

BITS AND PIECES OF BRANTFORD'S HISTORY
ON RELIEF – BRANTFORD DURING THE
1930'S

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Index

Introduction	3
Relief	4
Transients	17
Civic Sidelights	22
“No Man Is an Island”	28
Politics in the 30’s	32
Men of Sweat and Toil	38
As the West Goes – So Does Brantford Brantford Industry in the 1930’s	41
Conclusion	45

BRANTFORD AND THE GREAT DEPRESSION

When you mention the word "Depression" to anyone who lived through the 1930's, the reactions will vary for each individual. For some, it meant lowering their pride and accepting relief work; some remember it as a time when dirty, unshaven men knocked at their door asking for food or money; still others recall that it was a "make-do" time, and a "time to do without." But all agree it was an experience that they do not wish to endure again.

Just as in all other occurrences and events in Canada throughout the years, Brantford proved to be a microcosm of what was going on everywhere. People in Brantford lost heavily when the stock market crashed in 1929. The city had to face the problem of how to feed and clothe the suddenly large number of unemployed. Citizens had to cope with panhandlers and transients, and people had to learn to do with less, or with nothing at all.

At the same time, a degree of normalcy pervaded what went on in the city. The various fads in the 30's from chain letters to dance steps reached Brantford, and had their time. The people of Brantford could find time to celebrate when the occasion offered itself, as it did for example on the 25th anniversary of George V's coronation, or when the new king, George VI, and his wife visited Brantford.

In some ways, Brantford was unique. What other Canadian city during this period had a mayor as flamboyant and controversial as M.M. MacBride? What other city would take on Hollywood, because it felt ignored in a movie on the life of Alexander Graham Bell? What other city had two major investigations into mishandling of public funds? If the Depression made Brantford drab, it did not make it dull.

RELIEF

The word "relief" in connection with the depression of the 30's, brings back bitter memories to many people. That word seems, in many ways, to summarize just what the depression was about for so many people in Brantford. In a country where there was no national unemployment insurance at the time, relief was the only way to survive for many. Although some gladly accepted it, and in some cases even took more than their fair share, most Brantfordites viewed it as a repugnant alternative to working for a living. Many men did everything and anything they could such as mortgaging already paid for homes, and selling out insurance policies, to avoid having to accept relief. Self-pride was strong in those days, and the words "pride" and "relief" were opposites for many. Nevertheless, because of the economic situation, some means had to be found to help those in Brantford who were thrown out of work through no fault of their own.

Brantford was particularly hard-hit during this period. This was due perhaps to one major factor. Brantford's industry at this time was not very diversified, as it concentrated mainly on agricultural implements. When the wheat crop in the West failed, the demand for agricultural implements declined accordingly and with it the need for workers to manufacture these goods. When these men were put out of work, there was not enough other industry in Brantford to absorb them, and thus many were forced to accept relief whether they liked it or not - and most did not.

On June 26, 1929, "a consultation report on policy affecting the administration affecting family relief and family social work in the City of Brantford", was submitted to the Mayor by D.B. Harkness, director of surveys, and consultant on social organization for the Social Service Council of Ontario. The report pointed out that "sound policy in relief administration will consult the welfare of the community as well as the comfort of the family concerned", and that relief should be viewed as a type of "community protection." The main reasons for relief were given as unemployment, sickness, and desertion. Ironically (considering what would come in October of 1929), the report stated that fewer families were receiving relief in 1929 than in 1928. Almost as if the author could see the future, the report recommended:

"The present moment in Brantford appears to be an opportune one for considering, and if deemed desirable, revising the social work methods in connection with family relief."

In less than a year, the stock market crash had made this a necessity in Brantford. The Dominion Bureau of Statistics reported on February 26, 1930, that employment in Canada on February 1, 1930, stood at a higher level for that date than at any year on record. Yet on the following day, Brantford's estimated relief bill for 1930 was put at \$24,000. as compared to \$3,000 in 1929, and unemployment registration had risen during February to a figure of 768.

In March of 1930, an Unemployment Association was set up in Brantford by over 200 out-of-work men (this was changed a month later to the Brantford Industrial Worker's Association). In the same month, the City Council took action by increasing relief

payments, and beginning work relief projects (providing Federal and/or Provincial aid was available).

Mayor Ross Beckett, in an address to the Rotary Club stated that the unemployment situation was critical and there was little hope of improvement. In an editorial on the Mayor's speech. *The Expositor* concluded:

"It is acknowledged that work is better than relief, but until the economic order can be so adjusted as to provide employment for all the workers at all the seasons of the year, it is evident the measures of relief must be provided."

And later in April *The Expositor* reported:

"While Brantford is paying more per capita of population for relief purposes than any other Canadian city, it has what is probably the most complete system of relief distribution....and the system has been developed to a point where it is believed to be proof against abuse by unscrupulous persons."

In April a "Spend For Prosperity" campaign had been launched in Brantford, the idea being that if people would spend money, the business cycle would get into high gear again. (see resources 1) The President of the Kiwanis Club of Brantford felt that people were holding back.

"There is no doubt in my mind that many people are holding back in getting work done, and spending money at the present time, because of the cries of blue ruin and hard times, heard in some quarters. Pessimists have created 75 per cent of the present change in business pace."

The Expositor echoed this sentiment in an editorial on April 25, 1930.

"The present is no time for pessimism in Canada, On the contrary, all the indications confirm the wisdom of those who have insisted that the present depression throughout the Dominion is merely temporary, and not justified by actual economic conditions."

Be that as it may, the City Council was pessimistic enough to remove all single men from the relief rolls as of May 1, in order to save money on a rapidly rising relief bill; and city-owned vacant lots were made available for cultivation upon application to the relief officer.

As the autumn approached, the City began to ready itself to face the relief and employment problem that would be aggravated by the winter months. Further appeals were made to the Federal and Provincial governments for aid: relief was tightened, so that no one possessing a car or a liquor permit was to be eligible for relief: Work was found for single men. They were to cut wood at the rate of \$3.00 a cord. They were allowed to work singly with a buck saw, or in pairs with a cross-cut saw. The money looked good but was not that easy to acquire. It took one man 7-1/2 hours to cut a cord,

another 29-1/2 hours: and in late September unemployment relief works were set up when it was decided to put in some sanitary sewers "through properties adjoining the new West street subway under the Canadian National tracks", and to build a dyke around the Waterworks property.

In promoting public works schemes as a means of dealing with "the present emergency," *The Expositor*, in an editorial entitled "Money Does Not Grow," warned "that in calling the tune now we must pay the piper later on. For that reason the greatest care must be taken to avoid becoming too excited over the present business depression, which after all is by legislation," but on September 30, Brantford's Medical Officer of Health made the following rather alarming statement to the press:

"Unemployment has certainly been a contributory factor in some recent deaths of children here. With some men out of work, some parents have been unable to provide the necessities of proper nutrition."

This was a comment on a resolution passed by the Brantford Industrial Workers in which it was stated that "many recent deaths of children have been caused through malnutrition." It would appear that some were already "paying the price."

Money was soon forthcoming from both levels of government to help allay relief expenses, and this coupled with a successful Social Service League appeal for \$12,000, gave the city some breathing space for the winter of 1930-31. In cases of direct relief - groceries, fuel, rent - the governments agreed to pay one-third each, the city carrying the remainder. On works relief, the government funds would cover 50 percent (250,000 was allotted for), this providing it was guaranteed that the relief works would not otherwise have been undertaken except for the economic situation.

As 1930 ended then, relief work was underway in Brantford. Slips were issued to the unemployed, and when their number was called they were eligible for work.

The year 1931 opened with a call for a radical change in the city's relief administration. Some aldermen objected to payment by cheque, and wanted credit given in direct relief for the amount equal to what a man would draw. A compromise was reached, and in the new plan 20 per cent was given in cash and the remainder in merchandising slips.

By February, over 300,000 people in Canada were unemployed - 1900 of them were on relief in Brantford. Nevertheless, the number of men on relief work was to be reduced as the provincial grant was due to expire at the end of March. This crisis was settled, when on March 23, both Federal and Provincial governments appropriated more money to Brantford. Of this, *The Expositor* stated:

"Other municipalities in Ontario have at no time adopted such a generous attitude in regard to municipal relief as Brantford, some industrial centres of even greater

population never having appropriated even half as much for this purpose as this city. The explanation presumably lies in the lack of sufficient diversification in the character of Brantford's manufacturing establishments, and the effect on the implement industry of the depression in the West. However whatever the explanation, this city has established a standard in its relief measures which can only be maintained by the acceptance of enormous financial obligations, so that the whole question ... is fraught with very serious complications."

As spring approached, the city sponsored a "Give A Man A Job" campaign. The idea here was to create work for the unemployed by asking people to hire a man to help clean up around the house. Such jobs as house painting, beating heavy rugs, and trimming trees were suggested.

In May a "Buy in Brantford" campaign was set up. Posters were prepared by the Board of Trade, and *The Expositor* argued:

"Buy in Brantford, and where possible buy merchandise made in Brantford. Money spent at home returns to the spender in the form of better schools, lower taxes, and more wages, and will bring better times in Brantford."

As well, steps were being taken to co-ordinate the various relief agencies in the city, and a meeting was held in April at the Hotel Kerby for the purpose. *The Expositor* called it the inauguration of a new era, and "a magnificent display of civic loyalty and enthusiasm...." The end result was the formation of the Brantford Community League, whose purpose was to co-ordinate the city's efforts to raise sums for direct relief.

In spite of hard-times, there were still complaints about the handling of relief. In 1931 the Brantford Industrial Workers Association had agitated for higher wages for men on relief, and had accused the Mayor of placing men of his choice in relief jobs (both were denied.) In May of 1931, the Trades and Labour Council charged the Relief Department with the "Cruellest Form of Slavery," in regard to their policy of placing single men on tobacco farms, and demanded that some action be taken.

In July the number of unemployed in Brantford reached 2200 and in August it was up to 3000. The crisis brought out the ability to improvise in the case of many Brantford citizens. For example, five single Brantford men set up quarters on Slater's Island near Wilkes Dam. Their set up was quite elaborate, with a covered dug-out kitchen that was very detailed in its furnishings. They slept in a tent, had planted a garden, and often cooked on an open brick fireplace.

In September the first drive for funds was announced by The Brantford Community League, with Colonel Harry Cockshutt as chairman. The target was \$75,000. This money was to be used for the direct relief of the needy as distinct from government relief works for the unemployed. The campaign was set for October 20, 21 and 22. The campaign was duly launched amid much fanfare, and October 23, *The Expositor* could

announce that the campaign was over the top and heading for \$100, 000, and stated in a later editorial:

"The response to the appeal of the league was so extraordinary that it excited favourable comment all over the country." (see resources 5)

Taking advantage of the civic enthusiasm displayed in the Community League drive, the merchants organized a "Made in Brantford Week," culminating in "Brantford Day" on November 4. The idea here was to encourage people to buy locally made goods at bargain prices in order to stimulate local business. (see resources 6).

In attempts to relieve the unemployment situation, the Federal government started northern work camps, providing work on the Trans-Canada Highway for those who could accept it. On September 30, 1931 Brantford was notified that her quota for the first draft was 140 men. On October 6, the first fifty of these men left. Their departure was reminiscent of war-time days, as 2500 citizens showed up at the station and sang songs and cheered as the men left. One worker from Windsor commented to a newsman:

"Brantford must have thought that either the Prince of Wales, or a bunch of Chinese soldiers were passing through...."
I've never heard so much commotion at a station since I went overseas in '14."

Early letters home from these men expressed their thanks for the help that the Relief Department had given them, and commented on the excellent meals they were receiving, but these impressions were later to change - for the worse (see resources 7)

The Federal and Provincial governments had renewed Brantford's allotment for relief, and relief work for the unemployed carried on during the winter of 1931-32. Although some of this work was productive, much of it proved to be very frustrating as bank clerks, and office workers, their hands still soft from their former vocation, attempted to put a pick through frost-hardened ground in order to dig sewers. But early in 1932 the provincial government cut back on its contribution to the local relief programme. The government explained that its relief work funds were exhausted and "additional appropriations will receive no encouragement." As a result, work shifts, and relief allowances were cut, and the City Council asked all civic boards to cut approximations by 10 per cent. To try to find work for the unemployed, another campaign similar to the "Give-A-Man-A-Job" campaign, was launched by the local service clubs. This one was entitled "Man-A-Block." All available jobs were to be turned over to the relief department and distributed to those who needed them. (see resources 8) As well, farmers were encouraged to employ men through The Community League in order to help assist the finances of that organization. (see resources 9)

The Brantford relief system came in for praise by the government inspector for the Department of Public Relief for Ontario. Among other things, he praised the simplicity of the operation, and the response of Brantford's citizens to the appeal by the League. He also commented:

"I very heartily endorse the idea of such a relief organization, separate entirely from the Council, and not under its control. I am of the opinion that it is the only system that can be operated without prejudice and with due justice to all...."

....One of the principal suggestions I offered was that the relief problem of a municipality should be, as far as possible, the responsibility of the wage earners of the municipality.... Your Community League does just that thing, and it is one particular report which I think you are to be specially commended."

The Brantford organization received a further compliment when the report of the citizen's advisory committee on direct relief, to the Ontario government, proposed a scheme that was almost identical to the Brantford system. The one exception was that the relief allowance was higher than in Brantford.

It was the allowance question that raised the biggest protest in Brantford. In April of 1932, the Brantford Fellowship for Social Justice, after a survey of relief conditions, reported that the allowance should be raised back to \$3 per week for husband and wife, from \$2.50. At a meeting in the Labour Hall to discuss the Fellowships report, many people on relief expressed the opinion that the allowance was insufficient, and a deputation was chosen to go to the City Council to ask for an increased relief allowance. Some criticized the League, calling it, "just a political machine, controlled by a body of men who are not the people's representatives", and charged that it was "the manufacturer's machine, political and otherwise." Letters to the editor in *The Expositor* accused the League of contributing to malnutrition through inadequate allowances, but a report by the school medical officer found no evidence of malnutrition.

In spite of the criticism and crisis that it faced, it was decided that the Community League would carry on for another year. Another successful campaign was launched in October, and the drive again topped \$100,000 (The slogan was "Let's See It Through - many feeling the depression would soon be over). In spite of this sum, the League found itself in a financial crisis by mid-December, owing to "an unexpected and large increase in the last two months, in the number of applicants for relief." As well, the League had increased its allowance on December 1, and this was a further drain on its resources. The result was a more rigid system of inspection to determine deserving recipients.

In October of 1932, the Provincial government had proposed setting up a central supply depot in Toronto from which municipalities could obtain clothing and footwear for the needy, at manufacturer's prices. Brantford was decidedly against this. The reasons were given by the Mayor:

"It has been the policy of Brantford to spend every cent it possibly can right here. The Brantford manufacturers and merchants contribute to the Brantford Community Relief Fund, and they are entitled to whatever business we have to offer.

In the purchase of clothing and footwear we have been treated splendidly by local merchants and manufacturers, and I see no reason why we should change...."

Perhaps the goods would have been purchased more cheaply under such a system, but Brantford's pride and loyalty were threatened, and she decided to "stay with her own."

A new administration took over at city hall in January, and were met by a letter from the Honourable J.D. Monteith, Minister of Public Works and Labour, advising them that in November, Brantford had exceeded its allowed expenditure in respect to relief, under the heading of fuel, clothing, and rent. The new Council was also faced with an ever-increasing number of people on relief.

The new administration set up a special relief board to consider the situation, and recommend ways where corners could be cut on relief expenditure. Some citizens felt that there was an attempt here to usurp the role of the Community League, and a joint meeting of the special relief board and the executive of the League was held. At this meeting it was decided that all relief was to be administered from the Community League headquarters, that a special appeal board would be set up to hear applications for additional relief, and the allowance for dependents over 15 was increased. The relief situation continued to worsen, and subscribers were asked to advance their payments to the League ahead of schedule. A month and a half later, the newspaper reported that expenditure on direct relief for the month of May was up 88 per cent over the previous year. As a result, the number of relief orders was to be reduced as of June 19. In spite of this measure, the fact that many local single men were finding work on farms for the summer, the city's distribution of free garden seeds to those on relief, and an ever-increasing number of restrictions on those eligible for relief (in '31 all those who had three days employment were declared ineligible; in '32 a family could get relief only after 3 months residence in the city), the League still faced a deficit. The City Council moved to guarantee the account of the League, but Mayor MacBride announced that relief would be reorganized. Another problem that Brantford faced in mid-1932 was the "possible unloading" of relief cases on Brantford by other municipalities. One alderman stated there had been 18 cases of dumping over the past few months and, the city was going to ask for a provincial probe into the matter.

Not all the news was bad. Some citizens were appreciative of the help received:

"I am pleased to say that I worked last week, the week before, and next week, and I hope the week following will carry me along so have not had to apply for relief at the present time. May I say how thankful I am for help given. Many of us poor folks greatly appreciate the kindness and courtesy received from everyone connected with the distribution of relief."

In August, after two years of handling relief for the city of Brantford, the Community League decided not to carry out another campaign, but to disband as of September 30. The main, official reasons given were that the problem was becoming too big, and that a more permanent solution should be sought. Unofficially, many felt that the

civic administration was interfering too much with the League's operation, and hurting its effectiveness.

A new relief board, to carry on the work of the Community League, was set up under the title of the Brantford Welfare Association. This organization was much more closely tied to the civic administration. It proposed no radical changes, but did want to give men with the largest families, and in greatest need, more work than others. Rent relief, and the work formerly done by the Social Service League, such as the distribution of clothing, was to come under the control of the association, and families coming into Brantford, already on relief, and without means of support, were to be sent back to the point from which they had come.

In July of 1933, relief work in Brantford had been cancelled pending assurance of financial assistance from the Ontario government. This finally came, and in early October work relief recommenced. The work was to be doled out to those who needed it, in two day shifts of 100 men per shift. The pay was to be in cash at the prevailing rate of 45 cents an hour. The nature of the work was to be concerned with paving, grading, and boulevard work. When the new relief work programme was announced, many men who had been working on farms in the area returned to the city seeking work. This of course flooded the labour market, and the Welfare Association decided that in such cases men must have a letter from the farmer explaining why the man was leaving. If no letter was available, no relief would be given.

The year ended on a positive note when several service clubs in the city sponsored a Christmas Cheer Broadcast to secure toys, apples, candies, and cash, for the needy at Christmas. The appeal was very successful.

The winter of '33-'34 was a very severe one, and this factor did little to lessen the relief problems in Brantford. But people were looking after each other it seemed. *The Expositor* reported that no Chinese had made application for relief as the Chinese community took pride in looking after its own people. When Brantford firemen in February found a young boy with no mittens, and his socks and shoes full of holes, they took him into the station and outfitted him with proper clothing.

In the early months of 1934, both Paris and Brantford township reported a worsening relief situation, but in May, Paris was able to report that relief costs for April were down over the previous year; and Brantford reported that relief matters seemed to be improving, to the extent that food allowances were increased by the city relief administration, and vouchers were to be replaced by cash, except for bread and milk. But in September, Paris reported that direct relief costs were over twice those of August 1933, and when applicants for relief in Brantford were called on to re-register in October, over 1400 families were represented. The Welfare chairman reported:

"At the present time, our relief situation is not improving owing to the shortage of employment in the city of Brantford."

It was perhaps inevitable that politics should become entwined in the relief situation. It did in many municipalities, and Brantford was no exception. It came into the open in September of 1934, when a city alderman charged that aldermen were handing out "work tickets" to some men for "political purposes"; in answer to this the Council passed a resolution:

"That the heads of the various Civic Departments be advised not to honour any work slips from any aldermen, and that in the future all relief work be handled entirely through the Welfare Board, and the Employment Service."

In November, a petition urged a probe into the Welfare Department, alleging money was being given to undeserving individuals, was being used to pay election workers, and that money was being improperly charged to relief accounts. Ironically, only five months earlier, the chief inspector of the Ontario Unemployment Relief Department had complimented the local relief administration with being "very conscientious toward department regulations," and had stated:

"I have never had to come to Brantford to settle trouble some matters in regard to relief as I have in some other places."

The Welfare Department declared it feared no investigation, and Mayor MacBride called the petition "political propaganda." However, the resulting investigation by the province charged that there had been interference in the allocation of relief, and partiality, over a period from November 1933 to September 1934. As well, the report pointed up overcharging against the government regarding wood for relief, and stated that the voucher system had been abused, and that there had been aldermanic interference. So much for Brantford's clean sheet and adherence to departmental regulations.

The relief department had men working in three day shifts of 150 men each. As Christmas approached, it was obvious that some of these men could not get their turn in before Christmas. The Welfare Association, in an unprecedented step, paid these men in advance so that their Christmas would be a brighter one. The move was greatly appreciated.

"May I ask permission for a small space in your paper, of which I am a constant reader, to voice my appreciation of the manner in which those on relief and unemployment were given the opportunity to spend one of the best Christmas days we have had during the slump, due to the privilege of receiving our cheques for work, in advance...."

Relief figures for January, 1935, showed that \$76,602.35 had been spent on relief compared to \$59,411.32 that had been spent in the previous January. This situation was further aggravated by the problem of housing. The eviction situation in Brantford was serious, as those unable to pay rents were being turned out. The landlord who housed relief recipients was allowed shelter relief on the basis of one-twelfth of 150 percent of his taxes per month. As a result landlords sought to get rid of "relief tenants," or not accept them. The situation worked against both the landlord and tenant. In an editorial *The Expositor* concluded:

"Admittedly, the Government cannot be expected to play the part of a fairy godmother with a bottomless purse, but some revision will have to be made if landlords are not to be unfairly penalized and relief recipients harassed."

In May, the Ontario government increased shelter relief to 200 per cent of taxes.

There was significant modification of the relief situation in 1935. The new "visitor system" was introduced in April, and although it raised the ire of some, it did get results. This system divided the city into eleven zones and one "visitor" was assigned to each zone. The visitor was to visit the homes of those in her zone who were requesting relief, sum up the conditions, and make recommendations to a supervisor as to what she considered would be the needs of that family when they were again visited in two weeks. It was hoped that this system would make for efficiency and economy, and assure that those in need were properly cared for. As well, it was hoped that this would eliminate the humiliating experience of the "line-up-and-wait-your-turn" system. The new method was criticized by many. Some felt that the new system was even more humiliating than the previous one. Others objected to "a single girl telling a woman who has kept house 20 years, how to run her home." Still others felt that the visitors were gossipy and pushy. The system stayed however, and during the year the newspaper continued to report a decline in the number of relief cases until in November, *The Expositor* reported that there were 1836 fewer individuals on welfare lists in October 1935, than in October 1934, and that there was also a decrease in expenditure for the same period. Just how much this was related to the new system or the beginnings of an upswing in employment is not clear. But it would seem that the visitor system did eliminate some people who had been taking advantage of the relief system.

The following sad story from the depression appeared in *The Expositor* on June 8, 1935. It began:

"Born Monday in a three-feet high shack of old oilcloth and tin picked from a dump, a five-days-old baby whose mother was unattended, died this morning in the Brantford General Hospital."

Four people were living in the shack in a place called "The Jungle," at the south end of Gilkinson St., in West Brantford. The four people slept on one mattress and cooked their food on a bonfire outside the shack. The father, when questioned, said they had been living there for three weeks, and, "when the family was on its feet again he would move on and try to get work picking berries." It would appear that the "visitor system" did not reach everybody.

A rather ironic situation developed in the summer of 1935. While the western part of Canada suffered through another season of the "dust-bowl", Southern Ontario again had a bumper crop, and the farmers were having difficulty finding enough men to harvest it. To help alleviate this shortage, the provincial government announced that men who went to work on a farm, would be taken back on relief when they finished their farm work, and while they were on the farm, their families would be taken care of in the city.

Brantford and district citizens found time, in spite of their own worries in 1935, to help others even less fortunate. The "Western Relief" drive was instituted by a co-operative effort of different church denominations in Ontario. The committee in charge of Burford United Church contributions sent "23 bags of potatoes, a quantity of carrots, squash, cabbage, beets, onions and pumpkins; a number of miscellaneous articles; five baskets of apples, 11 dozen canned goods, 26 jars of fruit, 2 pails of honey." Citizens from the village of Bethune, Saskatchewan, sent a letter of thanks to the Brantford district committee for its contribution and noted: "Not one sealer was broken in shipment and everything was in the best of condition."

Two features stand out in regard to relief in Brantford in 1936. First, there was a move toward tightening the whole relief system, and getting rid of "relief chisellers." In February, the City Council passed a resolution stating that relief work must be placed through the Welfare Department, and not through the Mayor or aldermen. This was to avoid personal bias. The provincial government moved to purge the relief lists and *The Expositor* whole-heartedly supported this move:

"...and those who are inclined to impose on the taxpayer, should be ruthlessly removed from the lists."

Those cheating on relief were being given heavier fines and stiffer sentences (one man was given six months). All able-bodied men in Brantford, who were on relief, and who were given the opportunity to work on farms at the current rate of wages, were required to do so. But when the city tried to take single men off the relief rolls a protest meeting was held in the market square, and as a result single men were reinstated on the relief lists. A final step that year was taken by the provincial government when it required relief recipients to register with a Government Employment Service, to prove they were trying to find work. *The Expositor* again applauded this action.

"The Government is well-advised in its determination to get rid of the dole system as quickly as possible....It is only fair however, to the taxpayers of the Province, that unworthy recipients of relief should be removed from the lists."

The second feature of 1936 in regard to relief was the downward trend in the number of people on relief in the city. The months January to July showed a significant decrease in this regard. But if numbers were down, costs were up, as the federal and provincial governments decreased their respective contributions to municipalities. Unfortunately, the downward trend came to an abrupt halt with the approach of winter, as relief registration increased. *The Expositor* had to report that in the city's main industries, "fewer were working under a curtailed, hourly and daily employment schedule (much below, 1935)."

In the remaining three years of what is called The Great Depression, nothing new or overly-startling occurred in the realm of civic relief in Brantford. The problem was

still there - and at times the solution seemed no closer. In January 1938 *The Expositor* concluded an editorial entitled "Census of Relief", by stating:

"...Thus while there has been considerable improvement, it is plain that the administration of relief is a vital feature in Brantford's financial budget, and will continue to be so for the year 1938. It is to be sincerely hoped, however, that the decline in unemployment, which has been noticeable throughout the Dominion since the end of the year, will not be permanent."

Again in March, 1939, *The Expositor* complained:

"The primary reason why the taxpayers of Brantford are not enjoying a 41-1/2 mill tax rate...is that relief costs are too high... What is wanted, what is necessary if there is to be any appreciable acceleration in the return to recovery is relief from relief."

On April 1, 1937 the "visiting system" was discontinued in Brantford. It was replaced by what was termed a "rigid system of investigation." Under this "new-old" system, able bodied relief recipients were to go to welfare headquarters to pick up vouchers. The increasing interference and control of provincial governments in relief matters was very evident, when in 1939, under directions from the provincial government, Brantford City Council again reorganized the local Welfare Department. Cash certificates were to be issued for food, fuel, and clothing relief; food and fuel standards were to be revised to conform to provincial standards; the issuing of relief was to be revised so as to permit individual cases to receive careful attention; home visits to all relief cases were to be conducted monthly; and the then current Welfare Administration was to be replaced.

Many were still on relief - and not happy. One disgruntled letter writer complained to *The Expositor* that he was working on a local C.N.R. project for 25¢ an hour. "Why ridicule men like Hitler when right in our own fine Canada things of this sort are allowed to go on." He went on to argue that the reason for the low wages was because "the foreigner rules supreme", and kept wages down. He concluded: "They talk about the falling of democracies, but in my estimation this is one of the conditions that destroys democracy."

The number on relief in the city decreased during 1937 and 1938, (it had reached a peak of 7332 in December of 1934), but rose again in the first eight months of 1939. However, whether numbers were up or down the cost of relief was moving steadily upwards. This was primarily because of the decrease in government money for relief. Relief costs to the city for 1938 were up \$20,604 over 1937, and there was a 5.2 per cent increase again, over 1938, in the first six months of 1939 - this latter increase occurred in spite of a Federal government announcement early in 1939, that relief costs would be split on a 40-40-20 basis among federal, provincial and municipal governments respectively. Only after the Second World War broke out did the relief rolls and costs really start to decline. In November of 1939, welfare costs were down 33 per cent from

the previous year. The effects of the war on relief were very evident by the time the war was a year old.

An August 1, 1940 editorial in *The Expositor* reported:

"Gearing of local industry to wartime production has had a marked and immediate effect on the relief rolls.

...Brantford has only twenty-three employable men receiving assistance.

...Thus while a year ago the number of heads of families on the Welfare lists was 1245, to-day the total has been cut to 226.... ...Despite the undesirable basic war cause of increased work opportunities, it is gratifying for the men who have found jobs, and for their families, that such employment openings have occurred.

Not less so is the result welcomed by the taxpayers who are thus getting long overdue "relief from relief."

The depression was over - the war had arrived.

TRANSIENTS

One feature of the depression that stood out in the minds of Brantford citizens, was that of the shiftless drifter, who came into town for a night, and left the next morning. These men were variously called hoboos, bums, tramps, or knights of the road, depending on one's attitude toward them.

Transients of course, had always been present and were not uncommon in Brantford even before the depression of the 1930's. But the great influx of the wandering unemployed during that period, left a vivid memory with most Brantfordites.

There was really no set date on which transients began to arrive in Brantford, but by 1931 they were beginning to make their presence felt. One of their favourite modes of travel was by freight train. The only problem was that this was illegal, and the Federal Government made this officially so in 1932, when they issued a ban against stealing rides on freight trains. In September 1931, *The Expositor* reported that four men were hauled into court for trespassing on C.N.R. property and that the C.N.R. detective, "has been quite active of late in checking up on transients going through Brantford "fare-free" on his employer's coaches or under them." According to the detective, the men were committing an offense against themselves, and "in arresting these men we are protecting them and the railway too." The above four were "protected" with a fine of \$10 plus costs, or fifteen days. According to the article: "It is likely they will take the time, as. from appearances, not one of the quartet possesses a nickel." These trespassers were not always dealt with harshly. In November of 1931, an elderly rail-rider was let off, and allowed to return to a farm just outside of Paris, where he had been working. In another case seven vagrants, who had come in by freight, were told by the magistrate:

"You must realize that this city and county have a colossal task in handling unemployment of their own....All these cases will be disposed of by suspended sentence. Go back where you come from and stay there....It is just about a quarter after ten. We won't be looking for you for an hour, but if you appear before me again, there will be no alternative. You will be sent to the reformatory for six months."

Not all of the freight-train riders were fortunate enough to escape with only a warning or a fine. Some lost limbs, and life. From 1932 through to 1938, *The Expositor* had at least one story a year dealing with transients who were either injured or killed at the C.N.R. depot in Brantford. The headlines told the tale.

Injured Badly In Taking A Ride

Freight Train Crushed Foot

Transients Legs Crushed By Freight

Trying To Board Freight Train Lad Instantly Killed At C.N.R. Depot

In the early years of the depression, transients, if not welcomed, were tolerated by the city of Brantford. There were complaints, especially by businessmen, who early in the 30's were receiving 20 to 30 visits from transients each day. But generally speaking the citizens were sympathetic to the plight of these men, and would provide food in the form of sandwiches for those who knocked at their door. The rule in most houses seemed to be that a hungry man was never to be turned away, even though it might mean that their house would be "marked" to let other transients know that there was food available there. Some householders asked the transient to do some small task, but most seem to have doled out without asking anything in return.

If pickings were slim among the populace, the transients could apply to the Y.M.C.A. or the police station, Up until 1932, those applying at the police station were given meal tickets, but in March of that year, a new policy was initiated. The reason given for the change of policy was that there were a great many transients applying for meal tickets who in fact had money in their pockets. Under the new system, meals were to be served at 6 o'clock in the morning and 9 o'clock at night at the police station, and they were to be served only to the men in the cells. (Those who applied late at the station had to sleep on the cement floor, or standing up). The meal was to consist of a bologna sandwich and a cup of coffee. According to the Chief of Police, this system was satisfactory.

"The meals served here are nourishing, and a transient may eat all he can hold. The bologna is cut thick and the bread likewise, and the sandwich that results is a very healthy looking affair. Ordinarily well-fed transients are only able to devour one such missile, while, extra-hungry travellers can get away with two but seldom three. The cake is served spasmodically as it is usually the gift of an organization that has conducted a banquet. The more banquets, the more cake for transients here.

The cost of the meal is surprisingly low, the plan of feeding the transients being one adopted by Chief Stanley to save money for the city. And the transients evidently like it. Many of them come back for more."

But the police were quick to point out that "this service would be only for transients not for professional bums."

But not all citizens felt the problem was being dealt with adequately. One letter writer stated:

"I am afraid there are quite a number of citizens who are wondering why they are feeding three and four transients a day at their home if these men can receive such wonderful treatment at the police station."

Yet, he took a sympathetic stand on the transient question, labeling them the "Forgotten Man", moved on by municipal authorities who had enough problems looking after their own relief recipients. The writer went so far as to suggest that funds from the Community League be used to feed and house the transient, arguing that soup kitchens were preferable to the "police station system." He ended:

"Some of them may be shiftless, unreliable and a little tough, but most of them are just victims of the depression, yet they must eat and have a place to sleep 'even as you and I'."

If the citizens of Brantford tolerated the transients, it seems that the "knights of the road" barely tolerated Brantford. In 1932, Brantford had been placed on the "hoboes blacklist" by the self-styled king of the hoboes. (a hobo was defined by the king as one who would work for meals, while mere tramps and bums often resorted to begging). It was described as the "worst city in Canada for hoboes." Apparently by 1933 things had improved as Brantford was to be taken off the blacklist. But even the run-of-the-mill transients did not have much use for Brantford's treatment of them. One of them told an interviewer that Brantford had "the rottenest jail in Canada."

"This place is terrible. The bunks ain't too bad and it's warm, but what do they want to frisk you for when you come in. Not even a smoke. This is the first time I've ever been frisked and what's more they turn you out at 6 a.m... There's no place here to boil up or cook up either."

Another wrote to the mayor in 1934 and complained that the coffee that was handed out at the police station, tasted like dish-water. He felt that urgent steps "should be taken to improve the menu that is presented to poor transients in this city...." In the same letter he complained that he was "insulted something awful" by some of the housewives of Brantford when he called at their doors asking for food.

The transients were a good source of material for local newspaper articles, and they were usually detrimental. Headlines such as: "Beggars Today Are Choosers - Transients Refuse Sandwiches", "Three Meals A Day and a Bankroll", and "Unemployment? Not In This Case - Officers Unable To Secure Two Or Three Men Of Many", tended to suggest that the transients were better off than their appearance and habits suggested. Other reports, such as the transient who received a meal and then exclaimed, "What no tea!", or the one who drove up to the police station in his own car asking for food and a night's lodgings, left doubt in the minds of many as to just how hard-up many of these men were. (sources 4) But all the transients were not as ungrateful. The following letter appeared in the letters to the editor column on Sept. 20, 1936.

"For obvious reasons I cannot express myself freely. Would you allow me space in your valuable paper in an open letter to express my sincere thanks as a mark of appreciation to the Chief of Police, also one known as "Scotty" for kindness shown to."

"Transient."

Statistics prove that even if Brantford was not high on the list of preferred stop-overs, nevertheless many transients did stop off here. The following are the figures for "police-station lodgers." 1931-912: 1934-1558: 1935-1841: 1936-1600: 1938-3260.

The sympathy and acceptance of the transients began to wear thin as the depression progressed. The individual citizens were less responsive as they gave the transients meal tickets for restaurants down town, in preference to money (which they felt was too often spent on liquor,) and food (which they complained the transient too often just threw away.) As early as 1934, the police were conducting a campaign against "transient beggars," claiming they did not want Brantford to become a haven for pan-handlers. (The chief of police at one point complained that most of the begging was being done by "local bums.")

In 1937, the tide really began to turn against the transients. In November of that year, the local crown attorney made a strong plea for the court to take strong action regarding the transient nuisance, arguing that Brantford was becoming a mecca for the shiftless. *The Expositor*, in an editorial in the same month, argued that these man should be working and stated "...the tragic feature is that hundreds of citizens have been out of work for so long, have become so discouraged and so hopeless in their outlook, that they often lack the initiative or desire to find another place for themselves in industry." And the police chief stated to the press that "Seventy-five percent of these men should be working. Half of them would not take jobs if you offered to give them one."

In 1938 the free meals at the police station were cut off, and those who wanted a meal now had to work for it. This was the year that also saw the push to employ the country's transient population in something productive. *The Expositor* suggested they be employed in defense. The editorial pointed to the example of Germany and Italy where the unemployed youth were forced into the armed services.

"Immediately of course there will come the protest that Canadian youth is free, that never must it be required to submit to such regimentation. But is unemployed youth in Canada free? Free perhaps to loaf on the street corners, free to grow soft and discouraged and broken not through any fault of its own perhaps, but broken none the less for that. Neither Germany or Italy would have to teach Britishers and Canadians what to do, but what can be said of a land of plenty which permits idleness, poverty, and the breaking down of morale due to that idleness and poverty, while the country's defenses remain virtually non-existent and devoid of anything remotely approaching adequate manpower."

The Brantford City Council passed a resolution endorsing training camps for unemployed youth,

"That the Council of the City of Brantford hereby endorse and approve the scheme as suggested by the Canadian Corps association to establish training and vocational camps through Canada whereby the unemployed youth of Canada may be temporarily employed and beneficially trained until such time as they can be permanently absorbed into gainful employment."

An organization called the City of Brantford Youth Employment Committee composed of representatives of the Trades and Labour Council, the Ministerial Association, service clubs, the Y.M.C.A., veteran soldiers organizations, and social services, was set up to help the young transients who were still pouring into Brantford. They petitioned the federal government to take some positive leadership in solving the youth unemployment problem they passed a second resolution that dealt with the local as well as the federal problem.

"Whereas this meeting being fully aware of the fact that the transient problem is a federal and provincial responsibility recognizes that it has become a local menace. Be it resolved that as a temporary local measure this community through the executive of this Committee raise sufficient money to provide the necessary funds to temporarily take care of this situation approximately to May 1. Our suggestion in view of existing conditions is that this Committee co-operate with the YMCA and supply two meal tickets to such transients recommended by the YMCA. The estimated expense will not exceed 50 cents per transient, costing approximately \$1000 to May 1. Also it is suggested that these men perform some work in payment for these meals."

In January of 1939 this committee began a campaign to raise \$1000. to provide for "genuine young transients," and by April 1 the goal had been reached. The Committee emphasized that they were not intending to set up something permanent, and that it was going to dole out only in the winter months.

The problem continued into 1940, and in January 1940, *The Expositor* reported that transients were still showing up at the police station. But by October 1940, *The Expositor* pointed out that the number of transients tabulated at the police station was not increasing with the cool weather.

Canada was mobilizing for war - the war had solved our transient problem?

CIVIC SIDELIGHTS

Most written and spoken material on the depression tends to stress the darker, gloomy side of life. People tend to forget that life did go on normally in many ways, for many people during the 30's. This was very true in Brantford in several ways, and although the effects of the depression were obvious, the city did rise above the problems of the time in many areas.

People did not stop enjoying themselves during the depression. Sometimes their activities may have been slightly curtailed in this area, or they may have had to make their own entertainment, but nevertheless, "all relief and no play" would have made Jack a dull boy and Brantford a dull city, to paraphrase a saying.

Brantford could well have been dubbed the "city of choirs" during the 1930's, as it possessed two outstanding choirs. Both the Schubert Choir and the Canadian Choir attained national and international recognition. The Canadian Choir, under the direction of conductor Frederick Lord, gave extensive concerts in Canada and the United States, and toured parts of England, gaining recognition as a fine choir when it competed in a festival in Blackpool, England. The Schubert Choir was directed by Henry Jordan. It made several successful appearances abroad, and in 1929 won the National Eisteddfod Cup in Scranton, Pennsylvania. It stayed together during the 30's, and when it sang at the New York World's Fair in 1939, it received the following comments from critics:

"Deserves an exceptionally high standing among mixed choruses of the English-speaking world."

"Ranks with our well-known choral ensembles."

The Brantford Drama League was formed in 1929, and it too had a number of successes during the 1930's. During its early years, the Drama League presented plays to Brantford audiences, and entered the competitions which had been initially sponsored by the Governor-General of Canada, the Earl of Bessborough, and which later became the Dominion Drama Festival. In April 1936, the Drama League, although not winners in their own division, were nevertheless asked, because of the excellence of their play - "Fixins", to compete in the Dominion Drama Festival being held in Ottawa. In 1937 they did win their division, but did not go on to the Canada-wide festival.

When the newly opened Earl Haig swimming pool was closed down, for health reasons, people took to the river to do their swimming. There were innumerable complaints about nude bathers in the Grand River, and there were also drownings as people tried to cool off in the warm weather. To give the people of Brantford a safer place to swim, Holmedale beach was created. At a spot in the river above Slingsby Mills in Holmedale, boulders were cleared away and sand was put in as a work relief project; and the city supplied wood for dressing rooms and a diving stand. The "Beach" proved very popular, and was in use throughout the 30's.

Sports, particularly baseball, continued to be popular during the depression. Individual sports like tennis and golf had their following, but it was the baseball teams that aroused most interest among Brantford citizens. During the 30's several championships were won by Brantford baseball teams. The Red Sox, Patterson Pats, Universal Cooler, and Terrace Hill Alerts teams all won at least one Ontario title in hardball or softball during this period, and the Pats and Alerts won their titles for two consecutive years.

Brantford was also subject to the fads and trends that were going the rounds in the 30's. Miniature golf arrived with a rush in 1930, but by late 1931 was on the wane here as people just could not afford to play. Cooking schools at the Capitol theatre, sponsored by *The Expositor*, with the proceeds going to city relief, were popular. Listening to the radio (CKPC went on the air in 1933, replacing 10BQ), and particularly to boxing, attracted many Brantfordites. The manager of the local Hydro office reported that just about every radio in Brantford was tuned in to the 1936 Louis - Schmelling fight. Chain letters appeared in abundance, until the local post office threatened to take action. Donkey baseball arrived in Brantford, with a donkey by the name of Mae West being the featured attraction. The "knock knock" craze also went the rounds. It was tagged as a "radio epidemic." An example - and one will suffice - would be "Knock Knock" "Who's there?" "Cicero" "Cicero Who?" "Cicero I sit in?" During the 30's there were several dance steps that were popular, but two that were being done by the students at the Brantford Collegiate as the decade drew to a close were "The Lambeth Walk" and "The Big Apple." Some things never really change.

In March 1929, the S.C. Johnson firm complained that many "petting parties" were taking place nightly on the road leading to the plant, and they wanted the police to take action, and in the same year there were complaints to the police of minors being allowed in Brantford pool rooms. When the ban on serving beer at tables in beverage rooms was finally lifted on July 24, 1934, after 17 years, Brantford citizens were among the first to line up for the renewed privilege.

A topic that caught the interest of everyone, especially during the early 30's, was that of airplanes and aviation records. Scarcely a night went by when the newspapers were not full of someone trying to break a speed or distance record in an airplane. In 1929, local factories began marking direction signs for passing flyers on the roofs of their buildings, and in June 1930, the Brantford Civic Airport was opened.

Crime did not increase to any great extent in Brantford during the 30's. The county's last hanging took place in the Brant County jail on December 8, 1932. Joseph Bomberry was executed for murdering his common-law wife in April of that year. In regard to this matter, it is interesting to note that in a time when capital punishment was accepted as the norm by most people, a petition asking for clemency for Bomberry was circulated, and over 3,000 people in the Brantford area signed it. The Bomberry hanging was the second of the 30's, as in 1930 a Chinese, Bob Wong, was hung for the murder of a fellow Chinese. If Brantford experienced its last hanging, it also experienced its first armed bank robbery when an east-end bank was robbed of \$643.00 in December of 1932.

The depression did have an affect on education in Brantford. In many cases, children had to leave school before they were of age, in order to try to help boost the family wage packet by finding some small job such as delivering meat or groceries. On the other hand, at one point during the 30's, the Board of Education seriously, considered closing some of the city schools in order to save money. At the Brantford Collegiate, attendance was greatly affected by the depression. The registration in 1932 was up 400 students from normal, as students stayed in school longer because of the lack of jobs, and many students graduating from an academic course returned to take a commercial or vocational course in the hope of securing a job. But students continued to be students in spite of the times. in April 1930, *The Expositor* reported:

"Ten B.C.I. students who leave school in such a hurry that they find it convenient to clamber on any running-board coming downtown, will have to help a Langford student to pay a fine of \$15.00 and costs for wreckless driving."

The depression did have negative effects on the health of Brantford citizens. In 1933 Dr. W. L. Hutton, Medical Officer of Health for Brantford, reported that the continuing years of the depression were beginning to have an effect upon health conditions in Brantford. Whereas a report a year earlier showed that people's health in Brantford was not suffering, this report saw the effects making themselves apparent in three ways:

"A progressive demoralization among the people, indicated by an increase in mental troubles: a rapid increase in dental effects among children, and particularly among "depression babies:" and a marked increase in the number of underweight school children."

Brantford was also affected by two serious epidemics during the 30's, one at each end of the decade. In 1930 there was an outbreak of spinal meningitis and fifteen cases were reported, and in August of 1937, an epidemic of infantile paralysis threatened to keep the schools from opening.

In the area of mental health, there was a rather startling development that occurred during this period. It shows just how much impact some of the Nazi ideas were having in Canada. In 1932 the City Council endorsed a resolution regarding voluntary sterilization of mentally defective persons. The move was argued from an economic point of view, to lessen expenditures on "the growing incidence of mental defect in Ontario and throughout the Dominion." One alderman argued that society had a perfect right to take action in a matter which was "one of vital importance, not only from a humanitarian point of view but also from the angle of dollars and cents to the taxpayers who were called upon to maintain institutions for the care of those who were mentally ill." The demand for sterilization continued throughout the 30's. In 1933, the Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario called for the "prevention of the propagation of the unfit," and in 1936, in again calling for sterilization of the feeble-minded, he emphasized the value of the comprehensive German sterilization law." W. G. Martin, Brantford's M.P.P. at this time, and minister of public welfare, stated:

"I am convinced that the day will come when governments will find it necessary to take firm and far-reaching steps in dealing with the question of the unfit."

Later, in 1936, Brantford's Medical Officer of Health declared before the Ontario Mayor's Association that:

"It is to sterilization we must look in dealing with increasing insanity and feeble-mindedness in Ontario."

It would seem that the problems of the depression, and the "success" of the Nazis, were influencing Canada to move toward sterilization of the mentally unfit.

Several, of what could be classed as, "major social events" took place in the city during the 30's. In May of 1933, the Governor-General of Canada, the Earl of Bessborough, officially unveiled the Brant War Memorial amidst much pomp and ceremony. In his dedication he said, in part:

"It is a noble Memorial, a true and fitting expression of that tribute which all of us unhesitatingly pay to the memory of the heroic dead: but, to my mind, its nobility is enhanced a hundred fold by the very fact that, though 15 years have passed since these men died, so great a concourse should have come here to-day to do them honour."

In the summer of 1937, Brantford hosted the first annual Dominion convention of men who had served in the Imperial fighting forces, and of Canadian Expeditionary Force veterans. Agricultural Park was turned into a tented city, and from all accounts, "a good time was had by all." A month later the city celebrated the Diamond Jubilee of the incorporation of the city of Brantford. An "Old Home Week" was organized, and many former citizens returned to the city to help it celebrate.

Two events connected with the royal family were cause for great celebrations in the city during the 30's. In May of 1935, in spite of the economic situation, or maybe because of it, there were extensive celebrations on the occasion of King George V's Silver Jubilee. Among the events were a large parade, an Indian pageant, a ball, and an air show by the U.S. Selfridge Field Squadron. The visit of the new King, George VI, and his wife, in June of 1939, set off another round of celebrating. Former Mayor Col. Colquhoun was elected Chairman of the Citizens' Committee which was in charge of planning the beautification and decoration of the city for the royal visit. Proving itself true to the mother country, the committee recommended that only British-made decorations be used. An interesting letter appeared in the newspaper in regard to the use of a 21 gun royal salute. The writer argued that two of these salutes during the whole visit (one on arrival, and one on departure), would be sufficient.

"That should be enough as when other places start it establishes a precedent and in any case it frightens small children. It's a nuisance for the public too, when the wind blows

the smoke their way, and to the "Old Brigade" the war of guns always brings back war memories some of us would like to forget."

In any case, the visit, which lasted only 15 minutes, attracted 50,000 people to the C.N.R. station to see the royal couple.

Finally, we come to an event which could only happen in Brantford. Ever since Alexander Graham Bell conceived the final step in the telephonic process at Tutela Heights in 1874, Brantford has been concerned with proclaiming to the world her title of "The Telephone City. Time and time again she has defended this claim, particularly against Boston, where Bell did much of his inventing. In July of 1936, *The Expositor* took the *National Geographic Magazine* to task for claiming that Boston was the birthplace of the telephone. In part, the editorial said:

"The July issue of The National Geographic Magazine, in an article devoted to Boston Massachusetts, claims for that City, both by implication and by direct statement, the honour of being the place of origin of the telephone, an honour to which not Boston but Brantford has first and irrefutable claim."

The editorial bemoaned the fact that Brantford was not even mentioned, and pointed out, again, that Dr. Bell's own words confirmed that the telephone originated in Brantford. The final paragraph stated:

"Accordingly it is disappointing to find a periodical of the prestige and wide circulation of The National Geographic being so careless in the compilation of an article as to perpetuate an unfortunate misconception which those interested in the clarifying of the record have been at pains to dispel for many years."

But this was nothing compared to the storm that was to break three years later over Brantford's claim to "telephone supremacy."

In January 1938, the City Council learned that Hollywood was planning to put out a movie on the life of Graham Bell. The mayor immediately wrote to the producers pointing out that Brantford, in fact, was the birthplace of the telephone. He received an answer back stating that some scenes would be shot in Brantford. However, when the movie was released in early 1939, Brantford had been completely ignored; and this was after the Mayor had sent the producers pictures and information on Bell's connection with Brantford. Commenting on this, *The Expositor* noted:

"The Hollywood film version of the life of A.G. Bell has been produced, and by all accounts is much more Hollywood than Bell, and certainly more Hollywood than history."

It further argued that Hollywood had produced a "totally unwarranted and inaccurate version" of Bell's life. Even *The Globe and Mail*, in an editorial entitled "The Truth Be Hanged," chastized the producers, and saw the film as an insult to Canada. *The Expositor* followed up this line of thought on April 6 in an editorial headed, "Stealing The Credit."

"The preparation of the Hollywood film representing the life and achievements of Alexander Graham Bell, inventor of the telephone, appears to be a deliberate attempt on the part of the producers of the picture to steal from Brantford the credit which belongs to it as the birthplace of the telephone... The action of the producers in totally ignoring the large volume of irrefutable evidence which proves that Brantford was the birthplace of the telephone should be strongly resented by Canadians from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The attempt to display a film in Canada portraying the life and achievements of Alexander Graham Bell, which entirely ignores the claims of Brantford, and of Canada, and appropriates all the credit to Boston, Massachusetts, is grounds for protest on the part of the Canadian people. In view of the mass of evidence offered to the producers by the City of Brantford, and the Bell Telephone Co. of Canada, the refusal to recognize the claims of the Canadian city is ungenerous, narrow-minded, and an attempt to mislead the public in regard to the true history of the invention of the telephone. More than that, it is a selfish denial of the "good neighbour" policy exploited by President Franklin Roosevelt himself. Canadians will be fully justified in strongly resenting this perversion of historical facts."

Three days later the City Council, in a strongly worded resolution, demanded that either the movie be appropriately revamped, or banned from Ontario. As a result of these protests the Censor Board of Ontario suspended the showings of the Bell film temporarily. Brantford's M.P.P., Louis Hagey, suggested that a prologue or epilogue referring to Bell's Brantford experiments, and a shot of the Bell Memorial be included. Twentieth Century Fox, the producers, cancelled all bookings in Canada, subject to the approval of the Bell family, and stated they would endeavour to interpret Brantford's role. Two camera men were to be sent to Brantford to shoot some scenes in this city. In the end, the revised film that was to be shown in Ontario had a prelude consisting of scenes of the Bell Homestead and the scroll at the homestead, two pictures of the Bell Memorial, and a statement that the invention took place at Bell's Brantford home. Brantford was appeased, Canada's honour was satisfied, but Americans went right on claiming Boston as the home of the telephone.

It is obvious then, that there was more happening during the 30's in Brantford than just unemployment and relief lines. In most times of stress communities manage to carry on, to a large degree, in a normal manner, and during the hard times of the depression Brantford was able to do this.

"NO MAN IS AN ISLAND"

During the 1930's, Brantford was only indirectly affected by political events taking place in Europe, but unlike an earlier time, the people were much more aware of what was happening outside the confines of the city.

One very important reason for this awareness was the increased efficiency of communications, and, in this respect the newspapers played a key role. By examining the headlines and editorials in *The Brantford Expositor*, the direction that public opinion was moving on certain overseas events becomes clear.

In 1932, after Japan had attacked China, in an editorial entitled "Japan's Aggression" *The Expositor* stated:

"...Japan seizing what she considered to be a favourable opportunity arising out of persistent Chinese provocations to strengthen her position in Manchuria, invaded that territory in violation of her expressed pledges before the League of Nations had opportunity to act.

If the Japanese Government was convinced of the justice of its claims against China, why was it not willing to submit them to the League for reference to the International Court of Justice at the Hague?"

With some foresight, the editorial also commented:

"If the League of Nations does not succeed in settling this dispute, it will be a calamity in civilisation."

And it concluded:

"There is one gratifying feature concerning Japan's unjustified aggression, and that is that it is strongly disapproved by the moral public opinion of the world."

Three days later in another editorial entitled "Japan Defies the Powers", *The Expositor* ironically concluded:

"...The latter (Japan) apparently failed to learn the lesson that was taught to Germany, that the civilized world would never again allow militarism to overthrow international law and justice."

As Mussolini moved to annex Abyssinia in 1935, *The Expositor* painted him as "a despot" and a "menace." Again it sent out a warning to the League of Nations.

"...The die has been cast, and it now remains to be seen whether the League of Nations is a mere empty name, or whether it will justify itself by imposing sanctions on the aggressor in the hope of preventing war."

The long drawn-out war in Spain also received its share of coverage by *The Expositor*. When war first broke out, an editorial entitled "Fear a General Conflict" concluded:

"The situation is indeed full of danger. Any nation that desires to bring about an explosion can easily do so by meddling in Spanish affairs. The next few days should determine the course of events. Unless other nations keep out of Spain, France has served notice that she will pour arms and munitions to aid the Government. Altogether the outlook is almost as dark as it was in 1914 when Austria decided to meddle in the affairs of Serbia. It will test the diplomacy of Europe to the utmost to avert a conflagration."

At least one Brantford man, an employee of the Cockshutt Plow, journeyed to Spain and fought for the Loyalists against Franco. After two years of fighting in Spain, he returned home to Brantford, but stated in an interview with *The Expositor*:

"...should our own democracy here in Canada ever be threatened, I would be with the first to enlist to defend it."

Little did he perhaps realize that within six months he would be put in just such a position.

In its comments and predictions on Adolf Hitler and the Nazis, *The Expositor* displayed a great deal of insight and foresight. As early as 1930 it was reporting on the "house-painter" who was now threatening the peace of Europe. In December of 1931, it pointed out the menace of Fascism and allowed that: "The Hitler movement will need to be closely watched as it possesses potentialities of great mischief." In April 1932 when Hindenburg was re-elected President in Germany, *The Expositor* heaved a sigh of relief:

"There will be almost universal satisfaction among people of moderate views throughout the entire world over the decisive re-election of President Hindenburg yesterday in Germany."

and concluded that the results afforded:

"...gratifying proof that the majority of the German people are inclined to adhere steadfastly to constitutional government, even under the stress of economic depression."

Yet within three months it was again reporting on the "Hitler Menace", and within the year had to pronounce "The Dark Ages Again", after Hitler had become Chancellor. Commenting on "Hitler's Supremacy" in March of 1934 *The Expositor* argued:

"...They (the German people) have acquiesced in the loss of their civil and religious liberties as established by the Republic, and have lapsed into a form of despotism more oppressive than Prussian militarism ever was."

Erroneously, in commenting on the future of Hitlerism, *The Expositor* stated:

"How long it will take, his enemies do not pretend to say, but they do claim that the end of Hitler's work is in sight."

Wishful thinking as it transpired. By 1936, the danger presented by Hitler to world peace was quite evident. *The Expositor* claimed that:

"...If the nations of Europe do not deal effectively with her (Germany) now, there is nothing more certain than that they will be compelled to do so when Germany thinks she is powerful enough to strike the blow..."

As Hitler threatened world peace over his efforts to take over sections of Czechoslovakia, *The Expositor* asked - "Is This Another Sarajevo?" and wondered if "European diplomacy is more powerful to preserve peace than it was when the shots were fired at Sarajevo in 1914."

In March of 1933, the Jewish community in Brantford had passed a strongly worded resolution regarding the atrocities of the Nazis against the Jews. In 1938, at a mass meeting in the Capitol Theatre, called by the Brantford General Ministerial Association, the following resolution was passed in regard to the persecution of the Jews:

"Whereas reports emanating from Germany state that Jews in that country are being subjected to cruel and unbelievable persecution;

And whereas the whole civilized world is aghast at the details of suffering and horrors which the Jews of Germany are said to be forced to undergo;

Now therefore be it resolved:

- 1) That the citizens of Brantford assembled at the Capitol Theatre today, Sunday, this fourth day of December, 1938, do extend to the Jews in Germany our deepest sympathy in the midst of their grief and tribulation, and trust that this sympathy may be of some solace to them in the knowledge that the civilized world condemns most strongly the barbarism and violence directed against them.*
- 2) That we feel that this persecution goes beyond an attack on any one minority, and that it is an attack on civilization itself, on both Jew and Gentile.*
- 3) That this meeting joins in the sympathy to the Jews as expressed by the Government leaders of Great Britain and the United States, and echoed by the press and spiritual and cultural leaders throughout the English-speaking world."*

Resolutions and sympathy had no effect on Hitler. As Hitler rolled into Czechoslovakia in 1939, *The Expositor* branded him as "an unscrupulous autocrat ready to crush the independence of weaker nations..." and although the paper had supported Chamberlain's compromises, it pointed out that "the League Is impotent", and now argued that "national safety can be preserved only by increasing British armaments." At that point, as things turned out, it was almost too late. (see resources 1).

Yet even with the international scene deteriorating, and with crisis after crisis coming to the fore, the foreign-born event which had most emotional impact on Brantford in the 30's was the abdication of Edward VIII, for the woman he loved. *The Expositor* left no doubt as to where its sympathy lay. It was the duty of the monarch to "uphold the stability of the monarchy"; the event was "one of the greatest tragedies in modern history"; and the King had "surrendered his royal birthright to rule over the greatest Empire the world has ever known, in order to pursue his own personal ends." The people of Brantford were split in their sympathies over the abdication. Some felt that Edward had no right to do as he wished, while others argued that he should follow his heart. A popular parody that was going the rounds among Brantford school children at this time was:

*"Hark the herald angels sing
Mrs. Simpson's pinched our King."*

But the fact that 700 copies of an extra edition of *The Expositor* sold in 45 minutes, allows one to see just how interested Brantfordites were in this issue.

The foreign crisis of the 30's made people in Brantford very aware of the fact that as much as they might be concerned with the everyday occurrences in their own locale, the age was past when they could ignore what was going on "on the other side of the pond."

POLITICS IN THE 30'S

Politics at all levels had lost some of the fervour and partisanship that had been present in the late nineteenth century. This is not to suggest that the fervour was lacking - it was just more subdued; and because the depression affected everyone in Brantford in some way, when an election was held emotions usually ran high, and election rallies were usually well-attended and lively.

At the federal level, Brantford followed the country in electing a Conservative in 1930 and a Liberal in 1935. In the election of 1930, Prime Minister Mackenzie King opened his campaign in Brantford. He addressed over 5,000 people in the Armouries in a two hour speech that was broadcast over a Canada-wide network of 24 radio stations. With regard to Brantford he stated:

"It is a pleasure, indeed, to be opening this campaign in the great industrial city of Brantford. There are many reasons why it is fitting this should be so. We have, in Brantford, a microcosm, expressive in a way, of the whole Dominion of Canada, which is composed in part of great manufacturing and industrial centres, surrounded by great agricultural areas."

The Expositor reported:

"The meeting was a model of orderliness, and reflected credit upon the thousands of people who were present. Not a single interruption occurred, nor was there a discordant note heard during the proceedings."

Were the good citizens of Brantford intimidated by the battery of microphones, or had times really changed that much? The Conservative leader, R.B. Bennett also spoke at the Armouries, and he also addressed a full house. He attacked particularly the Liberal fiscal policy, and called for a higher tariff that would protect industry in Canada, and create more jobs in Brantford. When the ballots were counted, R.E. Ryerson, the Conservative incumbent, had retained his seat, and would help form the Bennett government.

In 1935, Brantford followed the country's swing back to the Liberal Government of Mackenzie King. W. Ross Macdonald, in his third attempt, was elected as M.P. for Brantford, defeating R.E. Ryerson. Mr. Macdonald was to remain Brantford's representative until 1953 when he was appointed to the Senate. During his Commons career he was a valued member of the government, and because of his fair-minded stands on issues, was elected Speaker of the House. In describing his victory celebration and speech, *The Expositor* commented:

"His address was not the boasting of a conqueror gloating over a victory, but that of a man who realizes his responsibility to serve all citizens of Brantford no matter what their political affiliations, their racial origins, or their creed."

Mr. Macdonald himself said:

"I have been elected to represent the Riding of Brantford, each and every citizen therein."

In 1936, Mr. Macdonald proved that this was no false promise. Some western Liberals in the House of Commons had called for an investigation into farm implement prices which had just been raised. Mr. Macdonald defended the price increases, pointing out that in good times up to 3,000 men were employed in the farm implement industry in Brantford, but that at that time only 800 were employed, "because of economic conditions", and if the increase was dropped, even fewer would have jobs. Going against one's party colleagues is not an easy thing to do, but when he felt that the interests of Brantford were at stake, Ross Macdonald never hesitated to stand up for the people who elected him - no matter who the opposition was.

In provincial politics, Brantford again followed the government to office. In 1929, W.G. Martin was re-elected M.P.P. for Brant as a Conservative member, and a year later Premier Ferguson appointed him Minister of Public Welfare - an important position considering the conditions that the depression had caused. The election of 1934 was considerably more lively. Describing a meeting of M.P.P. Martin, *The Expositor* commented:

"At a meeting Saturday night in the Pythian Hall, a meeting, incidentally, that assumed early in the evening and maintained throughout the tenor of an old - fashioned political rally, with vigorous verbal thrusts, and a plentiful sprinkling of heckling thrown in. Ron. W.G. Martin, government candidate here, reviewed the record of the Henry administration (Premier Ferguson had died in office), and took one of his opponents, Mayor M.M. MacBride sharply to task on the latter's own record, and on what he described as his misleading statements."

As the meeting ended two hecklers refused to sing "God Save The King", and were given a "rather rough and precipitate assistance to the door." But Brantford saved its real show for Premier George S. Henry's visit on June 15. *The Expositor* headlines noted:

"Overripe Tomatoes and Eggs of Ancient Vintage Hurlled At Premier Henry As He Entered Theatre."

The tomato throwing continued in the theatre, (until the hecklers were ejected), and as the Premier exited - even though he took another exit to that expected.

The Expositor concluded that it was the work of an organized group of hoodlums, and that:

"In all, the reception here was the most unruly of Premier Henry's lively campaign tour."

The results of the election showed that W.G. Martin had been decisively defeated by M.M. MacBride, who was then Mayor of Brantford, and who was running as an

Independent. M.M. MacBride won the following election in 1937 as well, and although still an Independent, was made Minister of Labour.

Although the left-wing of politics made gains in some larger cities, not much headway was made in Brantford during the Depression. A Labour Party was formed in the city during this period, but was never able to achieve much politically. However, in April of 1933, the Labour Party of Ontario held its convention in Brantford, and at this convention a significant decision was made when it was decided by an overwhelming majority that the Labour Party would affiliate, unconditionally, with the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation.

Farther to the left, the Communist Party did send representatives here. They usually addressed crowds who gathered in the market square, although one did speak at the Labour Hall. Brantford's reaction to these speakers varied, but was never really violent. Sometimes the crowds were passive, sometimes abusive, and once they even chased a speaker off the square. In 1934, Tim Buck, the leader of the Communist Party in Canada at that time, spoke at the Masonic Hall and was given a good hearing. But in 1939, the Board of Education refused to grant permission for Buck to use the Collegiate Auditorium for a meeting, on the grounds that he did not represent a responsible or representative local organization. However, the real reason was probably expressed by one of the trustees when he said:

"...no one will be permitted to use any school building under its control for the dissemination of Communistic doctrines."

Of all the political arenas in the 30's, the local municipal scene was the one that attracted most attention from the electors. This was partly because it affected them directly, but was also due to the particular issues that came to light, and to a very flamboyant and colourful mayor.

Two mayors dominated the Brantford scene in the 30's - Ross Beckett and Morrison Mann MacBride. Ross Beckett had first been elected Mayor in 1928, and continued in that post until 1933. He was the man in the chair when the depression first struck, and it was because of his initiative that Brantford managed to get through the initial shock of the depression, and if he did not put Brantford on the road to recovery, he at least held its head above the water in the early period of economic distress. An excellent organizer, Mayor Beckett was to a large degree responsible for the conception of the Community League, an organization that united Brantford's relief efforts. He was its first president. Mayor Beckett's concerns were to help the man who had been hard-hit by the economic problems, take the weight of what could be excessive taxes off the shoulders of the taxpayer, and keep the city solvent. He worked tirelessly in organizing the relief for the unemployed, and the relief work projects. He continually pressed the provincial and federal governments for funds for relief, and was successful in this regard.

Doubtless though, the most colourful mayor of the period was Morrison Mann MacBride. He had been mayor previously in 1918, 20 and 25, and M.P.P. for Brantford from 1919-1925. In 1931 he attempted a return to municipal politics but was defeated by Ross Beckett. For the 1933 term he ran, and was successful. He was re-elected, for

1934, but defeated in 1935 by Col M.A. Colquhoun. However, he was again elected Mayor in 1936 and 37, and carried both this job and that of M.P.P. for Brantford, (having been elected M.P.P. in 1934 and 1937).

If M.M. MacBride did nothing else for civic politics he got people interested in it. Reactions to his personality and politics were extreme. People either disliked him intensely, or admired him greatly. But they came out to vote in municipal elections - either to see him defeated or help him get elected. MacBride was an orator of great ability (many said he could have been an effective evangelist), had a striking appearance, and the ability to arouse the working-class of Brantford, from whom he got most of his support. His flamboyance came through in many ways, his platform manner, his penchant for saying things without first checking the facts, or perhaps ignoring them, and his election advertising which was often set out as a poem such as:

*"Upon the ground of Reason - I make an
honest plea.
Thus only do I make my plans - to serve
humanity.
I'd never stooped to levels low nor
strutted forth with pride.
To serve the people well - my thought –*

Sincerely yours, MacBride.

Whatever his eccentricities or faults, he did attract the citizens of Brantford to municipal politics. The Council meetings were always jammed with spectators when he was mayor. Workers waited hours in long line-ups outside of his office, hoping that he might be able to help them with their economic problems. His political enemies suggested that he helped too many people too freely for political purposes, and an investigation into the relief organization during his first 2 years as mayor in the 30's did point up some irregularities.

It was from the working class that he got the majority of his support. In one instance, in 1936, during a strike at Canada Car and Foundry, MacBride addressed the strikers. Among other things he told them:

*"As the representative of all citizens it does not become me to take sides, but everyone knows all my sympathies and all my thoughts are on the side of the working-man.
...There has been some reference that concern is felt for the wives and children if the strike continues. Let me say there will be no man or his family suffers for the necessities of life so long as I am Chief Magistrate...."*

In spite of the efforts of *The Expositor*, with whom he kept up a running battle (to the point of a threatened law suit), and who was in fact largely responsible for MacBride's defeat in December 1934, and other conservative elements in the city, M.M. MacBride was elected mayor 4 times during the 1930's.

A recurring issue during the depression years in Brantford was the collection of property taxes. Late in 1933, the city's financial position in regard to tax collection was

described as "good." In January of 1932, Mayor Beckett called for a drastic cut in taxes, and tax arrears at the end of March were reported to be no worse than in 1931. However, by September, it was obvious that tax arrears were greater than previously. Taxes continued to fall behind in spite of efforts to collect them, and too, of efforts to pay them. People would come in to the City Hall with 50 cents or a dollar to be put against their taxes, in order to keep their houses. For the most part they were given a sympathetic hearing as the city was loathe to foreclose, given the economic conditions. There were some however, who could pay and who were taking advantage of the situation by not paying. In 1935, the situation was described as "serious but not alarming." A determined drive by the City was put on to collect back taxes, and a tax collection campaign committee was set up to appeal to the citizens' loyalty and citizenship. In 1936, Mayor MacBride asked Council to give him the authority to collect taxes, as one of his election promises had been to collect taxes from those who could pay and were not doing so. The Council refused his request. Characteristically, the Mayor replied, "I'm going to make some of them pay their taxes anyway, whether you vote for it or not." But the crisis seemed to be over when, in August 1937, the City Council considered a tax-rebate because of an improved financial situation..

Civic wages and salaries were another issue that was present in Brantford in the 30's. Civic employees took a 10 percent wage reduction, on a voluntary basis at first, and then on a compulsory basis. In 1932, all honoraria to civic officials was cut, including \$750.00 that went to the Mayor. In May of 1933, the City Council passed a by-law to adjust salaries of civic officials, and to fix those paid by spending boards and commissions. When the City Council of 1933, late in December, introduced a bill to pay aldermen up to a \$200 maximum - retroactive to January 1933 there were a great many protests - first protesting that it had been done at all, and secondly complaining that it had been done behind closed doors. A letter to the editor of *The Expositor* called the move "one of the most reprehensible exhibitions of cupidity known in the history of Brantford." *The Expositor* itself issued a scathing editorial entitled "Santa Claus At The Council."

"Santa Claus visited the city council chamber last night and left \$200 in each of the aldermanic stockings, or \$3,000 in all. The old gentleman always seems to think of everything, so he brought a by-law along sanctioning his beneficence, and the document must have been prepared some days before in the legal department which he maintains at the North Pole. As everyone knows Santa has a very soft heart, and no doubt the tears actually ran down his beard as he thought of the Brantford civic representatives working hard all year without a cent of remuneration, although for over fifty previous years other aldermen had done exactly the same thing on identically the same basis. While he was at it, the dear old gentleman thought that he might also restore the honaria which it had been previously decided to drop, from motives of economy, in connection with other civic boards, so that he was manifestly in a very melting mood."

Mayor MacBride countered that the increase had been done honourably (at the previous meeting the Mayor's salary had been fixed at \$2,500.00), but the new Council of 1934 declared the bill giving the aldermen \$200.00, invalid. Later in 1934, civic salaries were "adjusted" upwards, and several aldermen claimed they knew nothing about it, but the Mayor claimed they did. He later explained that there were no salary increases, "just

adjustments.” It is obvious then, at a time when economic restraint was being practised by many, any attempts to increase expenses at the municipal level, where the taxpayer paid the piper, were met by strong civic opposition.

A major change in Brantford undertaken by the Council in the 30's was the changeover from streetcars to buses. This was not accomplished without some opposition. During 1932, Brantford experimented with buses in order to ascertain whether they would prove more popular and economical than street cars. The Municipal Street Railway was incurring a deficit of from \$20,000 to \$30,000 annually, and it was hoped that buses might help improve this situation. The worsening economic situation ruled out purchasing buses, and the matter was temporarily shelved. Interestingly, in 1933, the books of the Municipal Railway were found to be \$35,000 short, and the Council asked for an inquiry into the affairs of various civic departments. In October of 1933, the judges found that there had been misappropriation of funds in the Brantford Municipal Railway. In 1936, the street railway continued to lose money, Mayor MacBride called for a revamping of the transportation system in Brantford. Not only were the street cars losing money, but their noise level was becoming unbearable.

Referred to as the "Toonerville Trolleys," it was reported that travellers were refusing to use the front rooms in some local hotels because of the noise of the trolleys. Many citizen deputations approached the City Council complaining of the noise, and asked that either the trolleys be repaired, or replaced by buses. A referendum in the December 1937 elections voted to do away with the street railway system and bring in buses. This was duly passed by Council, but turned down by the Ontario Municipal Board. Another referendum was held in May of 1938, but was defeated by a significant majority of 965 votes. The city then put on a determined campaign to have the voters pass a bylaw in the 1938 election, and aided by front page editorials in *The Expositor*, was successful in getting the by-law accepted. Brantford at last had buses, But even here the controversy did not end. When buses were being bought for local transportation, a letter writer to *The Expositor* asked:

"May I ask if the other members of the P.U.C. realize that they have taken between 3,300 and 3,900 labour hours away from local workmen by purchasing out of Brantford?"

Even though the letter was written after the outbreak of war, when things were returning to a form of normalcy, the "depression way of thinking" of "Brantford first" was obviously still present.

Politics in Brantford during the depression were lively, if somewhat subdued from what they had been in former years. At every level of politics, it was the issues and the personalities that made politics interesting. Brantford's response to these issues and personalities showed that if she was down, she was not by any means out.

MEN OF SWEAT AND TOIL THE WORKING MAN IN BRANTFORD DURING THE 30'S

The person most directly affected by the depression of the 30's, and yet the person least responsible for its occurrence, was the working man. In Brantford in the 30's, this meant a large section of the population. These men suddenly found themselves, many for the first time, without work, and forced to accept relief, either directly or through relief work. Work-hardened manual labourers, skilled craftsmen, and office clerks, found themselves working together on such projects as digging sewers, and laying curbs. It was a bitter pill for many of them to swallow, but it was the only way to stay alive.

Like others, the workers were caught off-guard when the depression struck, and also like others, it took them some time to realize that prosperity was not just around the corner. The chief spokesman for the worker in Brantford in the 30's was the Trades and Labour Council. During this period as various issues arose, this body took stands which were designed to protect the working-man. One of these issues was the question of immigration. As unemployment became more widespread, many Canadians wanted the door shut on immigrants in order to preserve jobs for Canadians. In May, 1930, the Brantford Trades and Labour Council passed a resolution, which was forwarded to the Federal government, requesting that because unemployment had become serious, businesses that were advertising for immigrant labour (here the railways were mentioned in particular) should cease doing so. The concern was obviously still there later in July when in the 1930 federal election, the following was one of three questions put to each of the candidates - "Are you in favour of prohibiting immigration into Canada until such time as the people here, who are willing to work, are employed?" The other two questions also reflected concerns of the worker. These were - "Are you in favour of the Dominion government enacting legislation, providing for unemployment insurance?" and, "Are you in favour of the Federal Government financially assisting the cities and municipalities in the relief of unemployment?"

Another issue they were involved in was the question of wages. In 1930 they protested against the wage scale being paid to relief workers on the subway, and when wage cuts were suggested in 1931 in certain industries and offices, the Council opposed this measure arguing, quite correctly, that there would be less money circulating and there would be small savings per individual. The Council felt very strongly on the question of exploitation of the workers, and spoke out on this several times. In a letter to *The Expositor* in 1934, Tom Rolls, then President of the Brantford Trades and Labour Council, argued:

"A recent investigation has proved beyond doubt that many workers are not receiving sufficient remuneration to maintain a decent standard of living for their families, and this is seriously menacing the health and happiness of our people."

In February of 1934, the Brantford Trades and Labour Council forwarded a communication to the Federal Minister of Trade and Commerce, charging that "sweat shop" conditions did exist in Brantford. At a meeting in March of '34, the Council issued a statement pointing out that in Brantford, workers were "entirely at the mercy of employer's, and were compelled by circumstances to accept wages barely exceeding

relief allowances.” It also revealed that the workers who had been involved in its probe were unwilling to give their names because of fear of reprisals. Again, on the issue of low wages, the Brantford Trades and Labour Council sent a letter to the Dominion Commissioner of unemployment relief, protesting the rate of pay for single men in the relief camps run by the government.

While violence flared on the picket line in other places, Brantford was free of violence, but not of strikes, during the depression years. There were several minor strikes in Brantford during the depression, and in almost every case the main issue was not money - but the question of union recognition. Brantford, of course, had many workers who belonged to unions, but these were, for the most part, skilled trades, and there was an attempt in the 30's to organize the unskilled. During a threatened strike by the Brantford Municipal Railway workers in 1934, a worker, in reply to a critic who felt the railwaymen were overpaid, suggested:

"... the only reason the men in the factory do not get 45¢ per hour and cannot get down to their work, or in other words have low wages and rotten working conditions, is because they are not organized. Even a capitalistic Liberal Government (provincial) is urging workers to organize into trade unions, but I do not see any great rush in Brantford to organize. I would urge that with the assistance of the Trades and Labour Council, the unorganized take some steps to get together for their own protection...."

At a meeting of union and non-union workers in the Labour Hall in February of 1935, the men who were not organized were urged to do so in order to end the exploitation of the workingman. The attitude of management to the possibility of the men organizing, if not hostile, was at the very best passive acceptance. A Royal Commission probe into payroll and profits in the textile industry asked these questions and got the following answers, when questioning management at Penman's in Paris.

"What is your attitude to organized labour in respect to your company?

Neutral

Are men in your employ free to organize without any discouragement or interference?

Yes

Are you prepared to deal with an organization union collectively in respect to your employees?

We have never been against the proposition."

Management in some plants was even less than neutral. When in 1935 the chairman of the Washing Machine Worker's Union asked for a raise in wages for the employees, he was discharged. Forty to fifty employees walked out in protest over the dismissal, and the chairman was re-hired.

In 1937 employees at the Dominion Radiator and Boiler Company were locked out by the Company because of union difficulties. The Company claimed that a minority of the employees, mainly Hungarian, were insisting that the firm deal exclusively with an outside union. The workers claimed that it was a good-sized majority that was demanding this, and claimed the Company was exploiting the workers by making them work long hours on piece-work without informing them of the rate of pay. The men

decided to return to work after the Company agreed to set up a committee to negotiate grievances.

Strikes also occurred at Kitchen Overall, where the question was both wages and recognition of a "closed shop" union, and at the College Theatre where the employers refused to deal with one union claiming that a union already existed. The workers claimed that the latter union was a "company union" - one run by the company. One strike, where wages were the issue, took place at the Canada Car and Foundry Company in 1936. The question here was not one of a raise in pay, but of the men resisting the company's attempts to cut back wages 10 percent. The men felt that because they had already had one 10 percent cut, they could not afford another. One effect of the strike was that those strikers who had not belonged to the union at the factory (the International Moulder's Union) joined, so that when the strike ended there were a lot more union members. The strike ended when the company agreed not to institute a wage cut.

How much headway the union movement made in Brantford during the 30's is difficult to ascertain, but the movement towards organization did continue; and in the 40's, the larger manufacturing concerns in town became the target of the organizers.

One interesting feature of the labour scene in Brantford during the depression came in the last year of the 30's. In March, representatives of several community organizations passed a resolution at City Hall requesting the Board of Trade "to make contact with the manufacturers and retail merchants regarding the feasibility of replacing married women now in their employ, whose husbands are also gainfully employed, by single persons." It was felt by some that one income in a family was sufficient, and that the job held by a married woman would be better held by someone who was out of work. It is safe to say that this issue aroused the emotions of the citizens of Brantford to an extent that few other local events in the 30's did. The arguments waged for and against the idea of married women working were numerous, and *The Expositor* was deluged with letters, to the point where it had to cut off correspondence on the subject. Ironically, one letter stated:

"Also if Canada should have to go to war again, who will be called upon to work while husbands fight? The married women of course."

Just as the war settled so many other problems of the depression, so too it helped to solve this question.

The Brantford working-man suffered a great deal during the depression years. If he was lucky, he worked two to three days a week for reduced wages, at his chosen work. Those less fortunate worked at what they could get, for what they could get. But when war broke out in 1939, the Brantford worker was there - either joining one of the forces, or helping the city's industries change over to war production.

AS THE WEST GOES - SO GOES BRANTFORD BRANTFORD INDUSTRY IN THE 1930'S

LOOKING FORWARD

"The dawn of 1929 presents the prospects of Canada more glowing than any year since the close of the war....

And it is without boast and with well founded facts we can say there is no more prosperous Country today, and no where one which is better equipped in material resources and in the character of its people to take full advantages of the opportunities of tomorrow."

LOCAL INDUSTRY PROSPEROUS

"The industrial condition of Brantford, judging from recent statements that have appeared in The Expositor is exceedingly satisfactory."

Such were portions of early January editorials in The Burford Advance, and *The Brantford Expositor*, respectively. And why should they not be thus? Robbins and Myer had increased its staff by 50 percent. Cockshutt Plow was operating full-time with a complete staff, and showed a profit of \$330,687 over 1928 - with a promising outlook for 1929. The minister of Trade and Commerce for Canada reported that 1928 was the most prosperous year in the history of Canada. Ironically, (what value hindsight), *The Expositor* editorialized in April of 1929, under "Brantford Progressing."

"It is evident that Brantford has once more struck its former stride in industrial progress. The steady employment that prevails throughout the city is reported to have caused the biggest shortage of houses experienced in many years....

It is not very long ago when Brantford was worried by a considerable exodus of workers from the city seeking employment elsewhere, with the result that there were a number of empty houses. The changed conditions are very gratifying. As an example, it is said that for one vacant house advertised there were fifty-two applicants in one day. Brantford is glad to welcome back many former residents, who during the period of depression, sought work in other centres.... All good citizens will rejoice in the remarkable prosperity which exists at the present time."

At the same time, it was felt by some, that more diversity was needed in Brantford industry. Her main products were agricultural implements, and these were tied to a large degree to the western wheat market. To this end, *The Expositor* pushed for an Industrial Commissioner whose main duty would be to secure more manufacturing establishments for Brantford.

"Brantford is not nearly up-to-date in regard to its industrial promotion....Now that the policy of some of the larger industries seems to be towards decentralization by the establishment of branch factories in the west, and in Europe as well, it is all the more important that Brantford should spare no effort to secure even greater diversity in its industries by constantly adding to their number."

As well, there was a certain urgency to this question of an Industrial Commissioner. It was felt Brantford was falling behind, as she now stood tenth among the cities of Ontario in the volume of industrial production, where once she had been near the top.

Just how oblivious people were to what was going to happen in October of 1929, can be seen by the fact that right up into September, headlines and editorials were still bragging of "good prospects" for Massey-Harris, of a new high for employment in Canada, and "no sign of depression" in Canada. But the signs were there for those who wished to see them. As early as February "severe declines" were noted on Wall Street. In March, Sir George Parish, a respected economist, warned of the "gravest financial crisis the world has ever seen," and also in March, the worst crisis in nine years took place on Wall Street. Stocks moved somewhat erratically over the summer months. These fluctuations hit Brantford indirectly through a weakness that began to show up in farm implement stocks. This trend was further aggravated by a drop in grain prices over the summer.

In early October, there was a severe downward trend in the stock market because of "extravagant indulgence" in speculation. A dramatic recovery followed. On October 28, as if to blunt the blow that was to follow the next day, an *Expositor* editorial ended:

"...Nevertheless, the assurance that the panic on Wall Street is not likely to disturb the industrial and commercial prosperity of the country will be very gratifying to Canadians."

The crash did occur on October 29, but by October 30 financial experts were predicting a "recovery." Several people in Brantford lost heavily because of the crash. A survey discovered that the average Brantford investor lost around \$300.00, but that some local people had lost as much as \$200,000. On November 6, 1929, *The Expositor* again had to report that local stock market traders were hit hard.

"Such stocks as International Nickel, Brazilian, Cities Service, Canadian Gypsum, Alabastine, Massey-Harris, Noranda, and Cockshutt Plow, whose securities are heavily held by local investors and speculators were caught in the pronounced movement and lost from one to eighteen points."

The harsh reality of what was to follow the crash took some time to sink in. Comments from experts and editorials led people to believe that the "crash" was only a "temporary interruption." Cockshutt Plow, in its annual report for 1929, stated that the future was bright, and would be even brighter if the government would institute some form of tariff reform to keep out American implements. The last word for the year 1929 belonged to *The Expositor*, on December 31.

"...and the year 1930 will probably find the era of general prosperity swinging along with very little, if any, interruption."

Only very slowly was it realized that this was more than a "temporary interruption." Articles and editorials with such titles as, "No Time For Pessimism," "Optimistic Outlook" and "Business Is Sound/" continued to appear. On the surface, the economy in Brantford seemed to be somewhat stable. A meeting of manufacturers in March 1930 seemed to indicate that industrial improvement was on its way, and that several plants were reported working to capacity, with expectations to continue doing so. But, the failure of the 1929 grain crop in the West was affecting the implement industry, and that meant Brantford. Massey-Harris reported a reduction in orders from the West, and Cockshutt's admitted to "some shrinkage in business." The implement industry was not aided in any way by the federal budget of May, 1930.

"...the citizens of Brantford cannot help deploring the fact that nothing has been done to aid the agricultural implement industry throughout the Dominion, and which so vitally concerns the industrial welfare of this city."

Brantford's M.P., R.E. Ryerson, Conservative, attacked the budget because:

"In these changes, which relate to manufactured goods, the whole policy of the finance minister seems to be to encourage and to help either the British, or the foreign manufacturer. I fail to note one change that will assist or help one Brantford industry."

In September, it was reported that Brantford's industrial condition was at its lowest ebb since 1921. When the Conservatives announced their first budget in September of 1930, the manufacturers in Brantford were very pleased. There were tariff changes on 130 items, but most important for Brantford was the 25 percent farm implement tariff.

Year-end announcements from Brantford's major industries seemed to confirm that 1931 would be a brighter year for this city. Cockshutt Plow, Massey-Harris, Pratt and Letchworth, and Harding Carpets, all indicated, that they would be taking on more men in the New Year. However, by June 1931, Colonel Cockshutt, president of Cockshutt Plow, was refusing "to confirm or deny rumours that it had been decided to continue that factory in operation instead of closing down." One reason for the failure of Cockshutt's to move ahead may have been the cancellation of a large order from Russia, because of a Canadian government decision to place an embargo on Russian products. The company had a million dollar deal pending with Russia, dependent on Russian coal being allowed into Canada. The embargo meant that the deal was off. Cockshutt's declared a deficit of \$494,486 for 1931, and Massey-Harris announced a business decline of 50 percent in 1931. In 1932 Cockshutt's still operated at a deficit - albeit a smaller one of \$292,151, and Massey-Harris was also able to report a reduction in its losses for the year 1932.

It was not gloom for all Brantford industry during this period. In 1931, the Brantford Cordage reported an increase in its earnings, and in mid-1932 was working 13 hours a day; Harding Carpets gave a "favourable" report for 1931 at its annual meeting,

and at the end of 1933 was "out of the red with good prospects ahead." A large number of industries located in Brantford during this period as well. In late 1931, Universal Cooler, and Sterling Action and Keys arrived; National Silicates Ltd., and Pittsburgh Water Heater Ltd. along with Sonoco Ltd., began operations in 1932-33; and in 1934 the H.E. Mott Co. took over the old Goold, Shapely, Muir buildings.

And if some industries were taking advantage of depressed conditions to decrease men's wages, at least one industry in Brantford was complimented on its wage scale. In 1935, there was a Federal investigation into the textile industry in Canada. While some other areas were harshly criticized for "sweat-shop conditions", Brantford's textile industry was praised.

Just when the "corner was turned" for Canada, as far as the depression was concerned, is very difficult to determine. If one believed the newspapers, It could have been at the beginning of each new year. Almost invariably, *the Expositor* had an editorial in late December proclaiming that there were "Signs of Recovery", or "Brighter Prospects," for the following year. Still, the relief rolls did not decrease. It would seem however, that the local picture began to improve somewhat, near the end of 1934 and in early 1935. It is certain that a trade pact between Canada and the United States, signed in November of 1935, stimulated some industry in Brantford. In 1936, the Liberal government's budget chopped the tariff on farm implements to 7½ percent. *The Expositor* growled: "The lowering of these duties cannot be justified on any economic ground." Col. Cockshutt of Cockshutt Plow initially had "nothing to say for publication," but later stated that the effect of the move "will be seen in increases in the Canadian relief lists."

In spite of this, Massey-Harris reported sales in 1936 up 30 percent over 1935, and *The Expositor* predicted, with some certainty this time, in December of 1936:

"The immediate outlook for this City is very much brighter than it has been since 1929 and better times may be anticipated with a very considerable degree of confidence."

The truth of this statement was borne out in 1937, when Massey-Harris reported it was "in the black" for the first time since 1929, and Cockshutt's announced "a very pleasant increase in business." The road from then on was steady and upward until the outbreak of war, when the reverse of the depression occurred - too many jobs and not enough men.

There is no doubt that Brantford industry was very hard hit by the depression. Given its general lack of diversity, and close ties with the Western wheat crop, any failure in that crop would invariably affect Brantford. One might say, as the grain crop of the Canadian West went, so went Brantford. The depression taught many people many things. Perhaps the lesson that Brantford industry learned was that it must have a more diversified industrial base to secure continued economic prosperity.

CONCLUSION

When did the "Depression" end? Nobody has been able to determine that exactly. In Brantford, the slow upward climb to normality seems to have begun somewhere near the end of 1936. But, of course, Brantford's recovery was linked to that of Canada's, and Canada's in return was related to the stabilizing of the world economy.

Like many other cities during the Depression, Brantford marked time in terms of development. The problems of the Depression took precedence over anything else, and by the time they were solved, there seemed to be little time, energy, or money, for anything else. For example, the switch from street cars to buses was seriously considered in the early part of the decade, but the changeover was postponed until the end of the 30's.

In Brantford, the Depression did leave an indelible mark on many. Health problems created by poor nutrition and aggravated by lack of medical care, would last on and on for some. Many had to give up getting an education to get out and do something - anything - to bring in money. Most significant perhaps, some attitudes changed dramatically. Gone was the carefree approach to life and all that it had to offer. In its place was a concern with the future, and appreciation of what one did possess. The value of a dollar was brought home to many, and remained with them for life.

The various major celebrations that took place in Brantford during the 30's showed that the citizens of Brantford had not lost either their ability to have fun, or their civic pride and loyalty. In some cases, the events of the 30's did bring people in Brantford closer together, in spite of, or maybe because of, the hardships just about everyone had to endure.

When war came in 1939, many men in Brantford saw joining the army as a means of getting "three squares" a day, and an opportunity to earn some money. After what many of them had been through during the 30's, the chance of literally killing themselves in order to get a pay cheque did not seem too ridiculous.