

IMMIGRANT DOMESTIC SERVANTS IN CANADA



Marilyn Barber

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MARILYN BARBER

Department of History
Carleton University

TABLE I
FEMALE DOMESTIC SERVANT ARRIVALS AT OCEAN PORTS
Total No. (and %)

Total	1904-14	117,568;	1919-30	123,982;	1951-61	82,937		
	TOTAL	ENGLISH	SCOTTISH	UNITED KINGDOM		WELSH		
				IRISH				
1904-14	90,028 (76.6)	54,396	25,692	8,983		957		
1919-30	74,427 (60.0)	27,556	22,909	9,985		970		
1951-61	7,479 (6.0)	3,363	2,840	1,163		113		
	TOTAL	SWEDISH	NORWEGIAN	WESTERN EUROPE		FINNISH	OTHERS	
				DANISH				
1904-14	8,094 (6.9)	1,907	1,613	429		2,094	2,051	
1919-30	14,179 (11.4)	1,779	1,744	1,483		7,086	1,562	
1951-61	10,487 (12.6)	161	423	991		1,150	7,762	
	TOTAL	GERMAN	AUSTRIAN	CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE		UKRAINIAN	POLISH	OTHERS
				HUNGARIAN				
1904-14	15,387 (13.1)	1,342	1,108	442		← 8,047 →	4,448	
1919-30	30,814 (24.9)	5,271	120	1,131		5,249	8,294	10,803
1951-61	35,116 (42.3)	24,840	2,028	2,239		289	1,423	4,297
	TOTAL	ITALIAN	GREEK	SOUTHERN EUROPE		SPANISH	OTHER	
1904-14	1,110 (.9)	1,029	62	16			3	
1919-30	1,989 (1.6)	1,448	497	9			35	
1951-61	27,160 (32.7)	18,402	7,642	410			706	

Compiled from *Annual Reports*, Department of the Interior, 1904-14; Department of Immigration and Colonization, 1919-30; Department of Citizenship and Immigration, 1951-61.

The statistics are by nationality for the years 1904-14, 1919-26 and by ethnic group for the years 1927-30, 1951-61.

No breakdown is available for the 13,007 British domestics who arrived in the years 1925-26 so the totals for English, Scottish, Irish and Welsh in the years 1919-30 are not complete.

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I — IMMIGRANT SERVANTS BEFORE 1870

From the settlement of New France to the present, the demand for domestic servants has brought young single female immigrants to Canada. Indeed, domestic service provided the main possibility of paid employment for women in Canada until the 20th century. By that time domestic service had become overwhelmingly a female occupation. As many as one third of colonial servants in the 1820s were male, but by the late 19th century over 90 per cent of Canadian servants were female. Frequently female domestics were immigrants, and the changing ethnicity of domestics from the 19th century to the present parallels broad changes in the pattern of immigration to Canada, even though women's acceptance of domestic employment varied considerably by ethnicity. The constant scarcity of servants in Canada facilitated female immigration, but, especially in the 20th century, channelled many immigrant women into a low status occupation shunned by Canadians.

In a country peopled by immigrants, inevitably many domestic servants were immigrants. Some servants had no choice in the move to Canada. Black slaves, both male and female, were brought by their owners, and most female slaves were employed as household servants. Unfortunately, little information exists regarding their lives and conditions of service. The gradual elimination of slavery throughout British North America in the 1790s and early 1800s ended this most servile form of household work. In the decades after the American Revolution, blacks seeking sanctuary and the children of former slaves still encountered racial discrimination which restricted many to employment such as domestic service. However, the much greater influx of white immigrants after 1820 meant that domestic service in 19th century Canada never became closely associated with black women.

In New France, domestic service sometimes was performed by indentured servants from France. Colonial administrators and merchants contracted maid servants to work in their homes, advancing the necessary money for clothing, food and passage. For these *engagées*, service in New France virtually guaranteed the possibility of marriage. Especially in the 17th century when women were scarce in New France, the administration encouraged early marriages and girls sometimes married as young as twelve and thirteen. Most *engagées* delayed marriage until the end of their bond, usually three to five years, and so generally married in their early twenties. Because of the need for population and the high priority accorded to marriage by the state, some *engagées* even were allowed to break their contract in order to marry.

Conditions in colonial British North America also enabled servants to be more independent of their mistresses than in Britain. In a country where labour was scarce, servants, like other members of the population, were very mobile and did not feel constrained to show deference. British gentlefolk, who often brought a household servant with them to British North America, frequently complained about the changed behaviour which challenged the hierarchical class structure that they wished to maintain. In *Roughing It in the Bush*, Susanna Moodie advised that “of all follies, that of taking out servants from the old country is one of the greatest and is sure to end in the loss of the money expended in their passage and to become the cause of deep disappointment and mortification to yourself”. In her experience, servants landing on Canadian shores immediately became imbued with a republican spirit, demanded to be treated as equals, and left without notice if not satisfied. Similarly, Sarah Harris who brought her maid, Jane, to Prince Edward Island in 1857 lamented that Jane was imbibing the disrespect and selfish expectations of servants in Charlottetown who were as independent as Yankee helps. Although Jane remained with the family for two years after emigrating, in her mistress’s opinion her departure showed a lack of gratitude.

The young immigrant women who took domestic employment in the early 19th century often came to Canada as family members rather than as servants. The need for additional cash income, or the expense of raising a child, forced poorer families to send daughters out to work. Sometimes even quite young children were either informally placed with a neighbour or formally apprenticed to give assistance in return for board, clothing, and some instruction. While apprenticeships were generally long-term, hired girls worked mainly for short periods, leaving when required by their families. Rural daughters helped families who did not have older girls from a sense of neighbourliness in times of need as well as from economic motivations. While not considered a member of the family for whom they worked, hired girls demanded treatment in accord with their status as a member of another family of independent worth. In British North America, as in the United States, their sense of status was reflected in their denial of the title ‘servant’ and their insistence on being called ‘girls’ or ‘help’.

The demand for women’s labour encouraged female immigration from the British Isles. In 1854 in the *Canadian Settler’s Guide*, the first emigration manual addressed specifically to women, Catherine Parr Traill extolled Canada as a field for younger working females. Significantly, she offered young women the inducement not only of ready employment at good wages but also of “marriage with young men who are able to place their wives in a very different station from that of servitude”. Catherine Parr Traill primarily advocated the emigration of families with a large number of daughters, but the same incentives already were bringing women on their own, often as part of a family emigration strategy. Occasionally wives preceded their husbands. For example, the Langtons at Sturgeon Lake employed the sister of an acquaintance, hard-working but without experience as a servant, whose husband had agreed to follow her to

Canada if she found conditions satisfactory. Usually, however, the women who used domestic service to seek better opportunities in Canada were single, travelling with sisters or friends. After 1830, they were also predominantly Irish.

The movement of people out of Ireland was the most momentous shift of population in the first half of the 19th century. While the 1820s emigration included many artisans and small farmers with sufficient means to take their families, single women and men between the ages of 15 and 40 constituted a larger proportion of the mass movement of the 1830s and 1840s. The shift to single adults capable of supporting themselves indicates the poverty of emigrants in the latter decades. By 1845 women formed almost half the total of Irish emigrants and after the famine they were frequently in the majority, although there seems to have been a higher proportion of single women going to the United States than to Canada. The prominence of women among Irish emigrants is a striking contrast to other 19th century emigration movements dominated by men.

Young single women, at least in some districts of Ireland, were reported to be more eager to emigrate than the men. There were few opportunities for paid employment for women in Ireland and marriage had become elusive because of lack of land and resources for dowry. On the other hand, women were more certain than men to obtain employment in North America because the need for domestic servants never ceased whereas the demand for male labourers fluctuated considerably. Therefore, a family would pool resources to send a daughter to America in the expectation that remittances from her wages would pay for the passage of other members or aid the family in Ireland. Examples recorded by government officials illustrate the chain migration process. After being in service in Fredericton in the 1830s, a young woman brought out her widowed mother, brothers and sisters. With her family came a neighbour who obtained service and the next year sent for her sister. The two sisters in service saved to bring out their two brothers and the four together then sent for their widowed mother and a sister in weak health. Similarly, two sisters from Iniskillen obtained an advance for their passage on security of repayment. Working for families in Restigouche and then Fredericton, they remitted £25 to bring out their parents and eight brothers. In addition to the independent migrants, parties of domestics from Irish workhouses, often totalling more than 100 in a group, were sent to Canada beginning in the 1850s and placed in positions by Canadian immigration agents. An 1849 amendment to the Irish Poor Law enabled Boards of Guardians to spend money on emigration. Since most workhouse inmates were women, the assisted emigration was overwhelmingly female.

Because of the nature of their employment, Irish women went to urban centres in larger numbers than did Irish men, thereby contributing to the rising population of women in Canadian cities. By 1851, the five largest cities had equal numbers of men and women; thereafter women outnumbered men. Michael Katz noted that in 1861 Hamilton, the sexual imbalance was more pronounced for the Irish

than for any other ethnic group. Not surprisingly, Irish, and especially Irish Catholic, women were also more often servants. Indeed, Katz concluded that almost every Irish Catholic woman in Hamilton spent part of her life as a resident servant. Similarly, in 1861 Fredericton, most servant-girls either came from Ireland or had parents born in Ireland. Claudette Lacelle, using the 1871 manuscript census, has shown that Irish women also dominated domestic service in Toronto, Halifax and Montreal. Among the larger centres, only in Quebec City, where most servants were French Canadians, did the Irish not occupy first place. Hence, domestic service in 19th century Canada became identified with Irish women.

In cartoons and literature, a stereotype of the Irish domestic emerged, undoubtedly influencing the general perception of domestic service as an occupation. The Irish immigrant servant without previous experience was handicapped by the poverty of her background. She was portrayed as personally untidy, careless, inept, ignorant and lacking common sense. At the same time, she was praised as chaste, moral, warm-hearted and faithful. Although more of the negative qualities may have been attributed to the Catholic rather than the Protestant Irish, the cultural distinctions were not clearly drawn. Generally Biddy fared better than Paddy, escaping the stigma of violent, drunken degradedness, with the exception of some of the workhouse domestics who, it was feared, lacked morals and would become 'depraved'. An 1865 Limerick party arriving in Montreal aroused an outcry because of their reportedly drunk, disorderly and immoral conduct. Nevertheless, authorities tended to blame problems on pauperism and the women's lack of preparation rather than any inherent Irish tendency to disorderly conduct. Despite the mockery and scorn, Irish women continued to take positions as domestics and employers continued to hire them. While the images conveyed a mixed message, at least from the employers' point of view, in many cases they likely also served to increase the distrust on both sides.

American historians have argued that Irish women willingly entered domestic service because, in comparison to unemployment, it represented upward mobility and because sexual divisions in Ireland had prepared them for a life separate from men. Whether the Irish who hoped to better themselves through domestic service in Canada were satisfied with their progress has not been investigated, although there is evidence that some were disappointed in wages or lonely in their isolated work, missing female friends in Ireland. Elizabeth Boardman in Port Hope, whose letters to her family in Armagh have survived, was one whose wages did not live up to her expectations and who felt that she could make more money in the United States. The United States had considerable attraction for young women working as domestics, but the number of Irish domestics who actually crossed the border in search of higher wages is not known.

TABLE II
DISTRIBUTION OF FEMALE IMMIGRANT
DOMESTIC SERVANTS
 Total No. (and %)

	ATLANTIC PROVINCES	QUEBEC	ONTARIO	PRAIRIES	BRITISH COLUMBIA
1911	1,468 (5.0)	4,083 (14.0)	11,645 (39.9)	9,438 (32.4)	2,530 (8.7)
1921	1,194 (4.7)	3,750 (14.9)	9,923 (39.4)	8,119 (32.3)	2,182 (8.7)
1931	1,334 (3.3)	6,750 (16.6)	17,300 (42.4)	11,782 (28.9)	3,597 (8.8)
1941	1,084 (5.9)	2,925 (15.9)	7,600 (41.2)	4,774 (25.9)	2,045 (11.1)

The published census after 1941 does not provide sufficiently detailed occupational categories by birthplace for the provinces to differentiate domestic servants from other personal service workers.

TABLE III
FEMALE DOMESTIC SERVANTS BY BIRTHPLACE

	Female Domestic	Immigrant Female Domestic	Immigrant Domestic as per cent of domestic servants
1911	79,609	29,164	36.6
1921	78,118	25,168	32.2
1931	134,043	40,763	30.4
1941	148,999	18,428	12.4
1951	88,775	19,545	22.0
1961	120,392	32,290	26.8
1971	76,555	14,035	18.3
1981	72,010	14,325	19.9

Comparability is difficult because different occupations are included depending on census year, and certain years include service workers outside the home:

- 1911-31 - domestic servants, not elsewhere classified
- 1941-51 - hotel, cafe, and private household workers, not elsewhere classified
- 1961 - maids and related service workers, not elsewhere classified
- 1971 - babysitters and personal service, not elsewhere classified
- 1981 - child care workers and housekeepers, servants and related occupations

II — RECRUITMENT AND REFORM, 1870-1914

As domestic service reached its peak in the late Victorian era, the demand for servants continued to exceed the supply. The burgeoning middle classes in cities and towns were the main employers of servants, but the more successful farmers in all regions of the country also wanted female help. Women needed assistance with the physical burden of child rearing and household work and, on farms, a female servant often helped with outdoor chores and the dairy. The employment of at least one servant also became increasingly important as a symbol of middle class status. The servant, like the ornately furnished parlour which she had to dust and polish, displayed the social standing of the family. She enabled her mistress to manage the social obligations and conspicuous consumption of the Victorian household. With the growth of women's organizations in the late 19th century, middle class women could extend their activities to include social reform because they had servants to do the work at home.

Because servants were scarce, immigrant women readily obtained employment in Canadian homes. Although more Canadian women began working away from home before marriage, those who had a choice usually preferred the expanding opportunities in factories, offices and shops. The greater independence of the new industrial and commercial work made the restrictions of live-in domestic service seem more onerous, although the wages were comparable. Young women also objected to the deference demanded of the servant who must 'know her place' and to the social rejection by peers which frequently followed. Hence, service in middle class urban homes was left primarily to migrants — young women from rural districts and immigrant women — to whom it offered the advantage of accommodation as well as immediate employment.

The proportion of immigrant to native-born in domestic service varied greatly by region. By 1911, over one third of female domestics in Ontario and three quarters of those in western Canada were immigrants. By contrast, only 20 per cent of Quebec servants were immigrants, most of them concentrated in Montreal, while in the Maritimes immigrants accounted for only 12 per cent of domestics. The greatest concentration of immigrant household workers occurred in areas attracting general immigration, the central Canadian cities and the western prairies. In the larger cities, employers offered higher wages, and the possibility of leaving service for other types of work was better. Hence, in Ontario in 1911, half of the domestics in cities with a population over 15,000 were immigrants whereas only 30 per cent of the other domestics in the province were born outside the country. To high wages, the 'Last Best West' also added the promise of greater equality and the allure of a high ratio of single men seeking wives.

Between Confederation and World War I, most immigrant domestics continued to come from the British Isles. In the decade from 1904 to 1914 for which detailed statistics are available, over three quarters of female domestics arriving from overseas were of British origin — and the proportion of British women

among immigrant domestics was higher than the British component of the immigration movement as a whole. Nonetheless, the composition of the British group had changed significantly from the mid 19th century: 60 per cent of British domestics came from England, with 29 per cent from Scotland and only 10 per cent from Ireland. By 1914, the Irish 'Bridget' so typical of the 1870s had almost vanished. With the depopulation of Ireland after the famine, Irish immigration declined dramatically and the majority of Irish emigrants went to the United States, while low wages and the barriers of an entrenched class system created a strong interest in emigration to the Dominions among members of the English and Scottish working class. In contrast to the earlier Irish emigration, men and families dominated the overseas migration movement from England and Scotland. Single women more often moved within England and Scotland to obtain work, since, especially in the early phases of industrialization, there was a strong demand for cheap female labour in factories and service. Also fewer women than men could afford the cost of emigration. Young women earned less than their brothers, yet daughters usually contributed more to parents than did sons. Nevertheless, working women who wanted to better themselves or to aid their families listened eagerly to the widespread reports of higher wages and more opportunities in Canada, "the land flowing with milk and honey". Typically, one Scottish domestic heard that "when you go to Canada you'll be picking up money in your apron". Kin in Canada who provided financial and emotional support continued to be very important in enabling women to emigrate, but, beginning in the late 19th century, governments, business and voluntary societies also offered assistance to promote female emigration from the British Isles. Some Canadian businesses recruited British women, but domestic service remained the main bridge to Canada for women with limited funds. By agreeing to work as a domestic, young women who knew no one in Canada could seek a better future over 3,000 miles from home. Various schemes for advancing passage fare and guaranteeing employment attracted both those already in domestic service and factory or shop workers who would not consider domestic employment in Britain but were willing to work for a short time in Canadian homes in order to emigrate.

Because British domestics were considered very desirable immigrants, the Canadian government directly and indirectly financed recruiting efforts. From the government's point of view, British domestics satisfied the demands of employers, often influential people who could exert considerable political pressure, and also made ideal wives, filling an especially important need in the west where lonely bachelor homesteaders tended to desert the land. In addition, there was no opposition to the immigration of domestic servants. Not only was the demand much greater than the supply but Canadian domestics were not organized to protest that large-scale immigration might lower their wages. Hence, the government recruited domestics through a network of immigration and steamship agents. From 1872 to 1888, during the operation of the passenger warrant system, female domestics along with agricultural families received the

lowest, most highly subsidized, fares. After 1888, because of the general opposition to assisted immigration, even female domestics no longer benefited from lower fares. Instead, the government began to give bonuses to agents for female domestics directed to Canada. To get the bonus, agents often arranged for a domestic to receive an advanced fare from a Canadian employer to be repaid from Canadian wages. As a result, many British domestics obtained the needed assistance to emigrate but arrived in Canada burdened by debt and constrained by an obligation to a particular employer. The impediment to changing employers along with the heavy drain on wages created by the loan repayment made the initial period of adjustment much more difficult.

While many British domestics were attracted by ads placed in local newspapers by agents, others sought the protection of group parties sponsored by women's associations or religious organizations. In an era of female reform activity, British and Canadian women cooperated in the promotion and supervision of female emigration. The British Women's Emigration Association [BWEA], formed in 1884 and soon the largest of the women's emigration societies, sent most of its approximately 16,000 female emigrants to Canada, directing most working class emigrants to domestic service. The women travelled in escorted parties to Canadian reception homes where they obtained their positions. After women of the social elite established the first homes in Montreal in 1882 and Winnipeg in 1897, Local Councils of Women, with the aid of government grants, began other Homes of Welcome for domestics in Toronto (1905), Calgary (1906), Halifax (1909), and Regina (1910). In Vancouver, the YWCA made special provision for the accommodation of immigrant domestics as did Ys in other centres such as Ottawa, London, and Saskatoon. Although the women's associations sought to assist female immigrants, class differences separated the concerns of the reformers from the interests of the women who used the services. The women's societies wanted to rectify the imbalance of the sexes in the emigration movement because they believed the civilizing influence of British women to be vital in building the Canadian nation and the British Empire. Immigrant women who had to earn their living were more concerned with the conditions of work than with middle class domestic ideology. Although most married in Canada, marriage was not usually the main reason for crossing the Atlantic. Women immigrating as domestics generally welcomed the security of a group party which spared them the difficulties of coping with transportation connections or of arriving in a strange city, often late at night, with little money and no place to stay. At the same time, the self-interest of their sponsors, who were also employers of domestics, limited the freedom of the immigrants and shaped the kind of assistance provided. Ladies of the BWEA, who did not want to lose their domestic servants, refused loans to experienced domestics unless they had been supporting their parents. The group parties and reception homes segregated domestics from other immigrants so they would not acquire notions about better opportunities in other kinds of work. The homes helped domestics in ways which did not interfere with employers' interests. They gave isolated domestics a

place to meet on their days off and assistance in times of illness or other crises, but they did not investigate working conditions or rates of pay.

British gentlewomen also found employment in Canadian homes through the women's societies, not as domestic servants but as 'home helps'. These 'distressed gentlewomen' had been labelled 'surplus' or 'redundant' in Britain because they could neither marry nor find suitable employment, whereas in Canada they were promised a choice between useful paid work or marriage. Although a few gentlewomen became companions or nursery governesses, status in the household more than any difference in the work performed differentiated a home help from a domestic servant. She had to be employed by a family of her own social class so that she would not suffer loss of status by associating with those less cultured than herself and she expected to be treated as a member of the family. Although the concept of home help appealed to their benefactors more than it did to gentlewomen who had to earn their living, some gentlewomen were willing to become a home help in Canada even though they would not contemplate such an occupation in Britain. Almost all were directed to British Columbia where British gentefolk settlers seemed to offer the only suitable positions. The ladies of the BWEA empathized with the plight of distressed gentlewomen and expended special effort to assist them. Because the upbringing of British gentlewomen seldom gave them much direct experience of housework, the BWEA began the Colonial Training Home for emigrant gentlewomen in 1890. On the Canadian side, Mary Agnes Fitzgibbon, an ardent imperialist and step-daughter of D'Alton McCarthy, founded Queen Mary's Coronation Hostel for Gentlewomen born in the United Kingdom seeking work in British Columbia. Begun in Vancouver in 1912, the hostel offered a three month course in household work and continued to receive British emigrants in the inter-war period. In the years just before the war, the new educated woman began to replace the distressed gentlewoman more typical of the 19th century. Some of these women with secondary education, whose numbers grew in the 1920s, accepted positions as home helps in Canada, usually in the hope of obtaining secretarial or professional work once they had gained more knowledge of the country. Nevertheless, the number of home helps emigrating to Canada remained small in comparison to other British domestics.

The women who worked to reform female emigration believed that common gender ties made women's societies the best guardians of the welfare of female emigrants. However, the bonds of womanhood did not eliminate class divisions and many working class women chose to emigrate instead with the Salvation Army which they felt more closely shared their class interests. The Salvation Army took great pride in claiming to be "the largest emigration agency in the world". From the formation of its emigration department in 1903 until the Great War, the Army brought approximately 15,000 single women to Canada, the majority as domestic servants. Thus the number of domestics who came in Army parties almost equalled those sponsored by women's societies. Working class women were attracted to the Army's emigration department by its reputation for

caring about people. Because of the Army's commitment to rescue work in both Britain and Canada, some Canadian critics feared that the Army was sending young women to Canada direct from maternity and rescue homes. The Army vigorously refuted the charge, and its denial is for the most part substantiated by steamship agents who bitterly complained that the Army was unfair competition. Single women from a variety of occupational and religious backgrounds, only a small minority of them Salvationists, chose to emigrate with the Army.

Although Army leaders did not have the same self-interest in obtaining domestics as did Canadian women's societies, the Army actively guided most of its single female immigrants to domestic service rather than assisting them with a wider choice of occupation. Financial, political and ideological considerations shaped the policy. The Army needed government funding to extend its work and domestics were the immigrants for which Canadian governments would pay. Beginning in 1910, the Army obtained a special grant from the federal government, and additional provincial grants, to aid in the immigration of female domestics and the operation of domestic hostels at Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver. The Army chose to concentrate even more on immigrant domestics because they seemed exempt from the increasing public opposition to assisted immigration. In addition, the Army's own domestic ideology reinforced the external pressures. While the Army stressed redemption more than the respectability so central to the concerns of women's societies, Army officers embraced wholeheartedly what has been described as the ideology of 'evangelical domesticity', making home and woman the primary vehicles of redemptive power. Therefore, women who agreed to enter domestic service received passage loans and guaranteed placement through one of the Army's domestic lodges. The Army promised advice with problems and a helping hand, but the implementation of these promises varied at the local level. While some emigrants seemed very pleased with their treatment, other disillusioned domestics thought that the Army was more interested in the repayment of the loan than it was in their circumstances.

Although the British women who came as domestics in the hope of bettering themselves usually were over the age of sixteen and had some choice in making the decision to emigrate, girls under fourteen were apprenticed as domestics in Canadian homes by British child emigration agencies. These Home children had no control over their fate. Between 1868 and 1924, when the movement ended, 80,000 British children, about one third of them girls, worked in indentured situations. Some came from English workhouses, but most were sent by English and Scottish philanthropic institutions, the best known being Dr. Barnardo's Homes. The 'little immigrants' belonged to the urban labouring poor of large British cities. Only one third were orphans; most were surrendered to the agencies by families unable to provide for them. The British child-savers used emigration to remove the children from conditions which they considered undesirable. With an idealistic vision of rural life, they believed that Canadian farms provided a healthy family environment for growing children whom they placed mainly in the older agricultural regions of Ontario and Quebec. The demand for a Home

girl was great. Farmers and village employers, who could not obtain or afford an adult domestic, welcomed a girl who could do much of the same work at less cost. The contract included the right to schooling but a Home girl's education often suffered because of her household responsibilities and her frequent moves. Home girls did gain early knowledge of Canadian ways, but at the expense of considerable emotional hardship. The apprenticeship period definitely did not instill a liking for domestic service. As Joy Parr has shown, when they completed their indentures, Home girls sought the greater freedom of non-domestic work in one of the larger cities.

British domestics, child or adult, had the advantage of being able to speak English. As the immigration movement included more immigrants from continental Europe in the late 19th century, non-English-speaking women also took domestic work, especially in western Canada. Some married couples obtained positions on farms with the wife working in the house, but more often the domestic workers were daughters of families settling on the prairie. Although the language barrier was a handicap in working for English-speaking employers, they readily obtained employment because of the scarcity of help, and their labour procured cash badly needed by their families. Icelanders in the 1870s and 1880s as well as some Swedish, Norwegian and Danish women took employment in homes before the war, but the largest number of non-English-speaking domestics were drawn from the new eastern European immigrants. Young women of Ukrainian, Polish, Hungarian, Roumanian and Russian origins helped to fill the demand for assistance on the farms and in the town homes of western Canada. Most came from a peasant background and had worked at home, assisting with housework, child care and the outdoor work on small plots of land. In Canada, they had to help support families that had spent most of their resources on emigration. An interpreter for the Immigration Branch met colonist trains and drew off girls for domestic service. Others worked for neighbours or took positions arranged by parents through an intermediary in the ethnic community. For example, in 1897 Anna Farion came to the Dauphin district of Manitoba from Galicia with her family at age 17. Her father learned from a Hungarian shoemaker in Neepawa that there was a demand for working girls in town. Anna agreed to work and later learned that her mistress had paid the shoemaker \$5 for her. Like Anna, many eastern European domestics had to work very long hours for low wages, sometimes assisting in the fields too. As most worked for English-speaking employers, they did acquire some knowledge of English and also of Canadian methods of housework. The Commissioner of Immigration at Winnipeg reported that "Galician girls are proving to be a useful class as domestics, being quick in perception and easily controlled".

Eastern European domestics were concentrated in the prairie provinces before the war, but Scandinavian domestics also worked in other parts of Canada. Some came from farm backgrounds; others came from cities where they had found domestic or industrial employment. Swedish domestics quickly became popular with Canadian employers and special efforts were made to recruit them.

The women's immigration society in Montreal was unable to persuade Swedish ladies to encourage their domestics to emigrate, but an agent in the eastern townships did bring small parties in the decade before the war. If necessary, employers advanced the passage fare which was repaid from Canadian wages. A 1907 article in the *Canadian Magazine*, "Swede Girls for Canadian Homes", described the Swedish domestics as possessing a quick temper but otherwise good-hearted and polite, a pleasant contrast to the "somewhat brusque and independent manners of our own domestics".

The open door policy for domestics did not include West Indian or Asian women. The racism characteristic of the period made women of colour unacceptable to the government, although not to employers. In 1911, Quebec residents arranged for two parties of French-speaking domestics from Guadeloupe to be placed in Montreal and other Quebec centres. French-speaking employers, surveyed by the government, claimed to find the women a little slow but clean, polite, obedient, docile and moral, definitely preferable to the scarce, exacting Canadian domestics who, one employer complained, wanted themselves to be mistress of the house. In spite of this positive, if ethnocentric, response, the federal government moved quickly to restrict the entry of West Indian domestics. Most of the next party were rejected for physical and moral reasons. The government used the charge of immorality to exclude the Guadeloupe domestics because of the belief that non-white immigrants could never be assimilated. Chinese women were even more directly barred from entry. The head tax levied against Chinese immigrants after 1886 virtually eliminated female immigration. While Chinese men worked in British Columbia homes, almost the only female Chinese servants were the 'slave girls', bought from impoverished parents in China and brought to Canada by Chinese merchants for whom they worked without pay.

III — THE INTER-WAR PERIOD

In the inter-war period, women's magazines and the electrical industry popularized the image of the self-sufficient housewife who used labour-saving devices. The cheaper, more reliable, electrical appliances of the inter-war period did reduce housework drudgery but they did not cook the meals, clean the house, or mind the children on their own. Nor were they available to the majority of rural homes which still lacked electricity and indoor plumbing. When possible, middle-class women continued to hire servants and the decline in the proportion of households with servants in the 1920s resulted more from the scarcity of workers than from the lack of demand for their services. When the depression limited working women's options, the employment of servants rose. The records do not reveal the proportion of live-out domestics but the use of daily help who lived out increased in the inter-war period because of smaller houses as well as workers' objections to live-in service. Although the demand for immigrant domestics to fill live-in positions continued unabated in the 1920s, some changes

did occur in the composition and distribution of this sector of the work force. The proportion of British women among immigrant domestics declined to 60 per cent while the proportion coming from continental Europe increased. Within the British component of the movement, the proportion coming from England decreased. American quotas directed continental European immigrants to Canada, but more single women also joined the emigration movement as the network of friends and relatives in Canada grew.

Ontario, and especially Toronto, became the preferred destination of British and many Scandinavian domestics in the 1920s. Group parties of eastern European domestics brought by the railways were placed in the prairie provinces, but some of them also moved to Ontario after a short time. The pre-war pattern of moving west from Ontario to seek better opportunities thus was reversed in the 1920s. Ontario was the only province in which the percentage of domestics born outside the country increased, even though minimally, in the 1920s. The Maritimes, with economic problems and lower wage rates, could not compete successfully for immigrant domestics and French-speaking Quebec, outside Montreal, held little attraction. The West still had the highest percentage of immigrant domestics of any region but the ratio of immigrant to native-born declined considerably from 1911 to 1931. The change paralleled the general reduction in the proportion of the population born outside the country. Daughters born in Canada to immigrant families now joined newly arrived immigrants in domestic service.

Contrary to initial expectations, fewer British women were willing to come to Canada as houseworkers after World War I. British women who had left domestic work for war work were not eager to return to service. Because of the scarcity of servants in Britain, wages and benefits improved, making household work in Canada less attractive even for those in service. As a result, the new Women's Division of the Canadian Department of Immigration, which replaced the voluntary workers and private agencies of the pre-war era, devoted most of its effort to recruiting women deemed suitable for domestic service. The Homes of Welcome became an official chain of Canadian Women's Hostels advertised as providing British domestics with rest on arrival and a social centre on days off. More importantly, the government offered passage assistance for domestics on better terms than in the pre-war period. With the introduction of the Empire Settlement Act, immigrant domestics from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland could receive government loans which eliminated the obligation to a particular employer; in the later 1920s the replacement of the loan with a very low passage fare enabled British domestics to come to Canada without incurring any debt. Because the only single women to be assisted were domestics, the Empire Settlement Act channelled women into domestic service as a way of obtaining passage to Canada. From 1926 to 1930 half of the British houseworkers coming to Canada received assistance under the Empire Settlement Act. The desire for travel and adventure increasingly led some women to accept domestic employment in order to see more of the world. Such was the Southampton woman who agreed to work in Canadian homes in order to get a voyage on one

of the ocean liners that she saw in port. For others, the hope that housework in Canada would lead to better opportunities remained the primary motivation.

In contrast to the favoured British women, female immigrants from continental Europe did not receive assisted passages. Instead, they were directed to domestic service by restrictive immigration regulations. After the war, the Canadian government limited admissible classes from continental Europe to agriculturalists, female domestic servants, and the wife and children of immigrants in Canada, but in practice, the Department of Immigration divided continental Europe into the 'preferred' countries of north-western Europe and the other 'non-preferred' countries, and applied the restrictions most rigidly to the latter. Single women from central and eastern Europe therefore had to agree to be maids in order to enter Canada. Most came in the later 1920s when the two major Canadian railways pressured the Canadian government to allow more active recruiting in eastern Europe. The Railways Agreement, negotiated in 1925, authorized the CPR and CNR to bring 'bulk orders' of female domestics for placement in rural homes in the prairie provinces as well as domestics directly nominated by name to a sponsor in any province. The railways helped to generate business through local colonization boards, each representing a particular ethnic group, which persuaded their fellow countrymen to nominate a domestic. As shown by applications to the Central Women's Colonization Board of the CPR in Calgary, western employers were predominantly English-speaking and wanted domestic help that could speak some English. Only the shortage of British and Scandinavian domestics, who could obtain better wages in eastern Canada, persuaded these employers to accept a non-English speaking domestic from Poland, Roumania or Jugoslavia. They often paid the eastern European domestics a less than standard wage, but objected because they left as soon as they had received some training.

The majority of continental European domestics came from Finland and the countries of central and eastern Europe covered by the Railways Agreement. Political tension and the fear of future war increased emigration from these areas. For women as for men, America was the land of economic opportunity, but, with restrictive United States quotas, America was limited to Canada. Relatives and friends already in Canada stimulated the emigration of single women, although some left their homelands without knowing anyone in the new world. Most were willing to be maids in order to enter Canada and their lack of English, as well as government regulations, initially limited other employment options. The Finnish women were often rural migrants who had worked in the cities. Like British immigrants from similar backgrounds, they were relatively independent of family ties and responded to the challenge of overseas migration. In Canada, they went to major urban centres, especially Toronto and Montreal, where they outnumbered Finnish men who headed to the resource districts of northern Ontario and British Columbia. The women obtained employment mainly through Finnish boarding houses which also provided them with a range of social services. On the other hand, the eastern European women came from a

peasant background where family pressures were greater and employment opportunities for women outside the household very limited. Most had little education as their schooling had been truncated by the war. As in the pre-war period, most had not ventured far from their home village, helping with the crops and the milking as much as the indoor work, although there were exceptions who received a higher education and training in sewing. Some persuaded reluctant parents to agree to their emigration; others were forced to leave by parents who believed the daughter's emigration would aid the family. The high price of travel to Canada remained a major obstacle to emigration. A pre-paid ticket sent from Canada often was the solution, some generated by the railways' efforts to increase nominations. Otherwise, the daughter usually received her share of the family inheritance to pay for the trip, and a cow or other possessions would be sold to raise the money. In Canada, she often worked first for a rural prairie family, sometimes in the fields as well as the house, and then migrated to urban employment.

One group of continental European immigrants who became important as domestics in the inter-war years came to Canada as refugees rather than as economic migrants. From 1923 to 1930, over 20,000 Russian Mennonites, fleeing from persecution after the Russian revolution, were brought to Canada by an agreement between the Canadian Mennonite community, which acted as guarantor, and the CPR, which advanced passage fares. Most were placed on farms in the prairie provinces. The new arrivals came from a range of backgrounds but had lost everything they possessed, including prosperous businesses and large family estates. In order to obtain cash needed for the farms and to repay the burdensome debt to the CPR, parents sent daughters away from home to work. Girls from families who had employed servants in Russia along with those from poorer backgrounds usually worked first in neighbouring farm and village homes and then moved to Winnipeg or Saskatoon. In the city, Mennonite domestics earned higher wages and also had a better opportunity to learn the English language and Canadian ways. With the depression, some migrated to Vancouver, Toronto, or the Niagara peninsula of Ontario in search of better wages.

Mennonite parents accepted domestic work in private homes as suitable employment for their daughters, but feared for their safety in the city. As the young women moved into the city in advance of most members of the community, both the General Conference Board and the Mennonite Brethren established *Maedchenheim*, or Girls' Homes, first in Winnipeg in the 1920s, then in Saskatoon and Vancouver in the 1930s and later also in Regina and Toronto. Like the Canadian Women's Hostels for British domestics, the *Maedchenheim* offered temporary accommodation and served as social centres. They ran employment bureaus, and Mennonite house parents, with no ties to employers, intervened more directly to protect the domestics than did other hostel authorities. They tried to obtain the best positions for the girls and removed them from homes where conditions were unsatisfactory. The Homes collected payments for the CPR debt directly from the domestics, fearing that money sent to parents would

be spent on the farms. The Maedchenheim also provided spiritual guidance, reminding domestics of the importance of their Christian behaviour in the homes where they worked. Mennonite domestics soon acquired a reputation for honesty, hard work, cleanliness and a desire to please, but also in later years retained some unhappy memories of humiliation and harsh treatment from certain employers.

Because of differences in skills, background and culture, as well as individual personality, immigrant women varied in their response to domestic service in Canada. Service in English-speaking homes gave continental European immigrants the chance to learn English and to become acquainted with Canadian household appliances and food preparation. Mennonite domestics commented that homes with children were best because the children delighted in teaching them English. British domestics, too, learned Canadian ways, but since they already knew English, placed less value on domestic work as a learning opportunity. In addition, the possibility of acquiring English was constrained for some eastern European domestics who could not obtain positions in English-speaking homes and worked instead for employers of their own nationality or Jewish employers with whom they could communicate. Almost all domestics found the work physically tiring and disliked the long hours. British immigrants who had previously worked in offices, factories, shops or hotels found the restrictions particularly irksome and felt keenly the social stigma attached to domestic service. For them, domestic work represented downward mobility and they usually sought other employment as soon as possible. Some British women from domestic backgrounds even wondered in the 1920s if they had bettered themselves by coming to Canada as the cost of living was higher. By contrast, Varpu Lindstrom-Best argues that Finnish women took pride in being maids, and that within the Finnish community, where the maids constituted the majority of the single women, the work was not disdained. Indeed, the economic independence of the women, who earned wages much higher than those in Finland, became a source of respect. Mennonite women also attached importance to self-reliance but accepted domestic work more from necessity than choice.

In 1930 the recruitment of immigrant domestics ceased because of the depression, but the money to be earned in domestic service by immigrant women already in Canada gained greater importance. With the decline of alternative employment, the number of women in domestic service increased. Role reversal sometimes occurred because women could obtain household work while men were unemployed. Single immigrant women paid for social outings and also loaned money to men. Married women returned to domestic work on a daily basis and some even took live-in positions while their husbands stayed home with the children. In addition, some married couples obtained work in wealthier urban households, the man accepting a subordinate domestic position because of the lack of other work. Because of the greater competition for the less skilled jobs, the depression caused serious problems for some eastern European domestics who

arrived in the latter 1920s. They found that they could earn only very low wages, often in poor conditions, and had difficulty retaining their health and repaying their debts.

IV — POST-WAR IMMIGRATION

The demand for domestics continued to exceed the supply after World War II. Canadian housewives who had sacrificed assistance during the war emergency hoped to obtain help with the return of peace. Proposals for post-war reconstruction stressed upgrading domestic service as a central area of women's employment. As in previous years, the proposals had little practical impact. With the resumption of immigration, employers and governments again turned to European women to fill positions for live-in domestics.

The first post-war groups of houseworkers came from the displaced persons camps. Between 1947 and 1952, in response to international pressure and an unexpectedly buoyant Canadian economy, Canada admitted over 165,000 displaced persons, selected for their ability to provide needed labour in Canada. Following the successful recruitment of men for lumbering and mining contracts, government officials agreed to admit women on domestic contracts. A double moral standard, as well as the placement of domestics directly in Canadian homes, led at first to more caution in recruiting women because "to handle these women will require much more care in selection than is necessary in the case of men". However, the need to obtain domestic workers for both homes and institutions overcame the initial prejudice regarding the impact of war experiences on women's moral character.

Arthur MacNamara, Deputy Minister of Labour, showed the greatest enthusiasm for extending the labour contracts to domestics. As MacNamara personally coordinated the domestic contract program, the women became known as "Mr. Mac's DPs". As usual, the selection criteria placed a premium on youth and good health. Employers as well as government officials preferred younger women whom they believed were "quicker to pick up the language, more obedient to instructions, not as definitely set in their opinions as older women". Experience in domestic work could not be required of young women who had spent most of their adult years as refugees but alternative skills, such as higher education, could be grounds for rejection. To be accepted, the women had to sign a contract to remain in domestic employment under prevailing local conditions for one year, and officials believed that educated women were more likely to become discontented.

Neither the war nor the Nazi death camps made Canadians query the ranking of immigrants by ethnicity. Most groups consulted by MacNamara expressed a preference for northern European domestics, recommending that selection teams give priority to women from the Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Suggestions that equal numbers of Protestant and Catholic women

be recruited also favoured the Protestants who were a minority in the camps. Similarly, Jewish women were considered unsuitable because they had not traditionally worked as domestics, although MacNamara wanted to experiment with recruiting a few for the numerous Jewish employers. Unfortunately, the Department did not publish a statistical account of the domestic contract scheme which might indicate the extent to which these pressures for ethnic discrimination were followed in practice.

Between October 1947 and March 1950, Canada admitted 10,499 refugee domestic workers. Recruitment of candidates considered suitable became progressively more difficult. Even in the early stages, Canada faced competition from other countries seeking domestics, and especially from Great Britain which was reported to have skimmed the cream of the domestic workers before Canadian selection teams arrived. Because of the increasing scarcity of young single women in the camps, the selection criteria gradually became more flexible. A limited number of older women, married couples, or widows with one or two children were accepted. Some daughters who understandably had been reluctant to leave their parents in the camps were persuaded to accept domestic contracts in the hope of saving money to sponsor their parents later. Nonetheless, by 1950 the stream of domestic workers from the camps had declined to a trickle.

In order to escape from the camps and build a new life in Canada, women contracted to accept domestic work for a year. The first to come were placed in hospitals and other institutions, but the majority of later arrivals went to private homes. Efforts of Canadian women's organizations to establish some standards of skill for domestic work through a period of training failed, for MacNamara decided that it would be less costly and equally efficient for the new domestics to learn on the job. The contract did establish certain conditions of work and a standard wage. The government intended the domestics to receive the prevailing local wage, but as Canadian wages for scarce domestics rose quickly in the post-war period, the standard of \$35-\$40 per month set in the contracts soon became exploitative. Some employers raised the wage but many DP domestics suffered from low pay as well as the isolation and long hours of domestic work. Most difficult for many of the better educated women was the condescension of well-meaning employers who instructed them as though they were peasants with no knowledge of modern homes. Indeed, even MacNamara initially assumed that some recruits might react hysterically to industrial technology; his early plans included a follow-up system because "if a girl on first trial of a vacuum cleaner ran out the front door screaming 'blue murder' we should have a place to send her where the intricacies of Canadian housekeeping could be explained". Milda Danys, who interviewed Lithuanian refugees, found that most Lithuanian domestics suffered a shock to their pride and self-respect because they had not expected to be treated as though they were incapable of anything but domestic work. Most DP domestics fulfilled the terms of their contract since they wanted to make a good impression not only for themselves but also for camp friends still seeking to enter Canada. Some in exploitative situations did

rebel, usually demanding a transfer, but their individual actions made no change in the general conditions of domestic employment. DP domestics learned to depend primarily on others of their own ethnic group for understanding and assistance. For example, in spite of the political differences which often separated earlier immigrants from the DPs, Lithuanian domestics received aid in finding alternative work mainly from pre-war Lithuanian immigrants. At the end of their contract year, almost all DP domestics left domestic work for other types of employment. Domestic work provided the main route to Canada for single women in the camps — only a smaller number with particular skills were recruited for nursing or the needle trades — but the refugee women provided only a very temporary solution to the domestic problem.

By 1950, unable to meet employer demand with a very depleted pool of DP domestics, the Department of Labour sought alternative sources. As Canada began to encourage immigration for the first time in two decades, immigration officials in the United Kingdom and western Europe received instructions to recruit as many domestic servants as possible. Beginning in 1951, women who agreed to work for one year in Canadian homes qualified for an assisted passage to be repaid from Canadian wages. With the exception of Germany and, to a lesser extent, Holland, the results were disappointing. A shortage of domestics existed in Britain and western Europe where wages were as good or better than in Canada and benefits such as guaranteed paid holidays, unemployment and health insurance generally were much superior. Those who came usually were women working in offices or factories who accepted the employment as a means of entering Canada. As employment officers reported, these women left household work for other employment at the first opportunity, thus creating a constant demand for more domestics.

The largest numbers of temporary domestics throughout the 1950s were of German origin. Some were women escaping the economic problems of Germany under reconstruction; others were political emigrés who had not been accepted under the IRO sponsored refugee movement because of their German ethnicity. For these women and for Dutch women, often well educated like the DP domestics, domestic work offered a bridge to Canada. Even as post-war reconstruction for a short time brought unusual numbers of household workers from Germany and Holland, the cold war cut off emigration from eastern Europe. Hence, in expanding recruitment of domestics beyond the preferred countries of north-western Europe, Canada had to look south rather than east.

To increase the number of immigrant domestics, the Department of Labour sponsored special group movements. From 1950 to 1953, the Department employed Mabel Geldhart-Brown, a native of Scotland and a professional social worker, to recruit domestics from Great Britain, especially Scotland and Northern Ireland. The results of her mission proved that Canadians could no longer rely on Britain as a major source of domestic servants. Most of those recruited came from factory or office backgrounds and used the assisted passage to escape from

post-war British austerity. As they wrote, "austerity was getting me down", or "I can't see any future here for young people". Only the knowledge that they could leave domestic service when they completed their one year contracts induced them to accept the work. Some fulfilled their obligations cheerfully and efficiently, but others complained about conditions, changed employers frequently, or broke their contract altogether. Scottish and Irish women, who had come to maturity during the war, did not submissively accept the restrictions and dependency of many domestic positions. Canadian government officials noted the problems and began to consider previously less preferred countries as sources for immigrant domestics.

Experimental programs to recruit live-in domestics from southern European countries achieved mixed results. The Department of Labour approved a 'bulk order' for 500 Italian domestics in the fall of 1950 but abruptly terminated the scheme in April 1952 after only 357 women had arrived. Canadians reacted negatively to the 'primitive villagers' from southern Italy who, they claimed, lacked knowledge of hygiene and mechanized household equipment. For quite different reasons, Italian women were equally unenthusiastic about the scheme. The lower than standard wage (\$35 minimum per month) offered to them as inexperienced and non-preferred immigrants and the high passage fare from Italy meant they could save little money. The Italian domestics had ethnic and religious biases too. Some were most emphatic in wanting Catholic homes and objected strenuously to Jewish employers. Estranged from their employers by language and religious barriers and by prejudices on both sides, the Italian domestics demanded transfers or used Italian networks to abandon service for other jobs. Reinforcing the warning of the Italian consul that "Italian girls are a very hot-blooded group", the lack of docility dealt a final blow to the Italian domestic scheme. By contrast, Italian women claiming their intended occupation to be domestic service were the second largest group of domestics arriving in the 1950s. Although little is known about these women, it is suggested that they were mainly single northerners who were more likely to travel independently than were southern Italian women who generally came as sponsored family members. In addition, Italian women who accepted domestic work much preferred day jobs which enabled them to live with their kin.

In the later 1950s, the government again tried group domestic programs in southern Europe. A short-lived experiment in 1959-60 authorized the recruitment of 50 Spanish women but placement difficulties arose because the Spanish authorities wanted Catholic homes and Canadian employers were mainly Protestant. The Spanish experiment lasted only one year and had no major impact on the meagre trickle of domestics from Spain. More significant were the arrangements for the group movement of Greek domestics. From 1956 to 1966, the Department recruited approximately 300 Greek domestics each year and placed them near Greek communities, primarily in Toronto and Montreal. As most came from poor Greek families and had limited education, the International Committee for European Migration provided a two-month training

course in Greece including instruction in the English language and in modern household appliances. Because Canada restricted immigration from Greece in the 1950s, families sent their daughters to Canada as part of a family economic strategy. Once they became established, the daughters could sponsor other family members. In addition, the emigration of the daughters reduced the dowry burden for the family, since they could earn money for the dowry or could avoid the dowry by marrying in Canada. Thus the group scheme formed part of a larger movement of Greek domestics to Canada. In the 1950s, over 7,000 Greek domestic servants entered Canada, constituting 25 per cent of Greek immigrants.

The failure to fill the demand for domestic workers partially explains the decision to adopt the West Indian domestic scheme in 1955. However, political considerations, even more than labour force needs, led to the first breach in Canada's racially selective immigration policy, although the numbers involved initially were small. Great Britain, receiving an influx of West Indian migrants after the establishment of a severe US quota in 1952, urged Canada to assist in aiding a part of the Commonwealth with economic problems. Wanting to be a leader in the new multi-racial Commonwealth, Canada cautiously agreed to admit a limited number of much needed live-in domestics from the British West Indies. In 1955, Canada accepted an experimental group of 100 domestics from Jamaica and Barbados. To be eligible, the women had to meet requirements similar to other domestic programs; they had to be single, age 18 to 35, and in good health. West Indian authorities made the selection, except for the final medical screening which Canada controlled mainly because of continuing prejudice regarding black women. Only after officials were satisfied with the first group was the program allowed to expand. In the following years the annual quota was increased to 280 from a wider range of islands — Trinidad, Antigua, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Lucia, St. Kitts, St. Vincent — and also British Guiana, although the largest numbers continued to come from Jamaica and Barbados.

By 1965, 2,690 women had been admitted under the scheme, more than all the West Indian immigrants to Canada before 1945. The majority were placed in Toronto and Montreal, with a smaller number in Ottawa. Efforts to distribute the domestics more widely in order to satisfy demands in other centres for their services and to prevent the development of racial groupings failed because of the higher wages in Toronto and Montreal and the women's desire to be near others from the West Indies. Government officials found the West Indians to be the most satisfactory group of domestics admitted since the war because they did not cause problems and more consistently remained in service for a year or longer. These domestics understood English on arrival and, although procedures varied among the islands, many had been selected only after taking a special training course. The educational requirement for acceptance was lowered to five years because eight years was found to be too restrictive, but island governments often preferred to select women with more education when possible. For example, Jamaican officials considered education, appearance and personality in select-

ing women whom they regarded as unofficial ambassadors for island interests. By sending women of the middle and lower middle classes by island standards, they improved employment opportunities on the islands. Since women who were not career domestics were more likely to leave household work, the selection also served to ensure that Canadian demand continued. Hence, women of colour from the Caribbean also viewed domestic service as a bridge to other occupations in Canada. They continued more faithfully in household work because racism made finding another job more difficult for them than for many immigrants, but eventually most found other employment, usually semi-skilled hospital, factory or clerical work.

Although the West Indian domestic scheme met a definite labour force demand, changes in Canadian immigration policy in the 1960s included the cancellation of the program. With the new regulations which for the first time removed explicit racial discrimination, the main justification for a special program to admit West Indians disappeared. The Canadian government wanted to standardize the criteria for admission of immigrants and through the point system gave priority to skilled professional and technical workers. Because experience and training in household work were not considered significant skills, domestic workers had difficulty qualifying as independent immigrants. Even the undoubted occupational demand was no longer considered a sufficient reason for permanent admission to Canada because immigrants tended to leave domestic work as soon as possible. Conditions in domestic work were not improved to attract workers. Instead, beginning in 1973 the government used the temporary employment authorization program to provide a rotating supply of live-in domestic workers who would work for low wages. For employers and the government, the employment visa solved the problem of immigrant women leaving domestic service, but for domestics it created a prison. A woman admitted on a temporary work permit for domestic employment could remain in Canada only so long as she kept her position; not only could she not change to another sector of work but she could not change employers without permission. The system enabled unscrupulous employers to take advantage of vulnerable workers who feared deportation. West Indian domestics, who usually had to support their families at home, could not afford to lose their jobs. In addition to their economic vulnerability, women of colour also suffered from continuing racism which stereotyped them as inferior and immoral. They endured abuses ranging from the curtailment of the wages and leisure time stipulated in the contract to sexual harassment and rape.

In the years after 1973, the proportion of foreign domestics on employment visas greatly increased while landed immigrants declined. By 1980, over 90 per cent of women admitted for domestic service came on temporary employment authorizations. Initially, from 1973 to 1976, most were from the West Indies, but by 1980 women from the United Kingdom outnumbered those from the West Indies and the numbers from Asia had become almost equal to those from the Caribbean. The revival of British acceptance of domestic positions occurred

mainly because of the growing demand for specialized child-care workers by families where both parents worked outside the home. Racial differentiation existed within domestic service too. While women of colour took the lowest status jobs as maids and cleaners, more British women worked as nannies or came as student-travellers using the employment visa system to obtain temporary work in Canada. The British domestic workers had more freedom to complain so the worst exploitation continued to be suffered by Third World women.

As racial and sexual equality became politically accepted goals in the 1970s, a campaign grew to obtain a better deal for one of the least protected groups of workers. Domestic workers' organizations such as INTERCEDE (International Coalition to End Domestic's Exploitation) were formed with community support, especially from immigrant, church and women's groups. They documented abuses and mounted a successful lobbying campaign. Gradually, provincial governments improved protection for domestics by including them within labour standards legislation. In 1981, the most important federal change occurred; a policy amendment allowed domestics who had worked continuously for two years in Canada to apply for landed immigrant status from within the country. To be accepted, the domestic had to demonstrate the 'potential for self-sufficiency'. Ironically, considering official efforts to retain women in domestic work, applicants with skills in fields other than domestic work are more likely to qualify. Monitoring by INTERCEDE suggests that Caribbean domestics — often older, with several dependents, and less ability to leave domestic work — are overrepresented in the rejected category. The policy change thus restores to domestic service some of its traditional function as a bridge to other employment in Canada, but continues the devaluing of domestic work itself.

V — CONCLUSION

Women often have been portrayed as passive or adaptive in the emigration process, sharing the consequences of a move initiated by men. Yet in all periods, single women came to Canada, many as domestic servants, for reasons of individual or family betterment very similar to those motivating male immigrants. Those emigrating as domestics were young women of prime marriageable age. While some were very aware of improved chances for marriage in Canada, and others used domestic service as a way to join fiancés who had emigrated, most domestics came primarily for economic reasons.

Women's migration patterns differed from men's, even within the same ethnic group, because of sex differentiation of roles in the family and the paid labour force. Especially in the early phases of western European industrialization, women more often migrated to the cities, where there was a demand for female labour in factories and service, whereas men sought employment overseas. At a later stage, from countries such as England, Finland and Denmark, larger numbers of women joined the movement to Canada. By contrast, an unusually high proportion of Irish emigrants were single women coming as domestics

because of the lack of opportunity for women in Ireland. Patriarchal family structure often dictated the contours and timing of female emigration. In the peasant societies of eastern and southern Europe, families accepted women's emigration as domestics more readily when they had kin in Canada. On the other hand, government immigration policies, which allowed admission to domestics from restricted groups, brought West Indian and certain Greek domestics to Canada in advance of other family members.

From the 17th century, Canadians have recruited female domestics from outside the country because of the scarcity of servants, and, for much of the period, of women in Canada. Yet not all immigrant domestics have been equally welcomed. Racial and ethnic prejudices have influenced the treatment of female domestics, both in immigration policies and in work situations. Only declining numbers of the favoured domestics from Britain and north-western Europe led to the encouragement of recruiting in eastern and southern Europe. Most adversely affected by racial discrimination in immigration policy were female domestics from the Caribbean and from Asia who, with a few exceptions, were excluded until the 1950s. Similarly, although generalizations mask the personal and individual nature of domestic employment, in the 20th century British, Scandinavian, and German-speaking Mennonite domestics usually had the best chance of obtaining the positions with higher wages and more desirable working conditions. The vulnerability of many immigrant domestic workers, especially from eastern Europe and the Caribbean, is shown by the praise which they received from mistresses who valued docility in their help and found immigrants more controllable than native-born Canadians.

The sponsors of immigrant domestics consistently stressed the value of household service as a preparation for life in Canada; in reality, work in Canadian homes isolated immigrant domestics more than it integrated them into the family or the community. In contrast to single male immigrants who often worked in resource industries and lived with other immigrants in bunkhouses, the women did learn about Canadian homes, and those who did not speak English acquired at least some knowledge of the language. However, especially where class and ethnic differences accentuated the social divisions between mistress and maid, most were observers rather than participants in the life of the home. Some did develop a friendly relationship with their employers, but even those who shared aspects of family life generally found that they were expected to maintain a subservient distance in the presence of company. Often one of the most objectionable features of the work was the dehumanizing invisibility demanded of the domestic. Although most immigrant domestics worked in cities, service in private homes provided little opportunity for social contact. During their limited time off work, immigrant domestics generally associated with others of their own ethnic background. Institutions and services structured along ethnic lines enhanced this natural tendency. Domestics usually could arrange to attend church on Sunday, but many churches in major cities were established along ethnic as well as denominational lines. Government-supported

hostels brought together domestics from England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, but domestics from continental Europe were not included. The Mennonite community established equivalent hostels for Mennonite domestics while Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian domestics went to social events and dances at Scandinavian community halls. Frequently, immigrant domestics simply met with a couple of friends, went for a walk, or shopped at Eaton's. Although Finnish domestics seem not to have suffered from a lack of respect within the Finnish community, many British or West Indian domestics found that other immigrants from their homeland did not want to associate with them. Nevertheless, when possible, domestics turned to others of their own ethnic group for help with problems or aid in leaving domestic work. Those without such a support network were the most vulnerable.

The constant availability of domestic work enabled women with little formal training to emigrate to Canada and assured good workers of steady employment even in periods of recession. However, the disadvantages of domestic work relative to other employment increased in the 20th century. Before World War I, many immigrant women could save more money in domestic work where room and board was provided than in factory positions. By the 1950s, domestic wages were no longer comparable to the wages of factory and other service workers, while the lack of privacy in live-in service became progressively more objectionable to young women who wanted greater independence. Although efforts to reform and standardize domestic service began in the late 19th century, satisfactory working conditions for immigrant domestics have always depended primarily on the integrity of individual employers. Hence, while some domestics were well treated, many were exploited and paid very low wages. Not infrequently, immigrant domestics suffered sexual advances from men in the households in which they worked, and, if they became pregnant, were dismissed, thus being deprived of accommodation as well as work. Immigrant domestics changed employers frequently in order to escape ill treatment or to obtain better positions with higher wages, but their efforts at individual improvement did not affect the system as a whole. While those who had training as domestics more often remained in domestic service, increasingly in the 20th century, immigrant women believed that they had improved their lot only if they could use domestic service as a bridge to other employment in Canada. None wanted domestic service as an occupation for their daughters.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

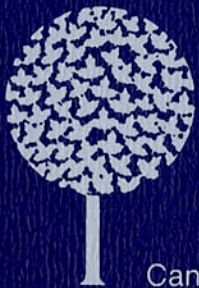
Information on immigrant domestic servants may be found in studies focusing on female immigration or on domestic work. Numerous articles deal with specific aspects of the topic, but there are few books. Isabel Foulche-Delbosc, "Women of Three Rivers: 1651-63" in *The Neglected Majority* (Toronto, 1977) shows how the high rate of marriage in New France affects domestic service. Claudette Lacelle, *Urban Domestic Servants in 19th-Century Canada* (Ottawa, 1987) examines the conditions of domestic service in the 1820s and 1870s, while Wesley Turner, "'80 Stout and Healthy Looking Girls'", *Canada: An Historical Magazine*, 3, 2 (December 1975) investigates the 1865 party of Limerick workhouse domestics which received much adverse publicity.

Most attention has been given to immigrant domestic servants in the context of industrialization, western settlement and reform between 1870 and 1930. Genevieve Leslie, "Domestic Service in Canada, 1880-1920", in *Women at Work, Ontario, 1850-1930* (Toronto, 1974) assesses the transitional period of industrialization. The recruitment of immigrant domestics and their adjustment to Canadian conditions have been examined by Marilyn Barber in a series of articles: "The Women Ontario Welcomed: Immigrant Domestics for Ontario Homes, 1870-1930", *Ontario History*, 72 (September 1980); "Sunny Ontario for British Girls, 1900-30" in *Looking into My Sister's Eyes* (Toronto, 1986); and "The Servant Problem in Manitoba, 1896-1930" in *First Days, Fighting Days* (Regina, 1987). The promotion of British female immigration is examined by Barbara Roberts "A Work of Empire: Canadian Reformers and British Female Immigration" in *A Not Unreasonable Claim* (Toronto, 1979). James Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen* (London, 1979), includes efforts to send British gentlewomen to British Columbia, while Marilyn Barber, "The Gentlewomen of Queen Mary's Coronation Hostel" in *Not Just Pin Money* (Victoria, 1984) deals with the home helps. The best analysis of the British Home children is Joy Parr, *Labouring Children* (London, 1980). A good regional study which gives attention to British philanthropic promotion of female and child emigration from North-East Scotland is Marjory Harper *Beyond the Broad Atlantic* (Aberdeen, 1988).

Female emigration from continental Europe is only beginning to be examined. The Multicultural History Society of Ontario has published most of the studies which give attention to immigrant domestics. Varpu Lindstrom-Best, *Defiant Sisters* (Toronto, 1988), shows the importance of domestic service for Finnish immigrant women, 1890-1930, as does Joan Sangster, "Finnish Women in Ontario, 1890-1930", *Polyphony*, 3, 2 (Fall 1981). Milda Danys, *DP: Lithuanian Immigration to Canada After the Second World War* (Toronto, 1986), while focusing on Lithuanians, explains the policy governing the admission of displaced persons as domestics. Franca Iacovetta investigates the unsuccessful government scheme to recruit Italian domestics in "Primitive Villagers and Uneducated Girls", *Canadian Woman Studies*, 7, 4 (Winter 1986).

Foreign domestic workers since the 1960s have received more attention from sociologists than historians. Almost all the literature deals with West Indian women. Articles include Ian Mackenzie, "Early Movements of Domestic Workers from the Caribbean and Canadian Immigration Policy", *Alternate Routes: A Journal of Critical Social Research*, and Frances Henry, "The West Indian Domestic Scheme in Canada", *Social and Economic Studies*, 17, 1 (March 1968). Louise Renaud, "A Study in the Persistence of Poor Working Conditions and Low Status: Immigrant Domestic Workers in Canada" (M.A. thesis, Carleton University, 1984), focuses on temporary domestic workers from 1973 to 1981. Makeda Silvera, *Silenced* (Toronto, 1983) provides personal accounts of ten West Indian domestics.

American literature useful for comparison and for theoretical approaches includes: Hasia Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America* (Baltimore, 1983), on Irish immigrant women in the 19th century; Faye Dudden, *Serving Women* (Middletown, 1983), on household service in 19th century America; David Katzman, *Seven Days a Week* (New York, 1978), on domestic service in industrializing America, 1870-1920.



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