 10 (December 1982): 213-32.
- Roth, Darlene Rebecca. Matronage: Patterns in Women's Organizations, Atlanta, Georgia, 1890-1940. Scholarship in Women's History: Rediscovered and New. Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Publishing, Inc., 1994.
- Rothman, Sheila M. Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to Present. New York: Basic Books, 1978.
- Scharf, Lois. To Work and to Wed: Female Employment, Feminism and the Great Depression. Contributions in Women's Studies, Number 15. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980.
- Sitkoff, Harvard. A New Deal for Blacks: The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue. Volume I: The Depression Decade. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.



Seeley, John R., et. al. Community Chest: A Case Study in Philanthropy. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957.

Shergold, Peter. Working Class Life: The American "Standard" in Comparative Perspective, 1899-1913. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982.

Sklar, Kathryn Kish Sklar. "The Historical Foundations of Women's Power in the Creation of the American Welfare State, 1830-1930." In Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of the Welfare States, pp.43-93. Edited by Seth Koven and Sonya Michel. New York: Routledge, 1993.

Skocpol, Theda. Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1992.

Sloan, Kay. The Loud Silents: Origins of the Social Problem Film. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988.

Smith, Judith E. Family Connections. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985.

Stadum, Beverly. Poor Women and Their Families: Hard Working Charity Cases, 1900-1930. Binghamton: State University of New York Press, 1991.

Stange, Maren. Symbols of Ideal Life: Social Documentary Photography in America, 1890-1950. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Sternsher, Bernard. "Victims of the Great Depression: Self-Blame/Non-Self-Blame, Radicalism and Pre-1929 Experiences," Social Science History I (Winter 1977): 137-77.

Stock, Catherine McNicol. The Great Depression and the Old Middle Class on the Northern Plains. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992.

Stricker, Frank. "Affluence for Whom?--Another Look at Prosperity and the Working Classes in the 1920s," Labor History 24 (Winter 1983): 5-33.

Sussmann, Leila A. Dear FDR: A Study of Political Letter-Writing. Totowa, NJ: Beminster Press, 1963.

- Tischler, Hace Sorel. Self-Reliance and Social Security, 1870-1917. Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1971.
- Trattner, Walter I. From Poor Law to Welfare State: A History of Social Welfare in America. New York: Free Press, 1974.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. Social Welfare or Social Control? Some Historical Reflections on Regulating the Poor. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983.
- Trout, Charles H. Boston, the Great Depression, and the New Deal. Urban Life in America Series. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Tweton, Jerome. The New Deal at the Grass Roots: Programs for the People in Otter Tail County, Minnesota. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1988.
- Valelly, Richard M. Radicalism in the States: The Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party and the American Political Economy. Foreword by Martin Shefter. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.
- Vandepol, Ann. "Dependent Children, Child Custody, and the Mothers' Pensions: The Transformation of State-Family Relations in the Early 20th Century." Social Problems. 29 (February 1982): 221-35.
- Verba, Sidney and Schlozman, Kay Lehman. "Unemployment, Class Consciousness, and Radical Politics: What Didn't Happen in the Thirties." Journal of Politics 39 (1977): 291-323.
- Walkowitz, Daniel. "The Making of a Feminine Professional Identity: Social Workers in the 1920s," American Historical Review 95 (October 1990): 1051-75.
- Walters, Ronald. "The Negro Press and the Image of Success: 1920-1939," MidContinent American Studies Journal 7 (Spring 1966): 36-55.
- Wandersee, Winifred. Women's Work and Family Values 1920-1940. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981.



Weiner, Lynn Y. From Working Girl to Working Mother: The Female Labor Force in the United States, 1820-1980. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985.

Weiss, Nancy. Farewell to the Party of Lincoln: Black Politics in the Age of FDR. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.

\_\_\_\_\_. The National Urban League, 1910-1940. New York: Oxford University Press, 1974.

Wenocur, Stanley and Michael Reisch. From Charity to Enterprise: The Development of American Social Work in a Market Economy. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989.

White, Graham. FDR and the Press. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.

Wickens, James F. Colorado in the Great Depression. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc. 1979.





