

The Bruce Report and Social Welfare Leadership in the Politics of Toronto's "Slums", 1934–1939

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Slum clearance and rebuilding first became a serious political project in Toronto during the 1930s. Following the release of a systematic housing survey known as the Bruce Report (1934), a set of actors distinguished by their planning authority with respect to social agencies, influence over social work education, coordination of social research, and role as spokespersons of religious bodies inaugurated a political struggle over state power. While the campaign failed, it called forth a reaction from established authorities and reconfigured the local political field as it related to low-income housing. This article gives an account of these processes by drawing upon correspondence and minutes of meetings of city officials and the campaign's organizers, newspaper clippings, and published materials.

L'élimination des taudis et la reconstruction furent pour la première fois un projet politique sérieux à Toronto dans les années 1930. Après la diffusion des résultats d'une enquête systématique sur les logements connue sous le nom de rapport Bruce (1934), un ensemble d'acteurs se démarquant par leur pouvoir de planification des organismes sociaux, leur influence sur la formation en travail social, leur coordination de la recherche sociale et leur rôle de porte-parole des organismes religieux s'affrontèrent sur la question du pouvoir de l'État. Bien qu'elle fut un échec, la campagne fit réagir les autorités en place et modifia l'échiquier politique local dans le domaine des logements pour personnes à faible revenu. Cet article relate ces processus en puisant pour ce faire dans la correspondance et les procès-verbaux des réunions des fonctionnaires municipaux et des organisateurs de la campagne ainsi que dans les coupures de journal et les écrits publiés.

DURING THE GREAT Depression, the issue of public housing moved from being a political project with little legitimacy in Canada to one

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supported nominally by federal housing legislation. Those who favoured government involvement could appeal to a half-century-long history of state programmes in England and, after 1933 and more importantly the passage of the *Wagner-Steagall Housing Act* of 1937, the inclusion of public housing as a component of the New Deal programmes in the United States. Each of these national interventions involved a struggle over the representation of the housing of low-income residents and a competition to gain control over the new state powers that would be deployed.¹

During the Depression, groups mobilized to demonstrate the existence of unacceptable housing conditions among the lower classes in Canadian cities such as Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Halifax, and Vancouver. In each of these cities housing surveys were conducted and used as a resource in political campaigns for state action to improve conditions.² Historical accounts isolate the *Report of the Lieutenant-Governor's Committee on Housing Conditions in Toronto* (1934) from among studies of the period before the Second World War on the basis of the quality of its empirical research and the case it made for slum clearance and publicly owned and subsidized housing.³ A set of actors, distinguished by their planning authority with respect to social agencies, influence over social work education, coordination of social research, and roles as spokespersons of religious bodies, used the Bruce Report to inaugurate a political struggle over state power. Although the group lost its coherence as its attempt to enact political representation failed, the struggle it initiated called forth a reaction from established authorities and gave shape to a sub-field of struggle over state powers relating to housing.

1 John Bacher, "One Unit Was Too Many: The Failure to Develop a Canadian Social Housing Policy in the Great Depression," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 22, no. 3 (1987), pp. 50–61. On the American pattern, see Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981); Gail Radford, "The Federal Government and Housing During the Great Depression" in John F. Bauman, Roger Biles, and Kristin M. Szylvian, eds., *From Tenements to Taylor Homes: In Search of an Urban Housing Policy in Twentieth-Century America* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), pp. 102–120; Alexander von Hoffman, "The End of the Dream: The Political Struggle of America's Public Housers", *Journal of Planning History*, vol. 4, no. 3 (August 2005), pp. 222–253. On the British experience, see Anthony S. Wohl, *The Eternal Slum: Housing and Social Policy in Victorian London* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977); J. A. Yelling, *Slums and Redevelopment: Policy and Practice in England, 1918–45* (London: University College London Press, 1992). See also Stefan Epp, "Class, Capitalism, and Construction: Winnipeg's Housing Crisis and the Debate over Public Housing, 1934–1939," *Histoire sociale – Social History*, vol. 43, no. 86 (November 2010), pp. 393–428.

2 John Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace: The Evolution of Canadian Housing Policy* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), pp. 66–74.

3 References to the Bruce Report can be found in local histories of Toronto and as part of narratives of housing policy development. Memoirs of those who were involved with the report and the Housing Centre are suggestive and include Herbert A. Bruce, *Varied Operations: An Autobiography* (Toronto: Longmans, Green, 1958), pp. 241–247; Humphrey Carver, *Compassionate Landscape* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), pp. 51–57.

The argument made here draws upon the work of the late French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Through empirical application, Bourdieu developed a system of concepts that aims to represent the relational aspect of social existence. His concept of a field situates actors invested in a particular struggle on the basis of the distribution of different forms of power or capital. He identifies four forms of capital or power: symbolic, which derives from the authority of actors' representations; social, arising from social networks; economic; and cultural, which is linked to institutional legitimacy. Fields represent the relatively autonomous microcosms of a differentiated social space that characterizes modern societies. In each field there is a struggle for the symbolic profits that accrue to those who are able to claim authority and orient the related social activities. The field's objective structure is supported by and reproduced through the embodied dispositions that guide the actors invested in it. These coordinated dispositions of the actors in a field are what Bourdieu called habitus. The concepts of habitus, field, and capital are interdependent elements of Bourdieu's analysis of social organization.⁴

Fields are not static, but are susceptible to change through their reproduction. They possess an inherent instability arising from the unequal distribution of capital and the social trajectories of actors. A new group may attempt to upset the dominance of those who monopolize a field's specific power by gaining recognition as legitimate players in the game. An attempt to convert the capital specific to one field into power in another will be subject to depreciation at a rate reflecting society-wide struggles. Adjustments to particular fields often reflect wider changes in society.⁵

The virtue of this set of concepts lies in the imperative to combine a structural analysis of the distribution of power with an examination of the struggles through which specific power is conferred in a particular microcosm. To delineate a field, a historian or sociologist must identify the particular forms of capital that matter in the struggle under investigation: "a species of capital is what is efficacious in a given field, both as a weapon and as a stake of struggle, that which allows its possessors to wield a power, an influence, and thus to *exist*, in the field under

4 For a general introduction to Bourdieu's work, see Pierre Bourdieu and Loic J. D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992). For the critical place of practices in linking habitus, capital, and field, see Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990). Of his empirical studies, social historians will find those focused on class lifestyles and the transformation of the field of French academics in the late 1960s of particular interest. See, respectively, Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), and *Homo Academicus*, trans. Peter Collier (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

5 Pierre Bourdieu, "Some Properties of Fields" in *Sociology in Question*, trans. Richard Nice (London: Sage, 1993), pp. 72–74; Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, pp. 76 n. 16, 979–978, 114.

consideration, instead of being considered a negligible quantity.”⁶ The significance of the positions of those in a struggle and the logic of that interaction are reciprocally determinative. Constructing a field requires, first, that sources be read with a sensitivity for the considerations deemed by actors to make it important to struggle over, and secondly, that those differentiating efforts be brought into relation with the distribution of hypothesized “pertinent properties” (forms of capital) among the set of actors who appear to matter.⁷

The Bruce Report and the related slum clearance campaign were part of a struggle for power over a particular corner of the municipal state. While the extension of the powers of the municipal state was at stake, the struggle involved a dual problem of establishing a field in which actors competed for control of those powers.⁸ The struggle took shape through the intervention of a set of social welfare leaders (E. J. Urwick, H. P. and Adelaide Plumtre, Claris Silcox, and Maurice Eisendrath), distinguished by particular cultural markers of authority they derived from their involvement in social agencies, the discipline of social work, and churches, from their symbolic capital as spokespersons for the interests of low-income families, and from their influential associations with the city’s philanthropically involved business and professional elite. They were able to mobilize volunteers, gain access to investigate the houses of low-income residents, have a particular representation of the problem accepted by a broad range of actors, and deploy their networks for political influence. The struggle failed to establish the envisioned state projects but initialized a new sub-field of power relative to the municipal state.

I briefly sketch the fields of housing regulation and land-use planning that took shape in the early twentieth century, then present the changes in the patterns of housing use during the Depression and summarize the Bruce Report’s findings. I argue that the representation of “bad housing” in the report drew upon practical schemes that organized the social welfare field socially and spatially. The work of the Bruce Committee gave rise to political organizing, group rivalries, and challenges to existing authorities. The struggle revolved around several particular sites — two municipal committees and the 1937 plebiscite concerning a slum clearance proposal — and led to institutional adjustments that helped to organize a setting for further disputes over low-income housing.

6 Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, pp. 97–99.

7 Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus*, p. 9.

8 Pierre Bourdieu, “Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field,” trans. Loic Wacquant and Samar Farage, in *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 42.

Housing, Planning, and State Power before the Depression

The campaign for improvement in low-income housing during the 1930s, led by social welfare interests, encountered the institutional and symbolic authority of public health and town planning that had accrued over the 1910s and 1920s. This influence and the existing housing pattern had taken root in the period following the city's rapid industrialization in the late nineteenth century.

During the last three decades of the nineteenth century, the poorest segment of Toronto's population became concentrated in small, densely clustered houses near the city centre, close to factories, packing houses, and railyards in the east or west. Housing for these classes of labour was reported to be affordable only when unsanitary and overcrowded. Construction of small cottages or conversion of houses given up after prolonged use by the higher classes were the main means of adding to the stock at the lower end of the market in this period. One outlet for higher grades of workers with stable employment from the 1890s to around the First World War was to build their own homes on land outside the city boundaries.⁹

A political atmosphere of uncertainty developed from the rapid social change associated with industrialization and increased immigration from non-Anglo-Saxon countries. The cultural differences of immigrants and their concentration in low-rent, inner-city districts attracted journalists, Christian missionaries, and organized reform groups such as the Local Council of Women, who placed the housing question on the public agenda.¹⁰ Slums were implicated sometimes as sources, other times as expressions, of concern about race degeneration.¹¹

New urban authorities began to scrutinize how low-income families lived. The institutional expansion of public health in the 1910s reflected the momentum it gained from alignment with social and moral reform movements. The Province of Ontario established a Board of Health in 1883, but not until the second decade of the twentieth century did the local board of health in Toronto expand its concerns beyond the control of epidemic diseases. Public health officials intervened to reduce infant

9 J. M. S. Careless, *Toronto to 1918: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1984), p. 138; Michael Piva, *The Condition of the Working Class in Toronto, 1900–1921* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1979), pp. 125–130; Richard Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs: Toronto's American Tragedy* (Baltimore, NJ: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 135–139, 157–158, 234–237.

10 D. C. Masters, *The Rise of Toronto, 1850–1890* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1947), pp. 126–127; Mrs. F. G. Huestis (President, Toronto LCW), "Women and Housing Reform," *Housing Problems in America, Proceedings of the Third National Conference on Housing, Cincinnati 1913* (Cambridge, MA: The University Press, 1913), vol. 3, pp. 258–259.

11 Angus McLaren, *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885–1945* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 15, 24, 27–29, 36–37, 46–48, 63, 113.

and maternal mortality using school health inspections and home visits, as well as campaigns against impure milk and for improved sanitation.¹²

These officials investigated, made recommendations, and implemented new standards in relation to low-income housing. Toronto's Medical Health Officer Charles Hastings used the term "slum" in 1911 to refer to "poor, unsanitary houses, overcrowded, insufficiently lighted, badly ventilated, with unsanitary, and in many cases, filthy yards."¹³ Hastings traced these conditions to the exploitative practices of landlords, inadequate specification of responsibilities and enforcement (as concerned lodging and sub-tenancy), and "national" differences in domestic sanitary standards. The inclusion in public health reports of "social aspects" pertaining to morals and delinquency mirrored the organizational alliance that the department had developed with the missions and settlements situated in inner-city neighbourhoods of Toronto.¹⁴ Public health officials were empowered in their inspections by new standards of sanitary conveniences (1913) and overcrowding (1912 and 1916).¹⁵ Other aspects of a loosely coherent reformist strategy in this period included the provision of education in hygiene, model housing projects, and, in a more ideal way, town planning.¹⁶

In contrast to the regulatory and educational approach of public health, architects and engineers attempting to establish a professional field of town planning in the early twentieth century relied upon preventative diagnoses to gain influence in housing discussions. Town planners lobbied the provinces throughout the First World War and the interwar period for planning legislation. Ontario's 1917 *Planning and*

12 Piva, *The Condition of the Working Class*, pp. 113, 115; Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada, 1914–28* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), p. 21; McLaren, *Our Own Master Race*, pp. 36–37.

13 Charles J. Hastings, *Report of the Medical Officer Dealing with the Recent Investigation of Slum Conditions in Toronto* (Toronto: Department of Health, 1911), p. 3.

14 *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 8, 10, 18, 20, 23–25; Allen, *The Social Passion*, p. 21; Ethel (Dodds) Parker, "The Origins and Early History of the Presbyterian Settlement Houses" in Richard Allen, ed., *Interdisciplinary Conference on the Social Gospel in Canada, University of Regina, 1973* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1975), p. 102; Sara Z. Burke, *Seeking the Highest Good: Social Service and Gender at the University of Toronto, 1888–1937* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), pp. 63, 67; F. N. Stapleford, *After Twenty Years: A Short History of the Neighborhood Workers Association* (Toronto: Neighborhood Workers' Association, 1938), pp. 8, 13.

15 Huestis "Women and Housing Reform," vol. 3, pp. 258–259; Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs*, pp. 151–152; Shirley Spragge, "A Confluence of Interests: Housing Reform in Toronto, 1900–1920" in Alan F. J. Artibise and Gilbert A. Stelter, eds., *The Usable Urban Past: Planning and Politics in the Modern Canadian City* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1979), p. 251.

16 Spragge, "A Confluence of Interests," pp. 253–254; Lorna Fay Hurl, "The Toronto Housing Company, 1912–1923: The Pitfalls of Painless Philanthropy," *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 65, no.1 (1984), pp. 34, 37–38; Paul Adolphus Bator, "The Struggle to Raise the Lower Classes: Public Health Reform and the Problem of Poverty in Toronto, 1910–1921," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 14, no. 1 (1979), pp. 44–45; Hastings, *Report of the Medical Officer*, pp. 28–32.

Development Act favoured adaptive land use planning and failed to provide the powers to promote decentralization and regulated suburban development advocated by planners.¹⁷

The professional horizons and hopes of many municipal planners working for older cities like Toronto contrasted with the work they performed. Their “managerial” activity involved the protection of property values and the extension and widening of streets to adjust to new patterns of use. It did not extend to the preparation of the long-range city plans that they periodically recommended. The “management” approach was regarded as being responsive to shifting lines of land use, forming the basis for efficient development and servicing and for sound tax policy.¹⁸

Planners became prominent spokespersons on housing issues during the 1920s. The influence of town planners rose as social workers and clergy withdrew from organized advocacy, particularly through the social survey movement. The Social Service Council of Canada turned to engineer A. G. Dalzell for research and publications on housing during much of the 1920s.¹⁹ Social agencies remained a privileged source of information on housing conditions in the interwar period, however. The Toronto Local Council of Women was critical of the elimination of housing discussions from meetings of social agencies during the 1920s, and it worked to organize the gathering of information on housing conditions. Among social welfare workers themselves, the opportunity for renewed advocacy in debates over housing was clearly perceived on the eve of the Depression.²⁰

17 John David Hulchanski, “The Origins of Urban Land Use Planning in Ontario, 1900–1946” (PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 1981), pp. 34–44, 76–77, 104–105, 123–126; Thomas I. Gunton, “The Ideas and Policies of the Canadian Planning Profession, 1909–1931” in Artibise and Stelter, eds., *The Usable Urban Past*, pp. 183–184, 188.

18 Michael Simpson, *Thomas Adams and the Modern Planning Movement: Britain, Canada, and the United States, 1900–1940* (London: Mansell, 1985), pp. 75–77; Gunton, “The Ideas and Policies of the Canadian Planning Profession,” pp. 181–182; Hulchanski, “The Origins of Urban Land Use Planning,” pp. 31, 164–174, 179, 194–195; Walter Van Nus, “Towards the City Efficient: The Theory and Practice of Zoning, 1919–1939” in Artibise and Stelter, eds., *The Usable Urban Past*, pp. 226–238; Peter W. Moore, “Zoning and Planning: The Toronto Experience, 1904–1970” in Artibise and Stelter, eds., *The Usable Urban Past*, pp. 325–326.

19 Alan Hunt, “Measuring Morals: The Beginnings of the Social Survey Movement in Canada, 1913–1917,” *Histoire sociale – Social History*, vol. 35, no. 69 (May 2002), pp. 173, 180, 183; P. T. Rooke and R. L. Schnell, *No Bleeding Heart: Charlotte Whitton, a Feminist on the Right* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), p. 20; Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, *A Full-Orbed Christianity: The Protestant Churches and Social Welfare in Canada, 1900–1940* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996); *Housing in Halifax* (Halifax, 1932), p. 8. See *Social Welfare*, November 1, 1920.

20 Archives of Ontario, Council of Women Collection, F805, vol. 5, file 1, Toronto Local Council of Women – In affiliation with the National Council of Women of Canada – *Thirty-Second Annual Report, 1925* and *Yearbook, 1932*; William McCloy, “The Social Worker’s Attitude toward Housing,” *Social Welfare* (1929), pp. 178–180.

The Depression and the Bruce Report

The Depression in Toronto was signalled by a variety of institutional measures. Statistically, recorded unemployment in the city had risen to 17 per cent by the time of the 1931 census and reached 30 per cent by January 1933. A quarter of those working in manufacturing in 1929 were out of work by 1933, and those who retained employment experienced a drop in wages that historians have shown outstripped the decline in living costs (particularly in rent). Construction workers were hit especially hard, as the industry halted for much of the decade.²¹ Social service workers were well positioned to witness the severity and consequences of mass unemployment and reduced income among workers. Some were involved with the provision of relief to recipients, who numbered 200,000 at mid-decade in greater Toronto. The strict delineation of those eligible for relief excluded single men, “transients,” most women, and the recently arrived or “unnaturalized foreigners,” and the inadequacy of rates left a considerable domain for voluntary organizations.²²

Social service workers also recognized many of the changes in housing conditions among low-income families. Families took in boarders or doubled up, and young adults delayed leaving home. Some owners converted their homes into several apartments, while others relocated from the suburbs to the inner city where houses were larger and more amenable to division. Boarders in private dwellings most often joined the families of skilled blue-collar workers, who could adjust their use of the dwelling space to have rooms to rent and who valued the income over the loss of privacy. While estimates suggest that in the early 1930s over 25 per cent of unskilled workers and 45 per cent of skilled blue-collar workers owned homes, there was a shift from owner-occupation to renting over the decade. Many comparatively costly dwellings sat vacant for a time.²³

In the context of this acute and sustained loss of work and unprecedented number of claims for relief, Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario Herbert Bruce (1868–1963) used the occasion of Toronto’s centenary (1934) to declare that many in Toronto lived in slums and that its citizens

21 James Lemon, *Toronto since 1918: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: Lorimer, 2002), pp. 59–60.

22 Roger E. Riendeau, “A Clash of Interests: Dependency and the Municipal Problem in the Great Depression,” *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 14, no. 1 (Spring 1979), p. 54; Lemon, *Toronto since 1918*, p. 60; Stapleford, *After Twenty Years*, pp. 21–22; Katrina Srigley, *Breadwinning Daughters: Single Working Women in a Depression-era City, 1929–1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

23 Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs*, pp. 250–251, 253; Richard Harris, “The Ends Justified the Means: Boarding and Rooming in a City of Homes, 1890–1951,” *Journal of Social History*, vol. 26, no. 2 (1992), pp. 342–343; Daniel Hiebert, “The Social Geography of Toronto in 1931: A Study of Residential Differentiation and Social Structure,” *Journal of Historical Geography*, vol. 21, no. 1 (1995), p. 62; Lemon, *Toronto since 1918*, pp. 65, 67.

and politicians must bear responsibility for the existence and elimination of such poor dwellings. Mayor Stewart immediately responded that taxpayers were regrettably incapable of financing slum clearance and rehousing. He nevertheless offered to pressure the provincial government for changes to the *Municipal Act* that would encourage private initiative and proposed an independent investigation of the situation. The product of this investigation was the Bruce Report.²⁴

The membership of the Bruce Committee was set through negotiations between Mayor Stewart and Lieutenant-Governor Bruce. The mayor offered to appoint a committee under Bruce's direction and "composed of men and women who, over a long period of time, have demonstrated by their constructive efforts in social conditions, that they are interested in our city. I would ask them . . . to study and report in an advisory capacity."²⁵ Individuals were nominated and then narrowed down to a list that, apart from those who excused themselves, was adopted.²⁶ The committee's executive included Bruce as honorary chairman, Professor E. J. Urwick and Professor H. M. Cassidy of the Department of Social Science at the University of Toronto as vice-chairman and secretary, and J. J. Gibson (chairman of the Council for Community Service) as treasurer. The inner circle was completed by Professor H. Wasteneys (vice-chairman of the Board of Directors of the University Settlement), Mrs. H. P. (Adelaide) Plumptre (of the Board of Education and soon to be councillor), and Miss Helen Spence, who acted as the assistant secretary. The committee included representatives of the Board of Trade, the Federation for Community Service, the Labour Council, the Toronto Local Council of Women, and Toronto women's councils of national political parties.²⁷ Notably, the committee included no members with expertise in housing development or land use planning.

The Bruce Report adopted a locally realistic use of the term "slum." It designated areas or districts with scattered pockets of "slum life," which could be distinguished using two standards of fitness, one for health and another for amenities. To pass the health standard, dwellings had to be

24 Riendeau, "A Clash of Interests," p. 52; *The Globe*, March 7, 1934. Herbert Alexander Bruce (1868–1963) had studied at the Toronto School of Medicine and received the degree of MD in 1893. He then worked as a surgeon at Toronto General Hospital and in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto. During the First World War he led a study of the Canadian Army Medical Services in England. During the interwar years he acted as director of Wellesley Hospital, which he had founded. Bennett appointed him Lieutenant-Governor on October 25, 1932, at a time when there was growing opposition to the position. Bruce resigned on November 16, 1937, and was elected to Parliament the following year in the Toronto riding of Parkdale. See Bruce, *Varied Operations*.

25 Bruce, *Varied Operations*, p. 243.

26 *Report of the Lieutenant-Governor's Committee on Housing Conditions in Toronto* [hereafter Bruce Report] (Toronto: Toronto Board of Control, 1934), pp. 2, 3, 6.

27 Bruce Report, pp. 3, 6.

free from dampness, the elements, and pests and to have circulating light and air, as well as facilities for cooking and cleaning, and sanitary devices that included a sink with tap and drain, a bath or basin, and a water closet that could be reached from within the house. The amenities standard required that a dwelling possess central heating, a cement cellar, artificial light in all rooms, full indoor plumbing, and cooking facilities separate from other domestic spaces. Those dwellings that violated the standard of health were “not to be tolerated as homes for any families in a community that cares for the welfare of all its citizens.” Failing to meet the second standard meant that, “while not in the same sense intolerable, [the dwelling] cannot be viewed with equanimity and should be changed as soon as possible.”²⁸

The main research component of the report not only evaluated particular dwellings, but mapped slum areas. Two separate surveys were undertaken. The first “extensive” one used information provided by social agencies, organizations, and individuals and attempted to locate the worst housing areas of Toronto and to suggest the scale and character of the problem for the whole city. On the basis of this investigation, a second “intensive” survey was carried out that recorded the general environmental context and the condition of all residences in two districts, Moss Park (Cabbagetown) and the Ward.²⁹ In the case of Cabbagetown, the residents were mostly English and Scottish first- or second-generation workers, with a section of Irish and Macedonians. The scrutinized population of the Ward appears to have been largely of Eastern European background.³⁰

The surveys revealed the overwhelming extent of substandard housing and presented evidence of comparatively elevated neighbourhood rates of disease, mortality, delinquency, criminality, and family dysfunction. Seventy-five per cent of the extensive survey’s 1,332 dwellings were assessed as below the standard of health, while 96 per cent were deemed below the amenities standard. The intensive survey of entire blocks revealed that 40 per cent of the Moss Park sample of 3,047 dwellings lay below the health standard and 73 per cent below the amenities standard, while in the Ward’s sample of 592, the percentages were 58 and 79 per cent respectively. Extrapolations from the surveys led to the estimate that between 2,000 and 3,000 houses in Toronto were below the health standard.³¹

28 *Ibid.*, pp. 13–15.

29 *Ibid.*, pp. 7–8, 13, 15, 23, 136.

30 Hugh Garner, “Toronto’s Cabbagetown,” *Canadian Forum*, vol. 16 (June 1936), pp. 13–15; Lillian Petroff, *Sojourners and Settlers: The Macedonian Community in Toronto to 1940* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario and the University of Toronto Press, 1995), pp. 13–21, 75–91; Hiebert, “The Social Geography of Toronto,” p. 63.

31 Bruce Report, pp. 18, 20, 24, 32–54.

Once the report had factually and interpretively linked housing conditions to health and social problems, it examined the origins of bad housing and made recommendations for action. The report identified the economic causes of slums as the inadequate income of renters and the unmanageable costs to builders arising from speculation in real estate, high rates of interest on credit, and inefficient civic control of land development and planning of services. On the basis of a survey of state action in Toronto and internationally, the report claimed that public action in the form of planning and positive encouragement of construction was necessary and that the re-housing of low-income individuals should be made feasible through rent subsidies and public financing.³²

The report also recommended the establishment of a unified authority to undertake replanning and re-housing and presented three plans for the redevelopment of portions of Moss Park. The report's first recommendation insisted on the establishment of a "City Planning Commission" comprised of "competent, disinterested and independent citizens," meaning volunteers aided by experts. The second and third recommendations concerned the immediate condemnation of unfit dwellings, the initiation of slum clearance, and a project to provide low-cost housing. The last recommendation insisted that the municipality should appeal to other levels of government for assistance in this work.³³

Construction of the "Slum" and the Organization of Social Welfare

The representation of low-income housing provided in the Bruce Report was a product of the institutional capacities of the social welfare field. The effect of this dependence was to link the question of slum conditions to the practices of social agencies (such as casework and diagnosis), their concentration of administrative authority in a federation and organization at a neighbourhood level, and their concern for certain communities. The Bruce Report undertook an extensive survey of households by relying upon case files of "the principal social agencies of the city" and the suggestions of other organizations. These agencies made a selection from their pre-existing "cases" on the basis of dwelling conditions. This strategy would have been oriented by their own sense of what elements were problematic for family life. The committee's inspectors then applied the two standards of categorization described above to these pooled data.³⁴ Access was granted to dwellings on the basis of a client-service relationship with a social agency. Thus, in the case of the University Settlement, whose vice-chairman of the board was a member of the Bruce committee (H. Wasteneys), the relationship meant that "[f]or two weeks during the

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 76–77, 93.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 96–103, 106–108, 115–121.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

survey, Settlement families co-operated with the Housing Committee by opening their homes for inspection.”³⁵

The coordinated gathering of information from social agencies mirrored their organization in the Federation for Community Service. The overlap between the federation and the Bruce Committee included the chairman of the council of the FCS (J. J. Gibson), its president (Thomas Bradshaw), and a member of its important social policy committee (Urwick).³⁶ The capacity to draw upon the networks of social agencies, their information-gathering activities, and their professional posture toward families reflected not only the institutional organization of social welfare but the particular position of a set of leaders in the field.

Social Welfare and Family Life

Concern over family life was widespread from at least the turn of the century in Canada’s large cities. The diversity of household arrangements that arose in connection with unstable employment opportunities for low-wage workers, many of whom were single and migratory, and the challenge of obtaining affordable housing fuelled a perceived need to regulate the family life of the lower classes. The observed and imagined arrangements of boarding, apartment or multi-family dwellings, and women’s hostels were represented as threatening to produce social deviants and encourage the exploitation of children. They were the subject of lively calls for reform. Discursive and social structures sustained the reformers’ ignorance of the social norms that governed the relations of working-class and immigrant families “living otherwise.”³⁷

The institution of the family emerged as the professional focus for social workers in charitable organizations in the first few decades of the twentieth century. While professionalization did not make substantial gains until the interwar period in Toronto, the field increased in legitimacy by courting a position as care-givers of families disrupted by impersonal economic forces. Workers could appeal to their expertise in meeting the “personal element” and aiding the development of “personal resources” in dealing with both the needs created by unemployment and its “aftermath of

35 Hortense Catherine Fardell Wasteney, “A History of the University Settlement of Toronto, 1910–1958: An Exploration of the Social Objectives of the University Settlement and their Implementation” (PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 1975), p. 119 n. 3.

36 Gale Wills, *A Marriage of Convenience: Business and Social Work in Toronto 1918–1957* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), pp. 5, 34, 63–64; Bruce Report, p. 3.

37 Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885–1925* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991), pp. 96–99, 134–135; Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs*, pp. 92–95; Richard Dennis, “Interpreting the Apartment House: Modernity and Metropolitanism in Toronto, 1900–1930,” *Journal of Historical Geography*, vol. 20, no. 3 (1994), p. 312; Pierre Bourdieu, “Appendix: The Family Spirit,” trans. Richard Nice, in *Practical Reason*, p. 69.

human wreckage.”³⁸ The discourse of helping families and the practices that gave the discourse its rationale are reflected in the logic of the Bruce Report.

While the report related “bad housing” to concerns of public health and municipal finance, the aspects it identified as particularly problematic and the imperative to act cohered around perceptions of family life.³⁹ The “features of slums which are injurious to health and morality” were interpreted to operate on bodies directly through the loss of privacy and the “breakdown of family life.”⁴⁰ The physical arrangement of dwellings was presented as exposing children and youth to more immediate (and taken-for-granted) risks of sexual violation, arising from inadequate segregation of the sexes in sleeping arrangements or from the potential “nuisances” created by “dark halls and stairways.” The inadequacy of physical features and domestic furnishings was seen to magnify the work of sustaining a family and to impede significantly the care and surveillance of children. Such disruptions of domestic life were read as contributing to youth fraternizing in the streets and not infrequently becoming delinquent or falling into a life of crime. The moral risks of uncomfortable and overcrowded dwellings for children were seen to arise in part from their displacement from the positive direction of adults and thus from encouragement of formative tastes for respectable activities.⁴¹

Hence re-housing the population was understood to involve the challenge of altering both the durable physical environment and the patterns of behaviour that disrupted family life. The committee and Urwick himself appealed to social work experience to support the claim that the majority of those re-housed would “appreciate and make good use of the opportunities for a better, healthier, and more dignified life offered by the reconstructed area.”⁴² Nevertheless, to encourage the care of property and the greatest benefit for tenants, the report recommended Octavia Hill’s method of administration. As part of her philanthropic project to improve landlord practices in Victorian London by example, Hill had

38 Roy Lubove, *The Professional Altruist: The Emergence of Social Work as a Career, 1880–1930* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 40–41, Kathleen Woodroffe, *From Charity to Social Work in England and the United States* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), pp. 33, 43–44, 50; Stapleford, *After Twenty Years*, pp. 6–7.

39 The Bruce Report was a collaborative project in both its research and writing stages. Distinct layers reflect an early stage of writing done by Harry M. Cassidy and a later one by Bruce, Urwick, and the economist Wynn Plumptre (son of H. P. and Adelaide). This difference is exemplified by Cassidy’s pragmatic approach to statistical categorization and social explanation, as compared to Urwick’s concern for the social significance of the “facts.” See Ryan George, “E. J. Urwick, the Lieutenant-Governor’s Report, and the Housing Centre of Toronto, 1934–1938” (MA research paper, York University, 2005).

40 Bruce Report, p. 35.

41 *Ibid.*, pp. 35, 36, 46, 47, 49–50.

42 *Ibid.*, pp. 108–109; E. J. Urwick, “Housing and Social Work,” *Proceedings of the Fifth Canadian Conference on Social Work* (Ottawa, June 1–3, 1937), p. 177.

put into practice a housing management philosophy that involved a moral reform agenda. At the height of her activity, she managed the dwellings of more than 3,000 people with intermittent or small regular incomes, offering them a standard of housing otherwise completely out of their reach.⁴³ The Bruce Report advised the appointment of managers who would be competent “as social supervisors of the welfare of the particular community, and also [act] as friends and advisors of the families comprising it.”⁴⁴ Slum clearance and public housing were to establish a new setting in which the practices of social welfare could be applied. The religious leaders among the social welfare leadership asserted similar hopes in 1936: “We believe, moreover, that the concentration of such homes of the families which cannot afford to pay an economic rent, would facilitate the more adequate and economical provision of those social services and supervision which will be necessary for some time to improve and maintain the morale of some of the families forced at present to live in a degraded and unhappy condition.”⁴⁵

Leadership and the Social Welfare Field

Authority within the social welfare field was structured by its practical regionalization of the inner city and an institutional division of labour. Social welfare activity was decentralized in its practical organization, but centralized in its control over planning and administration. These two aspects bear upon the distribution of social, cultural, and economic capital in the field. This structure enabled a social welfare leadership to construct the slum problem in a distinctive way and mobilize groups in support of its political intervention.

As professional social workers became active in Toronto after the First World War, they mediated between their clients and a range of services in the neighbourhood, creating a space of activity through their practices of information exchange and referral. As in the United States, information about community services (health, education, and employment, for example) was to be integrated with knowledge of particular needs through meeting in a “neighbourhood centre.” Reform projects commenced new processes of setting apart and internally regionalizing these locales as neighbourhoods.⁴⁶ The representation of inner-city

43 Wohl, *The Eternal Slum*, pp. 179–199.

44 Bruce Report, p. 109.

45 City of Toronto Archives [hereafter CTA], Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto [hereafter MMT], 220, S100, File 8, “Considerations to be Presented by Toronto Churchmen to the Board of Control,” May 20, 1936.

46 James Pitsula, “The Emergence of Social Work in Toronto,” *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 14, no. 1 (1979), p. 40; Woodroffe, *From Charity to Social Work*, pp. 81–82; Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984), pp. 118–122.

neighbourhoods as places where problems relating to personal life, livelihood, and material existence intertwined was conditioned by the practices of social welfare service toward particular populations. By contrast, the suburban “slums” deplored by town planners fell outside the institutional and practical capacities of social agencies to represent them.

From the turn of the twentieth century to the 1930s, the settlement movement made an important contribution to the integration of social welfare work and community life in Toronto. District associations took root before the First World War, and following it they established decentralization as a professional principle. These associations joined in the spring of 1914 to form the Neighbourhood Workers’ Association (NWA).⁴⁷ The NWA district offices were professional networking sites, and the district secretary performed the task of integrating and coordinating the efforts of voluntary organizations and social work agencies. Clergymen were among the most important supporters of the NWA, and the problems of the district and the organization of social work were presented to them through its district meetings. Professional social workers gave direction to voluntary efforts through the mediation of such community leaders. Thus, during the interwar period, the expansion of paid staff did not displace volunteer activity, but instead organized it and encouraged its expansion.⁴⁸

As professional capacity became tied to neighbourhood work, the administration of social agencies was reorganized through a compromise with the coordinating objectives of city government as well as philanthropic and business groups concerned with efficient administration. After ineffectual efforts between the 1880s and the 1900s, the Social Services Commission was established in 1912 as a watchdog over municipally funded agencies. In 1918, the Federation for Community Service (FCS) arose out of an attempt by social workers to obtain stable funding and by financial contributors to impose business standards in administration. The effect was to internalize the struggle between the practical objectives of cost limitation and professional autonomy. The federation implemented new practices of allocating funds among agencies on a community-wide level, a process that came to be dominated by business community representatives on the budgeting committee but with the mediation of influential social welfare leaders.⁴⁹

The social welfare leaders involved in the housing campaign held varied positions in social service planning, in organizing research and educational

47 Cathy James, “Reforming Reform: Toronto’s Settlement House Movement, 1900–1920,” *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 82, no. 1 (2001), pp. 73–74; Stapleford, *After Twenty Years*, pp. 7, 10, 13.

48 Stapleford, *After Twenty Years*, pp. 13–15, 19–20.

49 Wills, *A Marriage of Convenience*, pp. 5, 15, 34, 37, 39, 40, 44; Pitsula, “The Emergence of Social Work,” pp. 37–39; Lubove, *The Professional Altruist*, p. 172.

programmes, and in influencing public opinion through journals, conferences, and public speaking. In these functions they mediated among social agencies, business leaders, religious communities, women's organizations, and politicians. They had extensive social networks and were particularly influential spokespersons in policy circles within the social welfare field and in related political and community forums.

E. J. Urwick's capacity to hold positions in social welfare planning, social work education, and the organization of social research reflected his professional trajectory. He was a member of the budgeting committee of the FCS and the Child Welfare Council, and, as head of the Department of Social Science at the University of Toronto (1928–1937), he had considerable influence over the direction of social work training. Edward Johns Urwick (1867–1945) had come to Toronto from London in 1927 for health reasons and moved on to Vancouver in 1940.⁵⁰ In London, Urwick had been involved in several COS District Committees, was the original director of the London School of Sociology and Social Economics, which inaugurated a new period of "academic openness" toward the COS tenets, and negotiated its absorption into the London School of Economics, where he continued as its head.⁵¹ Urwick brought to the problems of organization of social welfare an appreciation for scientific philanthropy and a respect for the role of service in clients' lives. However, he also expressed an awareness of the potential for service to create a class-mediating disposition among political leaders.⁵²

The work of the Bruce committee drew upon the experience of Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and non-denominational organizations, and those connections were represented by leaders in the housing campaign.⁵³

50 Wills, *A Marriage of Convenience*, pp. 44, 46–47, 57, 63–64; Harold A. Innis, "Obituaries: Edward Johns Urwick, 1867–1945," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, vol. 11, no. 2 (May 1945), p. 265.

51 José Harris, "The Webbs, The Charity Organisation Society and the Ratan Tata Foundation: Social Policy from the Perspective of 1912" in Martin Bulmer, Jane Lewis, and David Piachaud, eds., *The Goals of Social Policy* (London and Boston: Unwin and Hyman, 1989), pp. 34–35, 40–41. The Charity Organisation Society (COS) was established in London in the 1870s to bring order to the unwieldy collection of organizations providing charity without consideration of the patterns of dependence that threatened to arise. The COS instituted "scientific" investigation of needs and the mobilization of social influences to set a path for reform in the behaviour of clients. District offices coordinated the work of charities in particular neighbourhoods, while the Central Office collected information and pursued donors for the particular cases (Woodroffe, *From Charity to Social Work*, pp. 25–55).

52 Harris, "Social Policy from the Perspective of 1912," p. 50. José Harris notes that the "purpose of the practical work [involving observation of coordinating organizations and state institutions] was imaginative expansion of citizenship rather than vocational training" (p. 35).

53 The full list of organizations that assisted the Bruce Committee was as follows: Big Sister Association, Big Brother Movement Incorporated, Board of Education of the City of Toronto, Catholic Welfare Bureau, Central Neighborhood House, Children's Aid Society of Toronto, Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, Jewish Big Brother Movement, Jewish Big Sister Movement,

Urwick's mediating position between business representatives and social workers contrasts with the roles of the religious community spokespersons, Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath and Canon H. P. Plumptre. Within their respective traditions, each of these men pressed their congregations to accept an ethical imperative to confront poverty and deprivation politically. The ideological commitments of these two leaders placed a particular value on coordinated service to underprivileged downtown communities.⁵⁴

The considerable involvement of Jewish social agencies in the Bruce committee's investigation and the close connections between Eisendrath and those involved in (predominantly) Christian organizations reflected the rabbi's perspective but, more importantly, the institutional orientation of the established community of Western and Central European Jews in Toronto. The Federation of Jewish Philanthropies (established in 1916) shared a commitment to "scientific charity" with the FCS, although its practices extended only to united fundraising and coordination, not social planning, during the interwar period. Many children of the members of the synagogues responsible for establishing the FJP (Goel Tzedec and Holy Blossom) trained at the School of Social Science during the 1920s, had formative contact with the leaders of the NWA, and carried their learning into the reform of Jewish charitable work.⁵⁵

The combined credibility these leaders achieved by speaking as planners of social welfare activity, coordinators of social research, and authorities on responsible community action distinguished their political position. Such a claim to influence social policy was shared by an organization with which Urwick and Plumptre both had contact and which was mobilized in support of the slum clearance campaign, the SSCC.⁵⁶ Although the SSCC was withdrawing from its social research and policy development function during the 1930s, Rev. Claris Silcox, who directed its realignment, nevertheless publicly supported Urwick's initiatives. Silcox was

Jewish Family Welfare Bureau, Neighborhood Workers Association, Poppy Fund, Social Service Department of the General Hospital, St. Christopher House, St. Elizabeth Visiting Nurses' Association, University Settlement, Toronto Housing Company, Ltd., Victorian Order of Nurses, Visiting Housekeepers Association (Bruce Report, p. 9).

54 Maurice Eisendrath, *The Never Failing Stream* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1939), pp. 137–142; Stephen A. Speisman, *The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1979), pp. 216–217; Canon H. P. Plumptre, "Christianity's Great Asset," *Canadian Churchman*, vol. 62, no. 37 (October 10, 1935), and "The Evolution of the Social Conscience, Part III: During the Nineteenth Century and Onwards," *Canadian Churchman*, vol. 64, no. 24 (June 10, 1937), p. 359; *Mail*, September 18, 1935. Eisendrath had come from the United States in 1927 to become the rabbi at Holy Blossom Synagogue and remained until 1943. Henry Pemberton Plumptre was the rector at St. James Cathedral between 1909 and 1935.

55 Jack Edwin Lipinsky, "The Progressive Wedge: The Organizational Behaviour of Toronto Jewry, 1933–1948" (PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 2003), pp. 37, 46–49, 170–171.

56 Christie and Gauvreau, *A Full-Orbed Christianity*, pp. 213–214; *Toronto Daily Star*, April 9, 1952.

the campaign's "leading publicist" as editor of *Social Welfare* and oversaw the publication of pamphlets relating to slum clearance. Beneath the surface there were tensions. Where Urwick pressed for an expansion and defence of Christian service through non-partisan representation to committees setting policy for the state or guiding research, Silcox feared that the outcome of competition among rival voices for social reform might result in a loss of community influence for the churches.⁵⁷

Social issues were not compartmentalized in this era, and the leaders of the housing campaign shared other projects at the time. Silcox and Lieutenant Governor Herbert Bruce were associated with Eisendrath's initiatives in Jewish-Gentile relations in the context of the rising anti-semitism of the 1930s.⁵⁸ These overlapping networks likely contributed to their capacity to leverage influence by building a multifaceted group.

Alongside and interconnected with these men with prominent institutional and symbolic authority were networks of women leaders, active in social welfare and social policy discussions that were important to social welfare. The Toronto Local Council of Women contributed to the membership of the Bruce committee and provided volunteer investigators for its surveys. Rosa Brown Eisendrath, whose husband was the rabbi of Holy Blossom Synagogue, was active in the Housing Centre while being the convener of the LCW's Housing and Town Planning Committee (1935–1937). The outstanding political representative of the campaign was Adelaide Plumptre (wife of Canon Plumptre). Plumptre had been educated at Oxford and distinguished herself in the social welfare field by helping direct the Canadian Red Cross Society into becoming a public health service and an agency for hygiene and nutrition education, setting the course for its work in unemployment relief and hostels during the Depression. She acted as a political guide to the Council of Women and initiated policy proposals in the Toronto Anglican Diocesan Council for Social Service.⁵⁹

57 Carver, *Compassionate Landscape*, p. 53; Christie and Gauvreau, *A Full-Orbed Christianity*, pp. 221–223, p. 221 n. 120. Carver appears to have been present for many of the Housing Centre's meetings and gives a sense of the relationships involved in the campaign, though he was not sensitive to the particular positions of all the members. On Urwick's capacity to manage these relationships, see *Compassionate Landscape*, pp. 53–54.

58 Bruce, *Varied Operations*, pp. 238–239.

59 Bruce Report, pp. 3, 9; Archives of Ontario, F805 Box 4, "Report," p. 37; Carver, *Compassionate Landscape*, p. 53; Vivien R. Kerr, *A Flame of Compassion: A History of the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario* ([Toronto]: Provincial Council of Women of Ontario and T. H. Best Printing Co. Ltd., 1967), pp. 18–19; Edward Pulker, *We Stand on their Shoulders: The Growth of Social Concern in Canadian Anglicanism* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1986), p. 118; E. H. A. Watson, *History: Ontario Red Cross, 1914–1946* (Toronto: Ontario Division Headquarters of the Canadian Red Cross Society, [1946]), pp. 9–23; Sarah C. Glassford, *Marching as to War: The Canadian Red Cross Society, 1885–1939* (PhD dissertation, York University, 2007), p. 386; *Toronto Daily Star*, January 2, 1936.

Plumptre's disposition in municipal politics was rooted in her thorough experience of Christian social service, while her interest in political office coincided with the Council of Women's commitment to non-partisan contributions to humanizing and cleaning up politics. After serving on the Toronto Board of Education (1926–1934), she was elected to council as the representative for Ward 2 (containing the Moss Park neighbourhood) in 1936 and served until 1940. The Local Council of Women appears to have been an important supporter of Plumptre, through her successes and failures, and was an audience for her concerns about the obstacles to women's participation in politics.⁶⁰

The power of these leaders in the social welfare field was both specific to the field and constitutive of linkages that extended beyond it. Sharing a practical disposition and discourse of service with a diverse group of actors allowed the leaders to project their influence into emergent fields of struggle over state powers at the municipal level.

Neighbourhood Life and Redevelopment Plans

The construction of the slum problem involved the regionalization of neighbourhoods according to social welfare practices that were themselves configured by the social patterns that social agencies encountered. An original anchoring of the slum population to the inner city was taken for granted by the social welfare approach. The pressure for inner-city low-rental housing reflected residents' dependence on proximity to formal employment and odd jobs for men and women and, particularly among "the foreign element," a commitment to the space: "they became part and parcel of a particular neighbourhood and they do not want to leave it."⁶¹ The interactions of social service workers and residents, as well as the networking of social workers, contributed to an understanding of bad housing as related to the social problems that characterized the district. While social welfare workers were committed to improving living conditions in the neighbourhoods where they worked without relocation of the groups rooted there, the task of delineating the geographic lines of redevelopment was given over to a group of architects. This alliance could be expected to strengthen the position of the social welfare leadership in relation to the established authority of city planners.

60 Veronica Strong-Boag, *The Parliament of Women: The National Council of Women in Canada, 1893–1929* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1976), pp. 382–385. Plumptre announced that she would run for the Board of Control before a supportive gathering of the Local Council of Women in 1940 (*The Globe*, December 18, 1940). From an isolated account of Plumptre, it appears that her fellow councillors regularly depreciated her contribution even when they accepted its direction (CTA, Adelaide Plumptre Fonds, SC1349, Box 11, File 11, Mrs. H. P. Plumptre to Miss Ross, June 8, 1938).

61 House of Commons, Special Committee on Housing, "Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence," No. 5 (March 14, 1935), pp. 146–147.

The architects contributed a block-by-block study of housing and land use and made proposals for redevelopment. The intensive survey of Moss Park and the Ward detailed the sensorial intrusions on residential life generated by the presence of industrial buildings and traffic, the absence of vegetation, and presence of dirt and waste. They characterized the neighbourhoods as consisting “of crowded houses in uncongenial surroundings,” lacking in playgrounds, homes of style or good construction, and opportunities for the enjoyment of tranquillity. The architects selected “a representative block” for reconstruction on the basis of the state of housing, the absence of pressure for industrial use (low assessments), and the beneficial proximity of employment for workers.⁶²

The cooperation of architects offered a measure of professional recognition for the social welfare leaders, but also made them captive to the architects’ proposals and assessments of their leadership. The architects were part of a new generation interested in community planning. They shared a critique of planning practice and a demand that it be carried out in the “public interest” rather than with exclusive concern for transportation and service infrastructure or for subdivisions promoted by real estate interests. Rebuilding on a relatively modest scale, as discussed in the Bruce Report, was in contrast to the community planning vision of the architects, but it acknowledged social welfare claims of how integrated neighbourhood life was. The compromise was in the nature of a bargain because the neighbourhood analysis provided by inner-city social service workers was precisely the exemplar for their programme of organizing housing as “neighbourhood units” with a full slate of modern amenities. This concept was reflected in microcosm in the Bruce Report’s redevelopment plans. While the architects gave a particular form to neighbourhood evaluation and to the call for rebuilding, they also supported the introduction of social service priorities into those housing plans.⁶³

A year after the release of the Bruce Report, members of the committee had begun to ask whether they had weakened their “case by allowing

62 Bruce Report, pp. 22–23, 25–31, 94.

63 *Ibid.*, p. 118; House of Commons, Special Committee on Housing, “Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence,” p. 144; Eric Arthur, “Housing and Town Planning” in C. A. Ashley, ed., *Reconstruction in Canada: Lectures given in the University of Toronto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1942), pp. 122–124; Humphrey Carver, “Utopia and City Hall,” *Canadian Forum*, vol. 15 (February 1936), “International Housing,” *Canadian Forum*, vol. 16, (April 1936), pp. 20–21; and “New Towns for Old,” *Canadian Forum*, vol. 16 (January 1937), pp. 16–17; The Research Committee of the League for Social Reconstruction, *Social Planning for Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1975 [1935]), pp. 452, 458, 460–462. “Chapter XIX: A Housing Programme” is recognized as the work of Humphrey Carver, who was directly involved in the housing campaign, but not in production of the Bruce Report (Carver, *Compassionate Landscape*, p. 51).

the architects to draw up elaborate proposals for reconstruction which however good they may have been distracted attention from the main point of the report.”⁶⁴ In reviewing the wisdom of “segregating one or two special districts and concentrating attention upon the rather exclusive, particularly in the matter of alterations,” the committee revealed its concern that meticulous re-planning not jeopardize the inauguration of a long-term political programme to improve housing.⁶⁵

Political Strategy and Mobilization

The case made by the Bruce Report was answered soon after its release in November 1934 with endorsements from the Toronto business community, religious leaders, and political organizations. These included qualified support from the Toronto Board of Trade, but outright commitment from the National Council of Women and the Anglican Synod.⁶⁶ These endorsements reflected the political pressure exerted by the social welfare leadership through its existing relationships.

The political strategy of the social welfare leadership delineated particular spheres of mobilization and sources of support. On the one hand, organizing work was directed toward the social welfare field. On the other, the discourse and publicity were intended to shape public opinion among the politically active.⁶⁷ Further, the campaign attempted to achieve a balance between the assertion of civic responsibility (arising from the social welfare concern for family life) and the assertion of a federal obligation (on the basis of its fiscal capacity, welfare interest, and the national economic origins of the housing shortage).

The housing campaign reflected the political strategies nurtured by the historical relationship between business and social work in Toronto. Gradualist (and non-partisan) politics through influencing public opinion was the rule during the interwar period.⁶⁸ Locally, the call for public support was accomplished discursively through an appeal to civic responsibility and to an accepted system of norms about the fitness of a dwelling for Anglo-American, middle-class homes. These norms were embodied in the problematization of low-income housing. The radical potential of the report’s recommendations was limited by its distinction between the slum problem and the need for inducements to the private building industry. The housing campaign questioned citizens’ sense of attachment to

64 University of Toronto Archives [hereafter UTA], Department of Political Economy [hereafter DPE], A76-0025, Box 1, File 5, E. J. Urwick to Dr. Leo A. Haak, October 18, 1935.

65 *Ibid.*

66 *The Globe*, January 21, 28, and 30, 1935; May 17, 1935; June 12, 1935.

67 E. J. Urwick, *The Social Good* (London: Methuen, 1927), pp. 123, 125, 195.

68 Stapleford, *After Twenty Years*, p. 18; Wills, *A Marriage of Convenience*, pp. 71-73, 80-82, 89-95.

place and community, as well as their declarations of concern for the welfare of their neighbours.⁶⁹

Mobilizing support for the report's recommendations was pursued initially by Bruce and Urwick, then formalized through the Toronto Housing Centre, established in September 1936. From the spring of 1935 and into 1936, meetings were held with visiting dignitaries and politicians at Government House, and addresses were made to political, religious, and educational associations, as well as to the House of Commons Special Committee on Housing. The Housing Centre was organized to influence public opinion and undertook this task through meetings, publications, and radio broadcasts. It scraped by financially on donations from a few wealthy benefactors. The University of Toronto loaned the premises at 86 Queen's Park as office space. The most elaborate event organized by the Housing Centre was an exhibition that ran from April 24 to May 19, 1937. Bruce opened the exhibition, which included the reproduction of a slum room and featured weekly speakers from Toronto, elsewhere in Canada, and abroad.⁷⁰

The Housing Centre deployed existing social work and charity networks. In its campaigns it identified social service leaders and business elites as potential members of a propaganda committee, although a list drawn up by Urwick also included an architect, as well as representatives from labour and the CCF. Urwick spoke to the Canadian Youth Council Forum on "Slum Clearance" in 1936 and encouraged members to devote themselves however they could to "this great cause." A meeting of the Toronto Association of Social Workers held on January 20, 1937, attracted about 60 members who were "most anxious to discuss the whole situation with a view to any contributions they may give as social workers."⁷¹ Later the same month, the Housing Centre contacted 30 or

69 Bruce Report, p. 15, 32–33, 112, 117; Herbert A. Bruce, *Friendship: The Key to Peace and Other Addresses* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1937), pp. 14, 19; E. J. Urwick, "Housing and Social Work," *Proceedings of the Fifth Canadian Conference on Social Work* (Ottawa, June 1–3, 1937), p. 178; Roberts Library, University of Toronto, The Shaftesbury Club – Housing Centre of Toronto, "Low Cost Housing – Broadcast #2 – January 23rd, 1938: Causes of Bad Housing," "Low Cost Housing – Broadcast #3 – January 30th, 1938: Effects of Bad Housing," "Low Cost Housing – Broadcast #6 – February 20th, 1938: Summary" (Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1938); Humphrey Carver, "Still No Housing," *Canadian Forum*, vol. 18 (December 1938), p. 269.

70 Queen's University Archives, Herbert A. Bruce, 2111, "Government House Guest Book"; Michiel Horn, *The League of Social Reconstruction: Intellectual Origins of the Democratic Left in Canada, 1930–1942* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), p. 56; *The Globe*, April 17, 1935; Bruce, *Friendship*, pp. 181–184, 186–187, 237; UTA, DPE, A65–0005, Box 1, File 6, E. J. Urwick to Helen Spence, February 5, 1937; E. J. Urwick to Margaret Gould, January 27, 1937; E. J. Urwick to Herbert Bruce, February 5, 1937; and E. J. Urwick to George S. Mooney, May 21, 1937; *The Globe and Mail*, April 22, 1937.

71 UTA, DPE, A65–0005, Box 1, File 6, E. J. Urwick to H. A. Bruce, February 7, 1935; Minnie Marriott to E. J. Urwick, June 19, 1936; E. J. Urwick to Mrs. W. L. Grant, January 15, 1937; and E. J. Urwick to Herbert Bruce, January 21, 1937.

40 social agencies offering to arrange meetings to discuss housing needs in Toronto. By mid-February it had moved to approaching churches. Other efforts to place the question before members of the social welfare field included a session of the Canadian Conference on Social Work on the “Low-Rent Housing Problem” in June and an associated issue of *Social Welfare* that reproduced some of the conference papers.⁷²

Political Struggle

The social welfare construction of the slum problem carried within it a class-specific imperative for action, but also supported the political claim of its authors that the problem could only be adequately addressed by “disinterested leadership.” The model of governance had to fit the character of the problem. In seeking public action under the influence of the voluntary sector, the Toronto housing campaign resonates with debates then underway in Britain. There, a voluntary housing sector affiliated with social services vied unsuccessfully for exclusive position as managers in new slum clearance works enabled by the 1930 *Housing Act*.⁷³ In Toronto, the coherence and authority of the movement led by social welfare was tested through investigatory and advisory committees and a municipal plebiscite on slum clearance.

The Attempt to Secure Institutional Authority

The housing campaign attempted to specify the requisite disposition for those who would direct the new state powers relating to low-income housing. The Bruce Report made its priority clear: institutional authority should only be conferred upon leaders moved by ethical service and possessing well-developed judgement in social matters. The Bruce Report endorsed the appointment of an investigatory and advisory City Planning Commission composed of volunteers who were “competent, disinterested, and independent” citizens. Various formulas for dividing or

72 UTA, DPE, A65-0005, Box 1, File 6, E. J. Urwick to Mrs. Lewis Samuel, January 23, 1937; E. J. Urwick to Helen Spence, February 16, 1937; E. J. Urwick to George S. Mooney, May 19, 1937; E. J. Urwick to Reverend C. E. Silcox, May 18, 1937; and E. J. Urwick to Professor Prince, June 21, 1937.

73 Patricia L. Garside, *The Conduct of Philanthropy: The William Sutton Trust, 1900-2000* (New Brunswick, NJ: Athlone Press, 2000), pp. 65-66, and “Central Government, Local Authorities and the Voluntary Housing Sector, 1919-1939” in Alan O’Day, ed., *Government and Institutions in the Post-1832 United Kingdom* (Lewiston/ Queenston/ Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press), pp. 87-89; Elizabeth Darling, “Enriching and Enlarging the Whole Sphere of Human Activities’: The Work of the Voluntary Sector in Housing Reform in Inter-war Britain” in C. Lawrence and A. K. Meyer, eds., *Regenerating England: Science, Medicine and Culture in the Inter-war Decades* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 158-159; *The Globe*, September 16, 1936. The British debate over the role of the voluntary sector had a connection to that in Toronto through Raymond Unwin’s participation in the organizing proceedings of the Toronto slum clearance campaign and his role as consultant to the Housing Centre.

combining the work of a city planning commission and a housing board were proposed, but, throughout the period, until city council had decided the issue for the immediate future, the social welfare leadership asserted the need for a “representative citizen’s committee.” This was sometimes defined negatively as a committee free of experts in related professions (real estate, contractors, architects) or municipal officials. Urwick proposed a membership list to Bruce in early February 1935: the mayor, a representative from city council, J. J. Gibson, J. M. MacDonnell, William Dunn (all three having been members of the Bruce Committee), Rabbi Eisendrath, and a “representative of the social services of the city who is interested in housing and planning, preferably a woman. (We would suggest either Miss Margaret Gould or Miss Oliver Ziegler).”⁷⁴ As envisioned by Urwick, the Commission would draw together representatives of business, social agencies, and religious life who were distinguished by their experience of service to inner-city, lower-class populations — in other words, precisely those who shared a perception formed by such service.

In March 1936 Mayor Stewart established a “Special Committee re Housing” to confer with the federal government about the possibility of a housing scheme as a relief project and to gather information relevant to the problem of low-cost housing from municipal departments and interested groups of “taxpayers.” A struggle ensued over the organizational status and representation of a housing commission with powers to recommend action.⁷⁵ Both Plumptre and Urwick privately expressed concern that “influential groups,” particularly the Development Recovery Committee, might influence the appointment of a commission that would serve the aims of businessmen and parties with a material stake or sole interest in reducing unemployment. Several religious leaders (Eisendrath, Silcox, and M. J. McGrath of the Catholic Adjustment Bureau) involved in the campaign expressed a similar concern in a submission to the Board of Control. They advocated a commission whose membership included only those “whose interest is primarily in the welfare of the city and its people rather than in any particular financial or business reward,” though that could include certain heads of city departments.⁷⁶

74 Bruce Report, pp. 118–119; UTA, DPE, A65-0005, Box 1, File 6, E. J. Urwick to Herbert Bruce, February 7, 1935; House of Commons, Special Committee on Housing, “Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence,” pp. 144, 149.

75 *The Globe*, March 31, 1936; CTA, RG 200, Special Committee Minutes, A, Box 1, “Special Committee Re Housing,” March 30, 1936.

76 UTA, DPE, A65-0005, Box 1, File 6, Plumptre to Urwick, April 29, 1936, and E. J. Urwick to Herbert Bruce, May 23, 1936; CTA, City of Toronto Planning Board [hereafter CTPB] Fonds, 2032, S721, File 3, “Representation made by Professor E. J. Urwick before the Special Committee re Housing,” May 11, 1936; CTA, MMT, 220, S100, File 8, “Considerations to be Presented by Toronto Churchmen to the Board of Control,” May 20, 1936.

This struggle clearly involved a rivalry between groups sharing an interest in the development of new state powers. The Development Recovery Committee, which appeared in the spring of 1936, was a “a group of some forty men, prominent in various callings . . . actively engaged in evolving programs to relieve the unemployment situation in and around the City.” In June 1936, L. M. Wood of the organization’s Subcommittee on Housing estimated that the time had arrived for the DRC “to mobilize its forces of talents and influence and show leadership.” A report of the subcommittee accepted by the DRC recommended that the commission to deal with the housing problem should include four individuals “versed respectively in Finance, Law [later replaced by “Labor”], Real Estate, and Building.” That Lieutenant-Colonel F. H. Marani (an architect) and David Shephard (an engineer) were involved in both the DRC and the Housing Centre indicates the extent to which the rivalry between the groups revolved around which leaders would be institutionally recognized as significant in the movement for slum clearance.⁷⁷

The proposal that city planning be made subject to the judgement of “disinterested” civic leaders was greeted with incredulity by the city’s established authorities. The City Planning Commissioner, Tracy leMay, was of the opinion that planning had been restrained not by lack of plans or a single authority but because of inadequate public support. Rather than a commission of private citizens organized to develop new plans, as advocated in the Bruce Report, he suggested, “it would therefore appear to be a proper function of a commission of private citizens to educate public opinion to the point where it authorizes Council to spend sufficient money to carry out some of the existing plans.”⁷⁸

Clearly, the municipal state was under great scrutiny because of the intervention of social welfare leaders. Civic authorities expressed strong reservations about the report and its recommendations. The department heads sought to diminish the credibility of the social welfare leadership in the political field and proposed institutional adjustments that would allow city departments to redirect the pressure along a path consistent with their regulatory work. Immediately after release of the report, le May attributed slum conditions largely to the habits of tenants and defended the need for “buffer strips” where dwellings would be permitted to depreciate in quality, as these tracts would protect property values in the core residential areas from trends in commercial and industrial land use. When called upon

77 Library and Archives Canada, Department of Labour Papers, RG 27, vol. 3356, file 6, The Development Recovery Committee [DRC] – A. D. Clarke, Secretary to Unnamed Recipient, Toronto, June 19, 1936; DRC – Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting, June 8, 1936; DRC – Report on Canadian Housing by Sub-Committee on Housing – submitted to the General Committee by L. M. Wood, March 27, 1936.

78 CTA, CTPB Fonds, 2032, S721, File 2, “Memorandum respecting the Report of the Lieut-Governor’s [sic] Committee on Housing conditions in Toronto,” n.d.

for guidance in establishing the necessary powers to close or rehabilitate houses as a stop-gap measure, the heads of the departments of Public Health, Buildings, Public Welfare, and Planning made recommendations for a housing standard by-law (14466), enacted in the spring of 1936. Despite earlier admissions on the part of the Medical Officer of Health that the strict enforcement of by-laws would displace residents and leave them with few housing options, they endorsed the inspection process as an adequate response to the slum problem *tout court*. Challenging the Bruce Report's conception of the problem proved administratively feasible, but by the summer of 1938 the department heads' commitment to code enforcement, based on their representation of the housing problem in terms of blight, had become politically unpalatable.⁷⁹

The architects who collaborated with the Bruce Committee and the Housing Centre envisioned the role of the social welfare leadership as political organizers, not as members of planning commissions. In this they expressed a professional commitment. In a letter to leMay, Humphrey Carver characterized "the two essential parties to the movement . . . [as] those doing amateur propaganda work (the Housing Centre people etc.) and those like yourself who are in the thing in an official capacity, whether they want to be in it or not."⁸⁰ The unarticulated, mediating position of the new generation of architects illustrates how their alliance with the social welfare leadership was part of a strategy to restructure the planning field. The stakes of the struggle were twofold: the autonomy of the planning field, and the structure of the field itself.

The attempt of social welfare leaders to establish a commission that would be an autonomous and representative citizens' body was frustrated by the actions of the Board of Control. The controllers and the mayor rejected the need for more citizen representation and, rather than considering the Special Committee's recommendation to this effect, they recommended that council create an Advisory Committee subordinate to the Board of Control. Members of the Special Committee regarded this action as reckless as it was contrary to the suggested conditions for federal support that seemed

79 CTA, CTPB Fonds, 2032, S721, File 2, Memo for Controller Wadsworth, n.d.; CTA, MMT, 220, S100, File 8, G. P. Jackson, K. S. Gillies, Tracy D. leMay, C. M. Colquhoun to the Mayor and members of the Board of Control, February 26, 1935; Urwick to House of Commons, Special Committee on Housing, "Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence," p. 152; CTA, MMT, 220, S100, File 8, Med Officer of Health, Commissioners of Buildings, Public Welfare, Finance, Assessment, and City Planning and City Solicitor to Mrs. Alderman Plumtre (Chairman), and Members of Special Committee re Housing, City Hall, April 14, 1936; *Toronto Daily Star*, May 4, 1938; CTA, Former City of Toronto [hereafter FCT] Fonds, 200, S1078, City Council Minutes, January 29, 1935, CTA, FCT Fonds, 200, S779, File 71, Board of Control Minute Book, February 5, 1935, and File 77, Board of Control Minute Book, May 4, 1938, June 1 and 15, 1938.

80 CTA, CTPB Fonds, 2032, S721, File 9, Humphrey Carver to Tracy D. LeMay, July 2, 1937. See also Arthur, "Housing and Town Planning," p. 124.

to be emerging through the (ultimately unrealized) plans of the National Employment Commission. Councillors McNish and Plumptre did succeed in increasing the representation of citizens on the Advisory Committee from three to five (with three city commissioners). Plumptre's attempt to have Urwick appointed along with F. D. Tolchard of the Board of Trade was less successful, for only the latter was admitted in late October, along with L. M. Wood and Lieutenant-Colonel F. H. Marani (of the DRC), Mr. E. W. Sinfield (of the Trades and Labour Congress), and Mrs. J. W. Bundy (the long-time convener of the Housing and Town Planning committee of the LCW) as the citizen representatives. The commissioners of public welfare, property, and planning completed membership of the Advisory Committee, constituted as a successor to the Special Committee with powers to recommend policy to council.⁸¹

Getting the Ball Rolling

Without the immediate prospect of institutional authority, the Housing Centre focused on influencing the new Advisory Committee and shaping public pressure on city council. Achieving political action on the slum problem as defined by the Bruce Report was the basic test of the campaign and of the representation of the social welfare leaders.

As municipal action appeared more likely, social welfare leaders became increasingly pragmatic. The Housing Centre showed itself open to a broad coalition among parties interested in housing: "Social Agencies, Women's organizations, Churches, C.C.F., Trades' Council, Unemployed Councils, Youth Council, etc."⁸² The Housing Centre resolved that the necessity for planning should be deferred and not hold up action.⁸³ Most importantly, it established its influence over the Advisory Committee, which came to rely upon the Housing Centre for information, persuasion of a defiant member (Sinfield, who worried wages might fall if rents were subsidized), and the exertion of public pressure upon city council.⁸⁴

The lobbying and committee work culminated in city council's decision to hold a plebiscite for ratepayers on whether the city should be authorized to pursue a demolition and building programme in an as yet unarranged deal with upper levels of government. The adoption of the bill

81 Bacher, "One Unit Was Too Many," pp. 54–55; *The Globe*, December 19, 1934, and August 6, 1935; CTA, RG 200, Special Committee Minutes, A, Box 1, "Special Committee Re Housing," May 29, August 18, October 2, October 7, and October 14, 1936; CTA, FCT Fonds, 200, S1078, 1936 City Council Minutes – Appendix A, p. 1241; CTA, FCT Fonds, 200, S779, File 74, Board of Control Minute Book, October 28, 1936.

82 UTA, DPE, A65-0005, Box 1, File 5, "Report of Sub-Committee on Housing Campaign – B. Publicity Program," n.d.

83 CTA, CTPB Fonds, 2032, S721, File 4, Minutes of meeting, May 19, 1937.

84 UTA, DPE, A65-0005, Box 1, File 6, E. J. Urwick to Herbert Bruce, January 21, 1937; E. J. Urwick to Dunn, January 29, 1937; and E. J. Urwick to Herbert Bruce, January 30, 1937.

was rushed through on November 1 and 2, 1937. Controller Day initiated the proceedings, and Aldermen Bray and Smith made an unsuccessful attempt to expand eligibility from those authorized to vote on money matters to all who could vote for mayor. However, there was reason to worry that haste would now compromise the initiative through careless preparation. Alderman Plumptre expressed fears that the plebiscite might make or break the gamble on the slum clearance campaign.⁸⁵

Once the plebiscite bill was adopted, the proposal itself became the focal point for the slum clearance campaign. The Housing Centre redirected its attention accordingly, hosting a meeting of the "Campaign Committee to Secure a Favourable Vote on the Housing Bylaw" on November 24. Tactics for distributing literature and developing counter-arguments to opposition were on the agenda. Canon Plumptre had the task of obtaining press coverage. Radio time was donated by the Community Welfare Council, and coverage was promised in at least one radio sermon. Organizers were encouraged to purchase time where possible.⁸⁶

Opponents to the municipal proposal appeared quickly from a variety of positions. The Property Owners Association of Toronto recommended rejecting it outright, expressing concern about its unspecified terms, the threat of a further tax on already overburdened property owners, and damage to real estate as a form of investment.⁸⁷ Some groups that offered support for slum clearance and rehousing in principle objected that the proposal overlooked the necessity of city planning in advance of such a project or failed to provide adequate detail. The Bureau of Municipal Research argued that the adoption of a housing programme was premature on these grounds. The General Manager and President of the Toronto Board of Trade decided to delay advising members on how to vote until city council had responded to its request to issue a statement of clarification related to the plebiscite question that would identify the plans and provisions for "proper safeguards." No such statement was issued by City Council.⁸⁸

The Globe and Mail speculated that the higher than usual number of votes cast on December 6 was in part attributable to the housing plebiscite. The day after the vote, the newspaper forecast that the decision would be

85 CTA, FCT Fonds, 200, S1078, City Council Minutes, November 1 and 2, 1937; *The Globe and Mail*, August 5 and November 3, 1937.

86 CTA, CTPB Fonds, 2032, S722, File 109, Notice of Meeting [Claris E. Silcox], November 23, 1937.

87 Toronto Reference Library Pamphlet Collection, "Vote No on the Housing Scheme on December 6th" Property Owners' Association of Toronto, n.d.; CTA, RG 200, Special Committee Minutes, A, Box 1, "Special Committee Re Housing," May 15, 1936.

88 CTA, Toronto Bureau of Municipal Research Fonds, 1003, S973, Sub-s2, Box 1, File 5, "Open Letter on the Housing By-law," White Paper No. 226, November 23, 1937; CTA, CTPB Fonds, 2032, S722, File 109, "Re Housing and Slum Clearance," November 26, 1937.

overwhelmingly against the proposal, and it was. With 36,687 votes against and only 13,789 in favour, it was clear that opposition had solidified.⁸⁹ The “Yes” vote’s proportion of the total varied from 22 per cent at its lowest (in Ward 3) to above 30 per cent in only two areas, Ward 4 (39 per cent) and Ward 5 (32 per cent).⁹⁰

The plebiscite was a test of the movement for slum clearance, but not its death-knell. The defection of the Board of Trade from full support was tempered by a commitment to “a proper housing and slum clearance plan.” The Housing Centre, for its part, recognized that the issue of finance and sensitivity to citizens’ capacity to pay was critical. Nevertheless, members argued that finance should not be an insurmountable problem in a country as wealthy as Canada. The removal of municipal personal income tax powers in exchange for a grant to municipalities in 1936 and the unrealized city proposal (in 1933) to make income taxes more progressive reveal how politically malleable taxation was perceived as being in the 1930s.⁹¹

Both before the plebiscite and after, the Housing Centre presented the case for slum clearance with urgency. In the summer of 1937, Urwick expressed fears that the forces of delay would extinguish “impulses toward right action.”⁹² Immediate action, not more research, plans, and commissions, was required, he argued. Urwick implored his audience to recognize that difficulties and doubts were normal. “Meet your perplexities with talk and they will perplex you still more,” he advised. “Meet them with action, and they will tend to melt away. If rehousing is begun within the next twelve months, there is hope of some achievement. If it is postponed beyond that limit, we may as well abandon hope for another twelve years.”⁹³ In the wake of the failed plebiscite, the necessity of starting somewhere was reiterated by reference to the successful British experience in developing a growing “housing consciousness” among the public that led to the English slum clearance legislation of 1935.⁹⁴

The perception that immediate action was necessary had two intertwined sources. One reflected the construction of the problem itself, the

89 *The Globe and Mail*, December 7 and 17, 1937.

90 CTA, FCT Fonds, 200, S1078, 1938 City Council Minutes – Appendix C, p. 28.

91 *Board of Trade Journal*, vol. 27, no. 1 (January 1937), pp. 3, 7; Robarts Library Collection, University of Toronto, The Shaftesbury Club – Housing Centre of Toronto, “Low Cost Housing – Broadcast #5 – February 13th, 1938: Solution in Other Countries” (Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1938); Lemon, *Toronto since 1918*, p. 62; J. Harvey Perry, *Taxes, Tariffs and Subsidies: A History of Canadian Fiscal Development* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1955), vol. 1, p. 263.

92 Urwick, “Housing and Social Work,” p. 178.

93 *Ibid.*

94 Robarts Library Collection, University of Toronto, The Shaftesbury Club – Housing Centre of Toronto, “Low-Cost Housing – Broadcast #5” and “Low-Cost Housing – Broadcast #6.”

manifest potential for improvement in living conditions among the disadvantaged and the credibility of civic responsibility. The other aspect reflected the stakes of the campaign. The spokesperson for any new project must gauge the practicality of targets for action and call actors to face a new dimension of service. The truth of a political proposition lies in the capacity of the speaker to mobilize sufficient forces for its realization.⁹⁵ The social welfare leadership had staked its political credit on the campaign. Urwick had sought to realize his view that social work ought to act not simply to improve the lot of the poor, but also as “a wider instrument of class integration in which the social worker must function as a more general ‘servant of society’.”⁹⁶ The commitment to reproducing this position and role was reflected in the training for social workers at the University of Toronto, which was meant to prepare leaders to act as part of a professional class of men, distinguishable from (generally female) case workers with specific technical skills. As Shirley Tillotson has argued in her study of charitable fundraising, the gender divisions that were promoted in this period were interconnected with political rivalries. Urwick was seeking institutional means of educating and involving leaders in social service (much along the lines that many elite women gained and practised in the emergent period of the social welfare field) who would be successful in struggles with representatives of business, partisan, and professional interests both within the social welfare field and in emerging spheres of state influence.⁹⁷ In the postwar period, precisely this form of paternalistic political representation became improbable as the meaning of “citizen participation” and “charity” changed and as labour unions became influential contributors to community chests.⁹⁸

Conclusion

The main actors responsible for producing the Bruce Report and undertaking the campaign for slum clearance drew upon resources specific to the social welfare field to construct the “slum” problem in Toronto, yet endeavoured to extend their influence in relation to municipal politics by mobilizing allies and activating a sense of duty among citizens. They achieved neither the institutional authority they had sought nor action

95 Pierre Bourdieu, “Political Representation: Elements for a theory of the Political Field,” in John B. Thompson, ed., *Language and Symbolic Power*, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 190–191.

96 Christie and Gauvreau, *A Full-Orbed Christianity*, p. 153.

97 E. J. Urwick, “The Training of Social Workers,” *Social Welfare*, May 12, 1930, p. 176; Burke, *Seeking the Highest Good*, pp. 99, 114; Woodroffe, *From Charity to Social Work*, pp. 37–38, 49–50; Wills, *A Marriage of Convenience*, pp. 52–5; Lubove, *The Professional Altruist*, p. 164; Shirley Tillotson, *Contributing Citizens: Modern Charitable Fundraising and the Making of the Welfare State, 1920–1966* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), p. 230.

98 Tillotson, *Contributing Citizens*, pp. 150–153, 163, 190–195, 200, 210–213.

along the lines they had proposed. Nevertheless, the intervention had several lasting effects. First, the campaign helped to mobilize a wider movement for national housing and planning reform whose leadership passed to a new generation of planners, architects, and municipal organizers. Expectations about which level of government should initiate such policy shifted from municipal to federal in the late 1930s, and this persisted through the Second World War. While the federal government initiated support for low-cost housing through the *National Housing Act* of 1938, it failed to gain political support in Toronto. Indeed, it was found to be unmanageable across the country.⁹⁹

Nevertheless, organizing moved beyond civic mobilization to provincial, and especially national, activity through a series of conferences and the formation of the National Housing and Planning Association beginning in the spring of 1937. Community planning proponents such as Eric Arthur and Humphrey Carver, as well as G. S. Mooney, the advocate for municipal governments, became its principal directors. These actors contributed much to national research and policy activity as exemplified by the report of the Sub-Committee on Housing and Community Planning to the Advisory Committee on Reconstruction (1944).¹⁰⁰ Secondly, the political campaign led established authorities to make administrative adjustments. The 1936 Housing By-law was one example, and another came in the planning field. Municipal pressure for an institutionalized planning body persisted. The neighbourhood evaluations of the Bruce Committee were confirmed by the City Planning Board's 1943 Master Plan.¹⁰¹

Finally, the social welfare leadership's activities organized around the Housing Centre at 86 Queen's Park wound down in the early fall of 1939.¹⁰² That campaign ceded the place of "citizens' representative" to the Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHPA, established in 1944). The intervention led by social welfare gave an initial structure to the local political field in the matter of low-income housing and slum clearance. It established organizational connections that were subsequently expressed through the formation of a Housing Committee to the

99 Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace*, p. 108. For civic authorities' negative evaluation of the NHA provisions, see CTA, MMT, 220, S100, File 8, Commissioner of Buildings, Commissioner of Property, Assessment Commissioner, Commissioner of Public Welfare, Commissioner of City Planning to Mayor Ralph Day and the members of the Board of Control, June 24, 1939.

100 Carver, *Compassionate Landscape*, pp. 54–57, 70, 88–89; Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace*, pp. 166–168.

101 Lemon, *Toronto since 1918*, pp. 79, 102; Moore, "Zoning and Planning," pp. 326–329.

102 CTA, City of Toronto Planning Board Fonds, 2032, S721, File 10, "Informal Conference on Planning and Housing," n.d., and "Resolution: Low-Cost Housing," n.d.; UTA, Property Insurance Records, A1975-0027, Box 2, 86 Queen's Park; *The Globe and Mail*, May 7, 1938; CTA, City of Toronto Planning Board Fonds, 2032, S722, File 109, "Summary of Proceedings, May 6th [1938]"; CTA, Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, 220, S100, File 8, E. J. Urwick to A. W. Laver, June 1, 1939.

Toronto Reconstruction Council (established in 1943). Similarly, the mobilization of social agency, philanthropic, and church groups during the 1930s must in part explain how rapidly the membership of the CHPA grew. The organizational efforts of the 1930s conditioned those of the wartime and postwar periods, but the early positions were also subject to revision as new forms of political representation took root and as the social welfare field upon which the leaders of the 1930s depended changed. During the 1930s, a first round of the game was played as initial positions in a struggle over new state powers were defined.¹⁰³

103 Carver, *Compassionate Landscape*, pp. 87–88; Albert Rose, *Regent Park: A Study in Slum Clearance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958), pp. 46–48; Kevin T. Brushett, “Blots on the Face of the City: The Politics of Slum Housing and Urban Renewal in Toronto, 1940–1970” (PhD dissertation, Queen’s University, 2001), pp. 48–49, 77–78, 83.