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Hamilton Workers in the Great Depression

W. Peter Archibald

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Article abstract

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W. Peter Archibald

Abstract

Contrary to most accounts of Canadian workers' responses to the Great Depression of the 1930s, this article portrays the majority of Hamilton workers as neither severely distressed nor especially prone to dissent. Much of the relative absence of dissent can be attributed to workers' powerlessness in very poor market conditions. but workers' quiescence should not be seen simply as a temporary, class-conscious strategy. Rather, many, perhaps most, workers either regarded dissent as illegitimate to begin with, or/and lowered their aspirations for secure and self-controlled work in the prevailing labour market and other conditions. In other words, they became psychically "alienated". These findings have important implications for most theorizing on these issues, which implicitly employs a "frustration-aggression" model; for popular conceptions of workers as highly class-conscious and epically heroic; and for organizing workers during most economic crises.

Like popular perceptions, most current academic analysis of the Great Depression of the 1930s has been based upon the following assumptions. First, these were times of great deprivation and distress for North American workers; that is, they were "hungry", "lean", "hard" and "dirty".[1] Second, there was much labour militancy and political protest, or dissent; hence the epithets "bitter", "turbulent times" and "decades of discord".[2] Third, distress was one of the most important, if not the most important, sources of dissent. Thus strikes, industrial unionism and new, left-wing political parties were more or less a direct result of workers' peculiarly high distress in the 30s.[3] For some analysts, dissent was mainly a rational strategy to ameliorate distress; for others, it was instead, or also, a "volcanic eruption", the building up of deprivation and frustration to the point where aggression "spilled over" into overt activity.[4] Fourth, the primary effect of employers' and governments' repression of strikes and extra-parliamentary political protest was to delegitimate the ruling class and drive workers and other members of the "public" to the left.[5]

True, many analysts have qualified these claims in various ways. Deprivation is sometimes said to have been more relative than absolute. For example, the problem was more that workers had to give up "luxuries" rather than starve. Sometimes these luxuries were job security and freedom and dignity, rather than material goods.[6] Similarly, it may have been a "decade of discord" more in the sense that workers were more militant and politically progressive in the 30s than they had been in the 20s, than that they were actually flocking to the Communist Party and demanding that it organize a revolution.[7] Furthermore, if distress did not always result in dissent, it was not because one does not naturally and usually lead to the other, but that other, often unusual, circumstances intervened. These circumstances were (a) poor labour market conditions which gave workers little choice but to stick with, and not publicly complain about, their jobs;[8] (b) sectarianism and timidity on the part of craft unions and traditional labour parties;[9] and/or (c) excessive, direct repression by employers and the state.[10] Finally, although the latter may have prevented workers from doing what their deprived needs and political beliefs inclined them to do, they did not alter these inclinations themselves. Rather than becoming discouraged and altering their aspirations, workers simply kept their individual and collective fires burning and bided their time until objective circumstances were more favourable.[11]

This paradigm has been so pervasive that even most of its apparent critics have failed to escape it totally. Numerous writers have pointed instead to the fact that a clear majority of workers not only retained their jobs, but, because the prices of many consumer goods and services dropped, probably experienced an increase in their material standard of living.[12] Others have argued that times were indeed tough in the 30s, but they had also been tough for workers in the 20s, so that in relative terms, the 30s must have seemed little different.[13] Still others have tried to put the dissent of the decade in context, by noting that participants constituted a small minority of workers, and that their immediate and long-term gains were few and far between.[14] Historians with unimpeachable radical credentials, such as David Brody, have argued that the "good guys" of the 30s, the industrial unionists of the CIO, were in fact not much different from the craft unionists of the AFL.[15] A few others have even suggested that some employers and bourgeois politicians used carrots as well as sticks in their dealings with workers, and may have been somewhat unfairly portrayed in most accounts.[16]

Résumé

Contrairement à la plupart des comptes rendus portant sur les réactions des travailleurs canadiens à la Crise des années 1930, le portrait que nous trace celui-ci de la majorité des travailleurs de Hamilton nous les montre ni profondément affligés, ni particulièrement enclins à la dissidence même si, bien sûr, il y avait effectivement de l'affliction et de la dissidence. On peut en grande partie attribuer l'absence relative de dissidence à l'impuissance ressentie par les traveilleurs face aux très mauvaises conditions du marché, mais on ne doit pas considérer leur passivité comme une simple stratégie de classe temporaire. Au contraire, pour beaucoup de travailleurs, et peut-être même pour la plupart, la dissidence était illégitime au départ et(ou), tenant compte des conditions du marché de l'emploi et d'autres facteurs, ils mettaient en veilleuse leurs aspirations à un travail assuré et sur lequel ils pourraient exercer un certain contrôle. Autrement dit, ils étaient devenus psychiquement «aliénés». Ces conclusions viennent fortement ébranler la plupart des théories élaborées sur ces questions, théories fondées implicitement sur un modèle «frustration-agression»; elles ébranlent également les idées généralement admises selon lesquelles les travailleurs avaient une conscience de classe très forte et étaient de véritables héros et elles nous donnent des indications sur la syndicalisation des travailleurs pendant la plupart des crises économiques.

However, in most of these cases the criticism is only of the claim for the existence of the "initial condition" of distress, which is supposed to initiate dissent, and/or of the intervening circumstances which adherents of the dominant paradigm claim prevented workers from dissenting. There has been little recognition, let alone reconsideration, of the assumption that distress leads to dissent in the first place, or that workers remain inclined to fight even in the face of poor economic conditions, an unfavourable balance of power, and actual repression by the ruling class.

Nevertheless, a more truly alternative paradigm can be constructed from the existing literature, a paradigm whose arguments go more-or-less as follows.

(1) While a substantial portion of workers were deprived and distressed by the Depression, the majority were *not*, either absolutely or relatively.[17]

(2) While there were remarkable waves of strikes (with remarkable degrees of solidarity among workers and new tactics, such as the "sit-down") and political protests of the unemployed and new political parties which extended far beyond the local level, the vast majority of workers were not even *affected* by these developments, let alone participants.[18] Competition among, and scapegoating of, some types of workers by others was common. Public protests were more likely to be against the alleged unfair privileges of *other workers* than those of the ruling class.[19] The protests of the 30s seldom had positive, long-term consequences for the radical, left-wing organization of the working class, and such consequences often benefitted populist parties with racist and nativist policies instead.[20]

(3) Distress by no means always led to dissent, or even to the *inclination*. Most employed workers held onto their jobs, even if they only got to work a day or two a week. They organized and struck only when they suffered actual losses, and then only when they felt they could get away with it. Most unemployed workers spent most of their time trying to find, and worrying about, work. Most of those who received relief were grateful for it, despite its minimal nature and the insulting manner in which it was dispensed and policed. They were also reluctant to risk this means of subsistence, and protested publicly only when relief was reduced.[21] Most strikes and political protests, and certainly any beyond the local level, occurred *not* in the early 30s, when the Depression was at its worst, but in the middle years when the labour market improved somewhat. When the job situation improved so did workers' hopes and feelings of power. However, when the recovery turned out to be short-lived, so did the strikes and protests. Furthermore, strikes undertaken when the economy was slumping tended to be lost, while those during upswings were more likely to be won.[22]

But it would be wrong to attribute the latter simply to the state of the economy and the sheer balance of coercive power between classes. Rather, workers also responded in terms of their interpretations of the causes and practical solutions for the Depression, of the legitimacy as well as feasibility of the latter. For the vast majority of North American workers, social democratic as well as communist conceptions were seen as neither viable nor legitimate. Instead, welfare capitalism and the Liberal and Democratic parties were the only routes seriously considered.[23]

(4) Just as the majority of *workers* were not simply "beaten to the ground", so capitalist and public *employers* thought and strategized on other bases besides how much domination and exploitation

they could get away with. Many did indeed take advantage of the state of the economy to extract immediate concessions, but others pursued other, longer-term strategies for retaining and motivating their own employees, who were often obtained through segmented family, ethnic, and internal labour markets. On the political front, municipal governments differed considerably in terms of their dominant ideology and their treatment of their own employees and unemployed workers in general. Not all exercised "knee-jerk" repression,[24] and when the latter did occur, it often had much the same effect as strikes at the workplace: it led participating workers to cease striking and protesting, and to lower their expectations and aspirations. As some writers have put it, the 30s can perhaps be best characterized not as bitter and turbulent, but as "lost", or even as years of "*despair*".[25]

Interestingly, although it is usually the dominant distress-dissent paradigm which is attributed to Karl Marx, the arguments of the critical one can also be found in his writings. True, in his middle writings we find him claiming that severe economic crises almost single-handedly delegitimated capitalism and forced and goaded French workers to revolt, and that communists should not worry themselves about defeats, because they would lay the system bare and sow the seeds of its own destruction.[26] However, in *Capital* he was equally emphatic that "The industrial reserve army, during periods of stagnation and average prosperity, weighs down the active labour-army; *during the periods of over-production and paroxysm, it holds its pretensions in check.*"[27] Furthermore, although in that work he often asserted that even well-intentioned capitalists were forced by competition to do what every other capitalist was doing, the *Eighteenth Brumaire* and other such more historically-specific analyses gave employers and governments much more room to manoeuvre, and much more credit for making better use of it.[28] Marx himself seldom bothered to reconcile such seemingly incompatible views, but we do know that his underlying social psychology is far more complex than most of his readers realize.[29]

Thus severe deprivation is at least as likely to lead to competition and "regression" to "lower-order" subsistence needs as to dissent. Absolute deprivation may also be greatly offset by low expectations and aspirations, and not comparing oneself with others more gratified than oneself. Deprivation leads to frustration mainly when workers cannot avoid it (for example, there are no other jobs to go to). Frustration only leads to rebellion when workers (a) see their employers and the state as both responsible for the crisis and capable of ending it; (b) believe they are powerful enough to get away with dissenting, let alone making fundamental changes in the overall political-economic structure of bourgeois society; and (c) regard their employers' and governors' interests and actions as illegitimate, and their own as legitimate. Otherwise, workers are more likely to pursue their own "slice of the pie", and "displace" their own frustration and aggression upon other workers, a process which is made easier if the other workers are less skilled and younger than themselves, or of a different sex, race or ethnicity. When the latter actions are *also* closed off or seen as illegitimate, workers simply lower their aspirations for secure, well-paid and self-controlled work and seek compensatory gratification elsewhere.

At each step, these processes are impinged upon, indeed, often constituted by, specifically social processes. Deprivation itself may be vicarious and fraternal rather than direct and personal, and affronts to one's *group* are likely to be especially provocative. Most deprivation has "moral" aspects, and the attribution of responsibility for deprivation, the power to overcome barriers to gratification, and the legitimacy for one's own interests and actions—all of which determine whether workers dissent or "alienate"—are all much more likely to occur within *group* settings than individually. Loyalty to groups often makes individual workers do things they would not otherwise do. Attacks from capital and the state (which, as we have just seen, may not in fact occur) are the single most important source of "superordinant" goals which bring workers together as a "class-for-itself". Without such goals, groups of workers remain opposed to each other as competitors for their own slice of the pie.

The latter model is used here as a means for analyzing the responses of Hamilton workers to the Great Depression, and possibly for deciding among, even reconciling, the competing views described above. Of course, there are various legitimate criticisms of the way this model has typically been used. It is often overly "hydraulic", that is, it is wrongly presumed that workers can and will tolerate only small amounts of deprivation and frustration, and that tension which is not released through one form of activity must necessarily come out in some other way. Alternatively, others have treated it as too much of a "tool box", with workers calmly and rationally entertaining all possible means and choosing the most effective ones. It can be psychologically reductionistic, the assumption being that collective dissent is simply the convergence of parallel psychic states and actions in/of individuals. Its applications can be very craftist, ageist, sexist and ethnocentric, in that the experiences of all workers have been presumed to be exactly like those of middle-aged craftsmen of the dominant ethnic group. Finally, its users have often been correctly charged with "productivism"; that is, of assuming that all important "eco-

nomic" activity and social change occurs only at the point of paid commodity production, and not in the family and the wider community.[30]

Nevertheless, I have made a concerted attempt to minimize such problems here.

The overall study from which the present data are drawn employed a great many, very different, sources of information; from local, daily and other newspapers, to the files and publications of governments and other organizations; to oral histories of 100 men and 100 women workers who lived and worked for pay in Hamilton for at least two years between October of 1929 and September of 1939. However, here I have concentrated upon the first two of these sources, and, in the case of the oral histories, upon apparent general trends rather than specific statistics and quotations.[31]

Deprivation and Distress: "You don't have to die to go to hell."[32]

Hamilton, the "Birmingham", and then "Pittsburgh", of Canada, has always produced iron and steel and many finished goods made from them: tools, nails and wire; machinery for agriculture and manufacturing; railway track and rolling stock; electrial apparati for consumer appliances as well as heavy industry and the military. Construction of everything from bridges to public buildings to housing has also relied heavily upon iron and steel.[33] It is hardly surprising, therefore, that when the bottom fell out of the market for farm machinery, automobiles, and construction, Hamilton was especially hard-hit. Indeed, except for other large Canadian cities more heavily dependent upon wheat and lumber, and Brantford and Windsor (whose industries were narrowly centred around the production of farm machinery and automobiles, respectively), Hamilton generally ranks among those most seriously hurt by the Depression.

In 1931, the eight firms manufacturing electrical apparati employed 4093 workers; in 1933 they employed only 2764. The comparable figures for machinery, railway rolling stock, castings and forgings, and other iron and steel products, were 742 and 459, 540 and 184, 408 and 232, and 2566 and 1050, respectively.[34] In 1931 Census takers asked workers whether they had lost working time between June of 1930 and June of 1931, and if so, how much it was, and whether their layoffs had been temporary or permament. 51 per cent of male Hamilton wage earners and 32.8% of their female counterparts said they had lost time. These percentages were higher than those for all the major western cities as well as those in Quebec. In Ontario, only those for Windsor were higher.

Figures for those without jobs during that period are provided only for cities with populations of over 100,000, so that those for Calgary, Edmonton, Regina and Windsor are not available. However, the percentage of 29.8 for Hamilton men, while lower than those for Vancouver, Winnipeg and Montreal, is higher than those for Toronto, Ottawa, and Quebec City.[35] According to the analysts of the Census, the percentage of time lost by "General and unskilled labourers" is one of the best indicators of the state of an economy. Assuming this to be true, it is interesting that the 43.6% of that year lost by Hamilton workers is well above the averages for Ontario and Canada as a whole (35.5 and 36.5%, respectively). Again, within Ontario, only Windsor's "general and unskilled workers", who lost an average of 60.3%, fared worse.[36] But Hamilton's constuction workers in general, including skilled tradesmen, suffered very high levels of unemployment as well. 58.5% of construction workers were unemployed in 1930–1, and according to another report, fully 90% of building tradesmen were unemployed in 1933.[37]

Large numbers of Hamilton workers were forced to seek various forms of relief. In January of 1931 there were 2209 *families* on public relief. By February of 1933 the number had skyrocketed to 8160, absolutely as well as proportionally higher than the number in Winnipeg, a much larger city. (It was 22.5% of all Hamilton families, and even more of working-class ones.) In January of 1931, 600 unemployed single men were being fed three meals a day at the official soup kitchen in Hamilton's working class east end; in February of '33 the number was about double that. 600 unemployed single women registered with the Local Council of Women for relief in December of '30; by November of '32, 1100 had done so.[38]

But the figures for unemployment and relief do not tell the full story of hardship for Hamilton workers, since a great many of those who were still officially employed were working only a day or two every few weeks, and were often earning less than those on public relief, who were intentionally kept little above bare subsistence.[39] Many working class families with nominally employed members as well as those on relief had to rely upon garden plots supplied by employers and the city for food. There were 5157 official plots in 1933. Indeed, the Welfare Board purposely reduced amounts of relief in the spring and summer months so that families on relief would *have* to fend for themselves more.[40] These and others also appealed to the Family Welfare Bureau, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, and local newspapers for housing and clothing.[41] Many more would have had great difficulty surviving without the aid of family, church and neighbours; the credit of butchers and grocers; and sometimes the free services of doctors and dentists.[42] In 1933 an average of 800 unem-

Depression Days: Down To The Last Cigarette! Brother, Can You Spare A Light?
The Spectator. Photograph by Liam O'Cooney.

ployed single men, and hundreds of unemployed single women, made use of athletic, musical and theatrical events organized by various service agencies, and if we are to believe the organizers, many participants were in serious need of a boost in morale.[43]

However, the Depression did not only deprive Hamilton workers of food, shelter, clothing, socializing and recreation, and thereby distress them. Rather, it was also a time of "blasted hopes", for *any* steady job, or for training for a trade, for the opportunity of practising one's trade after one had been trained, for moving out of one's parents' home and being on one's own, for getting married, having children and buying one's own home, and so on.[44] It was a time when finding a job, keeping a job, and obtaining and retaining relief were often humiliating and infuriating, and also a time when complaining and protesting were very dangerous.

One could trudge from plant gate to plant gate for months and years and not find work, unless one stood out from the crowd for some reason: one was particularly muscular or had a loud Hawaiian shirt, or especially, one's relatives worked there or knew someone who did. In order for you to keep a job, the foreman might require you to wash his car, pick his cherries, sleep with him, allow him to sleep with your wife, or slip him a fiver or a bottle of Scotch every payday. If you complained about the way you were treated at work, the boss might walk you over to the window and silently point to the hundreds of unemployed workers waiting to take your job.[45]

If you applied for relief in the early years of the 30s, which itself was often humiliating, you could not get it, if anyone in the household was working full-time, no matter how large the family was. Nor was relief available if you owned your own home, had any money in your bank account, owned a car and license plates, a liquor permit, a telephone, or even a *radio*![46] If you were lucky enough to qualify for relief and went to pick it up at the Relief Office, you might have to stand outside in a long line in freezing or boiling weather, and be treated "like a dog" by those dispensing relief. Alternatively, your relief vouchers might be delivered to your home, but only if you allowed the bearer to inspect every inch of it, to make sure that you did indeed qualify.[47]

If you decided to "sit-down" in the Office until you got what you came for, or "take a swipe" at the official who had just treated you "like dirt", there would be a policeman or two waiting to cart you away. If you refused the other "means test"—that is, to demonstrate your respectability by agreeing to do various types of demeaning "make-work" (sweeping streets, cleaning the dump, or cutting a cord of wood) you were promptly cut off relief, with no means of appeal.[48] Indeed, being a "communist" or other "troublemaker" was sometimes treated as legitimate grounds for entire families to be cut off relief. Not being a Canadian citizen and becoming dependent upon relief were themselves grounds for deportation. If one was a "troublemaker", the chances were that much higher.[49] Where the authorities lacked such levers, they could, and often did, conveniently charge workers with "vagrancy". This happened when they were under suspicion of planning a "hoist" or bootlegging, or when they were "bothering" middle class Hamiltonians on the street or their private doorsteps by panhandling, or even when they were simply "loitering", walking around their own block, or printing and distributing left-wing handbills.[50]

Most of these deprivations taken singly would be understandable grounds for organized political protest when it was possible. When it was not, they were grounds for bumping off one's foreman, theft, relief fraud, skipping town, drunkenness, madness, and suicide. As we shall see below, all of these occurred in Depression Hamilton. However, it is important to keep this distress in context. The distribution of unemployment and "short-time" was very uneven, even at the worst of the Depression, with at least 60%, and usually considerably more, of workers having been little affected. Furthermore, the economic circumstances of most of the Hamilton industries seriously affected began to improve not long after they "bottomed out", so that for most of the remaining 40-or-so per cent of workers, things returned more or less to "normal" (i.e., pre-Depression levels), perhaps as early as the end of 1933, and certainly by 1935.

Thus, whereas 58.5% of construction workers had no job in '30-'31, construction workers constituted only 11% of male wage earners. Of the 13.1% who were in service industries, only 6.8% lost any time, and "only" 19.4% had no job. Of the 48.1% in manufacturing, 27.1% were temporarily laid-off, and 27.2% had no job. Service and manufacturing were also the loci for the largest portions of women wage earners (42.1 and 38.4%, respectively). Only 3.3% of women in service lost time; and only 11.8% were unemployed altogether. Even in manufacturing, "only" 17.2% were temporarily laid-off, and 16.9% unemployed. If we examine manufacturing more closely, we find that iron and metal industries were the most populous for men (51.5%), and textile and clothing for women (54.1%). The percentages losing time and unemployed for men in iron and metal were 29.1 and 33.1%; for women in textile and clothing, 41.1 and 17.6%. Although the 41.1% is obviously high, one must remember that work in textiles and clothing was fairly seasonal anyway, with most plants laying off workers for a portion of the summer. Finally, if one breaks down each of the iron and metal industries on the one hand, and the textile and

clothing industries on the other, one often finds large differences within each. Thus while 40.4% of men making farm machinery and 50.6% of those making railway cars were unemployed, "only" 23.9% of sheet metal workers, and 24.8% of wire workers, had no job. Similarly, of women in textile and clothing, only those making women's clothing—18.2% of the total—had an unemployment level of more than 20%. It was 27.3.[51]

Some of these various differences between and within manufacturing industries, and some of the important changes over time, can be seen in Table 1.[52] Note that whereas most iron and metal firms were seriously affected, most began to recover by 1934. This conclusion is supported by newspaper accounts of their annual reports to stockholders.[53] Note also that most textile and clothing firms were not affected much in the first place. Indeed, most reported not just profits in 1933, but *full* production and *increased* profits.[54] Finally, as can be seen in the remainder of the table, many of the other most populous manufacturing industries were not seriously affected by the Depression either.

These data tell only part of the story of the great unevenness of Hamilton workers' deprivation and distress, and, by implication, their very different, and often conflicting, interests in protesting about working and living conditions in

Table 1
Most Populous Manufacturing Firms (F) and Employees (E)

	1931		1932		1933		1934		1935	
Industry	F	E	F	E	F	E	F	E	F	E
Iron, Metal										
Elec. Apparati	8	4093	8	3491	8	2764	10	3026	8	2055
Primary I&S	7	1701	10	1633	10	1916	10	2673	10	3539
Wire & Goods	11	1394	11	1284	11	1100	10	1325	10	1435
Machinery	11	742	12	589	13	459	14	501	13	558
Sheet metal	10	546	12	428	12	442	9	453	9	475
Railway Stock	4	540	4	215	4	184	4	220	4	300
Cast, Forgings	12	408	8	267	10	232	11	225	11	242
Other I&S	6	2566	4	778	3	1050	3	1122	3	1546
Textile, Clothing										
Hosiery, Knits	8	3248	8	2940	9	2940	9	2964	10	2782
C. Yarn, Cloth	5	1623	5	1515	5	1590	5	1678	5	1688
Men's Clothing	4	347	4	373	5	409	4	496	4	501
M's Furnishings	3	158	3	163	3	175	3	186	3	182
Fur Goods	8	43	7	42	7	41	7	45	9	43
Hats & Caps	4	40	4	34	4	38	4	36	4	42
W's Clothing	3	15	3	15	3	19	3	21	3	25
All other	10	383	8	369	9	484	10	506	11	600
Other										
Bread, etc.	52	704	52	655	56	668	57	707	57	732
Glass	3	567	4	577	4	651	4	704	4	728
Tobacco, etc.	3	475	3	492	3	544	3	610	3	640
Print, Binding	38	350	40	323	43	332	47	328	49	350
Dye, Clean, Ln	18	348	20	334	21	317	23	349	22	354
Coke, gas	4	326	5	322	4	333	3	474	3	451
Creameries	3	236	4	274	5	406	5	345	6	392

the 30s. For there were usually large inequalities in susceptibility to short-time and unemployment within any one workplace. I have attempted to document these differences elsewhere, and can only briefly summarize them here.[55]

Craftsmen, even apprentices, almost always worked more than others, even though they were also more highly paid. Presumably, employers regarded them as the most difficult to replace when full production levels returned, and hence wanted to keep them around. Middle-aged men and women generally worked more than both the young and the old, although very young boys (10–15) worked the most, presumably because, given the existence of a minimum wage only for women, they provided the cheapest of labour.

As can already be surmised from the material presented so far, overall, women worked considerably more than men, and this may well explain the animosity many male Hamilton workers had for women workers in the 30s (see below). Also, in addition to the establishment of new consumer goods industries which employed mainly women machine operators rather than craftsmen,[56] there was a trend for women to replace men in traditional industries, and we now know that the result was in fact a cheapening of male labour.[57] However, comparisons between men and women are complicated by the fact that they tended to be segregated by industry and occupation, with women more likely to be in those less affected by the crisis of the 30s. When I concentrated upon occupations containing substantial numbers of both men and women, I found several different patterns, but the *most common* one was for women to work more than men only when they were also cheaper. When they were *paid more* than men, they tended to *work less*.

One suspects that ethnic differences were also complex, but the '31 Census does not provide them by city. However, we know that minority ethnic workers were almost totally excluded from the relatively secure jobs in public service industries, and from most of the privileged skilled trades in the private sector as well. Furthermore, the figures for Ontario as a whole indicate that whereas workers of British extraction lost about 2.5 weeks *less* than the average for all workers, those of Jewish, Italian, Central European, and Eastern European background lost about 1.5, 4.5, 7 and 9 weeks *more* than the average, respectively.[58] But in order to keep in context the absolute numbers of workers adversely affected, one must remember that in 1931, fully 79.5% of Hamilton workers were of British ethnicity.

Some other important trends in relief as well as unemployment and distress over time can be seen in Table 2. Not all employers would have advertised jobs through the federal government's Employment Bureau; not all workers who were unemployed or otherwise looking for jobs would have looked there; many who did and were unsuccessful would no doubt have become discouraged and given up. Nevertheless, it is interesting that the trends in the first two columns more or less fit those noted earlier. Specifically, the number of jobs available decreased, and the number of workers competing for them increased, through 1933, but conditions improved after that, at least until the new downturn in '36. Similarly, the numbers of families and single men on relief did not stay at the high levels of '33, but decreased steadily through '38, and began to climb again only in 1939.

Also remarkable about Depression Hamilton was how closely the cost of living followed the state of the local economy. As can be seen in Table 3, a great many of the staples of the majority of workers (i.e., those of British background) decreased in price through 1933, and

Table 2
Various Indicators of the Local Economy and Workers' Deprivation

Year, Month of February	Vacancies for Full-time Jobs*	Unplaced Registrants*	Families on Relief#	Single Men Fed at East Soup Kitchen#
1929	835	929	—	—
1930	525	2169	—	—
1931	544	5092	2209	600
1932	461	3735	4289	?
1933	299	2614	8160	1200
1934	524	2192	7426	583
1935	389	3384	6565	?
1936	342	5687	4847	463
1937	345	5748	4024	300 +
1938	365	4333	3232	?
1939	350	5491	4468	320

Sources: **Labour Gazette*, Volumes *29* (p.428); *30* (434); *31* (463); *32* (440); *33* (418); *34* (363); *35* (362); *36* (358); *37* (439); *38* (435); *39* (417).
#1929-1936 (March): *Hamilton Herald*; 1936 (April)-1939: *Hamilton Spectator*.

Table 3
Prices of Selected Foods, Fuels and Rents; February, 1929 – 1939

Good	1929	1931	1933	1935	1937	1939
Shoulder Roast of Beef (lb)	22.7cts	19.1cts	13.4cts	12.9cts	13.8cts	16.8cts
Leg pork (lb)	26.7	19.8	11.5	20.8	20.5	23.7
Eggs	49.9	31.8	21.7	29.3	23.0	26.7
Milk (qt)	13.0	12.0	10.0	11.5	12.0	12.0
Bread	7.3	6.0	5.4	6.0	6.3	6.4
Potatoes (15lb)	21.1	24.9	18.9	12.6	38.2	28.3
Tea	72.4	62.8	46.1	53.8	57.5	60.9
Coke (ton)	$12.50	$11.00	$10.00	$11.50	$11.00	$10.00
Wood (cord)	12.50	13.00	11.00	11.00	11.00	11.00
6-Room House w. elec. and water	30.00	30.00	27.50	25.50	29.50	31.00
6-Room House without these	21.50	21.50	16.00	16.50	19.50	21.00

Source: *Labour Gazette*, Volumes *29* (pp.436-41); *31* (480-5); *33* (442-7); *35* (378-83); *37* (460-5); *39* (440-5).

sometimes 1935, and started to increase again only as the economy recovered. For 9 of the 11 goods in the table, the prices in 1939 remained lower than those in 1929.

It is probably correct to assume that the gratification of workers' higher-order needs for freedom and dignity had *not* returned to pre-Depression levels, but there were some important changes here as well.

The demand for skilled workers greatly exceeded that for general labourers,[59] so that trades and careers again became possible for many young workers. Many of those who had had to postpone marriage, children, and buying cars and homes were finally able to do so. Many more were not only employed, but under somewhat better conditions. At a minimum, more had the choice of avoiding especially poor working conditions by switching jobs. Many employers were less prepared to provoke their employees and sully their public reputations by retaining personally exploitative and vindictive foremen.[60]

So many workers had had to seek relief in the early 30s that its necessity had usually become acceptable, and being on relief was no longer so looked-down-upon and humiliating. More people became eligible. For example, even homeowners threatened with repossession and eviction got some mortgage, tax, and fuel relief, and non-owners were able to do a bit of paid labour as well as receive direct relief. The process of actually receiving relief became less horrendous: there were not only fewer people crowding into the Relief Office, but the latter had been renovated to make more room for reliefers instead of just relievers. Although the home inspectors had not disappeared, they were now accompanied by clergy and social workers who professed to be interested in their non-material as well as material needs.[61]

It was still difficult to organize a union and strike. Indeed, there was a massive public campaign against the CIO and industrial unions, and Communism, by governments as well as employers. However, employers started using more carrots in their battle against unions (see below). Hamilton's local government had long since learned that "repressive tolerance"—letting Communists and others speak, and then not listening—was far more effective than naked repression. Judges began to question the appropriateness of the charge of vagrancy, and deportation was largely a thing of the past, at least for destitution and dissent *per se*.[62]

To recapitulate, a great many Hamilton workers were hurt by the Great Depres-

sion, absolutely, and relative to workers in other major Canadian cities. However, the *majority* of them were *not*. Furthermore, for many of those who *were* seriously affected, the blows were cushioned somewhat by a substantial drop in the cost of living, and improvements in employment, living conditions, and civil rights, often as early as 1933.

But what about the claims that the significance of the Depression was less a matter of the absolute deprivation of workers' needs, than of their *relative* deprivation; that workers' expectations and aspirations were unfulfilled; that even when they were moderately *fulfilled*, workers could see that their employers' and governors' needs and wants were much *better* gratified, so that workers remained dissatisfied anyway? Our interviews contain a wealth of material with which to answer these questions, material so voluminous and complex, in fact, that it will have to be presented separately in subsequent publications. Nevertheless, it can be crudely summarized as follows.

Some workers told us they had lived so close to bare subsistence prior to the Depression that they were hardly aware that there *was* a depression in the first place! Many who found themselves with even seemingly small "luxuries" beyond bare subsistence—for example, they could still smoke, drink liquor, and go to a movie for 15 cents—felt relatively gratified. Conversely, even when they could not afford such small luxuries, they were often consoled by the fact that they still *ate* adequately.[63] Although workers who went on short-time, took wage cuts, or became unemployed altogether tended to feel deprived, they also tended to feel gratified again when their circumstances improved.

The reference point for most was not the usually much better position of their own employers, or even middle-class neighbours, where they existed, but of other workers similar to themselves. Given the large number of unemployed, many workers were downright grateful to have any job at all. When many educated, skilled, middle-aged men of dominant ethnicity were unemployed, the uneducated, unskilled, young, female and ethnically minor who were fully-employed often felt especially gratified, even when their pay and working conditions were not good in absolute terms. Alternatively, middle-aged men of the dominant ethnicity tended to feel particularly deprived when they were un- or under-employed. But as we shall see, a great many unemployed *single women* were also angry that any married woman with an employed husband remained working.

Workers' comparisons were not always egoistic and self-serving. Most of the more fortunate probably felt not only grateful, but guilty and "fraternally deprived" because other workers were not so lucky, and sympathetic toward them. More than a few also acted on these feelings by helping friends, neighbours, fellow church and ethnic members, and tramps at the door in non-monetary ways, and in some cases by voluntarily donating a portion of their own wages toward publicly-organized relief of the needy.[64] Nevertheless, many were not able to help in this way, nor readily able to protest "secondarily" without serious risk to their own, somewhat better position. Furthermore, at least a substantial minority were not very sympathetic in the first place. There were jobs to be had, if people really wanted to work, they told us; if workers were drenched in the park, they shouldn't have been there protesting to begin with, and therefore deserved it.

No, relative deprivation appears to have had much the same effect as absolute deprivation: a great many workers felt so gratified that their own position was better than that of other workers, that they experienced less injustice and bitterness than they otherwise might have. Furthermore, relative gratification gave them a sense of privilege which they were loath to risk by demanding more for themselves, or for other workers for whom they may have felt fraternally deprived and responsible, and therefore guilty.

But as argued earlier, by themselves, neither absolute nor relative deprivation would have been enough to produce dissent. For that, they would have had to have gone unrelieved, and to have interpreted their sources and their own power in particular ways. These, in turn, would have been dependent upon the extent and nature of their own social organization, and the responses of the ruling class to it. I shall now argue that these prerequisites seldom existed in Depression Hamilton, not, at least, enough to make collective and class-wide dissent workers' most common and effective response to deprivation and distress.

The Organization of Relief and Rebellion: A Class Divided

Some workers have always had strong craft traditions of supporting each other during illness and other calamities.[65] With the onset of the Depression the Bricklayers, the Musicians and others attempted to aid those of their members who became unemployed. Nor were such practices restricted to skilled tradesmen in the private sector. Rather, firemen and policemen had their own pension plans as well as measures for short-term relief, and transit workers had a benevolent fund. When their employers gave them the option of job rotation and a four-day week or laying off a portion of their number, Bell Telephone operators chose the former.[66] Furthermore, Hydro and other public workers voluntarily donated some of their own income to unemployed workers in general, and there was a con-

certed effort to organize a "one-per-cent fund" among all employed workers.[67] However, soon more members of the skilled trades were unemployed than employed. Such groups had all they could do to keep their charters, let alone sustain individual members in distress.[68] It also became clear that asking individual employees to contribute small amounts toward relief of the unemployed would not even begin to foot the bill.

However, as others have pointed out, the *first* line of defence against economic crises for *most* workers has traditionally been family and kin, not other workers at the point of paid production. Furthermore, the immediate supplements or alternatives have been the neighbourhood church and the ethnic lodge or wider ethnic group. Should the latter also prove inadequate, workers are then likely to appeal to their employers, governments, and private service agencies, most of which are also upper or middle class. It is usually when all of these alternatives have been explored and found wanting that workers, especially non-unionized ones, are likely to turn toward each other at the workplace and organize themselves independently to protest the situation of workers in general, rather than that of ethnic and other interest groups.[69]

According to Lizabeth Cohen, such was the case in Chicago in the 30s, and the attempt to organize on a class-wide basis and its relative effectiveness in increasing workers' political clout and relieving their economic distress are said to have been greatly aided by the prior emergence of mass culture, which broke down ethnic barriers among workers; as well as by the peculiarly non-sectarian organizing strategies of the CIO and the Democratic Party. Elizabeth Faue has made a somewhat similar argument for Minneapolis, although she concentrated upon gender more than race and ethnicity.[70] While there is less relevant material, it seems reasonable to conclude that in Hamilton, (a) both workers' own families and the local ruling class were considerably more effective in relieving workers' distress; and (b) rank-and-file workers and the leaders of the labour movement remained far more divided by occupation, age, gender and ethnicity. As a consequence, Hamilton workers had both less motivation and poorer means for protesting as a "class for itself".

Let us take up each of these arguments in turn.

The Family Economy, Neighbourhood Church and Ethnic Lodge and Community

Before the Depression it was common for adult children, whether gainfully employed or not, to live with their parents until they married and established a household of their own. However, the Depression often considerably altered the contingencies.

If parents were no longer employed full-time and one was the only child or the only child employed, there was less of an *option* to move out and away. If one married, one would be more likely to live with, and support, one's parents than to move out, but marriage and children were less likely in the first place.[71] If unemployed, with several younger brothers and sisters living at home, one might feel pressured and/or obligated to move out and away, even though one had no other immediate means of support.

On the other hand, with employed and/or well-paid parents, or older, single employed brothers and sisters living at home, one might be able to survive the Depression without full-time paid employment. Either or both of these latter sets of circumstances applied to many of the retired workers we interviewed: some were supported by their parents and/or siblings; others did the supporting.

Another type of adjustment was for family members who would not normally have sought and taken paid employment to do so. Thus, where they could, wives and mothers got factory, domestic, or farm work outside the household. When they couldn't get full-time work, they took part-time work. If they couldn't find paid work outside the home, they brought it home in the form of sewing, washing or lodgers. They exported farm produce made from start to finish within the home. Children left school early, if they could find full-time paid employment and get permission from the authorities to do it rather than continue in school. Eventually, however, there were so few jobs for underage children that many more of them remained in school than *before* the Depression.[72]

Many more goods and services were produced almost totally within the household. Besides vegetable gardening, baking bread, making clothes, and gathering or chopping fuel (sometimes illegally); other productive household activities increased during the Depression. Although more of these activities were probably undertaken by women than men, the latter also did labour usually peculiar to them—for example, soling shoes and giving haircuts—as well as gardening and other, less gender-specific, tasks. Hamilton workers were sometimes highly inventive in the materials and technology with which they pursued new household production: marble slabs were used to keep food cool, clothes were made from potato and sugar bags, and shoe soles from tin or cardboard.

But more common than new production was reducing the cost of "old" production: luxuries were decreased or dispensed with altogether, and subsistence goods and services were stretched as

far as they could go. *Wives and mothers* usually collected, spent and distributed the total family income. If there were shortages, they had to make up the difference by going hungry or threadbare. Most workers (usually men) continued to smoke ("makings" were very cheap) and, usually through making their own home-brew and wine, to drink as well, if so inclined. However, fewer of the choice cuts of meat were bought, and less meat in general was used, through the (nearly constant, it seems) making of stews and soups. The most hard-up families sometimes had to rely on "bread and dripping"; that is, bread dipped in bacon or other grease, and then fried. Fresh fruit out of season was unheard of, except for an orange in one's stocking on Christmas day. Sharing *between* neighbouring families also occurred.[73]

Now, there were clearly working class families who were *not* able to survive on their own. We have seen how some 8,000 of them turned to public relief at the worst of the Depression, and still others were serviced privately by churches and ethnic groups. Furthermore, U.S. researchers have documented the toll on the male egos of husbands and fathers of having their wives and children wholly support them financially.[74] The logbooks of the Hamilton police department document an average of 200 "missing" men for most of the years of the 30s.[75] Accounts of notes and other circumstances surrounding suicides indicate that unemployment, the inability to support one's family, and feeling that one was a drain on one's family's resources, were all major sources. Furthermore the social workers of the Family Welfare Bureau reported much drunkenness, quarreling, fear, demoralization and lethargy.[76]

Nevertheless, the latter also reported that the *majority* of the families they serviced were holding up "courageously".[77] Our interviews turned up surprisingly few cases of family tension and breakdown. It seems that the latter were likely to occur mainly, if not only, under relatively rare circumstances: where parents were sick or widows or widowers, where there were large numbers of dependent children, or where there were longstanding problems of parents or children not being prepared to support each other. Our own most dramatic "case" was a stereotypically-Irish father who had drunk away the family farm in Ireland, lost relief in the Hamilton area because he didn't show up for the token relief work, turned to bootlegging and made money at it, but then drank all of *that* away as well. At that point one of his own sons, who was desperately trying to support the whole family on his own, anonymously turned him in to the police! That such circumstances were not all that rare is suggested by newspaper accounts of relief authorities and judges trying to force children to support their parents.[78]

With regard to the relief work of churches and ethnic groups, Hamilton's city government had elaborate hopes and plans for most relief to remain "private" in this sense,[79] but it is not clear how successful these were. Some churches appear to have had few badly hit members to begin with, and may even have been politically conservative to the point of not having been very *inclined* to materially relieve workers, at least beyond their own congregations.

Newspaper summaries of the annual reports of the large, west-end Anglican and Presbyterian churches read much like those of industrial corporations, complete with surpluses of which they were very proud. Some Catholic interviewees complained that their parishes still insisted on taking from them when they had little for themselves. Hamilton's only all-black Baptist congregation was in such dire straits that it appealed to, and received aid from, other Hamilton churches.[80] The top of the Catholic hierarchy was conservative to the point of supporting Franco, and whereas the United Church leaned toward the CCF, Baptist leaders criticized them strongly for doing so.[81]

Similar conclusions can be drawn for *lodges and wider ethnic groups*.

Cohen's claim that Chicago's ethnic groups were no longer as able to provide the aid they had before the Depression probably applies to Hamilton, but the most important form of help which such groups provided to Hamilton workers had always been help in obtaining jobs through word-of-mouth knowledge of vacancies, and referrals. This continued through the Depression, if on a lesser scale, and because, as mentioned earlier, the markets for different industries and occupations tended to be segmented by ethnicity, members of middle- and low-status ethnic groups may have been almost as well-served by this system as dominant ethnics were.

Furthermore, just as certain ethnic groups had fewer members in dire straits, so some had more inclination and resources to aid them when they were. The Council of Jewish Agencies appears to have been especially effective, and the Sons of Italy and other such ethnic organizations also undertook some forms of private relief. In fact, the ability to take care of one's own and avoid public relief itself seems to have been a source of status and resentment. Thus two Jewish businessmen told me there *were* no Jewish factory workers to *begin* with, and the official history of the local Polish community claims that *all* Poles were too *proud* to accept public relief. However, neither claim is correct.[82]

Employers and Governors as Relievers as Well as Deprivers

When the demand for products and/or the supply of revenue went down, many employers put their workers on short-time, or laid them off altogether. Although public employees were less affected than private ones, and their jobs therefore coveted, they were by no means immune. Some employers in both sectors directly cut the wages of their full-time employees.[83] Others did so only indirectly through various forms of speed-up and overload. Thus Stelco's sheet mill workers found their tonnage rates lowered. Westinghouse, Mercury Mills and other employers continued and intensified their efforts to fully institute the "Bedeaux" and related systems of speedup. Movie projectionists and streetcar and bus drivers had to work alone and do the tasks formerly done by two of them; and firemen, policemen and nurses had to do a great deal of unpaid overtime.[84] Some employers not only paid their full-time workers so little that they still required relief to subsist, but explicitly encouraged them to apply for it. Extremely long workweeks were maintained, and even extended; paid vacations and pension plans remained rare, even for public employees; and many employers used the state of the economy to prevent the organization of new union locals, or to decertify or otherwise neutralize those already in existence.[85]

As we shall see, these new and often cumulative deprivations provoked strikes and other protests. Again, however, we must keep them in context.

In the first place, even some of the more offensive employers were careful to sweeten bitter sticks with carrots. Thus after defeating striking building tradesmen, contractors gave them a 40-hour week, and textile and clothing manufacturers quickly acquiesced to the 48-hour week demanded by the state after a Royal Commission. Stelco beat back its striking Sheet Mill workers, but then instituted company-wide wage increases of 10%, and works councils. After ruthlessly firing union organizers, Dofasco went further and brought in profit-sharing and other "corporate welfare" measures.[86]

Secondly, those employers most favourably situated to increase the domination and exploitation of their employees did not necessarily do so. When they did not, workers were very impressed and became more loyal. Thus one electrical contractor rotated work even though, if we are to believe the laudatory letter to the editor from his workers, it caused him to operate at a loss. Similarly, International Harvester Corporation called some of its workers back and rotated them, despite the continued low demand for farm machinery.[87] Harvester, Stelco and most other large heavy industrial and construction firms supplied garden plots, tools, sheds and night watchmen, not only for their own employees, but for workers on relief in general, and some construction firms provided free labour for cultivation.[88] The major bakeries, butchers and grocery stores provided the east end soup kitchen with raw materials; the three major movie theatres charged canned goods for the needy as the price of admission for a "Kiddies' soup matinee".[89] Harvester, Firestone and other companies could have played "hardball" to prevent union organization, but instead tried to allay it by ignoring it.[90]

Thirdly, the 30s provided a golden opportunity for firms little affected by the Depression to distinguish themselves by their corporate welfare, and thereby increase the loyalty of their employees and customers. Cohen questions the initial effectiveness of the corporate welfare of Chicago's large industrial firms (several of which had branches in Hamilton) and suggests that most dispensed with it in the 30s and thereby provoked workers to organize.[91] However, in Hamilton, little corporate welfare was instituted before the 30s to begin with, and even the smallest steps of, for example, Harvester, sometimes went the longest of ways. Nor was Dofasco the only firm to take long steps. For example, Proctor and Gamble, in addition to giving their employees small, regular wage increases throughout the 30s (as many other firms did); guaranteed a minimum work week of 40 hours, publicly matched the wages of the top five, highest-paying employers in town, and instituted a profit-sharing and pension plan similar to Dofasco's.[92]

As mentioned previously, Hamilton's city government could be as miserly and mean as most capitalists. They could also be incredibly hypocritical, insisting that private employers with city contracts pay a healthy minimum wage, while paying their own city employees far less; giving unemployed private sector workers relief work and then laying off their own employees and forcing *them* to go on public relief; and maintaining there were no funds to increase levels of relief while bragging about budget surpluses despite lower tax rates and higher relief expenditures.[93] Nevertheless, the local state's own list of accomplishments during a time of material scarcity and ideological *laissez-faire*ism is an impressive one.

After all, it not only had a minimum hourly wage for city contractors (47 to 55 cents) which was well above the average for Hamilton's largest private employers, but enforced it.[94] It established and ran a daycare in the east end for as many as 300 children, so that working class mothers could work for pay.[95] It also sometimes acted as a mediator in private labour disputes, although it conveniently selected those disputes and sides which were in its own best interests, and which were most legitimate.[96]

Despite their restrictiveness, Hamilton's eligibility rules for relief were more liberal than many. At least some meals and lodging were given to transients as well as to single, unemployed male residents. While its schemes to privatize relief conveniently relieved the pressure upon its own purse strings and did not threaten age, gender and ethnic hierarchies, they were relatively effective in relieving types of workers whom many other cities left to fend wholly for themselves.[97] The range and amount of relief were usually adequate for subsistence and favourable compared to elsewhere. Reliefers were given bread, milk, clothing, shoes and fuel as well as vouchers for other groceries. Medical and dental care, and organized entertainment were free. Indeed, one of the reasons that Hamilton eventually enforced its eligibility rules more strictly and seasonalized relief was that it gained a reputation as a particularly humane place, so that families and single transients flocked to it in large numbers.[98]

Hamilton's government was as prepared to support reliefers in their dealings with private retailers as it was to interfere for private sector workers, where it had jurisdiction and clout. When private grocers and coal and shoe dealers took advantage of the fact that relief vouchers were tied to particular retailers to charge excessive prices or provide poor quality goods, the Board of Control untied the vouchers, had the Welfare Department buy clothing and shoes wholesale and distribute them itself, and threatened to do the same with groceries. It insisted that private landlords accept only half of the official rent, which it paid, and when it was not successful in keeping landlords to the rule it often stopped evictions, or found the evicted new lodgings.[99]

Though no great respecter of reliefers' feelings and civil rights (see earlier), Hamilton's governors were probably more responsive to workers' complaints than were private employers. As we have just seen, they revised eligibility rules, renovated the Relief Office and instituted home visits, and moved from naked repression to repressive tolerance. Just as these adaptations placated workers, so others—keeping relief at the level of subsistence, make-work, the withdrawal of relief for trouble-making, and so on—made the dispensing of relief more palatable to private employers and tax-paying homeowners. Toward both ends, Hamilton's mayors and councils not only did a lot of pleading and protesting to other levels of government to get more public work, relief, and long-term protective legislation, but took the lead in organizing other mayors and councils. Yet if it appeared that other cities were being favoured over Hamilton, its governors were quick to organize their own deputations and submissions and complain about it.[100]

Controlling workers through a clever mixture of carrots and sticks also characterized the relief work of many private social service agencies. The Salvation Army offered to feed and lodge unemployed single men, for a fee, providing they had first been screened as "respectable". Furthermore, no matter how hungry he was, if a man so much as took extra slices of bread, he might well get a month in jail for every extra slice![101] Similarly, the Local Council of Women graciously took up the task of relieving unemployed single women, but when there were complaints that some of their own members were gainfully employed, they chose to defend themselves by arguing that the rule was never supposed to apply to educated, *professional* women like themselves, rather than to defend married working women as a whole. They then organized schools to train unemployed office and factory women to become domestics in upper-middle-class homes, and if their clients refused to cooperate they were cut off relief.[102] On the other hand, one suspects that unemployed single men and women appreciated the work of the private agencies as much as others did that of local government.

Competing Interest Groups, Dividing Workers and Tying Them to Rulers

Unfortunately, the longstanding privileges of craft, age, gender and ethnicity among Hamilton workers were more often reproduced and strengthened than overcome by the scarcity of the 30s. Also, many new divisions were created. The following incidences are taken almost wholly from only two years of the 30s, 1933 and 1938, so that a complete list would be very much longer.

A) (1) Craft versus Craft; (2) The Crafts vs. the Unskilled; (3) Unionized vs. Non-Unionized; (4) Employed vs. Unemployed; (5) Homeowning vs. Renting; (6) Resident vs. Non-resident

Electricians claimed that *their* wages should not be cut as much as those of other building tradesmen, and that firemen should not be doing electrical work. Meanwhile, bricklayers complained that *Kitchener's* should not be working on the Toronto, Hamilton and Buffalo Railway station. Typographers (wrongly) criticized the City for not giving much work to unionized firms. After complaints from other workers, three cemetary workers were dismissed because they did not reside within the city's limits.[103] Hydro workers felt their wages should not be cut as much as those of other public employees. The inside, office staff at City Hall made a point of not only unionizing separately from outside, "manual labourers", but of maintaining an open rather than closed shop.[104] The efforts of the majority of firemen and nurses to fight all enforced policework and unpaid vacations, respectively, were hampered by substantial minorities of them offering to do the overtime on a paid basis. The Hamilton local of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees said it was not interested in joining with other locals

to fight wage cuts, because the cuts had yet to reach Hamilton.[105]

Bricklayers protested that the city was building retaining walls with unskilled, relief labour. There were complaints that reliefers were putting regular streetsweepers out of work, and that they, instead of laid-off building tradesmen and city workers, were also getting paid work.[106] Some employed workers said they couldn't find houses to rent because reliefers refused to leave them, even after they had been evicted.[107] Unemployed workers sometimes fought amongst themselves. Thus one man distinguished between the deserving unemployed, amongst whom he placed himself, and "bums" and "frauds"; the wives of others wrote to editors, placing their own husbands in the deserving category and those of others in the other two.[108]

The jobless also became divided by homeownership. At first, unemployed homeowners were not eligible for public relief. However, they formed their own association and fought this bitterly. They were eventually fairly successful, but in the process they often derogated the claims of renters as well as landlords. For example, they argued that it was cheaper for the city to have owners not pay taxes than it was to pay the partial rents of tenants. Renters then defended their own interests against those of owners. As a consequence, the public debate about relief was almost always restricted to (a) whether the funds should come from personal property or sales taxes; and (b) which category of the unemployed should get the most relief. Increasing the size of the pie through progressive corporate and personal income taxes, to say nothing of altering the capitalist structure of production and distribution, was seldom discussed.[109]

Some interest groups pleaded the case for other workers besides themselves. For instance, the Building Trades Council members who called for more public construction, in which they would be employed also condemned the low wages of most workers, because they limited the demand for all consumer products; and all direct as opposed to work relief, since only the latter allowed workers' self-respect. Similarly, the plight of regular streetsweepers laid off because reliefers were doing their work as "make-work" was made public by striking reliefers themselves. They maintained that they should do real, paid work which did not disemploy regular city workers.[110] Nevertheless, legitimating one's own group's claims by appealing to the interests and solidarity of the class as a whole was the exception rather than the rule.

B) (1)"Pure" Age and Seniority; (2) Married Men with Children versus Single Men; and (3) World War I Veterans vs. Others

The City General Staff Association complained that senior employees were discharged for purposes of "economy", while junior employees were retained. Letters to editors charged that the real problem with youth unemployment was that youths weren't willing to learn a trade, and that governments were employing mere "boys" to make munitions.[111] Meanwhile, young railway workers formed their own Junior Railway Workers' Association because *they* felt that work had been unfairly distributed to more *senior* workers and unemployed youths and their parents reminded the letter writers that there were no skilled trade jobs to go to, for either parents or children.[112] Married men with children were not only more likely to get scarce work, but to get public relief, and more of it. Understandably, they were also more reluctant than single men to risk losing relief by striking, and when the city threatened to cut off reliefers striking against relief cuts and the absence of paid relief work, the married strikers were the first to break ranks.[113] First World War veterans complained of being unable to compete fairly with younger workers, and to have been discriminated against, even by governments. They laid special claim to employment and relief on the basis of having laid their lives on the line for the nation as a whole. Sometimes, disabled and other subgroups appealed separately. Their appeals were often successful, in that special efforts were made to find them work, housing and relief in general, over other workers.[114]

C) (1) Men versus Women Workers; (2) Employed Married vs. Unemployed Single Women; and (3) Middle Class Women For, Against and Controlling Working Class Women

Even the leading Labour members of City Council charged that the Hospital Board and other public employers employed married women whose husbands were also employed, and objected to a woman as superintendent of the Home for the Aged and Infirm. The women were rarely defended; and the defences centred, not around the right of all workers to employment, but on the inability of husbands to obtain employment or earn enough to support their families, and on women's greater suitability for jobs in health care and related fields, because of their natural propensity to nurture.[115] But *single* women were *also* attacked. "An indignant male" claimed single women should not be taking any jobs from any men, and that those who did should also have to pay the Poll Tax. Meanwhile, when single women defended themselves, they argued that they shouldn't have to pay the tax, because they had to spend more on clothes for work, and so on.[116] Apparently, single women were as likely as men to complain that married women were taking jobs away from them. Some suggested only *married* women should pay the Poll Tax, and one even went so far as to say that the *real* problem was these women's *husbands*. If, in effect, they were "real men", they would not have let their wives work in the first place![117]

That most women's groups were led by middle class women by no means meant that working class women were necessarily ill-served by them. Thus if anyone defended married working women, it was likely to be the members of such groups; they sometimes pleaded the particular plight of working class women (for example, "poor mothers"); and we have already noted how they, almost on their own, took on the relief of unemployed single women.[118] On the other hand, we have also seen how, when there were class conflicts of interest between women, most of these groups pursued their own, middle class interests. To those examples already mentioned, we could add the actions of Nora Francis Henderson, Hamilton's leading feminist of the time, who exhorted wives on relief to bake their own bread rather than complain about the amount of relief, and scolded them for supporting their husbands and sons when they undertook relief strikes. Almost all of Henderson's own solutions for the Depression were petty bourgeois, and she eventually ran for Stevens' Reconstruction Party.[119]

As with men's interest groups, women's groups tended to be divided by age, marital status, and ethnicity as well as class. Independent organizations of women with specifically working class objectives were not totally absent.[120] Nevertheless, most working class women were not organized as either workers or women. When they were, they were at least as likely to be led by middle class as by other working class women.

D) (1) Majority Ethnic Workers versus Minorities; (2) The Majority Against Each Other; and (3) Class Collaboration Within Ethnicity

There were many complaints that too few immigrants were of British origin, and social democrats were prominent complainers. If Canada would only enact unemployment, medical and other social legislation, they argued, more Britons would emigrate to Canada.[121] The Native Sons, various veterans' groups and others demanded that only Canadian *citizens* be given jobs, and sometimes initiated witchhunts where naturalized minority ethnics were falsely accused of taking jobs away from "Canadians".[122] As mentioned previously, ethnic groups tended to be segregated by occupation, and even more so residentially. The latter was often even formalized through "covenants" among property owners.

Now, minority ethnic workers were not simply passive victims, in that they passed on those jobs usually performed by their own members, and were often reticent about teaching non-members the requisite skills.[123] Furthermore, residential segregation was a question of group protection and personal preference as well as necessity. Moreover, our interviews unearthed interesting incidents of cross-ethnic sharing and defence.[124] Again, however, the overall picture is more one of multiple ethnic solitudes than class-wide solidarity. Indeed, even workers of British origin were by no means a solid ethnic bloc. In addition to religious differences, many workers of English and Scottish ancestry, women as well as men, were members of the Masons, its Scottish Rite branch, or the Eastern Star. Although less numerous, workers of Irish Protestant background sent more than 500 delegates to provincial conventions of the Orange Order, and could mobilize 15 to 20,000 members for parades in Hamilton alone.[125] This was more than the workers and their families the Hamilton and District Trades and Labour Council brought out to its annual Labour Day picnic.

As John Bodnar has noted for the United States, the leaders of such ethnic organizations tended to be middle class, so that the likelihood of class collaboration within ethnicity was considerable.[126] Our own, most shocking story came from Alf Ready, the subject of a previous autobiography. He himself was astounded that he was able to retain his job at Westinghouse when every other union organizer was fired. The only explanation he can come up with is that, as with almost all of the managers at the time (1937–8), he too was a Mason.[127]

4) *Independent Working Class Organization*

A) The Sectarianism of Middle-Aged, Male Labour of Dominant Ethnicity

However one assesses the relative merits of the various camps, one must conclude that Depression Hamilton was a caricature of, rather than an exception to, the common cleavages among the TLC, the ACCL, the CIO, and the CPC.[128] For example, at a time when both the City Council and the United Church were vigorously intervening to save these workers' jobs, the HDTLC, with the near-saintly Sam Lawrence in the forefront, refused to support the (largely female) workers on strike at Mercury Mills, on the grounds that their union was not an international one. Similarly, Hamilton was the only city in Canada where the AFL/CIO split was severe enough to result in two, entirely separate, labour councils, each holding its own Labour Day celebrations and competing for sites and endorsements from City Council.[129]

Rifts in the official political arena were no less severe. Hamilton went into the Depression with Canada's strongest local Independent Labour Party, but it was unable to maintain solidarity in the face of the economic crisis. At first, it had to contend only with the infinitely smaller and less legitimate CPC. However, the latter had a dedicated and well-organized cadre who, for example, both wooed away some very capable and active young ILP members and actually campaigned for the *Conservative* rival of

the ILP for a federal seat.[130] Later, however, ILP members were faced with another social democratic rival in the CCF. Although two of its branches decided to join the latter, the large and influential Central Branch not only did not, but often bitterly denounced CCF candidates as traitors to Labour. Perhaps as a consequence, the CCF hit a low-level plateau of membership, and the rump of the ILP withered away, with its most experienced members running only as independents.[131]

B) The Failure to Fully Incorporate Women, Youth and Minority Ethnics

Gender barriers between workers were sometimes broken down in the 30s, so that the rights of married as well as single women were successfully defended, and the ensuing, more class-wide solidarity permitted substantial gains for the working class as a whole.[132] However, such circumstances were rare, and they do not appear to have characterized Hamilton.

The position of the AFL-affiliated TLC was a curious one, even on such seemingly "motherhood-and-apple-pie" issues as minimum wages. In the 20s, it had successfully campaigned against a minimum wage for all workers, and, in the case of Ontario, instead accepted one of $12.50 a week for women only. As well, there were loopholes for employers to avoid even that low minimum, not just for whole categories of women workers, such as domestics, but for young factory workers, who could easily be categorized as only "in training". Its rationale was that women needed to be protected so that the wages of *men* would not be undercut. However, there should not be *any* minimum for *men's* wages, because the average male wage would then tend toward the minimum.[133] Needless to say, the low minimum for women left them uninterested in joining the more highly-paid, but male-dominated and -serving labour movement. There was nothing to prevent employers from paying adult *men* far below the minimum for women, and it tended to undermine solidarity between older and younger workers.[134]

As nearly as I can gather, although Hamilton's WUL and CIO made more of an effort than its TLC to organize women workers, they did little more to break down such structural barriers. Similarly, all of the ILP, CCF and CPC recruited women and occasionally ran them as official candidates, but there is little reason to believe that they were any more integrated into the parties, and that the parties had more meaningful feminist platforms, than was the case elsewhere in Canada.[135] Similarly, the exodus of youth from the ILP seems to have had as much to do with its exclusion of youth from its inner circles and its "old-fogeyness" as the necessary attractiveness of the CPC; although, to its credit, the latter did have a vigorous youth wing in the Young Communist League. Moreover, as we have seen, Hamilton's leading social democrats did much worse than not defend minority ethnic workers. One worker of Ukrainian descent told us of being drawn to an East End CCF office by an especially alluring poster, and then being told that he was not in fact wanted as a party member, because he was too poorly-educated, and spoke English too poorly, to understand its policies![136]

Beyond turning off women, youth and minority ethnics from *any* kind of political organization, this sexism, ageism and ethnocentrism threw them into organizations dominated by the middle class. We have already seen the results for women. The major response of youth was the Canadian Youth Council. Its initial membership included the YCL and the CCF, and the former in particular had a disproportionate influence on the Council's written program, which emphasized youth employment and peace. However, most of its membership consisted of middle-class Christians affiliated with the YMCA and YWCA, and *fascist* youth groups were included as well! Furthermore, the CYC later succumbed to red-baiting and more or less forced out the YCL as well as the fascists. Peace was dropped and replaced by a call for youth to join the armed forces and defend Britain against Hitler.[137] Most minority ethnics continued to support the Liberal Party, although substantial pockets of them remained within "foreign" language sections of the CPC and other socialist parties, and occasionally fascist ones.[138]

C) *The Political Costs of Sectarianism, the Other Isms, and Disorganization*

Hamilton had long been a "Tory town", but the ILP was also strong. At the onset of the Depression, no less than six of the twenty-one members of City Council were members; and the mayor, John Peebles, was a former member of the Knights of Labor who moved steadily toward the left during his term in office, becoming Secretary-Treasurer of the Hamilton CCF immediately after being defeated in 1933. Though only a minority of council, the ILP served as its social conscience. As the Controller with the most votes, Sam Lawrence was usually responsible for relief. He supplemented his official duties by personally intervening for individual workers and dispensing coal from his own basement.[139] As can be seen in Table 4, through 1933 the combined vote for the left rose steadily in East Hamilton, which was almost solidly working class.[140]

This increased support for the ILP, usually at the expense of the Tories, was itself a protest against the ruling class. However, after '33 this trend ceased. The onset of economic recovery may have contributed, but the emergence of the CCF and the refusal of so many ILP members to join it was by far the more important source. It delegitimated the social

democratic left as a whole, as well as divided its vote at a time when the ruling class had decided that City Council was too extravagant in its taxation and dispensing of relief; and when both working class homeowners and renters had felt that it had not gone far and fast enough in precisely those directions.[141] The figures in Table 4 clearly indicate that the larger the number and variety of leftist candidates, the less the vote for the left, although there were other processes at work too.[142]

Parallel problems occurred at the federal level. ILP Central member Humphrey Mitchell broke the Tory stranglehold on the House of Commons seat for Hamilton East in a by-election in 1931, with 58.7% of the vote. However, when he ran again in 1935 the CCF also ran a candidate. While the combined left vote was more than that for any of the other candidates, it was divided between the two social democratic parties, and the Tory won with only a minority of the vote. Somewhat different circumstances characterized provincial politics. Sam Lawrence racked up an impressive 54.9% for the CCF in Hamilton East in 1934, with his nearest rival, the Tory, polling only 37.8%. Yet he was the only social democrat in the entire legislature, and was unable to do very much. Furthermore, he joined the CIO movement and accepted an invitation to travel to Russia, and became a victim of Mitch Hepburn's strange mixture of right-wing conservatism and populism; of out-Torying the Tories when it came to pursuing the interests of large capital, especially by red-baiting and repressing the CIO while professing a "down-home" concern for the plight of workers and farmers.[143]

Dissent and Alienation: "What, strike *in the 30s?! You've got to be* kidding!"

If intense, extensive, and relatively *homogeneous* deprivation, and much, independent, and *class-wide* organization are necessary conditions for working-class revolt, Hamilton did not possess them in the 30s, and we should therefore

Table 4
Class Politics at the Municipal Level, Hamilton East (Wards 5 through 8)

	1929	1931	1933	1935	1937	1939
Overall Turnout	25.8%	45.9%	53.2%	45.5%	?	?
Board of Control						
Left candidates	1(ILP)	1(ILP)	2CCF,1CPC	1CCF,1CPC	1CCF	1CCF
Left winners	1	1	1(CCF)	0	1	1
Votes for Left	5825	13066	25429	5952	8088	11392
Closest Rival	−1476	+4007	+4658	−45	+3387	+2844
% Left Vote	26.2%	27.8%	45.0%	12.7%	26.1%	23.0%
Alderpersons						
Left candidates	6(ILP)	7(ILP)	4ILP,2CCF 1CPC	4ILP,6CCF 1CPC	2ILP,3CCF 1CPC	1ILP,3CCF 1CPC
Left winners	5	4	5	1	1	3
Winning parties	ILP	ILP	2ILP,3CCF	CCF	CCF	2CCF,1CPC
Votes for Left	13352	11910	15752	10340	6740	7780
Closest Rival	+463	+1364	+595	+24	−2746	−1319
% Left Vote	41.7%	42.0%	45.0%	35.0%	30.9%	36.3%
Total Council						
Left/Total	6/21	5/21	6/21	1/21	2/21	4/21
% Left members	28.6%	23.8%	28.6%	4.8%	9.5%	19.0%

Sources: *Hamilton Herald* and/or *Hamilton Spectator*, first week in December.

not expect much rebellion and revolt to have occurred either. We have already seen a great deal of *protest*, but it was that one's own, narrow interest group was not getting its fair slice of the pie, and that the situation should be rectified by decreasing the share of *other* interest groups. As such, it should be taken as a form of "alienation" from other workers rather than rebellion against the ruling class. We have also seen various other forms of alienation: of workers retreating from barriers to gratification by leaving town, ceasing to hope and act, leaving reality, and ceasing to live. But what of rebellion proper, and its frequency and "success" relative to "jurisdictional" protest and other forms of alienation? Also, how were each affected by the state of the economy, deprivation, and the balance of knowledge, power and legitimacy?

Determining the absolute and relative frequency of these responses is no easy task. Needless to say, the newspapers of the time did not report all incidences of them, and some were reported much more than others. Large, public demonstrations tended to be reported, but small ones organized by CPC-related groups were often not. Furthermore, most instances of workers withdrawing because they felt too powerless or illegitimate are unlikely to have been documented in newspapers or elsewhere. Here our oral histories are especially useful. Even so, the same characteristics which made these events unobservable or unremarkable at the time are likely to make them less accessible to workers' memories at present than other, more overt and public events.

Nevertheless, as a rough indication I took the single worst and best years of the 30s according to the indicators in Table 2 (1933 and 1938), and recorded and coded every event in the above three categories reported in at least one of the two daily newspapers. I also tried to determine whether the events were primarily collective or individual, whether the demands and actions entailed were legitimate in terms of capitalism (and therefore attainable without drastically altering the system) and how successful they were. Table 5 provides the major types of events in all but the jurisdictional protest category, which has been dealt with extensively in the previous section.[144]

Table 6 has the summary data for '33 and '38. The first finding of note is that there was a considerable amount of "rebellion" in both years, and that, even allowing for the abovementioned underreporting of "C-type" alienation, rebellion occurred frequently relative to the other types of responses. One is also tempted to conclude that it was more frequent at the worst of the Depression, and less at the best, although one must remember here that the '33 data are from the more liberal *Herald*, and the '38 from the more conservative *Spectator*. However, cross-sectional comparisons tell a somewhat different story.

In the first place, in both years "Ambivalent" responses—that is, which fit a second category as well as rebellion—were more frequent than unequivocably rebellious ones; and overall, the latter constituted a relatively small minority of all responses (16.8% in '33 and 28.6% in '38). Furthermore, of the "Rebellious" responses, only 21 and 27.6%, respectively, were "Illegitimate", or beyond the capitalist system. Secondly, there were at least half as many collective jurisdictional disputes against *other workers* as there were collective rebellious acts against *employers and/or governors*. Moreover, in 1933 almost half of the rebellious acts were performed only by workers acting *individually*; by 1938 there were twice as many individual as collective acts of rebellion, and most of the latter were the relatively safe acts of writing to the editor.

Since these findings are equivocal with regard to the distress-dissent and power-alienation theses, let us examine some of the specific events more closely.

Figure 1 graphs the strikes in Hamilton for all the years of the 30s. On the face of it, there were actually 10 in 1933, if one includes a strike by reliefers, that is, a refusal on their part to do the required day of unpaid labour for the City. That the peak occurred in '33 seems to support the deprivation-dissent hypothesis, if that year is in fact taken as the worst one of the Depression. However, things were not quite what they seemed.

In the first place, two of the ten strikes did not in fact occur. The report of a strike by Bricklayers appears to have been a face-saving device, in that they did not strike, and instead accepted the wage cuts demanded by building contractors. Similarly, when they refused to accept the cuts, the Masons and Plasterers were locked out until they too accepted them.[145]

Secondly, of the remaining eight strikes, six were "defensive": those of the Carpenters, Plumbers and Electricians were "desperation" strikes against wage cuts demanded by building contractors; the Real Silk and Mercury Mills workers were fighting piece-rate decreases accompanying "Bedeaux"-type modifications of the production process; relief workers were protesting cuts in relief.[146]

Thirdly, the circumstances under which they occurred are at least as open to a balance-of-power as to a deprivation-dissent interpretation. High proportions of the building tradesmen were already unemployed, yet most employers continued to respect closed shop clauses, so that the former presumably had little to

Table 5
Examples of Classification of Responses to Deprivation

	Collective		Individual	
	Legitimate	Illegitimate	Legitimate	Illegitimate
A. *Rebellion*	Unionizing; Striking; Demonstrating with permission; Deputations, petitions, letters	Picket-line violence; Demonstrating when forbidden; Preventing evictions	Refusing to sign employment contracts; Demonstrating; Deputating; Writing editor	Killing foreman; Anointing landlady with cabbage; Threatening mayor
B. *Against Other Workers*	Blaming other groups of workers for own misfortune; Asserting seniority and other rights over	Craft, age, gender and Race/Ethnic stereotyping; Assault	Competing with other workers for jobs, labour time, political patronage	Blaming workmates, family members; Assault
C. *Retreat/ Withdrawal*	Dissolving union; Giving up demands, strike, demonstration	Dissolving family; Quarreling; Demoralization	"Lumping it"; Quitting job; Leaving town with notice	Leaving town without notice; Alcoholism; Madness; Suicide
D. *Ambivalence*	Blaming other workers as well as rulers; Demanding more for own group than others	Demanding structural changes, but authoritarian ones or means (e.g., fascism)	Not working hard; Not voting	Not showing up for relief "make-work"; Not paying Poll Tax; Relief fraud; Theft

lose by striking. The relief workers did stand to lose relief, and when threatened with it, they ended their strike. On the other hand, recall that textile and clothing firms were not seriously hurt by the Depression, particularly by '33, so that the other four groups of workers struck under circumstances where they had a reasonable chance of winning. In three of the four cases the strikers, or at least those who struck first, were among the most skilled, and therefore less easily replaced: hosiery workers in Mercury Mills and Real Silk, and the weaving and rubber workers in Hamilton Cottons.[147]

Fourthly, however, near-total failure was the result for all but three of the strikes. All of the building tradesmen returned to work and accepted wage cuts; in this, their third strike in four years, the workers at Mercury Mills were faced with the prospect of the main department struck being moved to Woodstock. This is how the reporter for the federal Department of Labour wrote to the Deputy Minister, describing the outcome of the strike: "Workers straggled back ...\ No change in system of work. Mr. Rowatt has promised to fill out #2 form & send it to you. I doubt if he will, our experience with these workers has been in the past, *they are afraid to talk*"[my emphasis]. Their fears were well grounded: all of the leaders of the '32 strike had been fired. We interviewed one strike leader and two rank-and-file participants. The latter were young and inexperienced (one struck only because her father insisted that she do so), and the leader complained that most strikers were indeed terrified and unreliable.[148] Two of the remaining strikes resulted in compromises. Only one led to complete victory (Hat and Cap workers got union recognition and a wage increase), but these gains were lost in the very next year, and workers had to strike again twice to regain the previously-won outcomes.[149]

What happened in subsequent years more generally?

First, of the seven sets of workers who actually struck in 1933 and *could* have done so later in the 30s (relief workers were presumably no longer the same individuals), only three, and perhaps two, did so. Hat and Cap workers struck *four* more times; Hamilton Cotton workers struck once; the Carpenters are reputed to have done so twice more. (In fact, I could find no documentation of the latter.)[150] Other than the Carpenters, none of the workers who had totally lost their strikes in '33 struck again. This was true for the workers at Mercury Mills: despite their having not given up twice previously, their third loss in a row appears to have been their "final straw" for the 30s.

Table 6
Summary of Types/Numbers of Responses in 1933 and 1938

		1933			1938		
		Collective	Individual	Total	Collective	Individual	Total
A.	Rebellious	47	43	90	25	51	76
B.	Against Other Workers	27	10	37	12	21	33
C.	Retreat/ Withdrawal	8	15	23	1	4	5
D.	Ambivalent (A + B or C)	16	369	385	0	152	152

Second, almost all of the workers who struck after '33 were in industries and firms not heavily hurt by the economic crisis. Besides textile and clothing workers, the others who did so were glass, paper box, and bakery workers in manufacturing, and milk drivers, restaurant workers and projectionists in the service sector.[151] Most of the exceptions are explainable as (a) already unionized workers facing direct or indirect wage cuts (the Sheet Mill workers at Stelco); (b) unionizing drives or unions spanning entire industries (Longshoremen for the Great Lakes as a whole); or (c) other workers, usually unionized, in industries or firms whose economic situation had greatly improved by the late 30s: National Steel Car and home construction (Carpenters).[152]

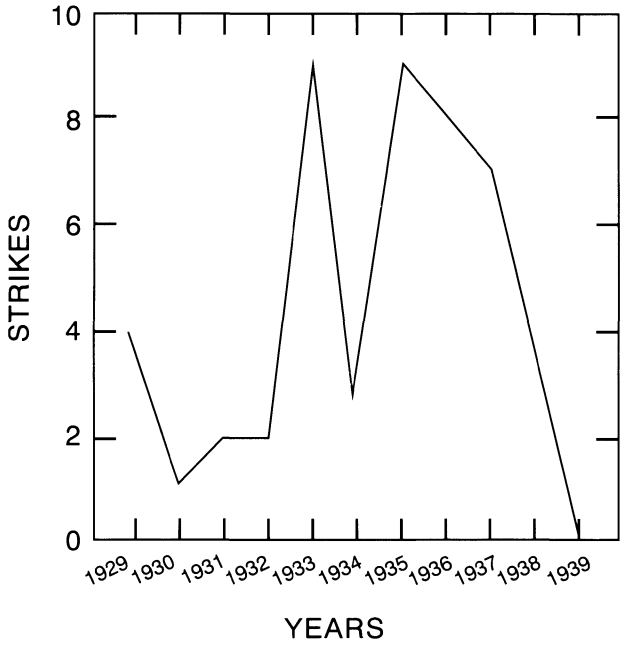
Strike at Mercury Mills, 1933. (Compliments of May Gisborn, top left.)

Third, for the 30s as a whole, the vast bulk of the strikes occurred in the later and better years. As noted previously, most of 1933 was probably in fact a time of recovery. But even if we classify it among the worst, 31 of the 45 strikes were between '34 and '39. Only 14 occurred between the official onset of the Depression (October '29) and the end of '33.

In this regard, it is interesting to note which better predicts the occurrence of strikes: deprivation *per se*, or the size of the "reserve army of labour" and the balance of power between capital and labour. Figure 2 gives the fit between the number of families on relief and the number of strikes, whereas Figures 3 and 4 provide that for the *inverse* number of unplaced registrants at the Employment Bureau for February and September, respectively. Presumably, the greater the number of unplaced registrants, the greater the number of workers competing for jobs. Although neither families on relief nor unplaced registrants is in the same units as strikes, both deprivation and competition correlate with the number of strikes surprisingly well. But in line with the balance-of-power hypothesis, competition for jobs, especially in the month of September, predicts strikes much better than does deprivation *per se*.[153]

Finally, how did the demands of the later strikes compare with those of the earlier, and what were the respective outcomes? Although the later strikes also tended to be defensive, there were more offensive demands in the later than the earlier years. Furthermore, whereas compromise outcomes were the modal ones in the later years as well, there was a large difference in the percentage of strikes which were *totally lost*. Thus while 53.8% of the early strikes were lost, this was true for only 24% of those which occurred after 1933.[154]

Figure 1
Strikes in Hamilton in the 1930s



When we asked workers whether they thought most were ready to complain and protest at a moment's notice, or whether they were instead too busy worrying about where their next meal was coming from to complain or protest; one woman insisted that we had it all wrong, that "They were too *scared* to protest!". Many subsequent interviewees agreed with her. Similarly, when we asked workers whether they or others had struck in the 30s, we often received responses ranging from bemused tolerance to outright ridicule. "What, *strike* in the *30s?!*" some said. "You've got to be *kidding*!" Some went on to outline the thesis that workers seldom strike in bad economic times. The vast majority could not recall *any* strikes having occurred in the 30s.

Of course, by themselves, strikes seldom indicate dissent against capitalism as a system. Most are undertaken by single groups of workers against single employers, to acquire or protect their own "piece of the pie" rather than to alter capitalist relations of production and ruling. Most occur within the framework of collective bargaining, and are therefore legitimate. To be sure, the latter framework was not yet firmly in place in the 30s. Both the general act of unionizing as well as such specific ones as resisting the "Bedeaux" system and opposing relief cuts at least objectively *challenged* capitalism, even when workers were not all that class conscious. However, even picket line violence to stop strikebreakers was rare, and it too characterized only strikes in the later years of the 30s.[155]

Much the same could be said of other collective acts in the 30s, even those, such as forcibly preventing evictions, which also contained "violence". Whereas the organizers were often Communists whose aims were to raise workers' consciousness rather than simply prevent individual evictions, the potential "evictees" were often rank-and-file workers with nowhere else to go, who accepted the offer of help reluctantly, and remained terrified that they would still be evicted, even when the initial act of prevention was successful. Similarly, threatening and beating up relief inspectors and bailiffs was as far as most reliefers themselves appear to have gone in the direction of dissent.[156]

Better indications of dissent would probably be the occurence of, and attendance at, extra-parliamentary rallies and demonstrations; the demands and immediate outcomes of such events; the appearance of new, dissenting political parties and other organizations; membership in these organizations and other, longer-standing ones; and the various consequences of this organization. By these criteria, Depression Hamilton had dissent, but not *all* that much of it.

The most dramatic and memorable incident of dissent was the May Day rally and demonstration in Woodlands Park in 1932. This event started out as a small gathering and demonstration of the unemployed, organized and led mostly by members of the CPC. Because it was well advertised by flyers and word of mouth beforehand, the two to five hundred actual, original participants (estimates vary) were matched by as many as eight or nine thousand curious spectators. What changed the ratio of participants to spectators, and the whole course of the demonstration, were the actions of the police force and a large number of firemen deputized for the occasion.

The demonstrators had been refused permission to use the park. The police tried to stop them once they were underway,

Figure 2
Strikes (---) By Families on Relief

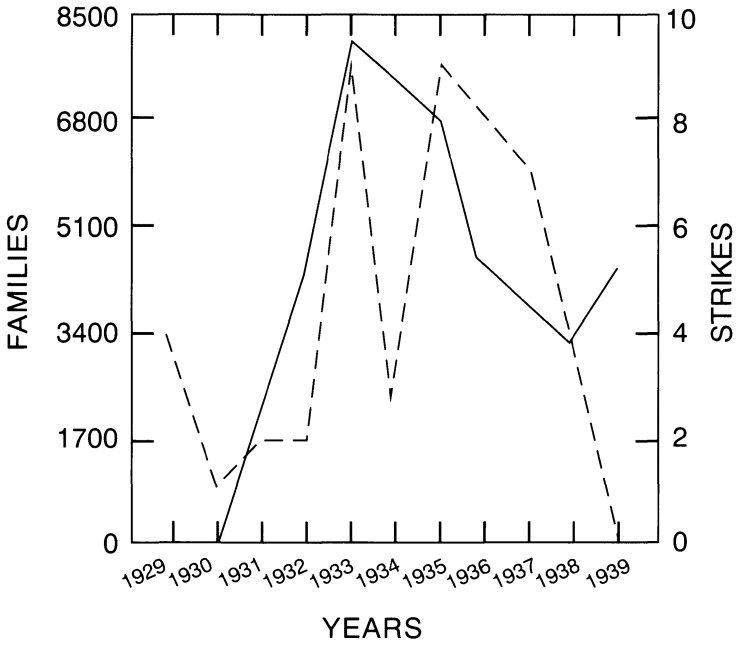
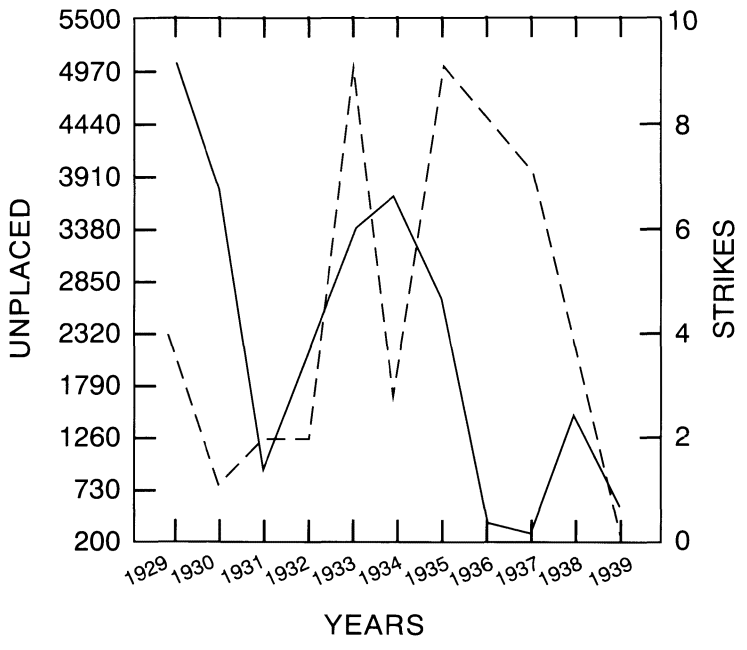


Figure 3
Strikes (---) By Unplaced Registrants (February) (6000-x)



and when they would not disperse many of the police physically attacked the demonstrators. The firemen were ordered to turn their hoses on the crowd, which they did, fairly indiscriminately. Although a majority of the crowd subsequently ran for cover, over 3000 of the spectators joined the demonstrators, filling the entire street. The crowd then marched to City Hall and angrily demanded retribution as well as a better deal for the unemployed in general.[157]

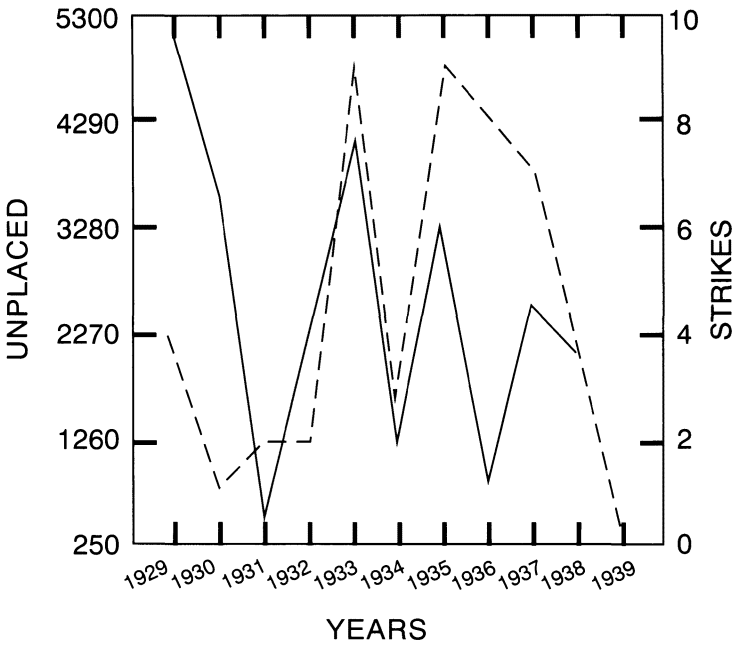
This demonstration had far-reaching consequences. Bennett Tories were convinced The Revolution had begun, and successfully requested that both daily newspapers, including the Liberal one, not even *mention* the event! Subsequent meetings of City Council were guarded by police and firemen, and the latter logged well over 3000 hours of unpaid, overtime policework for the rest of 1932 alone. Both according to other researchers and our interviewees, observing the repression of the demonstration turned many spectators, even those who did not then join it, against City Council. Motions were introduced at the HDTLC to expel the Firefighters' Association, and they were nearly successful.[158]

On the other hand, as already mentioned, the Board of Control quickly learned to give permission for, and not repress, subsequent demonstrations of this nature. Furthermore, contrary to the claims of many, the modal response of the spectators we interviewed was not to become politically radicalized in general, but to only be sympathic to repressed demonstrators because they were distressed economically and deprived of their civil right to complain about it. There were many subsequent attempts to recreate the event and its consequences, but none were successful. The original number of active participants was seldom exceeded, and then only barely. Similarly, that many spectators was never

reached again. Most were still looking for entertainment rather than a chance to join The Revolution. When the ruling class refused to help provide it, they simply stayed home.[159]

Again, while the short-term consequences might fit the deprivation-dissent hypothesis, the longer-term ones seem closer to an imbalance-of-power and alienation interpretation. That is, most rank-and-file participants "gave up" because their earlier action was not successful, and because other, subsequent actions were even riskier. Thus they would be cut off relief if they refused to do relief work, as we have seen, and jailed if they "attacked" police or disrupted City Council meetings. (The two main leaders of '32 spent the summer in jail.) Meanwhile, most spectators were only fraternally deprived in the first place, and hence had less interest in, and more to lose by, joining in.

Figure 4
Strikes (---) By Unplaced Registrants (September) (6000-x)



Unfortunately, there is little information about the size and health of Depression Hamilton's left-wing social movements and parties. We have already seen the ILP and CCF to have been somewhat large and active, but both concentrated upon parliamentary politics, made little effort to organize the unemployed, and would have little to do with the CPC. They were also dominated by middle-aged men of British ancestry. The CPC cast a much wider net: it organized both its own industrial unions and the unemployed, it had an active and fairly independent youth wing in the YCL, and a women's wing in the Women's Labour League. The *majority* of its members were minority ethnics, and it spawned such umbrella movements as the Canadian Labour Defense League and the League Against War and Fascism.[160]

Yet in Hamilton as elsewhere, the CPC tended to be marginalized when it acted independently, and coopted, used and discarded when it acted in concert with the more legitimate TLC, CIO and CCF.[161] We shall never know just how many members it had in Hamilton in the 30s. For much of that period it was so secretive that when we asked one former member whether his wife was also in the Party, he replied he *thought* she was in one of the "artsy" West End branches, but then he wasn't sure, because even spouses were forbidden to discuss it![162]

One convention report put Hamilton's membership at 309, but local party members who joined in the 30s question this figure. According to them, if it is accurate, it probably included the entire area; that is, the towns of Burlington, Dundas, Bartonville, Saltfleet and Grimsby as well as Hamilton itself.[163] In his lively autobiography, Peter Hunter paints a picture of a great many foreign-language sections of the Party in Hamilton. There is no question that when the Party wanted to mobilize people to petition governments, it could come up with an amazing array of ethnic "front" groups. Nevertheless, one gets the distinct impression that such groups were very small indeed; that their major field of activity was defending themselves; and then as much against other members of their ethnic communities who wanted to legitimate themselves and assimilate as against the wider, dominant ethnic community.[164]

Conclusion

The present paper does not decisively "prove" the validity of one Depression scenario and "refute" the other. To the contrary, it could be construed as underlining the importance of *both*. That dissent is "fueled" by distress is not only reasonable, but supported here by the fact that in Depression Hamilton, there was

much dissent as well as distress; and that much of the dissent, including some of its strongest and more remarkable expressions, from the election of social democrats to "illegal" strikes and "violent" public demonstrations, occurred when the crisis was at its worst. On the other hand, we have also seen that by itself, this proposition has limited utility. Other, alienated responses to distress were more frequent than dissent, and the relationship between distress and dissent is clearly a highly contingent one.

I have concentrated here upon the balance-of-power contingency. Further investigation of our interviews will throw more light upon both the roles of knowledge and legitimacy on the one hand, and the relationship between distress and the various responses on the other. However, I think it is already safe to conclude that a great many workers responded to distress with *neither* dissent *nor* alienation. Instead, they made do in a variety of mundane and creative ways, some of them illegitimate, but many more of them legitimate. If their lives were heroic, they were so on a much smaller and more human scale than the portraits of them by many of us "politically-correct" historians and sociologists.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

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5. Jamieson, op. cit., p.269. Betcherman, op. cit., pp.18, 212-3. CPC, op. cit., pp.71, 79, 97, 116. Struthers, op. cit., p.85. Thompson, op. cit., pp.226–33, 272. Brown, op. cit., p.205. Brodie and Jenson, op. cit., p.164. Berton, op. cit., pp.88, 127, 325, 458.

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7. Cohen, op. cit., pp.7, 253. Greg Kealey and Douglas Cruikshank, "Strikes." Pp.95–6 in Kerr et al, op. cit.

8. Brody, op. cit., pp.99–103. Morton, op. cit., pp.141–3. Heron et al, op. cit., pp.34, 106, 131–2. Brodie and Jenson, op. cit., ppp.164–5. Heron, op. cit., p.165. Berton, op. cit., p.400.

Kealey and Cruikshank, op. cit. Joy Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, men, and change in two industrial towns 1880–1950.* UTP, 1990. Pp.40–1, 213–4.

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10. Heron et al, op. cit., pp.53, 106, 143. Storey, op. cit., pp.208–12, 234. CPC, op. cit., p.68. Heron, op. cit., p.172. Berton, op. cit., p.290.

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15. Brody, op. cit., pp.130–2, 170.

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20. Horn, 1972, op. cit., pp.662–82. Braithwaite, op. cit., pp.101-2. John Taylor, "Mayors a la Mancha: An aspect of Depression leadership in Canadian cities." *Urban History Review*, 1981, *9* (February), pp.3–14. Dubofsky, op. cit., p.210. Thompson, op. cit., p.101. Berton, op. cit., pp.423–30.

21. Cassidy, in Richter, op. cit., p.209. Gray, op. cit., pp.28–9, 152. Evans, op. cit., p.192. Broadfoot, op. cit., pp.94, 127–8, 212, 357–8. Sidney Hutcheson, *Depression Stories.* Vancouver: New Star Books, 1976. Even as a Communist worker, he described his own and others' typical reactions in these terms: "if you had a job you felt safe at the time, and when you were out of work you were too busy trying to stay alive to worry about the system."(p.111) Dubofsky, op. cit., p.216. Storey, op. cit., p.2. Bird, op. cit. Horn, 1984, op. cit., pp.11–20; 1986, op. cit., pp.74, 108. Berton, op. cit., pp.13, 19, 148, 237, 434.

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23. Horn, 1972, op. cit., pp.392–4; 1986, op. cit., p.33. Broadfoot, op. cit., pp.361–70. Braithwaite, op. cit., pp.32, 42–3. Finkel, op. cit., pp.157–8, 166. Dubofsky, op. cit., pp.212–3, 221–3. Brody, op. cit., p.154. Morton, op. cit., p.159. Betcherman, op. cit., pp.108–15, 132. Brodie and Jenson, op. cit., pp.157, 174, 181. Berton, op. cit., pp.23, 75, 98. Parr, op. cit., pp.111–9, says that it was particularly illegitimate for *women* to strike and otherwise dissent.

24. Taylor, op. cit. Craig Littler, *The Development of the Labour Process in Capitalist Societies.* London: Heinemann, 1982. Pp.1–5, 192. Cohen, op. cit., pp.32–3, 47–51, Chapter 4, 350. Parr, op. cit., pp.43–52.

25. The general argument, with supporting data, is presented forcefully by Charles, Louise and Richard Tilley, *The Rebellious Century 1830-1930.* London: Dent, 1975. Pp.244, 257, 271. "...\ violent repression works. It works in the short run. It works even better in the long run ...\"(p.285). For its "alienating" effects in the 30s, see: Gray, op. cit.,p.133. Horn, 1972, op. cit., p.393. Abella, op. cit., p.26, 54. Broadfoot, op. cit., his title. Dubofsky, op. cit., pp.217–8. Storey, op. cit., p.2. Betcherman, op. cit., p.144. Horn, 1986, op. cit., his title. Heron, op. cit., pp.172–3. Berton, op. cit., pp.118, 271. Faue, op. cit., pp.135, 154.

26. *The Class Struggles in France.* In *Collected Works, Vol.10.* New York: International Publishers, 1978.

27. Volume *1.* Moscow: Progress, no date. P.598. My emphasis.

28. *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.* In *Collected Works, Vol.11.* 1979.

29. See my *Marx and the Missing Link: 'Human Nature'.* London/New Jersey: Macmillan/Humanities, 1989/1992.

30. For a critique of its hydraulicism, see especially the Tilleys, op. cit.; for the "tool box", Paul Edwards and Hugh Scullion, *The Social Organization of Industrial Conflict* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981); psychological reductionism: Michael Billig, *Social Psychology and Intergroup Relations* (London: Academic, 1976); and productivism and sexism: Veronica Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled: Lives of girls and women in English Canada, 1919–1939* (Toronto: Copp-Clark Pitman [Longman], 1988); Parr, op. cit.; and Faue, op. cit.

31. Hamilton had two daily newspapers until the end of March, 1936. Having secretly bought out the struggling *Hamilton Herald* some time earlier, the *Hamilton Spectator* let the latter die at that point (John Weaver, personal communication). Unless specified otherwise, all footnoted dates prior to April 1936 refer to the *Herald*, and all those after March 1936 to the *Spectator.* However, for reasons which will become clear shortly, most references are from the two years of 1933 and 1938. The oral histories are drawn from a "haphazard" sample stratified by gender, ethnicity, industry and firm. All the men were "blue collar", "manual", "production" workers; but the women also included domestics, clerical and sales, and such "semi-professionals" as nurses, social workers,

librarians and teachers. The male interviews are numbered M001 to M100; the female interviews F101 to F200.

32. A United Church minister, quoted in one of the local newspapers.

33. For example, see J.W. Watson, "Industrial and commercial development." Pp.21–39 in Alexander Wingfield (Ed.), *The Hamilton Centennial 1846–1946*. Hamilton: Davis-Lisson, 1946. He claimed that according to the 1941 Census, Hamilton was the most industrialized of all Canadian cities; and that metals comprised 40% of the city's manufacturing. Weaver, op. cit., p.135, attributes much of the devastation Hamilton experienced in the Depression to its heavy reliance upon the production of capital goods in particular. According to Harold Wood, "Because its industries depended mainly on national and international markets, Hamilton suffered more severely during the Depression than did other cities supported to a greater degree by trade with local hinterlands." See his "Emergence of the modern city: Hamilton, 1891-1950." Pp.119–37 in M.J. Dear et al (Eds.), *Steel City: Hamilton and region*. UTP, 1987. Pp.130–1.

34. Department of Trade and Commerce, Dominion Bureau of Statistics (DBS), Census of Industry. *Manufacturing Industries of the Province of Ontario*, 1931–1935.

35. DBS, Seventh Annual Census, 1931. Vol.*6*. *Unemployment*. Ottawa: King's Printer, 1934. Pp.510, 536–7; 547.

36. Ibid, Census Monograph No.*11*. *Unemployment*. 1938. P.134.

37. Ibid, Vol.*6*, op. cit., pp.510–18. The 90% figure came from Sam Lawrence (15/9/33).

38. (1) The number of families on relief in February was usually reported in the newspapers in the second week of March. Sam Lawrence reported that the 1933 figure was higher than that for Winnipeg (2/6/33); the 22.5% comes from Wood, op. cit. (2) Single men at the soup kitchen: 21/1/31; the second figure is the average for 12/1/33 and 11/3/33. (3) Unemployed single women: 4/12/30; 12/11/32.

39. E.g., 15/7/32; 18/7/32.

40. Gardens: 9/2/38. Seasonal reductions: 29/5, 31/5/33.

41. E.g., 1933: 12/1, 14/2, 4/10, 13/11, 15/11, 29/11, 1/12, 16/12.

42. Free services of doctors and dentists: 4/10, 26/11/33. For increased credit from them as well as grocers, see Harry Cassidy, *Unemployment and Relief in Ontario 1929–1932*. Toronto: Dent, 1932. Pp.242–3.

43. 1933: 11/1, 19/1, 1/2, 8/2, 27/4. For one claim that it boosted morale, see 17/5/33.

44. The term "blasted hopes" is Dubofsky's, op. cit. Examples abound in our interviews, and will be reported later.

45. Interviews. See also Roberts, 1981, op. cit., and Heron, op. cit.

46. 1933: 24/3, 2/4, 17/4, 29/4.

47. 1933: 30/8, 31/8, 8/9.

48. 1933: 16/6, 25/7.

49. For deportation figures for 1932 as a whole, see 25/4/33. For specific cases in 1933, see 9/1, 10/1, 23/2, 17/4, 25/4, 2/6. For two infamous Hamilton cases as well as the situation for Canada more generally, see Barbara Roberts, *Whence They Came: Deportation from Canada 1900–1935*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988.

50. For walking around one's own block: 4/12/33; for duplicating and distributing left-wing handbills: 9/1, 2/5, 11/5/33. For some other cases, see 4/3, 17/7/33.

51. 1931 Census, op. cit., Vol.*6*, pp.510–18.

52. Census of Industry, 1931–1935, op. cit.

53. The following reported new orders, and therefore calling back longterm employees, and/or hiring new ones in *1933*: Stelco, Hamilton By-Product Ovens, National Steel Car, Mercury Mills, Westinghouse, Hamilton Bridge, Union Drawn Steel, Firestone, Stanley Steel, Howe Candy, Tuckett's Tobacco, Beech Nut Gum, Hoover, MacGregor Shirt, Studebaker, and the three main steamship companies. In general, Hamilton's textile trade in 1933 was up 100% over 1932 (18/10/33).

54. The textile and clothing firms reporting full-production were Canadian Cottons, Kismet, Eaton's Spinning Mill, Mercury Mills, Zimmerknit, Hamilton Cottons, J.R. Moodie, National Hosiery Mills, and Cambridge Clothes. Those reporting *almost* full production were Chipman-Holton, Cosmos Imperial, and Mohawk Mills. National Hosiery Mills and Zimmerknit also had increased profits. Firms in other industries reporting full-production included Stelco's Queen Street Works, Porritts and Spencer, CNR and the Hamilton Street Railway. The latter and Canadian Canners had greatly increased profits.

55. See my "CAGES: Class/Craft, Age, Gender and Ethnic Biases in Depression Hamilton". Paper presented to the joint oral history session of the meetings of the Canadian Historical Society and the Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association, Kingston, June, 1991.

56. See Littler, op. cit., and Miriam Glucksmann, *Women Assemble: Women workers and the new industries in inter-war Britain*. London: Routledge, 1990.

57. However, women replacing men is only a hint in the information I have. It may well be that, as Faue claimed for Minneapolis (op. cit.), there was not in fact very much of it. Either way, that an increase in the proportion of women in an occupation from 1931 to 1941 decreased its average wages has been established by Bonnie and John Fox, "Women in the labour market: Exclusion and competition." *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 1986, *23* (February), pp.1–21.

58. 1931 Census. Monograph No.*4*. W. Burton, *Racial Origins and Nativity of Canadian People*. 1937. Table 71, p.276.

59. 4/8/37; 23/2, 18/5/38.

60. Interviews.

61. (1) Homeowners: 1933: 13/9, 27/9. (2) Paid labour: 1933: 3/8, 18/9, 7/10; 1938: 19/4, 3/8, 18/9, 7/10. (3) Relief office: 21/1/33. (4) Inspections: 28/10/33; 3/1, 4/1, 26/8/38.

62. 1937, an election year for Mitch Hepburn, was an especially "good" one for CIO-bashing. It occurred almost daily (e.g., between 2/1/37 and 29/9/37), with lurid accounts of pistol-packing; allegedly Communist, or even fascist; leaders and "volcanic" and misled rank-and-filers. For Hamilton's rulers' turn to repressive tolerance, see 1/5, 2/5/33, and judges' concern with the charge of vagrancy, 17/6/38.

63. (1) On "luxuries": "'If things were tough, and you had a cigarette, things didn't look as bad. But if you didn't have a cigarette, you had hit rock bottom.' We could always get the makings, and roll them. If you ran out when you were working, you got these tailormades out in the alley." (M018:6) (2) On making do with necessities: F103: "Did you know of any poor people, Rose?" F102: "Everybody that I know of had something to eat." ...\ F103: ...\ You know, when you were eating, you don't think about being poor."(p.26)

64. Interviews. City employees voluntarily gave 1% of their income toward relief (25/5/32); Hydro employees gave 5% (15/3/33).

65. For example, see Bryan Palmer, *A Culture in Conflict: Skilled workers and industrial capitalism in Hamilton, Ontario, 1860–1914.* Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979.

66. International Union of Bricklayers and Masons, Local 1. Letterbook, 1921–1930. Amalgamated Transit Workers, Local 107. Minutebook, 1928-1932. Both are in McMaster University's Mills Library Labour Archives. A benefit concert for musicians is referred to in 18/5/33; and the pension plans of firemen and police in 9/6/38. The Bell story comes from F136, F137 and F138.

67. See Note 64.

68. For example, in February of '34 the executive of the Bricklayers' local wrote Bennett, pleading for more public works, and describing themselves as "*forced* (through no fault of their own) to *ask* for *Relief* ...\ We understand, that provision has been made, for *those on Relief*, but none for *those* who are *not* on Relief to get *anything* not even a few Days Work ...\". A week or so later, a member of the Carpenters' local wrote, "This is not an official letter, but written as a humble citizen, very humble just now, as, because of sickness and unemployment, I am being kept by the state." Papers of R.B. Bennett, Reel M-1446, #484428–9, #484463, respectively, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

69. John Bodnar, *Immigration and Industrialization: Ethnicity in an American mill town, 1870–1940.* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977. Pp.75, 102, 135, 151. _____, Roger Simon and Michael Weber, *Lives of Their Own: Blacks, Italians, and Poles in Pittsburgh, 1900–1960.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982. Pp.56–8, 63, 73, 78. *The Transplanted: A history of immigrants in urban America.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985. P.xvi. However, especially in the latter work, Bodnar stresses that different ethnic groups relied upon family and kin to different extents and in different ways. Cohen, op. cit., pp.57, 238.

70. Cohen, op. cit., pp.217, 246–9. See also Bodnar, 1977, op. cit., pp.xvii, 151; 1985, op. cit., pp.85–116. However, Bodnar also claims that relying *primarily* upon the family and ethnic group, and the existence of strong divisions among the latter, remained among Pittsburgh workers until the 1940s (1977, pp.144, 149; 1985, p.213). Faue (op. cit, pp.45–6, 98–9) makes the same arguments for the family and the divisions between men and women workers.

71. Interviews. See also Faue, op. cit.

72. 2/9/33; 22/6, 28/9/38. Interviews. For an account of how the family economy worked in Canada more generally, see Strong-Boag, op. cit.; for Paris and New Hamburg, Ontario, see Parr, op. cit., pp.79–92, 190–1, 198–202.

73. One woman (F189) told us of how her mother and the woman next door would buy roasts of beef and the weekend newspaper, with its job ads, alternate weekends, and share them. Just how much this sharing was organized by women is suggested by the fact that her brother (M100) did not know of the practice.

74. Mirra Komarovsky, *The Unemployed Man and His Family.* New York, 1940. However, Parr, op. cit., pp.200–1 questions these claims, for both other cities as well as the two Ontario towns she studied.

75. John Weaver, personal communication. For some specific cases, see 9/1, 27/10, 28/8/33.

76. For some general statistics on suicide, see 2/11/33; for some specific cases, 1933: 21/4, 26/5, 29/5, 28/8, 29/8, 30/8, 5/9, 27/10, 1/11. For reports of family problems, see 1933: 4/4, 14/9, 21/10; 1938: 2/5, 25/6. For suicide and family problems more generally, see Cassidy, op. cit., pp.251–2, and Leonard Marsh, *Health and Unemployment.* Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1938. Pp.914, 122–3.

77. See previous note. In fact, the FWB later argued that families actually fared better in the worst of economic times, and that relative prosperity was more likely to break them up (4/3/38).

78. M041. 12/4/37.

79. Cassidy, 1932, op. cit., pp.172–5, 217–21, 226–7. However, he says that despite its efforts, Hamilton's ratio of public to private relief remained 5 to 1. Apparently, Toronto was more successful.

80. Anglican surpluses: e.g., 19/1/32; Black Baptist deficits: 18/5, 10/6/38. Of UC congregations: they "are in the heart of the industrial section of the city, and accordingly are greatly affected by unemployment. ... In some of these churches everyone of the church officials and 80 per cent. of the workers of the congregation are unemployed" (12/11/32).

81. (1) Top Catholics and Franco, etc.: 1938: 12/1, 24/1, 4/4, 4/7. (2) Top United Churchers and the left: 5, 6, 7/6/33; 28/3, 11/5, 7/12/38. (3) Baptists' criticism: 11/10/33. Cassidy, 1932, op. cit., pp.220–7, said many Catholic parishes did do relief work, but he implies that United Church ones did more.

82. Two phone conversations in attempts to get recommendations for retired workers to interview. Stanley Hudecki (Ed.); Gladys (Flis) Williams and Henrietta (Wasik) Pecyna (Narrators), *Heaven Sent: Diamond Jubilee of the Parish of St. Stanislaus Kostka.* Hamilton: 1987. P.90.

83. Layoffs of public employees, 1933: 25/5, 1/6, 7/7, 22/8, 31/10, 16/11. Direct wage cuts, both sectors, 1933: 10/1, 13/1, 14/1, 18/2, 1/3, 15/5, 26/6, 8/7, 26/7, 28/7, 9/8, 19/8.

84. "Speedups" also occurred at Gelndale Spinning Mills, National Hosiery Mills, and others. For the increased workloads of streetcar drivers and projectionists, see 9/8, 8/9/33. For unpaid overtime, see 1933: 21/1, 1/3, 8/3, 17/3, 22/3; 1938: 5/7, 6/7.

85. (1) Telling employees to go on relief: 25/8/33. (2) Long workweeks and absence of vacations and pensions: 1933: 18/3, 12/8, 18/11; 1938: 9/6. (3) Union busting: e.g., 2/6/38. For Stelco and Dofasco, see Storey, op. cit. Our interviews turned up instances at Dominion Glass, Westinghouse, and many others.

86. 40-hour week for building trades: 26/7/33. For changes at Stelco and Dofasco, see 17/2/38, and Storey, op. cit.

87. Benevolent contractor: 17/8/33. IHC: 8/11/33; 25/3, 7/4/38. William Kilbourn (*The Elements Combined: A history of the Steel Company of Canada.* Toronto: Clark, Irwin, 1960. P.153) claims that Stelco also kept men on even though it did not have the means to pay them profitably, and that this action helped morale.

88. 16/5, 18/5/33.

89. Soup kitchen: 21/1, 26/1, 4/2/32. Matinee: 14/12, 18/12/33.

90. Interviews.

91. Op. cit., pp.184, 211, 238, 267–8, 313–4. See also Brody, op. cit., p.104, and Heron, op. cit., pp.106–10.

92. Storey, op. cit.; Heron, op. cit. Interviews.

93. Low pay: 1933:5/9; 1938: 15/1, 6/4, 14/4, 20/10. Giving away own employees' work: 6/4, 18/5, 20/10/38. Bragging about surpluses: 1938: 2/2, 8/2, 12/2, 6/5, 24/12.

94. E.g., 17/3, 25/8/33.

95. 6/9/33.

96. E.g., 1933: 27/6, 25/8, 1/9, 3/11; 1938: 24/1. The whens and whys will be presented in a separate paper.

97. Relief for transients: 7/10/38. Comparisons: e.g., 7/1/33. See also Cassidy, 1932, op. cit., pp.144–5, 149, 181, 206; Marsh, op. cit., pp.178-83; Richter, op. cit., 85–6.

98. See previous note, plus 22/12/38.

99. Retailers: 1933: 20/1, 6/3, 4/12, 8/12; 1938:23/6. Half rent: 1933: 13/1, 11/4, 28/4, 2/5, 25/8, 20/11. Evictions: 1933: 19/4, 30/8, 5/10, 18/11, 23/1, 28/2, 7/7, 21/11, 23/11.

100. Government protesting: 1933: 12/5, 19/5, 22/5, 14/7, 28/7, 10/8; 1938: 9/9, 9/11, 23/11. But self-protection: 20/7/33; 5/4/38. For a general discussion of such practices, see John Taylor, "'Relief from relief': The cities' answer to Depression dependency." *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 1979, *14* (Spring), pp.16–23.

101. 4/7/32. M004:1–2.

102. Relief of single unemployed women: 4/12/30; 12/11/32; 10/11/38. Defence of employed, married, *middle-class* women: 4/10/32. Cutting off those who refused to become domestics: 30/1, 11/11/33.

103. Electricians: 23/3, 6/6/33. Bricklayers: 17/3/33. Typos: 10/8/33. Cemetary workers: 26/6/33.

104. Hydros: 14/2/33. Insiders: 3/12/33.

105. Firemen and nurses: 8/3, 20/4/33; 23/3/33. CBRE: 12/8/33.

106. Bricklayers: 18/5/33. Streetsweepers: 27/7/33. Paid work: 7/10, 10/10/33.

107. 23/7/38.

108. Bums and frauds: 1/12/33. Wives quarrelling: 4/8/38.

109. 1933: 12/5, 22/5, 28/12; 1938: 5/11, 9/11, 30/12.

110. BTC: 1/11, 16/11/33.

111. CGSA: 22/5/33. Unwilling youths: 5/8/38. Munitions: 17/12/38.

112. JRWA: 17/5/38. Absence of skilled jobs: 2/8, 3/8, 5/8/38.

113. More work for married men: 31/3/31. However, Parr, op. cit., found single men in the firms she studied to also have been included in job rotation. Married men breaking relief strike ranks sooner: Department of Labour, Strikes and Lockouts, RG 27, Volume 359, Srike #27, NAC, clipping from the *Toronto Worker*, 30/6/33.

114. Vets: 17/5, 10/12/38. Disabled vets: 7/11/33. Success of appeals: 4/5, 10/8/33; 25/3/38.

115. Hospital Board: 1938: 28/10, 1/12, 19/12, 22/12. Home: 11/10/33. Defences: 14/10/33.

116. Indignant male: 6/9/38. Defence: 10/9, 15/9/38.

117. Complaints from single women: 1938: 19/2, 30/3, 29/7, 19/9, 9/11, 10/11, 31/12. Poll tax: 15/9/38. No "real men": 19/9/38.

118. Defence: 4/3, 25/3/38. Poor women: 1933: 7/7, 11/8, 29/11, 30/12.

119. Bread: 14/9/38. Scolding: 1/6/33. Solutions: 12/10/33. Running for RP: 7/10/35; also *Spectator*: 15/10/35. She came in a not-distant second among five candidates in Hamilton West.

120. See especially the CPCs Women's Labour League, but also the Hamilton Housewives' Association, which made strong pitches for not only government control of the prices of commodities, but also for cooperatives. 1938: 8/4, 6/5, 7/5, 26/5, 7/10.

121. Too few British: 17/8/38. Because of social legislation: 7/9, 30/11/38.

122. Citizens: 15/7/33. Witchhunts: 2/6, 4/6/31; 10/6, 11/6/32.

123. For example, M068, of English ancestry, told us about Italian-Canadian workers at Dofasco attempting to hoard certain jobs, and refusing to teach him the requisite skills for them.

124. For example, a black interviewee (M098) said there was much solidarity among blacks and other minority ethnics in his neighborhood; a Jewish man told us about an Italian gang avenging the beating up of a group of Jewish boys in their neighborhood, by a gang from Toronto.

125. E.g., 8/7/38.

126. Bodnar, 1985, op. cit., pp.117, 131, 142. Cohen, op. cit., pp.96, 112. However, Bodnar cautions that by no means all middle-class minority ethnics were leaders of working-class ones, and that there were circumstances where the latter acted on class rather than ethnic interests.

127. M011.

128. On and from the camps in Canada in general, see Abella, op. cit.; Morden Lazarus, *Years of Hard Labour*. (Don Mills: Ontario Federation of Labour, 1974); Morton, op. cit.; Angus, op. cit.; CPC, op. cit.; Thompson, op. cit.; and Norman Penner, *Canadian Communism*. (Toronto: Methuen, 1988).

129. HDTLC: 8/7/33. Only city with two councils: 15/9/38. For some specifics about the latter, see 1938: 8/1, 6/8, 6/9/38.

130. Wooing: 8/5/33; Peter Hunter, *Which Side Are You On, Boys ...\: Canadian life on the left*. Toronto: Lugus, 1988. CPC campaign against Mitchell: 8/8/31. For histories of Hamilton's Independent Labour Party, see John McMenemy, *Lion in a Den of Daniels: A study of Sam Lawrence, labour in politics*. (Master's Thesis, McMaster University, 1965); and Bill Freeman and Marsha Hewitt, *Their Town: The mafia, the media and the party machine*. (Toronto: Lorimer, 1979).

131. Denouncing CCF candidates: 6/2/33. Experienced independents: Charles Aitchison, Sam Clarke and Archie Pollock.

132. For example, Cohen, op. cit., but especially Faue, op. cit.

133. 14/9/38.

134. 29/1/38. Interviews. See also "CAGES ...\", op. cit. For the employment of boys over women more generally, see Scott and Cassidy, op. cit.

135. On the latter, see especially Joan Sangster, *Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian left, 1920–1950*. MS, 1988.

136. Reference misplaced.

137. See especially the papers of the CYC in the Archives at McMaster. For its initial defence, but then betrayal, of its CPC membership; see 1938: 8/8, 13/8, 30/8, 26/9. However, some members retained ties with the CIO; for example, 1/10/38.

138. Interviews. See also Hunter, op. cit., pp.18–20; and Martin Robin, *Shades of Right: Nativist and fascist politics in Canada, 1920–1940*. UTP, 1992. Pp.12–16, 213–4.

139. Peebles: 2/5, 31/8/33. Lawrence: 8/6/32. Interviews. See also McMenemy, op. cit.

140. Ward maps obtained from John Weaver. However, there were also scattered working-class neighbourhoods in central and west Hamilton; for example, in the "Corktown" and Dundurn Park areas.

141. In 1933, a coalition of the Chamber of Commerce, wealthy landlords, and the Civic Research Association put up and paid for, to the tune of $300 each, an "economy slate" of all

Conservatives, and, according to Lawrence (1/12/33), started a "whisper campaign" that he was in fact a CPCer. Meanwhile, Peebles, the Board of Control, and City Council were dragging their feet on relief for homeowners, and Henry Wilton and much of the rest of the economy slate moved into the breach. E.g., see 1933: 23/11, 24/11, 30/11, 1/12, 2/12, 5/12, 7/12.

142. (1) City Council were not able to please all competing interest groups (see previous note). (2) As mayor, Peebles "went down with the ship" of rising relief costs and taxes. (3) Much of the "left" vote for Controller was in fact a function of the *personal* popularity of Sam Lawrence, who, as MPP, was largely absent from local city politics between 1934 and 1937. During that period, other, less popular, left candidates ran. Incidentally, the "closest rival" figures in Table 4 indicate how much the left candidate(s) won or lost by. For example, Lawrence's closest rival for Controller had 1476 more votes than he did in 1929; and in 1935, the Left missed having a Controller by only 45 votes.

143. Mitchell: 11/8/31; 15/10/35 (see also the *Spectator*, 15/10/35. Lawrence: 20/6/34; 16/8, 7/10, 25/10/37. Also McMenemy, op. cit., pp.47–78. On Hepburn, see Braithwaite, op. cit., pp.101–2; and John Saywell, *'Just Call Me Mitch': The life of Mitchell F. Hepburn*. UTP, 1991.

144. Details of, and references to, these responses will be presented in a later work. Almost all of them are reported in the newspapers. However, I first got an inkling of murdering foremen from a rumour reported in an interview. Although the two events in question are by no means totally confirmed, there were newspaper reports of one foreman having been missing, and of his body having subsequently been found where the interviewee said it should have been. The man's family did suspect foul play.

145. DOL, SLs File T2765, Vol.355, Strikes #57 and #51.

146. Building trades: 15/5, 28/7/33. See also Note 144. Real Silk and Mercury Mills: 20/6/33; DOL, SLs, T2765, Vol.355, #59; T2967, Vol.356, #115.

147. 3/10, 17/10/33. See also previous note.

148. DOL, SLs File 2765, #59, p.001257. For the '32 strike, see T2764. Interviews.

149. Compromises occurred in the real Silk and Hamilton Cotton strikes. See T2765, #59, and T2767, #115. For the Hat and Cap workers, see T2766, #85 (1933); T2970, Vol.359, #17; and T2975, Vol.365, #233 (1934); T2981, Vol.371, #167 (1935).

150. For the Hat and Cap workers, see the previous note. Hamilton Cotton: T2989, Vol.380, #186 (1936). Carpenters: T2985, Vol.376, #60 (1936); T3007, Vol.399, #170 (1938).

151. Glass: T2987, Vol.378, #101 (1936). Paper Box: T2996, Vol.388, #175 (1937). Bakery: T2988, Vol.379, #173 (1936). Milk drivers: T2980, Vol.370, #95 (1935). Restaurant: T2987, Vol.378, #106; T2988, Vol.379, #178 (1936). Projectionists: T2981, Vol.371, #153 (1935). For the economic state of these industries, see Table 1.

152. Sheet Mill: T2978, Vol.368, #58 (1935); Longshoremen: T2987, Vol.378, #121 (1936); T2993, Vol.385, #80 (1937); National Steel Car: T2994, Vol.391, #226 (1937).

153. The units for families on relief and unplaced registrants are *individuals* and *groups*, while strikes are *collective events*. February was generally the worst month for the deprivation of families and individuals, while September was usually a better indicator of the economic situation of firms, since they were then geared up for fall and winter production after an often slack summer.

154. Material obtained almost exclusively from the above-mentioned Department of Labour, Strikes and Lockouts files.

155. That is, the Glass workers in '36, and the Longshoremen in '36 and '37 (op. cit.). A pistol was fired in one of the Hamilton Cotton strikes (op. cit.).

156. Preventing evictions: 1933: 28/2, 19/4, 12/10, 21/10; 1938: 7/4, 18/5, 5/8. See also Hunter, op. cit. Threatening and/or beating inspectors and bailiffs: 1933: 19/1, 17/7, 25/7, 19/9, 13/10; 1938: 8/7, 3/12, 7/12.

157. *The Toronto Globe*, Monday, May 2, 1932, pp.1, 3; *Toronto Star*, May 2, 1932, pp.1–2. Interviews. Hunter, op. cit., pp.12–16.

158. Censorship: Bennett Papers, M1249, pp.305745–6. Guarding council meetings and unpaid overtime: 20/4/33. Interviews. Motions against Firemen: 7/5, 11/5, 21/5/32. On the alleged radicalizing effects on spectators, see Heron et al, op. cit., pp.140–2; and Hunter, op. cit.

159. 1/5/33; 2/5/38.

160. Betcherman, op. cit., pp.35–6. Hunter, op. cit. See also earlier references to the YCL, the CYC and the WLL. After his release from prison in 1932, Tim Buck drew about 17,000 to a rally and speech in Hamilton.

161. Ignored, used and discarded: 1933: 6/2, 12/4, 17/4, 23/5, 23/6, 27/7, 25/8, 5/10, 13/11, 20/11, 11/12. The CPC was *there* in the CIO and the Hamilton Allied Organizations for Welfare and Relief, but not completely openly (5/8, 14/10/33). Similarly, even in the late 30s when he became an alderman for several years, Harry Hunter did not make much publicly of his membership in the Party. For the use and subsequent discarding of YCLers by the CYC, see earlier. For the treatment of the CPC more generally, see Abella, op. cit. For the U.S., see Cohen, op. cit., p.311.

162. M013:18.

163. Papers of the Communist Party of Canada, NAC, H1597, Vol.29, File #66, 1938. At this convention, Hamilton had 9 delegates out of a total of 127. This was larger than other cities besides Toronto (Sudbury had 7 and Windsor and Kitchener each had 5), but Toronto had 66. Similarly, of the some 510 official members of the YCL, about 385 were from the Toronto area. Its Provincial Committee of 38 had 3 members from Hamilton. My thanks to Sam Hammond for helping me gain access to the Party's papers.

164. Hunter, op. cit. Bennett Papers, op. cit., e.g. M990–1. For some examples of intra-ethnic squabbling, see 29/11/30; 18/5, 23/11, 31/11/31.