



# **Sex, Politics and Religion:**

## **Controversies in female immigration reform work in Montreal, 1881-1919**

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Canadian social reform work concerned with female immigration underwent a transformation in the first two decades of the twentieth century. By 1920, it had become secularized, professionalized, institutionalized and bureaucratized—as social reform work in general had tended to become. That these trends should be found in female immigration reform work is thus not surprising. What is somewhat surprising is that it did not become defeminized, at least insofar as selecting, dispatching, receiving and distributing female immigrants from the British Isles was concerned. For the most part, the hostels and other networks that had been established by British and Canadian women in Canada in connection with this work, remained in the hands of, and under the control of, women. Also, for the most part, policy and procedures concerned with the immigration of British women continued to be largely determined by the women who had established and continued to operate this network.

triguing exceptions to this general trend was the first such hostel established in Canada—the mother house, as it were—the Home of the Women's Protective (later Women's National) Immigration Society, in Montreal. Opened in 1882, its doors were closed in 1917. Its untimely demise was occasioned by a variety of circumstances. These included the decrease in numbers of immigrants coming through Montreal due to the war, the proliferation of organizations concerned with the care and control of female immigrants, the desire of the Superintendent of Immigration in the federal government to economize and centralize the work, and the determined efforts—nearly three decades in duration on the part of one Anglican gentleman—of a group of Protestant clergymen and laymen to put it out of operation.

To follow the rise and fall of the WNIS Home in Montreal is to trace the course of an institution founded, operated and controlled by women, for women. The Home, and the Society that sponsored it, were operated

For the most part, but not entirely. One of the most in-

upon non-sectarian, even secular, lines, by a group of Protestant and Catholic women, who believed that their concerns as women and patriots were more important than the differences between them. They were backed by some of the most powerful families in Montreal—families who dominated the financial and social institutions in the city and in the Dominion. Their work was international in scope, as were their organizational ties. In many ways they represented the dominant social trends of this period. In some ways they anticipated them.

On the other hand, those who opposed these “ladies” represented the powerful thrust of activist Christianity, in particular the fringes of the movement that was later to be recognized as the Social Gospel. This fringe group was adamantly evangelical and salvationist, and in that sense not a part of the Social Gospel; nonetheless, their actions and works mark them as kin if not kindred. In both thought and action, they were anti-Catholic, anti-secular, anti-elitist and often sectarian. They may also have been anti-feminist, at least insofar as the management of female immigration work was concerned. Although this group was concerned with the protection, direction and control of women immigrants, its members were nearly all men. Its policies were determined by clergymen and businessmen, and implemented with the help of ladies’ auxiliaries and a few female employees.

The religious attitudes of this group—if dogmatic anti-Catholicism, anti-secularism and sectarianism can be called religious—were within the mainstream of their church traditions in the 1880s, but were in the process of becoming outmoded. The ensuing decades witnessed a struggle within the churches between the individually and the socially oriented, between those who emphasized salvation and those who aimed to remake society. The issues were ideological and practical. There was the question of legitimacy: to have accepted the idea that “the social concern of the church was just as religious as its evangelism,”<sup>1</sup> as one Presbyterian social worker put

it. More relevant here than the issues was the struggle for control over the social work in which church and other people were engaged. By the late 1920s, the socially oriented had virtually vanquished the evangelicals and the emphasis was on the Social, in the Social Gospel.

The men in Montreal who opposed the women of the WNIS were on this ultimately-losing side. They fought out part of their battle in their churches and also in the broad arena of Montreal. In the latter, the struggle was carried out primarily through two institutions. The first was the Andrews Home opened in 1895 for the reception of Church of England immigrants of both sexes. The second, opened in 1915, was the Dorchester House for female immigrants, operated by the Protestant Directorate of Female Immigration, made up of clergymen and laymen of six denominations, with a Church of England head and a Presbyterian secretary.

It looked for a while as if the men of Dorchester House were on the winning side. They succeeded in taking over the work of the WNIS after 1917, and their organization outlived the WNIS. Victory, however, was shortlived. Dorchester House was itself taken over in 1919, ironically and perhaps fittingly, by a national, non-sectarian, secular, institutionalized, bureaucratized and professionalized organization, the Canadian Council of Immigration of Women, run by women on terms they laid down to meet the needs that they defined as priorities.

In addition to themes of general historical importance, the story of the rise and fall of the WNIS Home also illustrates smaller points: the sometimes-ugly struggle for control over social reform work; the stupid nastiness of some of the people involved; bigotry and other kinds of intolerance. These are not themes usually associated with the social reform movement or the Social Gospel in current Canadian historical literature. Yet the study of these events in Montreal would suggest that Christian principles in action were not always particularly principled, nor particularly Christian.

## I

The Women's Protective Immigration Society was established in Montreal in 1881, under the patronage of the Princess Louise, for the purpose of helping respectable British women emigrate to Canada. The women of the Society intended to work closely with British colleagues and to become an important part of the network by means of which carefully selected British female emigrants were transported, received and distributed in the Dominion. This female immigration network operated upon principles originating in mid-Victorian Britain, principles modified and refined by decades of practice in several parts of the Empire. The women reformers operating this network shared a grand vision.<sup>2</sup>

The vision was of the creation of an English society in Canada, based on the recreation of the Victorian home by the civilizing Victorian wife and mother. Prospective wives and mothers were chosen from among the under- and un-employed women of Britain on the basis of practical and moral considerations. They must have "character" and the respectability of the bourgeois wife and mother but the skills and pragmatic attitudes of the respectable working class. They could work as domestics in the homes of Canadian women, especially of the reformers who had a hard time getting good household help, then meet and marry good British men and become mistresses in their own homes. Each new British home thus created would be a building block in the new nation and would strengthen the favourite colony in the Empire. The Montreal Society was to be an agency through which this grandiose vision was to be carried out.

The women who founded the Montreal Society were the wives and daughters of some of the most important men in Montreal, (of the families Macdonald, Shaughnessy, Allan, MacKay, Roddick, Meredith, Taylor, Baumgarten, Clouston, Stephens, for example). These men were the founders, presidents, directors and managers of the railroads, steamship lines, insurance

companies, banks, industries and manufactories, among those "men who are at the basis of Canadian finance," as they were described by the *Montreal Star* in 1911. Many of them were titled. They were members of the Anglican, Presbyterian or other Protestant churches, the Church of Rome, or, rarely, not affiliated with any church. They were supporters of both major political parties. Some of them were known as philanthropists; one, Sir William Christopher Macdonald, had given ten million dollars to educational institutions. Others left it to their wives to carry on good works. The "ladies" running the Society were indeed members of the ruling class.

When the Women's Protective Immigration Society founded its female immigrant reception home in Montreal in 1882, its operation was funded mainly by a \$1,000 annual grant from the federal government. It was given a grant for several reasons, including the importance of its function as a cheap social service and social control agency for the government; but the most likely immediate explanation for the grant was the close political, personal and social ties between the backers of the Home and the Minister responsible for immigration. Sponsors of the Home included representatives of the British royal family and the Crown, as well as other important persons.

Federal grants were important because they were necessary to maintain the Home. The other main source of income was fees collected from women who stayed on in the Home beyond the initial free period right after arrival. These boarders' fees seldom paid for more than a part of the groceries which fed the inmates and did not begin to cover operating expenses for the Home. The financial dependence of the Society upon the government was justified by the role of the Home as an authorized institution of the Dominion Government, carrying out the work of the government and providing facilities that were badly needed and not otherwise available. Far from feeling unhappy about their function as a cheap social service agency for the government, these women eagerly sought to achieve and retain that status. Indeed, they

wished to retain that status exclusively and attempted to prevent their first rival, the Andrews Home, from sharing it.

The federal grant originally obtained by the Society continued more or less automatically for more than a decade. The Department of Agriculture explained to the Department of the Interior, which assumed responsibility for immigration in 1892, that in the past, "the interests of the Society . . . were very influentially pressed on the Department, and the requests . . . uniformly acceded to."<sup>3</sup> After the transfer, the grants appear to have come less automatically. Due to government budget cut-backs, the grant was reduced to \$500 in 1895.<sup>4</sup> The Society pressured the Department to restore the grant, arguing that if the Society collapsed, the flow of respectable British women to Canada would be diverted to other countries.<sup>5</sup> The grant was restored in 1896.<sup>6</sup>

In the same year, the Society extended its scope and became national. It formalized its links with the soon-to-be booming Northwest (now included in the Prairie Provinces). It changed its name to the Women's National Immigration Society in 1898. At the annual meeting of the Society, wherein the new dimensions of the work of the Society were announced, Jasper Smart, Deputy Minister, praised the plans and spoke of his personal—and implied his official—support for them. For the next five years the Society campaigned to increase their annual grant to finance their expanded work. The main obstacle to expanded funding was the Minister in charge of Immigration, Clifford Sifton, who had no intention of paying more money for what he could get for less.<sup>8</sup> For a grant of \$1,000 per year, the government had been able to use the facilities and resources of the WNIS and its British affiliates to facilitate the immigration of carefully screened and supervised British women into Canada. The WNIS cost less and presented fewer problems than did commercial agents. It offered facilities that were better than those of the government, the labour of some of the most competent women in the country and the special touch that comes from strong personal involvement of the employees.

The tactics of the women in forwarding their cause were well reasoned and they used their resources wisely. They sent letters to prominent politicians, deputations to the Minister of the Interior, petitions signed by powerful men of Montreal and by members of provincial and federal parliaments to officials in the Immigration Branch, to Lady Laurier and to anybody else who might have some influence. Only by receiving a larger grant, spokespersons for the Society argued, could the Home increase the size of the population it assisted. Their tactics worked. After the women followed up a petition signed by 68 of the most prominent men in Montreal, with a deputation to Prime Minister Laurier himself, they got their grant increased to \$1,500.<sup>9</sup>

The political setting in which immigration work took place changed abruptly in 1905 when Sifton offered to resign over French Canadian educational rights in the West—he was against them—and Laurier surprised Sifton by accepting his offer. Deputy Minister Smart resigned as well. The new minister, Frank Oliver, did not like Sifton, did not like his policies and did not wish to spend money so freely on immigration. 1905 was a year of economy drives in the Immigration Branch and the Women's Society was caught in it. Their increased grant was not included in the estimates. Scott, the Superintendent of Immigration, required six months to be convinced that the authorized grant had been \$1,500. It was necessary for members of the Society and their influential backers to appeal to the Minister and provide documentary evidence, in order to get the payments.<sup>10</sup> From the summer of 1906, the Society received grants regularly and without problems. In 1912, they received an increase to \$2,000 annually,<sup>11</sup> after representations were made on their behalf by a prominent politician.<sup>12</sup>

## II

Opposition to the Women's National Immigration Society apparently originated in a religious issue, around 1890. At that time a member of "low church" Anglicans in Montreal became aware that the Matron of the Women's Home was a Roman Catholic.<sup>13</sup> The Matron

had been working at the Home for nearly nine years and was entirely satisfactory to the Society. According to the President of the Society, the Immigration Chaplain for the Church of England, the Reverend J. Frederick Renaud, began to call at the Home more often and to "annoy and persecute" the Matron, so much that he was told not to appear there save in his official capacity to visit Church of England immigrants.<sup>14</sup> Renaud and his supporters tried unsuccessfully to force the Society to discharge the Matron. Renaud then went to England and discussed the matter with emigration societies there, particularly those sending women to the Montreal Home. Some of the societies were apparently alarmed by Renaud's claim that Protestant immigrants would be sent to Catholic homes as servants, and there efforts might be made to lure them away from their own faith. Several asked that the British Women's Emigration Association, the main sending agency for the Montreal Home, recommend to the WNIS that it hire a Church of England Secretary to oversee the work of the Home. The WNIS agreed to do this and there the matter might have rested.<sup>15</sup> However, some of the British societies still objected to their emigrants being handed over to a Catholic.

The conflict continued for several years. It became public at the annual meeting of the WNIS in December of 1894. The Society discussed the matter, reading from a Department of the Interior Blue Book a description of their Home: it was a non-sectarian institution, run by a Board of Management of Catholic and Protestant ladies of the first families of the city, performing important and useful work in an eminently satisfactory manner.<sup>16</sup> The controversy centred upon the fact that the work of the Home was carried out upon broader lines than those approved of by the Church of England. The non-sectarian practices of the Home were defended by the women as appropriate on the grounds that the Home was supported by government funds. The Church of England had never contributed to the work of the Society, nor had it been asked to.<sup>17</sup> Renaud responded by reiterating his concerns and his belief that each denomination should care for its own. He claimed that he was satisfied with the

compromise that had been reached by the hiring of a Church of England Secretary to oversee the placing of domestics in families of the same religion.<sup>18</sup>

His claims were not borne out by subsequent events. The Andrews Home for the reception of Church of England immigrants was opened in Montreal in 1895. It had been funded by H.O. Andrews, who had left a large bequest to the Bishop of Montreal to use as he saw fit. The Home was under the sponsorship of the Bishop, and under the direction of a House Committee of seven clergy and laymen, with Canon Renaud as the Secretary. It advertised as the sole Home under full Church of England control, for the reception of men and women members immigrating to Canada. These would be met, received and placed in positions, by Church of England representatives. Care would be taken to place them in an atmosphere that would not jeopardise their faith, where their employers could "exercise supervision over them and preserve them in the faith of their fathers."<sup>19</sup>

The Andrews Home campaigned strenuously to corner as much of the female immigrant traffic as possible. The first campaign centred around the information that was to be given to newcomers at the ports by government officials. The Andrews group succeeded in having these agents instructed to inform Church of England arrivals, especially "unprotected women and girls,"<sup>20</sup> of the useful work of the Andrews Home, "especially in relation to the care of women."<sup>21</sup> The Andrews Home was not satisfied with this and pressed for more exclusive directions.

The WNIS was upset about this procedure. Their reaction was evidently based partly on principle, partly upon fears that the Andrews Home was not a good environment for women immigrants and partly upon a sense that their hegemony over female immigration work in the city of Montreal was threatened. They arranged to have telegrams sent notifying them of the impending arrival of any unprotected single women, who were to be informed that the WNIS Home "takes care of all single women who may arrive as immigrants."<sup>22</sup> The govern-

ment at first refused to instruct its agents to hand out the cards of the WNIS Home to all such women and were reluctant to tell them that it was the "Home recognized by the Government for the reception of single women immigrants."<sup>23</sup> The government acquiesced in this request only after the President of the Society wrote privately to the Deputy Minister, outlining a history of harrassment by Renaud and the Andrews group against the WNIS, and expressing her antipathy to the practice of sheltering both sexes at the Andrews Home, explaining that "we cannot feel that it is either a safe or desirable one for single women as has been shown by recent events."<sup>24</sup> She referred to a sex scandal in which the male superintendent of the Andrews Home, a former missionary, was accused of seduction by a young immigrant woman living and working in the Home. The incident was widely discussed and publicized;<sup>25</sup> although the man was apparently believed to be falsely accused, both government officials and the WNIS were concerned. Renaud accused supporters of the WNIS of promoting a sensational newspaper article about the scandal in order to injure the Andrews Home.<sup>26</sup>

Justifiably or not, the scandal strengthened the conviction of the WNIS (and other female immigrationist reformers) that they needed Homes "for women only, and controlled by women."<sup>27</sup> It also resulted in an official announcement to government agents that the WNIS was supported by federal money to maintain a Home for female immigrants, which they did effectively, and that the Home, "an admirable institution in every way," was to be made "known to female immigrants arriving at Montreal" as the "institution recognized by the federal government . . . that single women of the domestic servant class are particularly recommended" to use.<sup>28</sup> The Andrews Home continued to press for explicit instructions to send all Church of England immigrants to its doors, typically accusing the WNIS of attempting to damage the interests of the Andrews group. In 1898, Renaud wrote to Minister of the Interior Sifton in this vein:

From what cause we do not care at present to in-

timite, but influence has been used to the detriment of our work, as you must know, dear Sir, in our organization we have but one interest and that is the welfare of the newly arrived and the desire to assist in populating our fair Dominion with desirable settlers.<sup>29</sup>

In 1901 the Bishop appointed a Ladies Committee as an auxiliary, perhaps in an effort to improve the position of the Andrews Home in the competition for female immigrants.<sup>30</sup> Although it was larger than the WNIS Home, its women's department consistently fell behind the WNIS Home, sometimes by a factor of two. The Ladies Committee, wives of prominent Anglican clergy and businessmen, apparently did not play an important role in policy formation or operation of the Home. Despite the intensive efforts of Renaud, Church of England and other women immigrants continued to go to the WNIS Home, run exclusively by women, for women. The Andrews Home remained open through the First World War, although its facilities were used for war work rather than to assist female immigrants. Renaud left the Home after 1910. He was not to appear in open opposition to the WNIS for almost four years, during which time the WNIS flourished.

### III

The second major threat to the position of the WNIS Home came from another group of religious men in the city of Montreal, including, not surprisingly, Canon J. Frederick Renaud. During the early part of 1914, the immigration branch had been approached by a group of Presbyterian men who said they had been moved to act by the pleas of Presbyterian deaconesses working with the unfortunate inmates in various Redemption Homes and similar institutions. These inmates appeared to include a preponderance of incompetent domestics among them—women who had been discharged from one situation after another because they could not do the work properly. Becoming discouraged and demoralized, and, one might suppose, hungry, they were easy prey for the careless or unscrupulous. The solution, the

Presbyterians had decided, was to attack the problem at its root: to train domestics to be competent in their work so they would not get fired and jeopardize their virtue through the loss of their secure homes and jobs!<sup>31</sup> The government thought such an institution might be useful, but cautioned that only a joint project of all "interested parties" could expect funding.

Cooperation between the men of various Protestant denominations was easily arranged, but, led by the Anglican and Presbyterian representatives, the group flatly refused to work with the WNIS. Canon Renaud accused it of hostility to religion in general and the Protestant churches in particular. Chisholm, the Presbyterian initiator of the proposal, charged that the WNIS was elitist and ineffective and could not follow up its immigrants save in a few large cities. The men's group could follow up immigrants all over the Dominion through the local churches. "This is better than Deportation, Rescue Homes and Maternity Hospitals," he charged, all presumably the results of the shortcomings of the WNIS. The WNIS, the men said, duplicated the work of the government. The men's group proposed something different: a scheme for training domestics, a tribunal for disputes between servants and mistresses, a comfortable place for meetings and wholesome recreation for off-duty servants.<sup>32</sup> The WNIS were "isolated from everybody in the city interested in the girls," said Chisholm. Further, he claimed that "indeed, in this city, the WNIS is not even regarded as a medium for bringing female labourers to Canada." He was disgruntled because he himself had asked them to supply servants in Montreal, and they had refused, saying that "the few who came out just waited until the departure of the next train west. There were none for Montreal."<sup>33</sup>

For these reasons, claimed the men of the proposed Dorchester House, it was not possible to unite with the WNIS. "The only union possible with them is absorption."<sup>34</sup> The group, indeed, had been attempting to absorb the funding of the WNIS for some time. Early in the spring of 1914, when the plan for Dorchester House

was in the very early stages, Chisholm had written to Scott asking for the WNIS grant. "I do not see why," he wrote, "the \$2,000 given every year should not now be donated" to the new institution for renovations so that it would be adequate as a receiving home.<sup>35</sup> Scott saw why not. He replied that grants money was to be used for general immigration work, not improving the value of the property belonging to the society undertaking the work, and the government "would only make grants on those terms."<sup>36</sup> Rebuffed but undefeated, Chisholm continued his campaign to oust the WNIS.<sup>37</sup>

Scott must have been impressed with Chisholm's arguments. He reviewed the WNIS file, and sent it with the letter to the Minister. He was duly instructed to cut the WNIS grant to \$1,000 for the next fiscal year, because of the "increased numbers of agencies in female immigration work . . . [and] the fall in numbers of immigrants."<sup>38</sup> The government did not promise Dorchester House a grant, but Scott dangled hope for the future.<sup>39</sup> Dorchester House was on the way up.

Although the campaign against the WNIS led by Renaud and Chisholm was not the only reason for the reduction of the WNIS grant, and the ultimate demise of the WNIS Home, it was certainly a factor. In this instance, as in others, Scott was apparently susceptible to pressures from persons he believed to be influential. It is difficult to be certain what were his own views on the women's homes in general and the WNIS in particular. In his early years in office he was opposed to women's hostels run by groups of women such as the WNIS, and had, for instance, been unsympathetic to the request for a grant from the newly founded Calgary Hostel.

My own impression is that institutions of this kind are soon diverted from their original intention and become mere "clubs," which are of little or no benefit to newly arrived women and girls of the humbler classes with which we are concerned.<sup>40</sup>

Yet after more contact with the hostels, he appears to

have become a supporter. He wrote of the same hostel a year or so later.

I think that this Association is doing a very useful work in maintaining a Hostel for women at Calgary and that the institution merits the continued encouragement of the Department.<sup>41</sup>

He does not appear to have resisted representations made on behalf of the WNIS after the debacle of 1906 when he was forced to back down. It is possible that he may have held some personal grudge against the WNIS because of this incident. Perhaps his original feeling that women's hostels operated by middle and upper class women were just "clubs" for a few made him susceptible to repeated charges of elitism laid against the WNIS by the Protestant men. For whatever reason, his correspondence concerning the conflict between Dorchester House and the WNIS reveals some puzzling inconsistencies. Scott had never before showed concern with the number of domestics retained in Montreal versus those sent on to the West. Yet in his correspondence with the Minister about the possibility of cutting the WNIS grant, he wrote that "our grants should be made with the object of encouraging better placing and supervision of young women, rather than expending money on passing them along at Montreal."<sup>42</sup> Because the WNIS saw its work as national, it did not attempt to retain large numbers of domestics for Montreal. The vast majority of its immigrants were forwarded on. Scott had never before objected to this policy.

Scott was willing to maintain the other women's hostels in Canada during the wartime period of decreased immigration activity on the basis that the government would need their services after the war when immigration increased again. Although Scott attempted to reduce the grants of all of the women-run women's hostels during the war,<sup>43</sup> the Minister refused to reduce the grants of the others,<sup>44</sup> none of which received in excess of \$1,000 yearly.<sup>45</sup>

It is true that the WNIS had long enjoyed an advantageous position relative to the other women's hostels.<sup>46</sup> However, the problem was not the position of the WNIS Home relative to other women's hostels run by women, but rather relative to the other institutions receiving female immigrants in Montreal. Underlying these relationships was the fact of the war and its impact upon the female immigration movement. During the war years, Scott was conscious of the continued high costs of operating the reception homes for women in Montreal at a time when the flow of female immigrants had been cut to the merest trickle. At the same time, the organizations interested in dealing with them had proliferated. At the time the government had begun to make the grant to the WNIS, "they were probably about the only people outside the government looking after immigrant women."<sup>47</sup> By 1914, there were many facilities, including a government immigration building with a matron (although many of these facilities were not exclusively for the use of women). Even if there were no such facility, the shortened interval between the arrival of trains at Montreal and the departure of trains from there to the West had rendered nearly superfluous large institutions to care for immigrants in transit.<sup>48</sup> In 1915 the federal government had paid a total of \$4,400 in grants to immigration institutions operating hostels in Montreal: \$2,400 of this to Catholic institutions and \$2,000 to the WNIS Home.<sup>49</sup> In 1916, the total was the same although the distribution had shifted: one of the Catholic homes did not request a grant, the WNIS grant was halved, and the Dorchester House got \$1,000.<sup>50</sup>

It is clear that the advantageous position of the WNIS Home relative to the other immigrant reception institutions in Montreal began to be lessened as alternatives to it increased in the city. It is also clear that the strong opposition of the group of clergy and laymen running Dorchester House helped to shift the balance against the WNIS Home, and that Scott had no objection to this shift. To be fair to Scott, however, it appears that he was not the force in the Immigration Branch pushing to give the Dorchester group a grant. Correspondence

reveals that as late as January, 1916, he was not sure whether or not such a grant would be provided for in the estimates, and he had not yet been told whether or not the Minister had promised it to the group.<sup>51</sup>

The influence behind the Dorchester group appears to have been the then Minister of the Interior, Dr. Roche. He had reputedly proposed to the five Protestant denominations involved in setting up Dorchester House that the \$2,000 then given to the WNIS be awarded to them instead. Mr. Doherty, a long time supporter of the WNIS, opposed this, and suggested instead that Dorchester House be given \$2,000 regardless of what was given to the WNIS. Dr. Roche "contended that the WNIS had outlived its usefulness and was not satisfying any of the religious bodies" and therefore proposed to transfer the WNIS grant. According to Chisholm, after some discussion, Roche divided the \$2,000 between the two.<sup>52</sup> In April, 1916, Dorchester House announced that it had been awarded a federal grant of \$1,000.<sup>53</sup>

Although the government found the Dorchester House to be satisfactory in its operations in Montreal, it was often dissatisfied with its methods of publicity. Several times Chisholm was sharply chastised by the Department on a number of counts: for circulating misleading or even untrue information about the excesses of other immigration agencies; the prevalence of the white slave traffic, and the connections between the two; and the relationship of Dorchester House to other immigrant reception homes in Montreal, and to the government.<sup>54</sup> Despite these conflicts, Dorchester House pursued an aggressive policy of recruitment to persuade agents to route the slim traffic to its institution. It also continued to importune the government to increase its grant and to cut out the WNIS grant completely. The WNIS found it impossible to continue its operation on the reduced grant and its doors were closed in 1917.<sup>55</sup> This was a great help to the Dorchester group, which then concentrated its campaign on getting the government to double its present grant by paying the amount formerly given to the WNIS to the Dorchester House.

The campaign continued to focus upon religious issues, or rather to use religious issues for tactical purposes. Canon Renaud (who died in 1917) had accused the WNIS of being hostile to religion many times over the course of several decades. The Reverend Mr. Chisholm had defended the WNIS against this accusation in 1915,<sup>56</sup> implying that he was not as concerned with sectarian issues, or at least as anti-Catholic, as was Renaud. Yet in 1918, he was openly applying pressure based on Catholic-Protestant antipathy and competition.

We . . . are the only non-Roman Catholic body asking for assistance along this line. . . . The members from Ontario and especially from Toronto, manifested deep feelings when Dr. Roche first refused the Protestants in Montreal the same assistance as he gave the Roman Catholics, especially because 80% of the immigrants are Protestants. . . . Unless our requests are complied with . . . we must seek an opportunity of appearing before you with a deputation from here reinforced by our Protestant friends from the Western provinces.<sup>57</sup>

Meanwhile the wider changes in social reform work in general as well as female immigration work in particular were beginning to affect the group managing Dorchester House. One change came from within the churches and one came from without, but both came from women. In February of 1919, a group of women formed a Federation of women's missionary boards including those of the denominations represented in the sponsorship of Dorchester House. Chisholm wrote to inform the Department of the change, explaining it as offering an increased ability to do follow-up work (which he had in the beginning claimed to be unsurpassed and nationwide). The consequences of the change for the men running Dorchester House were to be far reaching. As Chisholm outlined them:

Because of the new mobilization of our women we have changed the constitution of our Directorate so

as to admit the same number of directoresses (sic) as we have directors, said directoresses (sic) to be chosen from and by the women's regularly constituted missionary organizations.<sup>58</sup>

The men were also forced to include representatives of Local Councils of Women, which had been connected with the operation of the various women's hostels across the country. These hostels were run along lines similar to the WNIS Home: they were non-sectarian, serving respectable immigrant women of different faiths, and run by women.<sup>59</sup> Although this would not immediately secularize Dorchester House, it did help to demasculinize it.

Also early in 1919, Canadian women involved in female immigration work, particularly those running the network of women's hostels across Canada, were in the process of organizing a new administrative and coordinating body that would be responsible for overseeing a new system of female immigration, including a national network of hostels. The new Council, to be called the Canadian Council of Immigration of Women, was the logical outcome of several trends: increasing institutionalization, secularization and professionalization of social reform work; the linking of local organizations to cope with concerns that were national in scope; pressures from Britain to promote a new scheme of Imperial settlement to populate the Dominions and get rid of her unemployed after the War; the desire of women's emigration societies in Canada and in Britain to increase female migration under their control, and the willingness of governments to have them do so. The new Council would reflect the tendencies of the work previously done by women. It would be secular, funded by public moneys rather than private donations; it would work in cooperation with a now more-sympathetic government; and it would be controlled by women. Further, a new women's Branch in the Department of Immigration and Colonization was formed, to whom the Council would report. It would now be the Council that would gather information about the expenses of the various Homes and

would make recommendations to the government about grants. It would now be much more difficult to rely upon pressure groups or threats to get results from the government, if there were a disagreement on the part of one Home or one group somewhere.<sup>60</sup>

The Dorchester House group continued to try to apply pressure for a bigger grant. Chisholm wrote to Mrs. Vincent Massey, Convenor of the Immigration Committee of the National Council of Women, who was involved in setting up the Council, attempting to use the same tactics as he had used with the government. He claimed (inaccurately) that the federal grants to Catholic organizations concerned with immigration, located in the city of Montreal, totalled \$8,900, arguing that it was thus "reasonable that the non-R.C. bodies should demand support for an institution of which we have exclusive control," since four-fifths of domestic immigrants were Protestants. He castigated the WNIS for not being "exclusively Protestant."

Indeed, at one time it was dominated by the Roman Catholics. . . . For this reason alone we have a right to demand the existence of an organization absolutely free from all influence of the powerful Church of Rome.<sup>61</sup>

Despite Chisholm's appeal, Dorchester House acquiesced in what must have seemed the inevitable, and in the autumn of 1918 agreed to "falling in with the new Council of Women's scheme."<sup>62</sup>

Dorchester House had been visited by Mrs. Kneil, the Secretary of the new Council, who had persuaded them to agree to a series of changes, including a name change to the Canadian Women's Hostel, which was to be standard across the Dominion, and to put representatives of the YWCA and the Local Council of Women on their Board.<sup>63</sup> Dorchester House had resisted putting Y members on the Board claiming that the Y women would be represented through these "directoresses" since Y members were also members of the churches represented by both men and women on the Board. It had agreed to put

on a LCW representative, but possibly the decision had not been implemented.<sup>64</sup>

The men's group made one last grasp for power. The churches which comprised the Protestant Directorate of Female Immigration, the name by which the Board of Dorchester House styled itself, made individual efforts to get voting representation on the new Council. The Council was most reluctant to include them. After lengthy discussion of the problem, it reported that, while it wished to give representation to all types of women's organizations, it was concerned to keep the Council to a workable size. "It was felt, too, that the care and housing of young women was primarily the work of women," and the representatives of the churches would in all likelihood have been men. Therefore, the Council decided to give representation to city, town and farm women's groups whose members would be the employers of the immigrants, to the Trades and Labour Council, the War Veterans Association, and ingeniously, "to these religious bodies: the YWCA, the Social Service Council, the Federated Boards of the Women's Missionary Societies of the Protestant Churches, and the Catholic Women's League of Canada." This brought the representation of twelve national bodies, plus provincial representatives, to the Council.<sup>65</sup> It excluded what would probably have functioned as a special interest group of the men who had run Dorchester House. Thus, the control of the work concerned with the immigration of women into Montreal was again in the hands of women.

#### IV

The rivalry between the WNIS and opposition institutions was presented in terms of principle, particularly religious principles. The institutions in opposition were established and controlled by men who insisted that the work must be carried out upon religious lines, by which they meant Protestant female immigrants must not be in the care of Catholics, not even officials of an established immigrant society or institution. Their concern, they said, was based on the fear that Protestant

immigrants would be lured away from their faith. Thus, only a Protestant-run and Protestant-staffed system and institution could oversee the immigration of Protestant females, and only a Protestant could place them in good Protestant homes to work as domestic servants. The main complaints against the WNIS were its refusal to exclude non-Protestants (or non-Anglicans), its religiously mixed organization, executive, and staff in its Home filled with a religiously mixed group of inmates, its failure to include religious services in its organizational life and its elitism. There are no records of complaints that the WNIS Home was run by women and while it welcomed men among its supporters and cooperated with them in the work of the Society, it did not allow men to interfere in the operation of the Home. There are no records but the situation suggests that there must have been an element of sexual politics involved. Certainly there was for the WNIS. Their statement in 1897, a period when they were under attack by the first rival Home, stands as a first principle for those engaged in female immigration reform work.

The advantages of a home for women only, and controlled by women, cannot be overestimated and are fully recognized by those societies in Great Britain who entrust their girls to the care of this society.<sup>66</sup>

For the Women's Society, religion was not an issue, and should not be an issue, in the carrying out of their work. They appear to have been more concerned with the principle of female autonomy, and with the question of moral or other sorts of danger to women who were under the care of the institutions run by men.

Their concern was not based solely on simple prudishness or the desire of the upper classes to control the lives of the lower. A working woman, particularly a domestic servant, depended upon her "character," as a job qualification. Numerous writers have pointed out that the consequences of a "fall" for women were potentially very serious. This was especially the case for a

domestic, for loss of character meant not only loss of a job but loss of her home.

Immigrants were considered by both reformers and officials engaged in immigration work to be particularly open to influence and thus to danger. This view was consistently expressed in the statements of workers, as for example, in the report of the YWCA worker at Quebec, Mrs. Burrington-Ham, who wrote in 1914 that more than ever before or after, female immigrants were susceptible to good influence. Their early weeks in Canada was the crucial time for them to be reached and protected, "which in nearly every case means prevention."<sup>67</sup> They were important to reach because of their future role as wives and mothers. The Commissioner of Immigration at Winnipeg, who was responsible for the West, pointed out that it was the knowledge that "surely, sometime sooner or later, (the immigrant) will somewhere mould the destinies of future Canadians" that was "making us feel how important it is for us that we take steps now to make sure that the moulding process be along the lines we desire."<sup>68</sup>

In expressing concern over moral dangers to women immigrants who were not under protection, the Women's Society was in tune with the female immigration reform movement as a whole. In urging that women immigrants be under the care of women, in a female rather than a mixed setting, the Society was representative of the organized women reformers involved in this work.

It was not only the female reformers who were concerned about moral dangers to female immigrants. Most immigration reformers and many social reformers were almost obsessive about what they described as the "white slave traffic." In fact there was not a real traffic in Canada. The problems that drove women to prostitution were economic, not moral, and increased protection or prevention, while it might alleviate some of the symptoms, would not cure the disease. Although the idea of the Dorchester group to train women in the skills necessary to work as domestic servants was sensible in

that it regarded the problem as at least partly related to work, it was typical of the limited remedies of reformers in that it identified the problem as incompetence on the part of the individual woman.

In a somewhat analogous fashion, the salvationist wing of the activist Christian movement advocated an individual solution: the salvation of the individual soul. These men were not representative of the movement that came to be known as the Social Gospel,<sup>69</sup> mostly because they lost. Yet the Social Gospel movement itself was not immune to sectarianism and factional dispute: many seem to have believed that it was their divine duty to exercise particular control over the various social projects intended to put Christian principles into practice in everyday life. In this respect as well, the fighting at Montreal was linked to internecine warfare for control over religiously-motivated social reform work.<sup>70</sup>

It probably made little difference to the immigrants who ran their homes: there may have been more maternalism on the part of the women, and more praying on that of the men, but similar problems would probably have dictated similar solutions. Still, these militant Protestant clergymen systematically attacked and eventually dislodged (albeit temporarily) the women's group which had created, developed, nurtured and systematized the management by women of female immigration to Canada. These women, part of an Empire-wide network, saw themselves as Empire-builders and Canadian nationalists. Their sense of mission derived in part from those visions. The men, on the other hand, spoke of Montreal and invoked their national connections as a threat for bargaining gains, in the name of the Empire of the churches. In the actions and concerns of this small group can be seen some of the most interesting, if perhaps not most appealing to a modern viewer, aspects of the Anglo-Canadian version of Christian principles put into practice in social reform work.

## NOTES

1. On the struggle between the salvationists and the socially oriented factions within the Social Gospel movement (or perhaps more safely called the Christian social work movement), as it was played out in the Presbyterian Church for control over settlement house work, see Ethel Dodds Parker, "The origins and early history of the Presbyterian settlement houses," in Richard Allen, ed., *The Social Gospel in Canada* (Ottawa, Museum of Man (sic) Mercury Series, 1973).
2. See S. Buckley, "British female immigration and Imperial development: experiments in Canada, 1885-1931," *Hecate: Women's Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Jan. 1977), pp. 26-40, and B. Roberts, "A Work of Empire: Canadian reformers and British female immigration," in Linda Kealey, ed. *Women and Social Reform in Canada, 1880-1920* (Toronto: Canadian Women's Press, 1979).
3. The papers of the WNIS Home are at the Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 76, Volume 48, File 1836. Unless otherwise noted, all citations in this section or hereafter cited as WNIS papers are to that source. Clerk to Minister, 29 June, 1892.
4. Department to Society, 28 June 1895.
5. Society to Minister, 23 July 1895.
6. Minister to Society, 25 July 1895.
7. *Montreal Gazette*, 14 December 1897.
8. *Montreal Gazette*, 10 December 1901.
9. Smart to Society, 22 April 1903.  
Unfortunately, someone within the government did not carry out the procedures that were necessary to get the increased grant moneys paid out to the Society. For a period of more than a year, if the Society got the extra money, it did not get the regular money, and vice versa. The matter was not resolved until the Society appealed again to the Prime Minister. See Deputy Minister to Society, 19 April 1904, and 26 September 1904.
10. 2 January 1906.
11. Superintendent to Deputy Minister, 24 November 1911.
12. Annual Report of the Women's National Immigration Society, 1912. The Montreal Home, however, was in a better position *vis à vis* the federal grant than were other Homes across the country. It was the only one that was ever successful in overturning grant cuts, or in reversing a refusal for an increase. The increase that the women of the Montreal Home got by calling upon the Prime Minister in 1903 was passed on unasked for to the Winnipeg Home, the only other one then established. So were the problems of collection and the cutbacks. Winnipeg was never successful in restoring their full grant.
13. Gillespie to Deputy Minister, 5 March 1898.
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Montreal Gazette*, 11 December 1894.
16. Annual Report of the Department of the Interior, 1894.
17. *Montreal Gazette*, 11 December 1894.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Montreal Herald*, 24 January 1896.
20. Public Archives of Canada, RG 76, Volume 62, File 2841, hereinafter known as Andrews papers, Secretary to the Minister to agents, 24 February 1897. The Andrews Home served four times as many men as women.
21. *Ibid.*, Deputy Minister to Minister, 24 February 1897.
22. WNIS Papers, Deputy Minister to agents, 18 January 1898.
23. *Ibid.*, Society to Deputy Minister, 16 February 1898.
24. *Ibid.*, President to Deputy Minister, 5 March 1898.
25. *Montreal Town Topics*, 28 August 1897.
26. Andrews Papers, Renaud to Immigration Secretary, 7 September 1897.
27. WNIS Papers, Annual Report of the Women's National Immigration Society, 1897.
28. *Ibid.*, Deputy Minister to Assistant Secretary, 8 March 1898.
29. Andrews Papers, 8 December 1898.
30. *Ibid.*, 1901 Report of the Andrews Home.
31. The papers of Dorchester House, operated by the Protestant Directorate of Female Immigration, are in The Public Archives of Canada, RG 76, Volume 64, file 890896, hereafter cited as Dorchester papers, 11 December 1914.
32. The WNIS had from its earliest days provided a place for its "girls" to come together for tea, and various types of entertainment or other social activities, as was the practice in the women's hostels across Canada.
33. Dorchester Papers, Chisholm to Scott, 28 July 1915.
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Ibid.*, excerpt of letter from Chisholm to Scott (copied out by Department), 15 April 1914.
36. *Ibid.*, Scott to Chisholm, 28 April 1914.
37. *Ibid.*, Chisholm to Scott, 28 July 1915.
38. *Ibid.*, Scott to Minister, 3 September 1915.
39. *Ibid.*, Scott to Parker, 11 November 1915.
40. Papers of the Calgary Hostel, Public Archives of Canada, RG 76, Volume 403, file 585245. Scott to Commissioner of Immigration at Winnipeg, J. Obed Smith, 28 November 1906.
41. *Ibid.*, Scott to Minister Oliver, 2 January 1908.
42. Papers of the Winnipeg Hostel, RG 76, Volume 138, File 33136. Scott to Deputy Minister Cory, 15 May 1918.
43. Papers of the Winnipeg Hostel, Scott to Cory, 11 February 1916.
44. *Ibid.*, Cory to Scott, 14 February 1916.
45. Papers of Calgary hostel, Scott to Cory list of grants to hostels, 16 November 1916.
46. In 1914, for example, the WNIS showed a total of only 310 immigrants passing through its doors, 215 of whom went on west. In that same year, Calgary had only 20 immigrants, while Winnipeg, the major distribution centre for the West, received 401. The grants for the three were \$2,000, \$500, and \$750, respectively, in that year. The comparison is not quite as simple as it would appear. The financial structures of the institutions were quite different. For instance, Winnipeg owned its own large home: Montreal rented. Winnipeg earned the bulk of its income from boarders' fees paid by women travellers, whom its large house allowed it to accommodate while it also received immigrants. Montreal's boarders' fees were insignificant compared to its costs; the bulk of the WNIS income came from the federal grants.

- See Dorchester Papers, Scott to Mitchell, 11 November 1915;  
 Calgary papers, Annual Report for 1915;  
 Winnipeg papers, Annual Report for 1914;  
 Dorchester papers, Scott to Meredith, 11 November 1915;  
 Calgary papers, 1915 Annual Report; and  
 Winnipeg papers, 1914 Annual Report.
47. Dorchester papers, Scott to Mitchell, 11 November 1915.
  48. *Ibid.*
  49. *Ibid.*, Scott to Deputy Minister, 9 November 1916.
  50. *Ibid.*
  51. *Ibid.*, Scott to Chisholm, 24 January 1916.
  52. Dorchester papers, Chisholm to Minister of Immigration, 24 April 1918.
  53. *Montreal Gazette*, 27 April 1916.
  54. Dorchester papers, for example, Scott to Chisholm, 24 January 1916, 8 January 1917, 17 January 1917.
  55. *Ibid.*, Annual Report, 1917; see also Chisholm to Minister, 24 April 1918, and Scott to Ireland, 24 April 1918.
  56. *Ibid.*, Chisholm to Scott, 28 July 1918.
  57. *Ibid.*, Chisholm to Secretary to the Minister, 24 April 1918.
  58. *Ibid.*, Chisholm to Deputy Minister, 17 March 1919.
  59. *Ibid.*
  60. For a discussion of the Council, see Buckley, *op. cit.* and Roberts, *op. cit.*
  62. Dorchester file, Scott to Minister, 8 October 1919.
  63. *Ibid.*, Mrs. Kneil to Lady Falconer, 20 October 1919.
  64. *Ibid.*, Chisholm to Deputy Minister, 17 March 1919.
  65. *Ibid.*, Jean Robson to Ireland, 21 October 1919.
  66. Annual Report of the Department of the Interior, 1897.
  67. *The Young Woman of Canada*, Vol. XIII, No. 10 (December 1914), p. 245.
  68. Bruce Walker, "Immigration," *ibid.*, Vol. XIII, No. 1 (January 1914), p. 55.
  69. The standard work is Richard Allen's *The Social Passion* (Toronto, 1971).
  70. *Ibid.*, see especially p. 248.