CANADIAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

Nous nous souvenons

NEW SERIES
NUMBER NINE

Forgetfulness leads to Holocaust;
Remembering is the root of redemption.
(Baal Shem Tov)

ON OUR FORERUNNERS — AT WORK

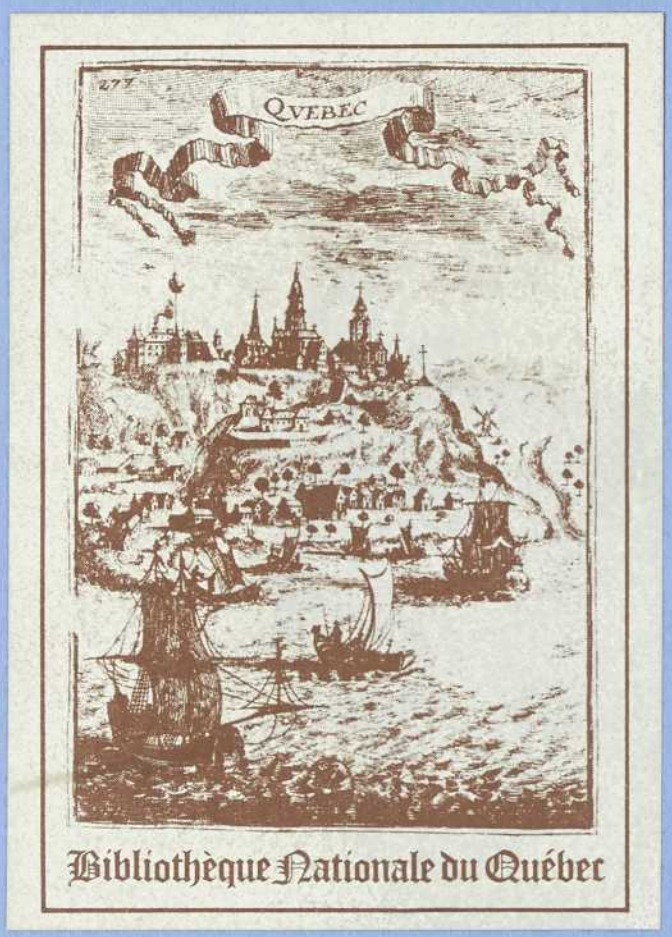
Compiled By
DAVID ROME

With an Introduction by
SAUL HAYES, O.C., Q.C., LLD.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES
CANADIAN JEWISH CONGRESS

Issued with the assistance of
THE JEWISH COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF MONTREAL

MONTREAL - CANADA
1978



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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

By

SAUL HAYES, O.C., Q.C., Ll.D.

The life story of the proletarians, the overwhelming mass of the immigrants who arrived here in the last twenty years of the nineteenth century is, strangely enough, remarkably difficult to come by.

It was characteristic of the central European society whence they came that they neither noted nor preserved their records. Informality was the stamp of their civilization. Also, they were absorbed in the urgencies of subsistence. Social organization -- as distinct from philanthropic and religious -- was slow in formalizing; when it came it was discontinuous. Few Canadian letters or personal documents have survived. Those written were lost back home in the holocaust which destroyed these homes and all who had remained. Sons and immediate grandchildren have not yet developed the pride of family that would place any memorabilia of the east side as escutcheons over suburbia's fireplaces.

Their press did not come into existence for a quarter of a century, nor did novelists and poets come to the surface. Possibly a closer study of the Canadian and foreign press and other sources may be fruitful.

In the meantime the Canadian Jewish archivist has a difficult time.

The Jewish labour unions, when they began to germinate, were isolated, short-lived and seem to have left few traces. They seem to have had few or no affiliations; and when they did, these central groups in their turn seem to have willed us no documentation. We but sometimes see distant glimpses of "tailors unions" and "dress workers groups" at Labour Day parades, barely distinguishing the men's from the women's groups, French Canadian from Italian musicians from sweated Jewish tailors.

Canadian Jewry is sorely missing a first class analysis of its record. Nothing like Trevelyan's Social History of England, or Samuel E. Morison's History of the American People has illuminated the much shorter and compact periods of Canadian history -- of the total community, or of its Jewish segment.

Students of Canadian labour find the plight of Jewish historians familiar. The early history they search is also hidden in a trackless fog. Indeed, the Canadian Jewish historian is in a partnership with the French Canadian chronicler and with those who seek to outline the development of Canadian industry and its workers.

The common search in French Canadian history and in the chronicle of Canadian Jewry is not wholly unproductive.

It so happens that the first arrival of larger numbers of Jews coincided with the establishment of Canadian industry which employed larger numbers of workers in factory conditions. A new relationship of labour to society was developing just when the Shtetel type left his urban environment to begin another saga of Jewish history. Coincidence? This is the field of the philosophers of Jewish history.

The moral concommitants of this industrial revolution in Canada did not pass unnoticed, nor that of the rural residents within a forty-mile circle of human blight about the large cities. The Sweating System became

a new term in society, with as many meanings as there are ways of converting girls' youth and the sweat of mass labour into an economic foothold for the employer on the profit ladder.

At a time when religious and nationalistic agitators were grinding out hatred of the Jews in Quebec, for example, social realities in certain areas of life were creating an identity of existence and of interests between Jews and French Canadians. As we read the documentation on nineteenth century labour, whether it is the government inspectors' reports, or federal studies of labour conditions, or royal commission proceedings, or the annals of syndicalism -- we are often uncertain whether it is Jewish immigrants that are being described, or French Canadian farmers. Similarly we are uncertain whether the employers are large Protestant firms or Jewish contractors or sub-contractors who are themselves scarcely to be differentiated from those whom they exploit.

The as yet unstudied industrial history of early Canadian Jews may shed more light on Jewish workers

and on Jewish employers. Current studies which are now in progress in Canadian social history are quite promising.

With time the picture clarifies as the very term"sweating"comes to be applied only to city workers, and only in the needle trades, and these became clearly all-Jewish.

The industry becomes more nearly identical with ready-made garments. The made-to-measure tailor as a class and as syndicalist factor practically disappears and the epic of organizing the Jewish needle workers becomes clear and vast -- and creative.

As a matter of fact, it is in the sources developed by the historians of Canadian labour that Mr. Rome has found the scattered shards which are the only hard facts about the first Jewish workers in Canada. In the annals of the Chevaliers de Travail, in the biography of Jules Helbronner, in the repertoire of early strikes, in the reports of the trades and labour councils, in the researches of Jean de Bonville and of Fernand Harvey,

in the columns of Toronto and Montreal newspapers, in the papers of Mackenzie King, in the political history as reflected in the Labor Gazette, in provincial legislative documents and wherever else a speck could be found -- the National Archives of Canadian Jewish Congress collects all references that come to hand, in the hope that further researches will render this collection but a progress report.

As the years and the decades passed into the twentieth century, working conditions became humane and bearable. Jewish society emerges clearly on the Canadian scene, by this time being the second or third generation of east European immigrants.

With all this familiarity, the historian cannot forget the silent predecessors. It was a suffering, sacrificed generation that laid the true foundations of the large community. In the abyss of possibly the harshest living conditions in Canadian history, these immigrants bore it all gladly, as is evidenced by the continuing immigration. Through all the endless hours in the steaming

and smelly Montreal factories these workers were confident and appreciative of the clean air of Canadian opportunity and freedom. They were articulate in their expectations from Canada, and the annals of the Jewish community confirm them.

That is another phase of our history in this country -- the social, which is one of the ongoing concerns of the National Archives of the community.

THE BROADER VIEW

To understand, even on the most superficial level, the Jewish worker community that constituted in numbers almost the entirety of Canadian Jewry by the mid-1880's we need to know that it was the creation of a complex series of revolutions made quite deliberately by these men and women, most often in a series of choices between options, difficult and painful options, clearly of profound import, choices which were often related to each other into complex and far-reaching ideologies.

Some of these choices emerged into concrete existence into groupings of Jews on Canadian soil, living one form of life or another in Montreal or Winnipeg or Moosomin, seeing their lives and their future in one perspective or another. Other of the choices concluded in Petach Tikvah or in Jerusalem, inside or outside the walls. Others found themselves in Lodz textile factories, on the orientalist faculties of German universities or in the centuries-old shtetel-hamlets of the Ukraine.

To summarize or even to list the complex and multifarious revolutions which implanted Canadian Jewry in substantial numbers is to do violence by oversimplification.

The complex patterns of these internal changes within Judaism in heartland Europe can best be understood from the grand lines of its modern development.

It began in the Napoleonic period, when all societies of Europe, Asia and Africa were challenged by the rational, scientific, universalist revolution born in Germany and France. This message reached the Jews of the heartland, not least through western Jewish intermediaries, and planted the beginnings of one of the great Jewish upheavals since Moses.

In due course it created secular Judaism, Zionism, vocations and industrialization, the Yiddish and Hebrew languages, their sciences and the arts of their literatures, Jewish labor and unionism, social democracy and socialism, migration, modern Jewish education, the sciences of Judaism and academe, the variety of Jewish organizations, community planning, philanthropy and philanthropism, assimilation, Jewish art, music and theatre, Reform, press, the Jewries of western Europe and of the Americas and other vast consequences -- among them the coming of these Jews to Canada.

For reference purposes we need to recall that in the nineteenth century the Jewish world concentrated as densely in the Yiddish land of central Europe as Englishmen were concentrated in England, and as Frenchmen were concentrated in France. It was undergoing a vast inner transformation under certain stimuli which were born within it and under others which were impinging from outside.

It had just passed through the cabbalistic impact of Chassidism. The European message which had created the French Revolution had now reached it. The ideas behind the industrial revolution were making their impact. The romantic movement came, together with delayed high medievalism, simultaneously with the renaissance; the discovery of America, megalopolis, secularism, democracy -- the entire dictionary of history impacted upon sleepy, dreamy Russian and Galician Jewry, as it was doing on Asia and on Africa -- all at once, without its European sequentiality.

From the west Napoleon, supported by Jews in France and Germany, had sent the news; there were such things as all-human equality, science, system, civics, languages, literatures, entertainment, vocationalism, nationalism, systematic education, children's and women's rights, decorum, metropolis, voyaging, art as an aim -- and a hundred other concepts seemingly neglected by the heartland of Jewry.

To these forces add the senseless brutality of the Russian authorities, a brutality which they also expended upon their own Christian citizens who were not subject to the rationale of antisemitism. It is easy to distort this element of our history, particularly since there is no usable measuring gauge of severity of murder, or of the fervour of indignation in the victim or in the historian.

Early in the nineteenth century Russian Jewry had been the victim of a crime approaching Torquemada's or Hitler's; the mass kidnapping of thousands of infants. The Jewish reaction was not the same as when, towards the end of the century, a series of pogroms unexpectedly exploded.

There was a positive side, an alternative vision: the great American dream was coming true -- "the last great hope of mankind" of equality, freedom, opportunity, economic development and many other twentieth-century realities offered to the hampered and to the downtrodden of Europe.

Add the new means of transportation, the temporary easing of travel legalities, the spreading organization of social aid, the ideologies which blessed and philosophized migration and revolution and change, the literature which energized the public, the press that informed it. Add, add.....

The answer which the Jewry of Russia gave to these impacts is substantially the history of modern Judaism, indeed a chapter in the annals of the last century of all mankind.

The civilization which had survived for half a millenium or more in Europe -- by living its own Jewish life in the psychologically sealed enclave of Jewry, by ignoring as much as possible the inhuman and morally irresponsible outside world -- gave way to a revolutionary philosophy. It reacted to the challenges posed by the very existence of Western Europe.

Many were the responses to the west that took form at this time in Eastern Europe. The result was a great fragmentation.

Above all, it was revolutionary change from the previous condition and from the way of life of the earlier generation.

The complex causes and effects of these revolutions -- probably the deepest reaching in Jewish history since the destruction of Jerusalem -- were many.

Yiddish discovered it was a language. Story tellers learned they were littérateurs; folk songs came for the first time from a stage.

Vilno Jews began to fondle and purify the Hebrew of the rabbis, separating out the Yiddish and Aramaic, discovering old and new metaphors, grammatical forms, synonyms, panegyrics. Goldfaden played theatre. Odessa Jews began to think about secularism. Mendele Mocher Sephorim began to write Rabelaisian Yiddish; Mapu wrote novels; Gordon wrote rebellious poems and intimate lyrics.

Men for the first time were beginning to work for employers too grand and distant to know by name all those who depended on them. A new human relationship and a new anti-human relationship were being born.

The General Bund of the Jewish Workers of Russia and Poland were being formed the same year as the Herzl's Zionist Congress. It came to have a great, if conflicting, impact even on Palestine rebuilt.

Zion was stirring in visions of Palestinian forms. A love of Hebrew roots was reborn as an "ism",

and Yiddish was to acquire the same suffix. Sholem Aleichem, like Mendele, was turning from Hebrew to Yiddish. Men were beginning to define their own economic uselessness.

The final question was forming: will we always be subject, endlessly, to a series of persecuting governors and czars with axes in their hands? Where will it end? It must end.

The most visible effect of the revolutions was in numbers. The world Jewish population was some 2,000,000 in Napoleon's day. It was 16,000,000 in Ben Gurion's, a multiplication not paralled by world figures, by European figures, or by the statistics of the East European area where it occurred substantially. (Roberto Bachi. Population Trends of World Jewry. Jerusalem, Hebrew University, 1976. Pp. 25-27)

The circumstances of this demographic phenomenon have been examined in terms of social conditions, but no explanation has emerged. Certainly the vigour of the spiritual and psychological revolution which marks that period is related to this development, although the mechanics of this relationship between sociology, literature, politics, migration, occupation, language and health in Jewish society have not been completely explained.

The Jewish migrants, especially after the Kishineff pogrom and the 1905 effort at a revolution in Russia, included bearers of the old tradition of changelessness, and others who identified their Judaism with the philosophies of change. Indeed, their very leaving their old homes and their arrival in Canada were for them the concrete working out of the process of radical change. Adapting their dress to the prevailing mode in Canada, shaving off their beards, dropping the bans and inhibitions of the dietary laws, putting aside Sabbath and festival observances, severance from the synagogue, abandonment of the Cheder, disregard of the rabbi and of the rebbe and their Halachah -- some or all of these were for them

necessary steps not only for adaptation to Canadian life, but also for the creation in Canada of a new viable Jewish life.

They were positive, thinking Jews, following trends of Jewish thought which were emerging rapidly into important and profound ideologies.

It was a series of changes whose violence was limited only by the absence of instruments of force in the hands of the antagonists. Here, on the historic arena of Jewish hamlets of Central Europe, was the original Kultur Kampf, the classic generational break which had impact and succession for two centuries, and is far from ended yet -- possibly the first generational gap in the millenia of Jewish history, and the classic generational gap which geographically more deeply rooted societies were to experience a century or more later.

It can be said that never had the gaps between generations and groups in Canadian Jewry as well been so profound as during this period. The abysses were between Jews who had remained in Europe and those who had migrated; between each Jew and his parents; between competing ideologies; between the secularized and the observant; between those who varied in form and degree of observance, between the Yiddish and the Hebrew and the English; between the East European and the westernized Jews in Canada; between Ashkenaz and pseudo-Sephard.

Each of these rock-girded ideological islands hung its entire existence on its own definition of Judaism, and each was armed with a consistent network of apologetics, with set answers to all challenges. All bore an intense positive loyalty to the entity of Judaism and to basic and original Biblical and conventional Judaism.

It is a tenable position to see this chapter of Jewish history as paralleling the development of many other peoples during the past two centuries.

Those who go further and see this Jewish history extending its own influence -- assuming the historian can disregard the insanities of the Jewish conspiracy theories -- can find much supporting evidence in this element in the annals of Judaism.

This conflict of love against love is registered in a myriad evanescent psyches and sometimes entered an unexpected record. In 1924 the labor spokesman before a provincial commission exploded with the agony of Jewish parents who have lost communication with their children. Speaking "of the result of the education of our Jewish children under the present régime, if all the details were presented to you of the tragedy that is wrought in the families of hundreds and thousands of our Jewish citizens here, it would evoke your pity and your great consternation. Take the case of very many families not recent arrivals, but families which came here twenty or twenty-five years ago; if you go into their homes and if you talk to the parents and the children, and realize the relationship that exists between parents and the children, you will be pathetically touched....The poor mother has not learned to speak English with the same fluency as might be desirable....We wish that no gulf be created between those poor parents and their children....

"Imagine the mother who had given her life to her daughter or her son and who had attended them with loving care from their infancy, and imagine the same son or daughter twenty years after, and the mother can no longer speak to them because she knows nothing but Yiddish, or because the children know nothing of Yiddish, and she does not know enough English to give voice to her inmost sentiments which create that bond of affection and attachment so essential between mother and daughter or mother and son.

"Under such conditions a son or daughter brought up without affection or proper control, with this yawning gulf between parent and child, such a child cannot attain the highest degree of citizenship, because something has

been sapped at the very root. Something has gone wrong which was essentially meant to be the cornerstone of this individual personality and his contribution to the society of which he is a member." (Louis Fitch)

Much of internal World Jewish history can be explained in the terms of this process, which found its most positive expression in Canada on many levels -- in literature, in the Congress, in war relief, in education, in the organization of community services, and in Zionism.

One of the phenomena resulting from these ferments was a tremendous wave of migration -- sudden, unorganized, unsponsored, unreasoned -- westward. The mass of the movement extended far, and reached New York. In point of statistical fact, over 90% of all nineteenth century Jewish migration was directed to the United States. Furthermore, even of the movement to Canada much was through New York, if only, as Mr. Rosenberg says, before 1905, when both the United States and Canada introduced restrictive legislation and the policy of the 'open door' came to an end. Many of the immigrants whose destination was Canada arrived in U.S. port and then proceeded to Canada via rail, since accommodation for immigrant passengers was always greater on ships bound for the United States than on ships bound for Canada. On the other hand, some immigrants whose destination was the United States came on ships which discharged their passengers in Canadian ports; they then continued their journey on to the United States. Among them was a little girl, Goldie, with her mother, coming from Kiev to join her father in Milwaukee. She was to marry a Myerson and to emerge on the stage of world history as Golda Meir.

We find many of these on the relief rolls of the Montreal benevolent society as they sought assistance to move on.

Some years of high Jewish immigration into Canada (1909-13) had as many arrive into the country via U.S. ports as through Canadian ports. At other times these constituted more than a quarter of all immigration. (1905-12)

But driblets dropped off from the giant fistful of Jews fleeing towards the United States and fell on the lands in between: Germany, the Lowlands, France, England, Canada, South Africa, Australia, South America. In each of these secondary destinations the relatively few that thus befell these lands overwhelmed by their sheer number and energy the existing tiny Jewish communities which had been settled there for some time, perhaps for decades. Henceforth the basic Jewish histories of each of these countries -- like Canada and the U.S. -- are substantially identical, histories of the coming, the adjusting and the further development of these immigrants on the way to Golden America, without quotation marks.

Canada was part of the Jewish hope"and occupied a great space in the imagination of the Jewish masses." The considerable influx of our Jewish coreligionists into the dominion of late years is told eloquently in the London Jewish Chronicle of July 3, 1908, of

"the ever-growing fascination which the Dominion has exercised over the minds of the oppressed Continental Jewries. The Russian Jew, starving and stifling behind the gates of the Pale, has scented from afar the great destiny of the colony. His Roumanian co-sufferer has longed with even greater ardour for the opportunities and freedom of the Dominion. When, some eight years ago, there came a wild rush of Roumanian Jews into London, the persistent cry on their lips was 'Canada'. With the pogroms of 1905 and the Japanese War came an in-flow from Russia, and again Canada was the refuge. The uprising of the Roumanian peasantry and the expulsions from the villages brought a fresh crop of Jewish emigrants to the Dominion, and their journeyings were duly noted as they halted in this country on their way to the West.

"Mr. Zangwill has sought to locate his Ito-land in the same territory, and there prominent Jews have sought opportunities for colonization. Even Jews in London have endeavoured to follow in the track of the little army, and some months ago a movement spread in the East End for

organizing emigration to the Colony -- a movement which seems to have died away from lack of the motive-power of hard cash.

"From time to time, Lord Strathcona (the High Commissioner in London), the late Inspector of Emigration Agencies (Mr. W. Preston) and Sir Wilfrid Laurier have spoken to intending immigrants. Several of these authorities have been guarded in their utterances. Lord Strathcona, e.g., while declaring that the Colony would receive with open arms any immigrants from abroad who were suitable to the conditions of the country, warned our co-religionists that what were primarily wanted were men who were engaged in agricultural pursuits, and who were also provided with at least £ 50. He pointed out that it would be difficult for Canada to absorb a great number of artisans. Much the same caution was exhibited by Sir Wilfrid Laurier."

The migration was part of a vast process which creatively shattered ancient European Jewry.

When a Jew left his ancestral village -- with its cemetery, society, elders, learned men, parents, standards, ethos, aesthetics, music, ambitions, heroes and speech ways -- he really travelled.

This was the quality of this Jewish migration, with its secondary waves which came later by half a century, after the European heartland had suffered wars, pogroms, depressions and had witnessed the progress of industry and of nationalism.

The first large migration reached Canada in the 1880's and continued until 1914, when war disrupted travel. Canada then followed the United States in slowly shutting its door.

1914, the end of an era of growth for Canadian Jewry and the beginning of the cataclysmic horrors for

European Jewry. The next migration was not to come until 1947.

Those who came first had a perilous journey, a journey from an ancient home to nowhere. In their old home many had been somewhat established. Some had been comfortable. Most were known to their neighbours. Their society had respected persons, and regarded them for their known qualities which, generally, were not material or portable. Family status was important to self and to others. Life at home had offered many cultural and social satisfactions in folklore, Sabbath, festival, status, mutual protection, rootedness. Travel meant more than change of milieu; it endangered continuity. Society, religion and leaders did not encourage migration. The rabbis warned of the dangers overseas to way of life and to the soul.

It was a radical change that underlined the break with the old life, a more complete break than was suffered by other immigrant societies. Crossing the ocean also meant leaving the home of old Judaism. It could mean leaving the 613 commandments that were the base of Shtetel civilization. It could be a break with its Jewish culture, with its occasions of joy and of sorrow. It gave the immigrant endless options for his future.

The very stability of the family migration confirmed this. There was that much less linking with the old and the distant behind him; there was no thought of return. Only the personal free determination of a man's truest intent.

Migration was selective, as usual. It was the uprooted who went first, those with the least to lose materially and psychologically, the adventurous, those who least heed warnings from the authorities, the refugees from pogrom, fire, debt, army or prison, the revolutionaries who do not stay to make revolutions, the youngest son with the least inheritance, those with the least responsibilities for aging parents, those unskilled in the required trades, those prepared to sacrifice tradition.

It was such a conglomeration of the socially more volatile that set out with unwonted suddenness for a country and a continent which they largely knew by name.

What was important was the storm in the heart as they made their way slowly across western Europe and the Atlantic. These sentiments have not ceased to colour Canadian life to this day.

There were the backward thoughts -- of family, personal roots in friendships and in cemeteries, recollections of childhood, of a way of life with its own ethos, its creed, its saints, its sublimity, its truth and its claims on a citizen for participation and for continuity. Its warmth and folksiness demanded faithful memory. Fidelity to roots was identical with fidelity to self.

Out of this was often born, in the introspection of shipboard isolation and in conversation, a dedication to the memory of the old home and of those who were left there. This dedication often became a determination to build, on the unknown shores ahead in the murky twilight of the ocean, a replica of the Jewish life they had known.

Simultaneously, the look ahead envisioned the promise of the new world. No idealist philosopher, no adventurous social planner, no patriot of America ever entertained a more profound or more brilliant vision of the Golden Land of America than the Jewish migrants. In point of fact, probably no voyagers ever realized this dream for themselves and for others more fully than did these Jewish migrants and their children -- the American vision, enforced by the eternal Jewish dream.

The migrants dreamed their determination. They forged the will to work endlessly, to apply all their accumulation of ethos and of historic experience, to sacrifice and invest energy and immediate pleasure. Their traditions of clean and united family living, their venturesomeness, their thirst for education, the respect for New World law -- all qualities required for success in a

developing continent -- were summoned up by these Jews on ships, to build on this last continent on earth a home and a community.

These stormy and formative thoughts found expression in recollection, in letters home and from home, in literature, in the press, and in the institutions these men constructed when they docked in their new lands.

Steerage was cheap. Relatively few found themselves stranded en route. When they did, they found that local Jews -- remarkably unfamiliar types because those coreligionists outside the heartland spoke another tongue, did not respect Yiddish or these Yiddish transmigrants, dressed differently, had other modes of courtesy and other speech traditions -- these strange Jews in the Atlantic ports were anxious to keep the travellers moving west. If necessary, they provided further fare; they seldom encouraged these migrants to settle on the spot.

In some cases this meeting of the western Jew was more protracted and significant. Some migrants were held up for weeks in ocean ports; some contacts were made at synagogues, through family relationships, at a briss or by sheer accident. Sometimes these were revealing and meaningful for the migrants in search of discovery, anticipating their new American homes. Germany, with its neatness, militarism, suppressed racist prejudice, with its "slavery within freedom" (to use Achad Ha'am's expression) -- Germany and its Jews left a mark on some migrants to Canada.

The term "conscious" is sometimes used in the sense of deliberate. Sometimes the term means awake and aware of its own condition. This migration was neither. In this strange movement the migrants eventually came to America, usually to New York, thus helping to make it the largest city in the world. Sometimes it was Montreal, often on the way to New York. Many finished off in Montreal, Toronto and Winnipeg; but also, by the outbreak of World War I, at every town, village and whistlestop from Victoria to Newfoundland.

So in St. John, Newfoundland, there was continuous settlement from 1895.

Religious services were conducted in the home of the early postmaster there, Mr. Solomon. The 1909 services were in a rented room at 170 Water Street in the Oddfellows Hall; in 1920 on Prescott Street, later on Henry Street. (Reminiscences of Max Rosen, Rev. I. Dworkin, "The Hebrew Congregation of Newfoundland," in The Book of Newfoundland, ed. by J.R. Smallwood, vol. 2, P. 302)

The concentration of Jews within ghettos proved to be just as natural as their gravitation towards urban areas. Louis Rosenberg has pointed to the major reasons for this phenomenon:

"For immigrant groups, newly arrived in a strange land, to concentrate within one area is natural and understandable. There are many factors, some social and religious and other economic, which lead to this tendency; of which some few, such as the desire for the companionship of neighbours of the same language and traditions, are matters of conscious or sub-conscious choice; whilst others, such as low income, proximity to place of employment and the prejudice which all too often limits the housing accommodation available for rental are, to put it mildly, involuntary. Among orthodox Jews the imperative need for the synagogue, religious school and kosher food stores within easy walking distance was also an important factor which impelled them to concentrate in the early stages of settlement within areas in which such possibilities are available."

As Siematicki wrote,

"St. Lawrence Boulevard has been the funnel through which repeated waves of Jewish immigrants entered Montreal. Until the 1950s, the bulk of Montreal's Jewish population (about 75%) lived within several blocks of St. Lawrence Boulevard stretching from Park Avenue on the west, to St. Denis on the East. Within this east-west 'straight-jacket' the Jewish community continually moved northward, as a mark of upward social mobility. Prior to the First World War the heart of Montreal's Jewish ghetto was located south of Ontario Street in Cremazie Ward; by 1921 it had

moved considerably northward to St. Lawrence and Duluth in St. Louis Ward; north again to Mount Royal Ave. and Esplanade in Laurier Ward, in 1931; and by 1941 the heart of Jewish settlement in Montreal was Waverly and Esplanade in St. Michel Ward. From the beginnings of mass Jewish settlement in Montreal until after the Second World War a considerable segment of Montreal Jewry resided within the federal constituency of Cartier.

"The occupational character of Montreal Jewry for the first 50 years of this century reveals dominant features, in conformity with the general pattern of first generation Jewish immigrants throughout North America."

In some senses their subsequent history and their condition in their new homelands is the story of their constructing of American democratic and egalitarian society in each of these lands. Nowhere was the American dream as attractive, as real and as powerful as it was in this Jewish nation of migrants from the Jewish heartland.

For the youngest and poorest of them, Canada was more than the freedom of the sidewalks. It was the promise of a great open future for every person. The Canadian world offered everything, and every glance showed the many who had been given everything. Freedom was everywhere; equality was in the school and in the progress made by all adults. Wealth appeared general and hunger rare. Dignity and acceptance on reasonable terms were ubiquitous. The dream of Canada which was envisioned by parents as they left Europe was within the grasp of the children, as they landed in Halifax or stepped off the train in Montreal or Toronto.

If the parents could not immediately deposit this dream in the bank, if they had to invest much of their lifetime in hard work and frugal living for the sake of their children, these children indeed were offered all. The Canadian promise was being kept.

The price was a continuation of the same painful break with their parents which these parents, in their turn, had made with theirs when they left for Canada. The process was equally painful for those left behind by time. There was no one to say nay to this, and no one to listen to any such nay.

AT WORK IN CANADA

Poverty conditions were harsh at the beginning, especially in the centres of Jewish settlement in the large cities. It is difficult to reconstruct this, since in the Victorian age these urban conditions were taken for granted.

Charity records are uncertain evidence, since they concentrate on those whose pride was broken to the point of seeking help.

Israel Medres' recollections make vivid the period when the needle industry was identical with Jewry, and its workers represented the mass of the employed community. Medres recalls the second decade of the century (In the Canadian Jewish Chronicle, March 13, 1936, translated by Eli Berger),

"Workers and employers earned less, and were satisfied with a much smaller standard of living. Rents were lower, clothes were not so expensive; luxuries were not so necessary.

"A wage-earner received about ten or twelve dollars a week. The tailor or cloakmaker earned more, but he was each year faced with the 'slack' season, when the employees worked 'part time' or not at all.

"The Jewish immigrant generally speaking, arrived here ahead of his wife and children. They had remained in the 'home' country, while the father, the wage-earner,

rented a room and, after securing employment, saved for the day when he could be re-united with his family. Room and board averaged three dollars a week, and incidentals another dollar. Usually, two or three dollars were sent home every week to the family, and the balance went as payment on the steamship ticket that had brought him over, or that would bring over the family. In those days, ticket offices were thriving intitutions on the 'Jewish streets'."

They arrived penniless and friendless. Even the few dollars which were the price of steerage had represented many precious rubles in a world where a farthing kopek was a treasured coin. They came to Canada without skills, for education back home had been humanistic and classical rather than vocational.

Economics and vocation had played so minimal a role in their ancient civilization that they could not easily fit into the employment structure of their new homeland. It was not only that so many of them were "luftmentschen", persons of no recognized useful economic occupation. Even the tailors of the Shtetel were not the equal of the Canadian tailor; the skilled worker was of another tradition. Certainly the businessman of the village was not in the category of his Canadian peer. He had little but character and an ancient culture.

They were vocationally not well equipped for the new life. What saved them from disaster economically was their general culture, their family traditions and the high morality of their society.

From the beginning what stood out about the Jewish group was the high proportion of wage-earners and, secondly, the small scale of operation of those who did own their own business concerns. Even fifty years later, of the 285 Jews engaged in Warehousing and Storage, 248 were shippers, while only 2 were owners or managers. In the Merchandising field, Montreal Jews were evenly divided between owners, managers and peddlers on one hand, and employees (most of whom were salesmen) on the other.

Louis Rosenberg's description of the typical Jewish merchant is representative of the Montreal situation:

"The average Jewish merchant in Canada is a small retail storekeeper, working himself with the help of some other member of his family or at most one or two hired assistants."

There are several reasons for this constant concentration of Jews in the small, retail trade. Firstly, the immigrant community represented a distinct market for the sale of goods and services which members of that community could best satisfy. Moreover the small, retail trade required relatively small amounts of capital and provided the owner with a measure of independence in his economic affairs. The most prevalent Jewish retail outlets in Montreal were general stores, groceries, meat markets, bakeries, furniture stores and clothing stores.

Among these transplanted Shtetel people trust was therefore common in employment in stores as clerks or as principals. Thus there emerged the Jewish small storekeeper and the peddler, new on the Canadian landscape.

Employment was often in stores and as peddlers, both in the city and in the countryside. Peddlers were trusted by wholesalers who usually advanced the pack, the stock in trade, on the honest face of the new immigrant, or on the recommendation of his landsman whom he knew also but a short time. Few wholesalers went bankrupt as a result of this practice.

Some took a pack on their shoulders and went into the countryside -- often running into licensing trouble, being fined, having the sack of their miserable stock in trade confiscated. Many went to work in cotton mills or building the railways. Sometimes they found themselves stranded in the fields of northern Ontario. A few managed to attain a small store.

It is a little recorded aspect of Canadian history where Jewish immigrant met French Canadian or Ontario farmers on the fields, humanly, usually very amicably, where intercultural experience was usually very positive.

On this arena, distant from history and from intellectuals' agitation, meetings took place that were long remembered by the principals but not often marked in documents. Agitators of race hate and religious intolerance sullied this activity by calling it exploitation, but the men concerned shrugged this off.

This was a phase of early Jewish economic activity in the distributive branches, in small stores, in salesmanship and in peddling as in factories. In the course of the decades some developed into the great merchandising projects that have altered and raised modes and standards of living.

Not everyone could foresee this and evaluate the current and ultimate contribution of these sectors to the national life. Government policy emphasized the primary industries, as if those who developed the marketing, the financing, the supply and the quality of life mattered little. So the mayor of Montreal, on a visit to the night school for immigrants, searching for some gracious words, **"expressed his pleasure that so few of them were peddlers and so large a number were getting their livelihood by honest labour." (Gazette, Nov. 19, 1891)**

As M. Siematicki put it in his paper on Communism in One Constituency (MS),

"The largest proportion of Montreal's gainfully employed Jews were in the manufacturing sector, and its extraordinary concentration in the clothing industry. As late as 1931, of 7242 Montreal Jews engaged in manufacturing, 5486 were in the clothing industry and 582 in the related fur and leather industries. The clothing and related industries thus represented over 83% of the Jewish work force in manufacturing. Less than 10% of this group held owner, managerial or foreman positions. Here then was the Jewish immigrant proletariat concentrated in the needle trades as tailors, sewers, pressers, cutters, dressmakers, etc.

"There are several clear reasons for this overwhelming concentration of immigrant Jews in the needle trades. Some of the Jews who came to Canada in the first three decades of this century had already been employed in the needle trades of the Old Country and so were well-prepared to enter this growing Canadian industry. Paradoxically, the clothing industry, with its advanced division of labour, was also an industry which provided a haven for the unskilled who could quickly master the task of sewer, presser or machine operator.

"Yet probably the critical factor involved in the steady flow of Jewish immigrants into the needle trades in Montreal was that here was an industrial environment which confronted the immigrant with surprisingly little culture shock: the boss and foremen were all Jews, Yiddish was the language of work and (where the boss himself was religious) the Sabbath was indeed a day of rest. As an early pattern of Jewish participation in the needle trades was established, it became a continuing phenomenon for immigrant Jews to enter the industry with the aid of friends or relatives.

"While employment in the clothing industry spared the Jewish immigrant from a measure of culture shock, it imposed instead a bitter dose of economic exploitation. The very nature of the clothing industry lent itself to an intense exploitation of labour. As an industry which requires a limited degree of capital investment, the needle trades were characterized by a large number of relatively small firms waging intense competition.

"Sam Liberman says of the industry in Montreal prior to the Second World War:

"'The competition was cut-throat, vicious and bankruptcies so prevalent that if a firm lasted 10 years it was phenomenal.'

"The situation was especially plagued by the existence of a large number of contract shops in the needle trades. In such shops an entrepreneur did not directly produce or sell goods, but rather he employed a group of workers to complete certain specific stages of production (e.g. sewing) for a clothing manufacturer.

"Operating under conditions of intense competition, contractors and clothing manufacturers were pressed to reduce their costs by whatever means necessary: shops were located in the cheapest location possible, and labour was forced to work as long as possible for as limited wages as possible. Inherently the clothing industry depended on cheap labour; in the mass waves of Jewish immigration to Canada the industry found its cheap-labour supply.

"How the wages paid in the clothing industry permitted workers to survive is baffling."

Even at the peak reached after forty years of sweating and union building, a short-lived peak that precipitated for another decade and a half until the middle of the twentieth century, the workers in the women's clothing industry, on the 'national' average, were living under sub-poverty conditions, while workers in the men's clothing industry would be hovering between poverty and minimum subsistence. (According to the standards presented by the Department of Labor to the Commons Committee on Industrial and International Relations)

Even these 'high' wage levels merit further comment. While these figures represent national averages rates in the Montreal clothing industry were below the national average; some 15% below Toronto's.

Furthermore, industry-wide wage averages in themselves are somewhat misleading; such averages for the clothing industry do no indicate that a cutter might earn three times as much as one of the many dressmakers.

It is true that in many cases wage earners were either single or had small families, and that where larger families prevailed there could be more than one wage earner. Yet Rosenberg's description of the Jewish working class is a bleak one:

"The unskilled manual workers are usually just above the poverty level, as bng as they are able to retain their jobs....The semi-silled and unskilled workers only rise above the poverty level during 'boom' periods and are the first to sink below this level as soon as there is a slowing down in industry." (Canada's Jews)

Conditions were similar in capmaking, baking and the fur industry, and among the few carpenters and builders; in Toronto as in Montreal.

H. Hershman describes the Jewish tailors who were working for the contractors -- immigrants like themselves, living like their employees who had known them from back home, residing on the same block, paying rent to the same landlord, praying in the same synagogue. "The stove in his home might have been of better quality, the oilcloth on his floor might have cost a few cents more per yard." These employers often lent their workers the price of ship's ticket to bring their families from Europe; at least they stood good for them with the ticket agent.

In a sense they were undergoing a downward process. Tailoring and other such trades were not particularly regarded occupations in their old homes. There was little income for such work in the pauperized, learning-oriented society they had left. Yet in the process of migration such work experience came to be useful, and many from better families condescended to enter this work.

It was easier to do so in a new land, where one's better origins were not known and were not asked about. But it did lead to a profound social and personal revolution: the despised poorer man from there of yesteryear was better paid, more sought after here and now. It was a democratising revolution but not a less painful one for that.

At the beginning of the mass migration there was as yet no class of Jewish craftsmen or industrial workers. As H. Vineberg recalled sixty years later (in his "Memories of a Jewish Old Timer" in the 1932 Souvenir Edition of the Eagle, P. 73), "Jews lived by trade, in small stores. There were several large Jewish firms and two Jewish cigar manufacturers; no doctors or lawyers. After coming to Canada, they would spend the first several months peddling in the countryside."

A number of the early immigrants were cigar makers.

It is difficult to know today to what extent their employees were Jewish, too. There is a continental tradition of skilled Jewish cigar makers, but we cannot document the Canadian experience.

The London, Ont., history is typical. The ur -- chronicle of the community records German cigar makers there in mid-nineteenth century, probably Jewish.

Cigar makers were among the most ill-treated workers in the Dominion. The Report, Royal Commission on the Relations between Capital and Labor, makes chilling reading in this area. Not surprisingly strikes in the industry in the nineteenth century were frequent.

Following the example of the cigarmakers, other labor associations were founded and became well developed in Montreal. Most of them affiliated with the local Trades and Labor Council founded in 1886 and necessarily modelled on the American Federation of Labor, established five years earlier. La Presse encouraged this movement. (Rumilly. Histoire de Montréal, vol. 3, Pp. 209, 298)

In June 1883 a strike at Samuel Davis and Sons, organized by Cigar Makers Union No. 658 for an increase in their wages, extended to the entire Montreal industry. The government had reduced the tax by $2.60 per 1,000 and the workers demanded an increase of $1 per 1,000 cigars.

London-born Samuel Davis founded his tobacco firm in 1861. He was a leading citizen in the community and served as president of Shearith Israel for seventeen years before he developed an interest in reforming the Jewish faith. In 1882 he joined in founding Temple Emanuel and was its president for the last decade of his life.

The communal traditions of the family were continued for a century and the names of Sir Mortimer Davis and Lady Henrietta Davis mark the National Library of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, the Jewish General Hospital and the Y.M.H.A. of Montreal.

The industry was one of only two in which the legal apprenticeship system was in effect. In the A.H. Davis plant apprenticeship was for a duration of 4-5 years.

All of H. Jacobs' workers were unionized, as were half of Samuel Davis' in 1888 when the average for the trade was a good deal lower.

An anonymous cigarmaker testified that in other factories the workers are treated as slaves, driven by threats and blows. The shops are schools of immorality, the children being exposed to scandal. The children are punished by incarceration in a cold dark hole. Children are beaten after being stripped, three men against a child. He moved to the Jacobs' plant where there are no apprentices. (La Presse, Feb. 7, 1888)

Five years later the proportion of unionized workers at the Davis plant, some 50%, was higher than in the trade as a whole. It is on the record that A.H. Davis encouraged apprentices engaged to him to earn more than the wages he had contracted for. "Our custom,"he said,"is to reward them for efficient work and to pay them more than the set rate of $1-2 weekly."

A. H. Davis testified, before the Royal Commission on the Relations of Capital and Labor in 1898, that his firm had brought some 200 German cigar makers to Canada and had helped establish them in Montreal in 1885 to deter his restless workers. Most of them left for the U.S. where wages were higher. The matter reached the House of Commons whose committee was to look into it.

S. Davis & Sons was the largest employer of the tobacco manufacturers at the time, with 457 cigar workers in its employ followed by J.-M. Fortier with 275. Others on list: H. Jacobs (80), Roman (32) and Z. Davis (18).

S. Roman was trustee of the Shaar Hashomayim congregation at this time.

A major strike in this factory in 1894 pulled out a large part of his work force of 600. The company claimed the right to reduce wages, just as it had increased them earlier.

The work stoppage attracted broad attention. The International Union of Cigarmakers supported the strikers financially, and gifts came from Cincinnati, Brooklyn and London.

George Warren, vice-president of the International Cigarmakers Union, went out of his way before the Royal Commission on Labor to single out the Davis company as a firm against whom he had heard no complaints in his eighteen years in the trade. "They do not make the workers pay for gas and do not confiscate the cigars." (La Presse, Feb.7, 1888)

Of the 1895 cigar makers strike, J. Lessard, president of the board of inspectors of public works, noted that it had little consequences and did little injury to trade.

"The situation was not of the best; far from it: in the first place, owing to the tobacco manufactories remaining idle and to the general tendency to lower prices and reducing of work, especially for women and girls." (General Report of the Commissioner of Public Works of the Province, 1895, Sessional Papers, no. 7, P. 55)

In the summer of 1901 the Davis firm was threatened with a strike because the company was not conforming to the regulations of the international union. Again the problem was alien labor, this time it was Portuguese workers who were replacing Canadians at derisory rates. By June 30 formal notice was served to the company.

The deputy minister of labor, in the event W.L. Mackenzie King, informed the cigarmakers' union that the law provided a fine of $50.00 for the employment of foreign labor. (Le Pionnier, June 16 and 30, 1901)

The long strike -- three months -- was supported financially by the international union and by locals in Canada and in the U.S. to the extent of over $2,100. The wage cuts were restored.

A year later another strike when the company again sought to reduce wages from the current $5-9 a week.

In 1898 another strike affecting 82 workers who complained that a change in the quality of the tobacco used reduced their effective wages.

In a world of perpetual inflation and rising wages and earnings it is striking to note that cigar makers wages decreased from $12-$18 a week in 1873-75 to $8 in 1888. (J. Rouillard and Judith Bart. "Le Mouvement ouvrier," in J. Hamelin, ed., Les Travailleurs québecois, 1851-96, P.106)

The following year it was the Hirsch Mfg. Co. that suffered a one-day strike as it sought a reduction of wages.

Fernand Harvey relates the reduction of cigar makers' wages to the introduction of machinery in the industry. This facilitated the employment of children and girls into the work force and affected the apprenticeship system. The skilled cigar makers, the first victims of this technology, sought legislation in Quebec to limit apprentices, to parallel the Ontario law. (II. 238)

In 1900 a more serious issue: Several firms, including Hirsch, were struck as workers demanded an 8-hour day and tighter regulations of the numbers of apprentices. Other firms joined the Canadian Manufacturers Association, which was headed by Hirsch, to demand that their workers force the strikers to return to work. The stoppage extended to other shops. Within a week Hirsch accepted the workers demands and the manufacturers association gave up their efforts to destroy the unions. (Jean Hamelin, Paul Larocque and Jacques Rouillard. Répertoire des grèves dans la Province de Québec au XIX siècle. Montreal, Ecole des hautes études commerciales)

Nathan Green, founder of the community in Saint John, N.B., was a cigar maker and had worked in the trade at the side of his close friend Samuel Gompers before coming to New Brunswick in 1859. Not for twenty years did other Jews come there: Abraham and Israel Isaacs, who established a cigar factory in 1879. (E. Boyaner in 1957 anniversary edition of Eagle, P. 29)

During their first years in Canada in substantial numbers the employment patterns of the newcomers were unclear and inchoate. Many of them were skilled craftsmen in shoemaking, some in industries such as the C.P.R. Angus shops in Montreal, some on rails, some at cigar making.

An incident from the records of the Baron de Hirsch Institute: Rabbi Simon Glazer sought to place some new arrivals in the Angus shops and was told by the foreman that there were no openings at the moment, but that he would see what he could do after the new year. The rabbi sent two men on the appointed day but, the way word gets around among unemployed landsleit, sixty showed up. They not only overwhelmed the shop office and the foreman, but they actually staged a sit-in. Result: protests from the C.P.R. to the Institute; the rabbi is reprimanded; he sent a letter to the company but forgot to sign it (Isn't it enough to write?); a counter-complaint to the secretary of the Institute who may not have reported the incident accurately, etc.

H. Hershman, anarchistically oriented pioneer of the Jewish labor movement in Montreal, also recalled that in the first years of the century there were many Jewish carpenters, blacksmiths, and tinsmiths working in the shops of the C.P.R. and some for the Grand Trunk Railway.

"The Jewish craftsmen who came from Europe then were true artists in their work when compared to the locals. There was general admiration for their production. The splendid decoration which we still see today in some railway cars," he wrote in 1928, "was the work of these skilled Jewish men. The qualified men introduced other newcomers to the large plants. The C.P.R. became a truly Jewish shop.

"The wages were not high, but in those days they were considered splendid. They were enough to meet expenses, to save a few dollars every week in the bank, to pay for an empty lot and for the construction of a modest home.

"They worked long hours. At three in the morning when some workers were returning from a meeting or from 'a people's banquet' they would see the shop workers on their way to their jobs. These men would leave home two hours earlier to walk to work so as to save carfare, then eight tickets for a quarter."

Those with the gift of handiness at tools were very happy at the C.P.R. shops. We have the testimony of Isaiah Zarchi who recalls that his father fled Lithuania before the threat of war with the Japanese and came to Montreal. His skills as a maker of copper pots won him a job with the C.P.R. "where he worked and earned well. His wages were unusually high, for he earned enough to maintain our family in Vilkomir comfortably and to save substantially for a rainy morrow. The C.P.R. arranged for him to become a naturalized citizen of Canada and advised him to send for his family."

When he decided to return to Vilkomir to consult his father, the company was ready to help him buy a home upon his return to Canada with his family, and to assure him of steady work. He came to his native city "wearing a fur coat, Persian lamb hat, American shoes, his beard short.... He shaved a little with some machine contraption, and washed hard. The crease in his trousers from top to bottom seemed to warn me, 'Don't touch; it'll cut your finger.' When I asked him whether all workers in Canada dressed like this, he said, 'Only those who are well paid. Many cannot afford this. In Canada, too, like everywhere else, there are bosses and workers, rich and poor. This is my Sabbath suit.'" (Zichroines, Die Arbeiter Bevegung in Litte un Canada. Toronto, Vochenblatt, 19/3. vol. 1, Pp. 40-41, 71)

Manny Batshaw, executive head of the Allied Jewish Community Services, and Justice Harry Batshaw recall that their father worked fifty years as a carpenter for the C.P.R. As the veteran Jew in the shop, they refused to recognize any other name for him but Moses.

S. Belkin notes that it was in such heavy industrial plants that many Jewish workers perfected their skills in carpentry, painting and metal work and became capable plumbers, machinists and mechanics.

One old timer recalled, "At that time many Jewish immigrants worked for the C.P.R. They were hired, tho' they spoke neither English nor French. Through the medium of the dumb language the foreman would show them what to do. They worked there as carpenters, tinsmiths, locksmiths, etc. Today, the Jewish traveller little thinks that into the coaches in which he rides there went a great deal of Jewish labour."

When Montreal C.P.R. workers went out on a sympathy strike in the summer of 1908 Jewish workers in the shop were among the leaders. Poale Zion and the Zionist Territorialists attended the conference at the Progressive Dramatical Club. (Belkin, Pp. 82-83)

L'Ouvrier mentions Jewish carpenters and cabinet makers union, local 1270 in 1908, with quarters in the Labour Exchange. Secretary, E. Schaffer of 123 St. Edward St.

As late as 1909 many hundreds of Jews were working at the C.P.R. Shops, about half of them new arrivals.

In Montreal and Toronto, with their burgeoning industry, Jewish immigrants flocked to the factories. On the prairies they engaged in hard labor; they laid railway tracks, dug waterways and canals, slaughtered cattle, worked on sewage systems and aqueducts.

Louis Chait, who is analysing the early Yiddish press, notes the considerable attention given in these papers to the C.P.R. shops as well as to the high incidence of tuberculosis. The Eagle was gratified that Jews were scarce among the scabs employed by the C.P.R. to break the weeks-long strike in their shops. (Sept. 18, 1908)

CLOTHING BECOMES AN INDUSTRY

To situate the Jewish immigrant tailor and the Jewish owner of the sweat shop (who does not come to represent the employer class in the industry so quickly) we need to note the place of the garment industry in the Canadian economic framework.

Two informal documents from the papers of David Solomon in the Congress Archives tell of the meeting between the Jewish people and the needle machine. Early in the twentieth century, he recalls, one summer day in Manchester, "my oldest sister Clara, was sitting on the front door step, hemming a bed sheet by hand, when up drove a salesman in a horse and cart with something funny looking on it, resembling a box on an iron frame. 'Good afternoon,' said the salesman, 'what are you sewing?' 'A bed sheet,' said my sister. 'How long will it take you to do the hem?' asked he. 'About three or four hours,' replied my sister. 'Don't do another stitch and I'll show you how I can do the job in a few minutes.' Off came the treadle Singer sewing machine from the rig. Right on the sidewalk in front of the house, the salesman hemmed several sheets in minutes. The Singer was bought instantly -- no down payment and a few pennies weekly."

In an informal history of his trade Montrealer D. Solomon noted.

"Before the invention of the sewing machine by Elias Howe in 1846, the women's clothing industry hardly existed. It was the child of the reconstruction period, which lasted from the end of the Civil War, almost to the end of the century.

"Into this strenuous and dynamic building of an industrial continent came the early women's garment manufacturers.

"Gradually, between 1860 and 1880, they built up their businesses. Until 1860, the industry was too insignificant to be listed in the census. The earliest records of Canadians, in this venture, date back to about 1890. Faint memories of early days evoke nostalgic events of informality between employer and employee, who fought and squabbled in family brawls. About 90% of the workers were women and girls, who were now rapidly being replaced by men, due to technological improvement.

"At first, cutting was done by shears and the sewing by treadle machines operated by foot. Both operations could easily be done with cheap female labour.

"In 1880, the cutting long knife was invented. It could cut from six to eight thicknesses of cloth and the operation required considerable strength. Women cutters were replaced with men. Later, the so-called Shaver sewing machine came into use. In the Shaver machine, the pedals worked forward and backward, like on a bicycle, and women often had their long skirts caught in the treadle. Native women operators were now largely displaced by East European Jews, mostly from Russia and Poland, who were coming over in multitudes.

"The impact of East European Jews on the garment industry was **tremendous.** They brought over the cultural, religious and political effervescence of their homeland. Czarist Russia was already a hotbed of revolutionary movement, which infiltrated into the new immigration.

"Among the new immigrants were the self-educated workers who developed as trade union leaders. Another group among the immigrants were a sprinkling of skilled craftsmen from Hungary. They were the aristocrats of the garment trades, commanding high wages in better shops. They looked down on the horde of semi-skilled cloak operators who crowded the sweat shops; these had lived in the ghetto, part ragged proletarian, ragged bourgeois, hawkers, hucksters cobblers, all preying on each other's poverty.

"What made the organization of garment workers possible, was the constant immigration which went on, without cessation, from the Russian pogroms of 1881 and 1882, until the outbreak of World War I in 1914. It was not until 1914 when immigration came to a standstill, that enough garment workers accepted their status to stabilize their own trade union movement.

"One result of the immigration was the sweat shop. The other was social; the beginning of a labour movement in the women's needle trades, which derived its militancy and its staying powers and shaped the course of employers in a fight for survival.

"In most cases, the boss had worked in another sweat shop long enough to save up $50.00 or less, to set him in business. All he needed was a few sewing machines on credit. Later, the workers had to supply their own machines, install them in their own homes. They and their families worked from sun-up to late at night and lived in filth and misery all year round.

"In the year 1893, the fastest cloak operator could barely earn $10.00 a week, while women earned between three and five. At about that time, cloakmakers could be seen doing the rounds seeking work, with their sewing machines on their shoulders.

"In 1904. 300 employees in Montreal went on strike, in opposition to the demand that they pay for and supply their own sewing thread in the manufacture of garments.

"Description of a typical sweat shop is remembered as follows; one cloakmaker turned his four rooms into a shop and supposedly kept the other three as a home for his wife and seven children. But the shop was all over the place. In the room adjoining the shop, used as a kitchen, the factory inspector reported there was a red hot stove, two tables, a clothes rack and several piles of goods. A woman was making bread on a table, upon which there was a baby's stocking, scraps of cloth, several old tin cans and a small pile of unfinished garments. In the next room was an old woman with a diseased face, walking the floor with a crying child in her arms. Such conditions were typical in all garment centres.

"In 1909, spurred on by strikes in New York City, the local Union staged a general strike which lasted 12 weeks. Workers returned to work, brow-beaten, with their Union in a state of dissolution.

"Very little is known of the industry statistically, in that period, but we do know that employers came and went; the life of each on an average being about two years."

De Bonville notes that the clothing sector became important in the Montreal economy after 1880. (Jean Baptiste Gagnepetit, les travailleurs montréalais à la fin du XIX siècle. Montreal, Editions de l'aurore. 1975, Pp. 27-28, basing himself on Gordon W. Bertram. "Economic Growth in Canadian Industry, 1870-1915", in C.M.E.P.S., vol. 24, no. 2, May 1963, Pp. 156-84) Bertram notes that between 1870 and 1900, this industry emerged as the fifth in the classification following steel, wood, leather and food.

The development emphasizes the consolidation of the manufacturing industry of the province which benefitted Montreal economically more than any other urban centre.

The term "sweating" imported from England was slow to assume its later definition which was nearly localized to the ready-made garment factories and to the contracting and sub-contracting practiced in this developing industry.

Thus, when Arthur St. Pierre spoke on "Sweating system et salaire minimum" at Ottawa for the Fédération des femmes canadiennes-françaises in 1918, he was dealing with workers' living conditions and wages in general all over the world, in an attempt to establish the laborers' right to be able to live off his work. (Le Problème social. Montreal, la Bibliothèque canadienne, 1925, Pp. 23-51)

In Quebec this at first affected French Canadian workers as well as Jews, and the countryside even at some distance from the metropolis as well as the ghetto.

One of the first Canadian surveys of "The Sweating Process" comes from the pen of Jules Helbronner in the form of Appendix "O" to the Report of the Royal Commission on the Relations between Labor and Capital, 1889 Pp. 72 - 75.

He begins by referring to starvation wages and exactions demanded from employees as the sweating process and cites many evil practices such as fining workers, failing to compensate the workers for their time at work, reducing wages arbitrarily during the winter season, retention and confiscation of workers' wages by the employers.

In his conclusions Helbronner approaches the practices in the emerging garment industry,

"Working by the piece, although in principle one of the most equitable and just methods, has yet in certain industries been instrumental in lowering wages, or at least of obliging the workmen to supply a greater amount of work for the same amount of pay. Workmen complain that the price of work is not calculated on the ability of the average workman, but on the ability of special workmen.

"Working by the piece is one of the consequences of the changes in manufactories; formerly the master was himself a workman, capable of judging whether his employees honestly earned their wages.

"Now-a-days the master is rarely a workman, and even when he is one, the commercial requirements of his business prevent him from overseeing his factory. In large factories and with large companies the personal oversight and appreciation of the merit of the workman is an impossibility. It is this impossibility of judging the respective merits of the workman that tends more and more to the generalization of work by the piece.

"This is to be regretted, as the discussion of prices is a source of endless difficulty, and the necessity of the workman doing a certain amount of work, often beyond his ability, in order to do a fair day's work, naturally leads to the lowering of the standard of handiwork. And the divisions and sub-divisions, caused by the general practice of working by the piece, reduces the position of a workman to that of a simple machine, and of a useless machine, when some new invention improves the machinery of which he is only the complement.

"From the working by the piece comes the real sweating process, and its true operator is the sub-contractor. Workmen protest strongly against the introduction of this intermediary, whom the masters have imposed on them, and whose profits are necessarily obtained from the price of their handiwork. These sub-contractors, from the workman's point of view are unnecessary, and in any case are only necessary where the master does not understand the details of the working of his business. The masters who have given evidence on this subject have all declared that the only advantage pertaining to this system is that it relieves them from the supervision of their workshops and that the sub-contractors derive their profits from the extra work which they obtain from the men.

"The workmen, on their side, have shown the wrongs caused them by this system -- decrease of wages, increase of work and, above all, an increase in the number of children employed."

For an understanding of this double evil of the uncontrolled primitive factory with its sweating, and simultaneously the sub-contractor the "cottage industry" where the entire family -- and neighbouring workers -- crowd to carry out elements of the total manufacturing process, we need to recall that, on the scale of development of the industrial revolution, we are at the moment when the factory site was just coming into being.

The sweating system therefore extended for French Canadians into the countryside and for Jews into their urban slum homes.

The Commission noted that "many employers, as well as employés asked that the Factory Acts be applied to stores and to small shops in which less than twenty persons are employed. Your commissioners believe that if these requests be granted, the sanitary conditions of these places will be improved, and the evils of the sweating process will be diminished, if not wholly removed."

The 1895 labor congress, on a motion of the garment workers, petitioned the government to investigate sweating in Canada. (Belkin, P.85)

Labor chronicler Charles Lipton records in his Trade Union Movement of Canada, 1827-1959 (Montreal, 1966, P.110):

"Development in the clothing industry prior to World War I is intermingled with the immigrants who came in thousands to Canada. Light on the conditions of these immigrants is thrown by this entry in the Minute Book of the Montreal Trades and Labour Council in 1901: 'Shiploads of Europeans are being put to work at scandalously low wages at the Workman's Clothing Factory in Montreal.' The industry was located mostly in Montreal, Toronto and Winnipeg. It was largely owned by Jews, and many workers were Jews. The Jewish owners paid the Jewish workers wages as low as those they paid the Galicians, Poles or French Canadians -- and demonstrated thus their freedom from race prejudice.

"Around issues such as abolition of sweat shops, child labour, 'home work', the clothing workers began to organize. Unions in the field then included the Journeymen Tailors Union (a fore-runner of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America), the United Garment Workers of America, and the United Hat and Cap Workers. The National Trades and Labour Congress also tried its hand at organization. In 1901 it was considering hiring 'two Hebrew organizers to better organize the Jewish working people'.

"An important reform affecting this industry came early in the century -- the first Dominion Government Fair Wage legislation. One of its clauses aimed to deny government orders for articles such as postal uniforms to factories where subnormal conditions prevailed.

"In their battle to improve conditions, the clothing workers fought many strikes. Between 1900 and 1914, 40,000 of them took part in 158 strikes. The time lost in these strikes was 10% of total time lost for all strikes in Canadian industry between 1901 and 1915. In 1913, 4,500 clothing workers at Montreal were involved in a 6-weeks strike, and 1,000 clothing workers at Toronto took part in a strike which lasted a year. At Hamilton 2,000 were on strike, at Montreal 1,000 operatives were on strike for 7 months."

Harvey notes two significant aspects of the sweating system: a) It reduces the expense of the foreman, for the sub-contractor assumes the cost of worker discipline and recruiting except when he works in the framework of his own factory, and b) It enables a faster accumulation of capital. (Paper on "Technologie et organization du travail à la fin du 19^{e} siècle; le cas de Québec," before the Institut d'histoire de l'Amérique française, Sept. 1977, P.15) Business biographies of Jewish citizens reflect this observation, as we note the manufacturers who had begun as sub-contractors.

By the 1890's New York conditions spilled over into Canada the development of sweat shop methods, the growth of the industry, and depersonalization of the factories, with incipient labor resistance and even the coming of craft experts from New York.

The evils of exploitation and of poverty came to the attention of Quebec society and government. Medres notes that the provincial department of public works publicly condemned the condition in the needle trades, noting the unsanitary conditions in the tailor shops and bakeries, even though some improvements had been made in earlier months.

Among the first to bring this phenomenon to general attention was the Montreal Herald which featured on its front page on Feb. 3, 1897, "The Sweating Evil, Its Prevalence in the City of Montreal, Overcrowded Tenements; Where People Work for Eighty Hours a Week; Views of Inspector Lessard as to the Best Means to Remedy the System."

It continued,

"Of all the evils of the present industrial system which baffle the efforts of humanitarians and reformers, the sweating system as applied to garment making is perhaps the worst and the most general. Much has been written about the miseries which this system entails to thousands of unfortunate beings in such large cities as London and New York; but perhaps few Montrealers are aware that the system is proportionately as great in Montreal, and that it is fast spreading. In fact, the sweating system has been heretofore an inseperable adjunct of the ready made clothing business. To save themselves the trouble of having suitable shops and work rooms, the large dealers give out the work to families or to contractors, who bid for the work at the lowest possible price and depend upon their ability to 'sweat' poor women and children to make their profit.

"The operators and the victims of this system are mostly Hebrews, the number of whom is continually increasing. It is estimated by men who have made special enquiries that there are now over a thousand of them in the square bounded by Craig, Sanguinet, St. Catherine and Bleury Streets. Nearly all of them live in old dark tenements. The over-crowding is general, there being cases where families have only one room each in order to save rent.

"Occupied as they are from early morning until night, they have little time, even if they had the inclination, to give a thought to the sanitary condition of their surroundings, which are often simply vile. The combination living-room and workshop offers one of the saddest spectacles which can be sought by any humanly disposed person, who seeks light on the subject of human misery.

"The president of the factory inspectors, Mr. Lessard, asserts that the ordinary week's work of these people is from 75 to 80 hours. Men and women who work out bring home work to do it on Sunday. They go to the employer and offer to work two or three hours extra if given a chance to work, thus subjecting themselves to a condition of slavery. There is in fact no limit to the hours of labor, but that of physical endurance, and the pay is kept down to the starvation point. Trousers are made in Montreal for from 8 to 10 cents a pair. It is not surprising that destitution, suffering, intellectual and moral depression should be the normal condition among the unfortunate victims of this permissious system.

"At the instance of the Provincial factory inspectors the late Conservative Government appointed a special commissioner to make an investigation into this matter. This commissioner made a flying tour around the country, and reported that he had seen nothing. 'He did not even come to see us,' says Inspector Lessard, 'but we are positive as to our information, and we can point out those who carry out this system which is a disgrace to every country where it is introduced.'

"As a matter of fact it is rather a difficult problem to solve. Under existing legislation the inspector can abate the evil of over crowding factory workrooms, but they cannot prevent the over crowding of rooms in tenements which are used as workrooms by member of the family. They can force the child under a certain age out of the workshop or factory, but they are powerless to molest him when he is employed in the home circle. They can cause the reduction of excessive hours of labor required of girls and boys, when employed in shops, but they cannot prevent such long hours of toil being imposed on persons of the same age when employed at home. They have no power which will enable them to force the contractor, jobber or sweater to pay greater prices to the worker than that for which he offers to do the work or than the contractor is willing to pay.

"In Great Britain the labor unions have succeeded in inducing the Government to put a clause in its contracts for clothing requiring that the contractor shall pay fair wages, that the work shall not be done at the homes of the work people, and that there shall be no sub-letting. Such a clause in all contracts given by the Federal, Provincial or municipal authorities for clothing would certainly be productive of some good. Restrictions of a certain class of immigration is also suggested.

"A more effective remedy would be a system of taxation and sanitary regulations which would force the workers out of tenements and into shop buildings, where they would be subject to the control and protection of Provincial legislation.

"In the meanwhile Inspector Lessard asks that the Provincial Legislature should at least pass an act to prohibit Sunday work, even in the home circle, when the work is for outsiders and done for pay. He claims that he could easily ascertain when such work was being done, and suppress it if he was authorized by law to do so."

The same day it wrote editorially,

"Sweating in Montreal -- In another column appears an article dealing with the sweating system in relation to its existence in this city, from which it appears that Montreal is by no means free from the evil. Here, as in every other large city, there is one section of the population whose necessities force them into a degrading and ruinous competion with one another in the search for work, and of whose poverty advantage is taken by those who have the work to give out. How to remedy the matter is a problem which has not yet been solved; and yet, its solution becomes every day more imperative. Crime and disease, menacing the entire community, are the inseparable accompaniments of the present state of things, to say nothing of the misery it involves to thousands of human beings. The efforts of the late Government to cope with the evil resulted in nothing being done, and it does not even appear that the investigations of the commissioner were thoroughly conducted. The problem must soon face the present administration, from whom we may look for earnestness and sincerity in any steps which they may take in regard to it. The widespread effect of the system when operated in a large manufacturing centre like Montreal is illustrated by the threatenings of a strike of the clothing makers in Hamilton. The large establishments like the W.E. Sanford Company in that city have declared that they must cut the prices for making certain garments in order that they may compete with sweating prices in Montreal. When the effects of the system spread over the country in this way it demonstrates all the more clearly the necessity for a thorough consideration of the whole matter by the Dominion Government."

In Toronto, a biographer of Mackenzie King notes, the basic conditions "were the same as in other countries and tended to be associated with the clothing industry. There was virtually no effective outside supervision, and the uncontrolled competition depressed prices and wages to the limit of human endurance. In one home a sick woman was being assisted in her work by two daughters: one, sixteen years of age, had worked for the past eight years at a rate for most of the time of two dollars a week; the second, nine years of age, was sewing at her own machine. A third daughter was employed in a factory making buttonholes at three dollars a week. Their piece-work rewards were 12½ to 15 cents apiece for men's trousers, and 5 cents each for boys' knickerbockers, but they had to supply the thread themselves. One shop was engaged in making buttonholes: large ones at a dollar a hundred, others for 50, 60 or 75 cents a hundred, according to size. Another contractor who paid more than the average wage gave his women employees three to five dollars a week, after they had served a month's apprenticeship free. A good girl might get six dollars a week in some places, but they were exceptional. Many other samples were given. Light, air and sanitary conditions varied, but in most instances were very bad and unhealthy. In a union shop working conditions and rates of remuneration were far superior to those where there was no such protection." (R. McGregor Dawson. William Lyon Mackenzie King, a Political Biography. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1958. vol. 1, P.66)

Similar testimony was given in Montreal before the Royal Commission on the relations of Capital and Labor in 1898 by Abraham Ephraim, Isaac Gold, Jacob Julius Rosen, Israel Solomon and Joseph Myers, tailors.

Ephraim was earning $15 a week as one of eleven employees of his brother who was working for a wholesale firm.

Gold had nine hands working at his home on coats. Rosen was a buttonhole maker for manufacturers and had eight boys and a number of men working for him earning up to $13 a week.

Of the fifteen workers employed by Myers at coats for the wholesalers, most of them were paid about $12 for a 55-hour week. Solomon had but three employees.

The 435 "manufacturing establishments" in Montreal, constituted the largest number of manufacturers in the city, but with their 5,500 employees were the fifth in the list of industries in the number of workers they engaged -- a clear picture of the role of the small ateliers which marked the beginning of the needle trade industry in the city. (Canadian Census, 1890-91, vol.3, Pp. 387, cited by De Bonville, P.35) These small shops gave work to more than a third of the manufacturing force.

Another element clearly of Jewish concern emerges from contemporary documentation: the smaller the establishment the less satisfactory the hygienic conditions under which the workers are forced to function. Older homes converted for business or industrial purposes

leave much to be desired. (Report of James Mitchell to Health Department, Doc. 2, 1890, P.143, cited by De Bonville, P. 69)

The vast majority of the workers in these industries (72%) were women, and these women in those clothing industries constituted half of all women engaged in industry in Montreal in 1891.

De Bonville indicates some significant aspects of these statistics: "As a rule working conditions deteriorate as the proportion of women and juvenile workers increases. The clothing industry and, to a lesser degree, leather and tobacco are remarkable for a particularly serious exploitation of a plentiful and cheap pool of labor." (P.68)

Mackenzie King described Montreal conditions in a report which appeared in the Herald of Apr.16, 1898; sweating is the most odious form of labor to extract the most from a worker for the smallest wage under unhealthy working conditions. A manufacturer cuts the cloth; sub-contractors undertake to produce the garments at a fixed price. They either crowd workers into unhealthy shops on a piece work basis or they divide up the cut up parts of the garments among the thousands of women who worked at home. King stressed that a woman can earn $2 or $3 for sixty hours of drudgery in the week, at a time when a carpenter can earn $3 a day.

King estimated that 75% of all clothing sold comes ready made; only some 3% is made in factories. The rest is produced in small shops and in thousands of homes scattered throughout the cities.

In a plea before the Select Commons Committee on a Lord's Day bill, Maxwell Goldstein appeared on behalf of the Jewish community.

"Industries have sprung up lately, such as the manufacture of ladies' waists, &c., which do not call for any plant, machinery or any other noisy operation. These manufactures can be carried on in a quiet way. This reference to smelters and blast furnaces and things like that do not apply to us at all, we have not got them. We have about 7,000 operatives working at the present time and they only earn their pittance of $1 or $2 a day."

Mr. Sinclair, M.P. asked "Are these operatives Jewish?" Mr. Goldstein replied in the affirmative. (Report of the Select Committee to which was Referred Bill no. 12, Respective of the Lord's Day. Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence. Appendix no.1, 1906)

It might be noted that, at least from a first reading of the Canadian record, the early labor record in this country is singularly free from the anti-semitism that appeared from time to time in the more general media of the period. This seems to be particularly true in regard to immigration.

From the earliest articulation of the labor voice Canadian workers were concerned with the competition of dumped cheap labor. Under the circumstances labor might have objected to Jewish immigration which might have been described as unassimilable, unskilled, subject to exploitation, and not bringing benefits to the nation. Indeed, the Quebec nationalist and religious press did so describe it early in the century, and organized labor took up the refrain two decades later.

To cite La Vérité just once on the arrival of "the rapacious Jews who come in serried ranks, like vultures after a battle, to suck the blood of our people and to put them under the yoke of the tyranny which they have established in various lands of the Old World." (cited in Le Nationaliste, March 15, 1908)

Yet during the first decades of the century, when Jewish immigration was strong, labor resisted the Tardivel temptation. When it attacked workers' immigration, its target was rather the Salvation Army which brought the unemployed from London to Canada.

But there were problems, and some came to a head very gravely in 1910 at the fifth national (continental) convention of Labor Zionists which took place in Montreal -- an indication of the importance of the Montreal Poale Zion from the all-American perspective.

At this conference it was, naturally, proposed that the party cooperate with the Socialist Party, but S. Schneur, outstanding ideologist of the Canadian party (who was to edit the Maccabaen the following year) asked that the Canadian branches not be bound by this resolution: the Canadian Socialist Party, he said, was antisemitic and opposed the immigration of Jews into Canada. (S. Belkin, History of the Poale Zion Movement in Canada, 1956, Pp. 61-62)

JEWISH WORKERS AND CONTRACTORS

Sweating as a system or a condition of work was not introduced by Jewish immigrants, nor were they the first or only sufferers. Indeed, in examining the reports of government and other such general sources, it is difficult to estimate the proportion of Jewish workers involved.

This is particularly true since the inquiry examines the social condition during a particularly sensitive moment in the history of French Canada, early in the transition from rural to urban-industrial vocations.

It so happens that this holds equally for the Jewish element of this working population; they, too, came to Montreal factories from the fresher air of the Rumanian or Lithuanian shtetel.

As far back as 1888 Hollis Shorey, Montreal drapier en gros, was employing 1450 workers outside his shop as well as 150 inside, as he told the Royal Commission on Labor and Capital. (Rapport, Pp. 316-19) Many of these workers were living in St. Jerome, Ste. Rose and St. Hyacinthe.

James O'Brien also testified that he could not tell how much one of his outside workers was earning since the work was done by entire families; mothers and daughters were working together and were being paid by the piece.

O'Brien called the sub-contractors "true entrepreneurs; they employ their own workers. There are many of these, especially Jews, and some employ ten or twenty or thirty workers, as far as I know." He was not dealing with them. (Pp. 328-29)

An 1874 federal document, The Report of the Select Committee on the Manufacturing Interest of the Dominions, dated well before the coming of large numbers of Jewish immigrants, cites a large scale sweating operation. (Hamelin and Roby, Histoire économique. Pp. 270-71)

"The more I visit the small shops the clearer it becomes to me that it is time that someone intervened between the employer and the female workers in order to ensure for the latter what is due to them according to the reports, especially in regard to hygiene. I have found shops disgusting in their filthiness and most dangerous to health." (Report Mme. Louisa King, 1897, cited by De Bonville, P.70)

It is in this working force, in the midst of economic developments that many of the employed immigrant Jews within the 2473 Jews living in Montreal in 1891 and the 6941 living there in 1901 began their role in this Canadian industry.

A phrase in the Labor Gazette of 1904 helps sort out the numbers of Jews from non-Jews in this work force. The report speaks of 10,000 Jewish men and French Canadian women. In the light of the overwhelming majority of women in the industry, it is clear that among the male minority Jews played an important part. In this article Labor Gazette, founded by W.L. Mackenzie King, drew attention to the Jewish condition in Quebec in its fifth, 1904 volume, as it had done in its first pages of volume one.

"In 1893 inspectors in Montreal have drawn attention to the rapid growth of sweat shops, attributed to the large number of Russian and Polish Jews who have settled in the city during the past several years and who are engaged in clothing manufacture, cut up in shops and wholesale stores and sent for finishing in homes where the work is done at very low rates because of the keen competition. In 1898 it was reported that nearly 10,000 Jews

and French Canadian women were engaged in Montreal at work in clothing manufacture in sweat shop conditions, in small establishments devoid of hygienic facilities, at very low wages and for very long hours. (Cited by De Bonville, P. 68, "Inspection des établissements industriels, et conditions d'emploi dans les fabriques en Canada" in La Gazette du travail, Pp. 505-6)

It is difficult to trace Jewish labor history in the needle industries which, in the course of time, became the backbone of the community's labor economics, for the beginnings of this occupational class in Canada was not Jewish, and consisted largely of male tailors working to measure. Early unionism in this trade consisted of these skilled workers.

An 1897 press report notes that the Montreal tailors had never been organized. But that September, an American organizer, Mr. Christopherson of Rockford, Ill., came to Canada to establish a Montreal local of the International Union of Tailors and Garment Workers. This is ascribed to several complaints, among others the existence of the sweating system which affects the industry. (La Minerve, Sept. 14, 1897)

This Canadian craft was older than the wave of Jewish immigrants which brought the manpower for the needle trade, and their Journeymen's Tailors Union remained largely non-Jewish to its end when, in the course of the development of the apparel industry, its remnants joined the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America in 1936. (Belkin. The Poale Zionist Movement in Canada. Yiddish. Montreal. 1956. P. 84)

Journeymen struck in 1912, but few Jewish members were involved, but the Jewish community urged them to display the strongest solidarity with their fellow workers. (Montreal Jewish Daily Eagle, Oct. 13 and 31, 1912)

Gradually this artisanate gave way to the new mass-production, ready-made industry: but included also a new type of work organization, employing unskilled workers which could be utilized on the nascent assembly belt; the structure utilized contractors and sub-contractors; a type of cottage industry developed in the concrete and brick ghettoes of the metropolis; in Montreal French Canadian women and children workers were common.

The arrival of many Jewish unskilled immigrants was fodder for the burgeoning industry; but including also petty entrepreneurs ideal for organizing complex contracting; with these came profoundly thinking and articulate labor unionists, bearers of a socialist message different from Marx, from British socialists, from Knights of Labor, from Mediterranean anarchism. Within the complex pattern of the economics and the syndicalism of the apparel industry, there is the sub-plot of Jews entering the industry, developing a domination of its economy from the bottom to the top, then abandoning the lowest strata to others -- who were possibly to repeat the Jewish experience themselves -- then leaving even higher strata to the point where the Jews' position in the various layers of the economy of the industry can be questioned. In the meantime the community had altered so and its stake shifted creatively so dramatically that apparel is but one of several of its foci, and the high traditions of the annals of its unionism to a large extent is nostalgic past.

The soft-ware industry did not immediately become central to the economics of the new immigrants. Small trading, peddling, cigarmaking, metal working and sheer black collar labor were as important as needle work first to the flood of newcomers. Then it was discerned that skill was not essential to the industry of clothing as it was to the craft of clothing. The laborers living in poor housing in the new ghettoes suddenly found themselves working in plants with a new title -- the sweatshops.

By the end of the century sweating was the means of securing bread to eat. By this time the idealistic labor organizer -- community builder -- Jewish Legionnaire Louis Gurofsky was on the scene in Toronto. In Montreal these nameless proletarians are the subject of La Presse', Jewish-edited, labor-crusading Jean Baptiste Gagne-Petit, (alias Jules Helbronner); Mackenzie King, journalist, reports on their living conditions; Ottawa finds this of political usefulness, and the first issues of Labor Gazette, its new Department of Labor, concern themselves with working conditions and union organization in this industry. But as we examine these social reports, it is difficult to pinpoint which of these workers, contractors and principals are Jewish.

Not much experience was required from immigrants making ready-made garments. The small town tailors were considered more than adequate for the work. As a result many entered the sweat shops out of which developed the great garment industry which has enriched Canada economically and became the labor and social base of the Jewish community for half a century. In this industry,which they developed from zero position, Jewish employees as late as 1931 were sixfold proportionately to their numbers in the total population;to the number of French -- and English -- origin workers.

Midway in this process, in 1911, Olivar Asselin noted, "The Montreal Jew is a self-supporting citizen and justly proud of it. That the moral work of the associations is not less effective is shown by the conspicuous absence of Jewish drunkards and prostitutes and by the general good breeding of the youth. The second-hand dealer may take more than his turn in the dock of the Police Court, but don't forget that that trade is the prime business of the Jew. A race that has no beggars, no drunkards, no prostitutes and no hoodlums, certainly has much to commend it.

"The great majority of the Russian Jews are in the clothing trade as cutters, tailors, finishers, and so forth. A good many work at home, or in sweatshops, under wretched physical conditions; but that is presumably no fault of theirs. As long as the consumer insists on having an all-wool, ready-made, fit-you-as-a-glove suit of clothes for $9.99 someone will have to turn it out. In Europe they are beginning to organize consumers' leagues, to protect the factory help by paying fair prices. The sweat-shop operative needs protection of that kind. In this selfish land of ours who will give it to him?" ("The Jews in Montreal", in Canadian Century, Sept. 16,1911, Pp.14-18)

Conditions in this Jewish-invented industrial complex of needle-related trades parallelled those of London and New York.

The concentration of these Jewish immigrants into the industrializing cities troubled some. A Mr. Whates, who published a book on Canada in 1906, was disturbed that Jews who had intended to settle on the land had finished off in the cities. Even he noted: the work of the Jews

in the ready-made clothing trade at least had made it possible for the poor to have cheap clothing.

This concentration on one industry -- the needle trade -- carried its own consequences, probably most familiar to one-crop farmers. Feast or famine in the fickle fashion trade meant bread and education one week; the next it was hunger, slack season, unemployment, undue power for one group of employers, overwhelming importance of the unions and their leaders. All these became central features of Jewish community life for half a century.

An unholy alliance of poor wages, oppressively long hours of work and shocking conditions of work prevailed in the clothing industry. Our clearest insight into this bleak nexus is provided by those who experienced it directly.

The development of the garment industry as a field of employment and subsequently of economic growth came very slowly.

Israel Medres notes that the clothing industry developed at the end of the 1870's when "inside shops" were established for the manufacture of ready-made apparel. Before that even ready-made garments were by housewives in their homes, and men ordered their suits from "custom" tailors.

Workers for the inside shops were recruited as they debarked from the ships and were taken to work at once -- long hours, low wages, minimal standards of living, he writes. ("The Jewish Labor Movement in Canada," in the 1932 Souvenir edition of the Eagle, Pp. 79-82)

It is amazing how long the conditions that mark the syndically primitive conditions of the 1870's lasted in the Jewish industrial life of Montreal.

Read the interview of a union organizer in Montreal with a Montreal worker:

"A sweat shop was you came in at 6 o'clock in the morning. You took lunch with you, a sandwich, and you stayed in the shop until 8, 9 in the evening. Shops had no windows, were dirty....You had no say in the shop. The boss would do with you whatever he wanted. The boss paid you whatever he thought was enough. A worker had no right to settle a price....He had no say, he had no protection on the job, no dignity. Especially a foreman at that time was a beast in the shop. Women had to go to sleep with them, otherwise they couldn't keep a job -- It actually happened. That's in general what was called a sweatshop. You were really sweating it out!"

"'How is it in the trade?'

"'Very very busy, we're working overtime...until 11 at night. Some start at seven in the morning, but regularly we start at eight and work until almost midnight; it's a busy season.'

"'A busy season. Then why did over 50 percent of the garment workers in Montreal have to be subsidized by charity institutions or other sources to keep alive?'

"The crushing reality of their misery and of the sweatshop mentality that brought it on angered me...

"There was a minimum wage of $7 to $12.50 a week for women, but employers rarely gave it to them. When they did the girls had to work unbelievable hours to make it.

"There was plenty of work in the industry and it was a good season, but a deluge of workers from bankrupt shops haunted the surviving shops looking for jobs ready to work for almost nothing. Even the skilled craftsmen had no security. There was no 'thank-you' for the worker who helped to make the season successful. A fast buck, a running style and then the long hunger in between seasons.

"Montreal was a sorry place for people who had to earn their living in the clothing industry."

The date? 1934!

This is what Bernard Shane, vice-president of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, found when he came to Montreal. (M. Siematicki. Communism in One Constituency.

Max Feigelson stated that about a year before his arrival in Montreal in 1905 a union had been organized in the needle trade but it ended tragically when it lost a strike. Some of the militants were arrested and sentenced to three months imprisonment.

Leah Roback told Irving Abella,

"There was no such thing as a cloakroom; your clothes you had to shake them out so that those cockroaches weren't on your coat, or you wrapped them up in a box right near your work, and your sandwiches you ate them right there, and you had to do this -- shove off the cockroaches -- because that's the way it was in that Jacobs building. There was no such thing as rest period, of course. Your lunch you ate at your work and you worked as you ate." (Cited by Siemiaticki)

F.R. Scott and H.M. Cassidy concluded, years later,

"The general impression left by the disorganized overcrowding, foul air, absence of sunlight and piles of cloth was one of complete and utter disregard for the welfare and comfort of the workers."

David Solomon had been in Montreal since his youth, as early as 1904. He spent his life in the industry, much of it as an executive for the employers. In a half fictional work he wrote of "Shima."

"Shima the tailor plied his needle rather leisurely as he sat at his table and his eye wandered now and then, in between stitches. First he would push the needle into the fabric -- and as he drew the thread, a furtive glance over his shoulder -- and a sigh of relief., 'Ah'.... 'All is well'; the boss was out of sight.

"It was late afternoon -- and if he could only make the work on hand last another fifteen minutes -- and the boss did not appear -- why, he could continue to work the next morning.

"At five o'clock sharp, just as Shima laid aside the unfinished garment and,moistening his thumb and forefinger with saliva, commenced to pick stray threads from his vest and trousers, he was startled out of his wits and his frame shook with terror.

"There stood the boss. 'Whadda mean,quitting! 'You Goddam son of a bitch. You can't do that to me. Sit down and finish that coat before you go home or I'll knock the hell out of you.'

"Shima remained on his feet. Had his plan failed? Would there really be no work for him tomorrow. These accursed lay-offs!!! Yet, what could he do? No, he would defy the boss. He had heard plenty of yelling from this boss during the past few years and though he never got used to it, the pay was not too bad. But you had to be careful with this boss. He had been known as a slugger:- those who had been hit, said he packed a powerful wallup. Instantly, Shima came to his senses. 'Whatthe hell am I paying 45¢ a week dues for? The Union is behind me -- why should I be afraid?'

"The boss advanced towards Shima and with poised fist, appeared ready to deal a blow. Shima wilted and sat down and his arms lay helpless across his knees.

"'Well! You lousy bastard, why don't you work? Get the hell out of here.' Shima was speechless.

"He was seized by the shoulders and dragged out of the factory. Something happened in the corridor. Only Shima and the boss knew. There were no witnesses ------."

Medres recalled living conditions at the time. The Jewish working community was concentrated between Craig and Sherbrooke St. ("under the mountain"), between Sanguinet and St. Alexander Sts., or a bit west to St. Maurice St. A few of the larger factories were located on St. Paul, McGill and Notre Dame West.

Working hours were from dark to dark. In season work continued till ten in the evening.

"One evening I wanted to leave at eight to attend English-language class at the Baron de Hirsch Institute. The boss yelled at me, 'He, greener. You want to study, to become a professor? If you want to be a professor, stay home. Here you have to work.'

Working conditions were so scandalous that even the Jewish Times, the excellent weekly that was the voice of the notables of the community, protested against the Jewish businessmen who passed as philanthropists at annual meetings of the community and at the same time exploited the newcomers. They were paying starvation wages for work done in impossibly unsanitary conditions which violated the weak laws of the time. The weekly spoke of infested bakeries where men worked 90 hours a week, of living conditions as evil as anything in New York.

Again from the records of the Institute: the doctor reported a growing incidence of chest disease among the immigrants, a clear indication of sweat shop conditions. The Institute acted to establish facilities for the stricken near Ste. Agathe des Monts. Thus the beginning of the Mount Sinai Sanatorium, Canada's parallel to the Denver of the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union.

The exploitation of the Jewish immigrant at century's end is documented in the strike at Workman Mfg. Co. in 1900. This clothing manufacturer fired nine members of the Clothing Workers of America, local 140, in September to replace them with newly immigrated Rumanian

Jews whom he paid $4 or $5 a week instead of the $15 he paid other workers.

Workman denied importing cheap labor in contravention of the law. While this question was before the courts, 52 of his workers, who objected to children below the age of fourteen working, the company recruiting immigrants to displace unionized workers, the working hours of 6 A.M. to 10 P.M. and running a sweat shop, went on strike. But the workers had not notified the general executive of the union, and the secretary-general of the international ordered the Montreal union to suspend its strike. (Jean Hamelin and Yves Roby. Histoire économique du Québec, 1851-96. Montréal, Fides, 1971. Pp. 321-22; Hamelin, Paul Laroque and Jacques Rouillard. Répertoire des grèves dans la Province de Québec au XIX^{e} siècle. Montréal, L'Ecole des hautes études commerciales. Pp. 165-66)

Initially none of the manufacturers who developed the sweating system were Jewish, and its first victims were the Canadian residents of nearby villages.

But the helpless immigrants fleeing the powder-keg of central Europe were natural candidates for this exploitation.

The external documentation of the life of these immigrants has been preserved in part in the governmental papers of the period dealing with living conditions in the slums, with work facilities in urban factories and with the exploitation of workers. The emerging science of sociology and the budding conscience which was learning to evaluate the human cost of the cities' growth began to record the lives of the early Jewish immigrants in Canada as they did in the U.S. and in Britain.

Quebec's President of the Board of Inspectors in the Department of Public Works J. Lessard wrote in 1894 complaining that "there are a great many Jews in the Province of Quebec who carry on the trade of tailors, furriers, etc., and who employ Catholic Canadian workmen whom they frequently oblige to work on Sunday.

"The law should protect these workmen. In England, the establishments belonging to Jews are closed on Saturday. But the law allows them as a compensation to work on Sunday; but if they are convicted of also working on the Saturday, they are prosecuted, because they cannot, according to the law, make any man work more than sixty hours a week." (General Report of the Commission of Public Works, 1894, Sessional Papers No. 7, P.113)

The following year he wrote in his report on "The Sweating System and Sunday Labor",

"Here I touch a deep sore, which I have already mentioned in my last report. 'The Sweating System' (work given out by the piece) is one of the most disgraceful speculations that can exist.

"A contractor takes a contract in a factory; say for two hundred pairs of trousers, for instance; he divides up this work among twelve or fifteen seamstresses, who work for a fearfully low price. The work is done, either at home by the seamstresses or at the contractor's.

"The workwomen employed are mostly young girls, even minors, who get from fifty cents to three dollars a week, seldom more.

"The weeks consist of an average of seventy-five to eighty working hours, for here the work is not determined by the capacity of the workwoman nor by the possibility of doing it within a given time, but by her moral or physical exhaustion.

"They need not work unless they are willing to expend all their strength, for the 'sweater' sees his profit in nothing else. The premises where the work is done are unhealthy and of doubtful cleanliness.

"This not all the evil. The 'sweater' often gives out work on Saturday night to be brought back on Monday morning.

"The poor seamstress, who frequently has nothing but her earning to support an aged mother or young sisters, passes her Sunday at work, so as not to lose her place, and to earn a little more money for her pitiless employer.

"An inquiry should be held into all these facts, which, I repeat, are too numerous. Sunday labor should be stopped, for, in a country as Catholic as ours, God's law should not be violated with impunity.

"Finally, the 'sweating system' should be suppressed, which has been a disgrace to the United States, and the city of New York in particular, and which will continue to be introduced here daily, if we do not take vigorous measures to stop it." (General Report, 1895, Pp. 55-56)

Mr. Lessard's 1897 report stated on the Sweating System,

"During the year, we have discovered some of the methods of working which constitute the system. When its field of operation lies in the city, it must be sought in the topmost storeys of houses, in the garrets or under the roofs. The unfortunate women compelled to work in these places are the victims of a defective hygiene and are moreover provided with no security whatever in the event of fire.

"In the course of the winter, we took advantage of a meeting of about five hundred Jews, whom we made acquainted with the laws and regulations. These and other manufacturers seemed to completely ignore the existence of their obligations. During the meeting they promised to improve the situation.

"But it also happens that this deplorable system finds an abode in the country. Who would believe that women and young girls, whose condition places them above the necessity of manual labor for others, devote their time eagerly and at reduced prices to this class of work, merely to satisfy their love of dress, considering that the slender profits which they derive from it may be freely deducted from the ordinary income of the family. For them, it is superfluous work which contributes to their fancies. They forget that in most cases they are depriving of bread poor mothers burdened with large families and who, by their acts, are condemned to ceaseless hardship.

"Against this evil we are powerless. A regulation for this class of owrk would be necessary, which would be a difficult and delicate matter." (Pp. 37-38)

The figure of 500 Jews engaged in this occupation seems excessive.

The following year he referred to "the profound plague, the sweating system, one of the most shameful exploitations that could be found. Some exploiter takes a contract for the manufacture of, for example, two hundred pairs of trousers. He divides the work among twelve or fifteen workers who will work for frightfully low rates. The work is done at their homes or, often, in his home. Most of the workers are young girls, even under age, whom he pays from fifty cents to three dollars a week; rarely more. The week consists of 75 to 80 hours of work, for the work is not measured by the ability of the worker nor by the amount of work that can be done in a given time, but solely by moral and physical exhaustion. Do not consider working for him unless you are prepared to give him all your energies. For the 'sweater' can see only his own benefit and nothing else." (Sessional Papers, vol. 29, Dec. 7, Pp. 55-56; cited by Jacques Bernier in his "La Condition des travailleurs," in Jean Hamelin, ed., Les Travailleurs québecois, 1851-96. P.35)

Harvey notes that under this system the worker is a sub-proletarian, being employed by the contractor, who is himself a worker.

He relates it to Karl Marx observation that the exploitation of workers by capital is here effected through the exploitation of worker by worker. (II. 295-96)

THE WHYTE REPORT

It was necessary to draw public attention to the conditions in Canadian sweat shops as had been done in the sweatshop conditions in other ghettoes of the Jewish migration in other western lands. Some documentation on the Jewish work world appears sporadically in papers such as the Canadian 1889 Report of the Royal Commission on the Relations of Labor and Capital on which Jules Helbronner served so usefully.

In 1895 unrest arising from conditions of work in sweat shops led to the appointment of Alexander Whyte Wright as commissioner to investigate the sweating system in Canada. His Report Upon the Sweating System in Canada submitted to the Secretary of State in 1896 (Sessional Papers, 1896, vol. 29, no. 61) is an important document in Jewish history because it deals almost entirely with conditions in the clothing industry of Toronto and Montreal where the newly immigrated Jews entered the work force; to some lesser extent also the suit making and the fur tailoring -- the industrial life in which many of the newly immigrated Jews earned their livelihood. It is also the social setting to which they reacted vigorously with an activism which was central to half a century of Canadian Jewry.

The report states that in Canada the sweating system applies to any extent only to the clothing industry.

"In Montreal, Toronto and Quebec there is some giving out of fur goods to be made in private houses, and in the first named city some of the work in the shoe trade is done in this way. In the shirt industry the home work system prevails to a not inconsiderable extent.

"Some manufacturers, though only a few, have all their work done in factories of their own; some have their work done by contractors who have their own workshops; others give it out to people who make it up in their own homes; while still others, and the greater number, have it done partly in all these ways. In Hamilton, for example, the greater part of the work is done by contractors, and the balance by people who work at home. In Toronto the same system prevails, though in that city the proportion of work done in private houses is greater. In Montreal the greater part of the work is done by families in their homes. In all cases the goods are cut out on the premises of the wholesale manufacturer.

"The reasons which employees advance in support of the opinion that wages and conditions of labor are prejudicially affected by the contracting system: The contractor being immediately interested in getting the work done cheaply, and being continually in close contact with the employees, is apt to resort to all kinds of methods to accomplish this. Being usually less prominent in the public eye than the large manufacturer, and so less amenable to the deterring influence of public opinion, is less likely

to be deterred from cutting the wages, if in other respects able to do so; and less likely also to have regard for the health and comfort of his employees. The contractors' shops being small and only a small number, comparatively, of employees working in them, it is more difficult for the workers to become organized for the purpose of keeping up wages and maintaining good conditions of employment. The contractors compete with each other and with private families for work, taking it often at ruinously low rates, and then must of necessity cut the wages to make up for the loss so entailed. It is held by the employees that all the profit the contractor makes must come out of the sum which would go to the workers as wages, did they work directly for the manufacturer.

"There appears to be no agreements made between employers and employees, covering a period of time, as to wages or prices for making up goods. In the custom trade, where the workmen are organized, the employers and employees usually agree upon a scale of prices to remain in force for a term agreed upon. But neither in the ready-made clothing trade, the shirt industry, the fur business, nor in any of the other occupations I inquired into, did I find anything of this kind. The price to be paid for making the various articles is usually stated when the goods are given out, it being the duty of some one in the employ of the manufacturer to fix the price. It seems almost inevitable that such a system must result in bringing the wages down to the lowest point at which the employees can afford to work -- to what economists have designated the lowest existence point. This result is rendered the more certain by the fact that the separation of the workers where they work in their own homes, and the want of combination among the contractors prevents a comparison of the prices offered.

"As a rule the sanitary condition of contractors' shops is good, though there are exceptions. In some of the shops I visited, while it might not be altogether correct to say that they were in an unsanitary condition, they were certainly far from cleanly, and were neither wholesome nor pleasant to work in. One in Toronto, in which a number of men, women and girls were engaged in

making ladies' mantles and cloaks, if not unsanitary, must have bordered very closely upon being so. In no case did I find that manufacturers took any measures to keep themselves informed as to the condition of the shops or houses in which their goods were made up, either as to cleanliness or healthfulness. I did not find anywhere shops that graded down to the level of the sweaters' 'dens' described in the report of the Commission of the British House of Lords, and in the reports of the United States Factories Inspectors, but I found not a few in which there was great room for improvement.

"The practice of using shops in which clothing is made as living and sleeping rooms, which is so great a cause of complaint in England and in some American cities, does not obtain here. When clothing is made in private houses, however, bed-rooms and living rooms are frequently used as work-rooms.

"I could learn of no authenticated case of an infectious disease having been spread by means of garments made in contractors' shops or private houses, though I did hear of cases where scarlet fever and diphtheria had been known to exist in places where clothing was being made. We have not, as yet at any rate, the tenement house system which is the cause of so much danger of the kind indicated in such cities as Chicago, for example, but even in ordinary workshops and dwellings better inspection is needed to ensure the public safety.

"The contract system, so far as the clothing trade is concerned, is confined to the ready-made business.

"The systems of having workshops on their premises and of allowing their workmen to take work home are common in the custom or ordered clothing trade. Many tailors, more particularly married men, prefer to work in their homes. Where the trade is organized, the unions generally limit the number of hours per day for work in shops. By taking their work home, some who wish to work longer than the union rules permit can do so without the knowledge of the union. The advantage of having the assistance of their families is a further inducement.

"Conditions in contractors' shops in Toronto and Hamilton fall far short of the large factories in Montreal and Halifax.

"When a comparison is made between the condition of the people who work in contractors' shops and the conditions which attend the making of garments in private houses, the advantage is, in a marked degree, in favour of the former system. The substitution of factory work for the contract system would result in the payment of higher wages, while the gain to the workers in improved conditions of employment would be great. The contract system does result in reducing wages and in lowering the conditions of labour.

"There are many places in the cities of Ontario and Quebec -- (there are no Factories Acts in the other provinces) in which clothing is made, which do not come under the provisions of the Factories Acts, and such places are not subject to the inspection and regulation of these Acts.

"Even in factories and shops subject to the regulations and restrictions of the Factories Acts, there is found to be considerable difficulty in enforcing the provisions forbidding the employment of children under the factory age. In small shops and dwellings to which the Acts do not apply, children of very tender years are employed. In such places women and children work many more hours daily than would be permitted in shops and factories under the regulation of the Acts. The school laws check the evil of child labour to some extent, but do not by any means prevent it.

"The small shops and dwellings in many instances were very far from being cleanly, and not a few were the reverse of being comfortable working places. The ventilation was often bad, and some of the rooms were too small for the number of people employed.

"The competition of the small shops that do not come under the provisions of the Factories Acts, and the rivalry of people who work in their own homes undoubtedly has the effect of forcing contractors to take work at

lower rates than they otherwise would, but this is only in part owing to the fact that they do not have to comply with the regulations of the Acts.

"There is pressing need that the provisions of the Factories Acts should be very greatly broadened and extended so as to bring within their jurisdiction all places where goods intended for sale are manufactured. In accordance with an amendment to the Ontario Factories Act, the government of that province appointed, in addition to the male inspectors, one female inspector, but it is not possible that one woman can effectively watch over even the factories and shops now under the Act.

"Competition among contractors and among workmen has undoubtedly resulted in the lowering of the prices for making goods and of the rate of wages. The introduction of improved labour-saving machinery and appliances, and the subdivision of labour have likewise had a similar result, but the tendency towards lower wages is mainly due to the general reduction of the prices of finished goods.

"There cannot be said to be an apprenticeship system in the ready-made clothing trade. 'Learners' are employed -- usually young girls and boys -- but the employer is under no obligation to teach them a trade or any part of one. Evidently such a system is capable of gross abuse and there are not wanting instances of such abuse by unscrupulous employers. I learned of one contractor, engaged in making pants and vests, who makes a practice of employing 'learners' who engage to work for him without wages while they are learning the trade. These learners, usually girls, are kept at some trivial and easily mastered work, such as pulling out basting threads, sewing on buttons, or running up seams on a sewing machine, and then, when the term for which they agreed to work without wages expires, they are discharged, without having had an opportunity to learn any trade by which they can earn a livelihood, their places being filled by other 'learners' who are in turn defrauded out of several months of work and time. It is abundantly

evident that when fair employers are forced to compete with those who take advantage of the opportunities which such a system offers to the unscrupulous, the effect must be detrimental.

"The systems of payment by the day or week and by piecework both prevail in factories and contractors' shops. It is not usual to fix a task or stint as a day's work though the system is not unknown. Even when there is no task set as the day's work, employees usually understand that the retention of their situations depends upon their regularly doing what is regarded as a fair day's work.

"The piecework system is probably more usual where women and children are employed than it is among male employees. Having regard, however, to the fact that all work done in private houses is done on the piecework system and is mainly done by women, it is evident that much the greater part of the clothing made under the piecework system is made by women. It is probable that the higher wages are received by those who work by the day or week.

"Ten hours per day or sixty hours per week is the usual time worked in factories and workshops, but in private houses the time is irregular and the number of hours of work is usually more.

"I did not find evidence that fining for imperfect or spoiled work prevails to such an extent as to involve injustice. However, one of the most serious disadvantages, which those who work for manufacturers in their own homes labour under as compared with those who work in factories or contractors' shops, arises from this system. When an employee in a factory or contractor's shop does imperfect work, necessitating an alteration, only the time required to make the alteration is lost. On the other hand, a person working at home must carry the goods back again, frequently losing half a day because of having to make an alteration which in actual work only requires a few minutes

of time. To avoid this they are often willing to submit to a fine or reduction of wages far in excess of what the making of the alteration would be worth to them. Those employed in contractors' shops are not held responsible for the making of alterations and are thus freed from the responsibility and loss to which those employed in factories and private houses are subject.

"Manufacturers uniformly bear testimony to the honesty of those who work for them in their homes. Many thousands of dollars' worth of goods pass through the hands of this class of people every month, yet losses through dishonesty are scarcely known. I was informed by one manufacturer in Montreal that, though his goods were sometimes out of his warehouse for months, his entire losses did not amount to one dollar per year, and that he never knew of a case of real dishonesty.

"There has been a pretty steady increase in the quantity of ready-made clothing manufactured, and this has given employment to a greater number of men, women and children, notwithstanding the introduction of labour saving machinery and the adoption of improved methods of manufacture; but the increased demand for labour has been fully met, and the relative number of the temporarily unemployed is no less than formerly. I do not find that the labour market has been to any considerable extent affected by immigration, though there have been instances of workers having been brought to Canada to take the places of men who were 'on strike.' Laws are strictly and even harshly enforced against any of them who seek employment across the lines, but there is no Canadian law to protect them against American labour in similar ways. The throwing of the 'learners' on the labour market necessarily results in an increase of the number of unemployed.

"The number of females employed in the ready-made clothing trade is relatively greater than the number of males. As the production of ready-made clothing increases in comparison with the making of custom clothing, the number of female employees becomes proportionally greater. In about the same proportion, child labour increases as compared with adult labour."

GUROFSKY TESTIFIES

A supplement to this Report is a transcript of evidence in Toronto, largely by L. Gurofsky on Jan. 8 and 9 at Richmond Hall.

Testimony given at this hearing, held in the midst of an early strike in the industry in Toronto, is enlightening on working conditions at the time:

At the opening of the hearing the Commissioners asked Louis Gurofsky, who is to figure in our history as typical of the communally minded men who devoted their talents to the causes of Jewish labour;

"Do the manufacturers or wholesale men depute the giving out of work to some foreman or other employee who arbitrarily fixes the prices to be paid?

"Mr. L. Gurofsky -- As far as I can understand, prices are fixed by the bosses of the warehouses. In Lailey & Watson's, for instance, I believe that it has been the custom for the firm and their foreman to meet in the spring and fix the prices. In Johnston & Co. two men -- sort of foremen -- take in and give out all the work. These two men also fix the price.

have a lot of work lying on their hands. The warehouses have a fixed price. They ask a contractor 'how much will you give for it?' When he names his price they do not immediately give him the work. They call in another and obtain his price, then give it to the lowest bidder. In giving out large quantities they mix up the work -- good and common. The contractors would not often take the common work, but are compelled to do so in order to get the good. The contractors are pitted against each other all the time.

"Mr. James Strachan -- Is there a contractor standing between you and the men who manufacture?

"Mr. Gurofsky -- Indeed there is, sometimes two.

"Mr. D.J. O'Donoghue -- Is the contract sometimes a sub-contract?

"Mr. Gurofsky -- Yes. Sometimes. They all try to cut down the workingmen, as far as possible, but independent of each other.

"The Commissioner -- Is it at all a common practice for employees or members of the families of contractors to sleep in the work-rooms or use clothing, in the course of manufacture, for bedding?

"Factories Inspector Robert Barber -- I am not in a position to say that any made use of the clothing for bedding, but have found a few places in this city where work was done in filthy houses. I have asked them to clean up, and some who objected have removed, unfortunately. That is a class of people that can be seldom found a second time, when we want to see them again. But I do not know any one making use of the clothing as bedding. Last summer walking up a street in 'the wards' I heard machines going in a house. I went in and found a place I had not previously known of. I went in and inspected it. I went again two weeks after and found that the man had skipped and left his employees without paying them their wages.

"There was one place I remember well, on Centre Avenue, at the lower end. It was on a hot day in July or August. The steps were in a dilapidated condition, with a large hole in them. I found several people working upstairs. The place did not look as if it had ever been scrubbed. I told that man that he would have to clean up, and he said he would. He afterwards moved and sent me word to that effect. I found him on Richmond Street in a much better place.

"Mr. Gurofsky -- You will find that in many of the places that many of the bundles are not only used to sleep on, but to nurse sick children on while the women work at the sewing machines. Of course, in large establishments, such as I work in, where many hands are employed, the clothing is not used for bedding.

"The Commissioner -- Do the wholesalers or manufacturers keep themselves informed or make inquiries as to the sanitary condition of workshops or dwellings in which their clothing is manufactured?

"Mr. Gurofsky -- In several years of experience, I never heard of a wholesaler inquiring as to the workshop where their work was done. I doubt whether many wholesalers or foremen ever see the establishments in all their lifetime. People work for them for years and bosses and foreman know nothing of them beyond the street and number of the house in which they reside.

"Mr. W.E. Todd -- Where a contractor gives the work to a sub-contractor, how would it be possible for a wholesaler to find out where it was made? It would be an impossibility.

"The Commissioner -- I do not think so. If they were anxious to obtain the information they could.

"Mr. Gurofsky -- They are not very anxious.

"Mr. D.J. O'Donoghue -- The experience in other countries proves that they can be, and are, compelled by law to know where the work is done, even by the sub-contractor.

"Inspector Barber -- There is no law here to compel them, but I have never been refused when asking for such a list from wholesalers. They have laws in Britain, however, compelling them, as has been said, to know where the work is given.

"The Commissioner -- Do the wholesalers or manufacturers take any steps or make any effort to keep themselves informed as to the wages or prices paid by the contractors who do their work, to operators, finishers, pressers or other employees?

"Mr. Gurofsky -- Indeed they do not. It is not any of their funeral at all. They give the contractor a price, and they do not know or care how he gets it done, or where, so long as he brings it back to them.

"The Commissioner -- Is there much work given out by contractors to persons who work in their homes?

"Mr. Gurofsky -- Well, Mr. Wright, as far as I know, a few sub-contractors have gone into that part of the work. There is one fellow in particular getting in that work on ladies' work. One on Front Street -- Fine is his name -- 14 Front Street West, I think -- has recently gone into the business. You will find his record in the police court. Not less than fourteen girls left him in one week. Several of them had been in the police court for non-payment of wages. He sub-contracts on all kinds of work. Eatons have also gone into that kind of business. They are making up their ladies' work on that kind of business. They give their people piecework. They contract with the contractor who gets the rake-off.

"The Commissioner -- Eatons get all their work done by contractors, do they not?

"Mr. Gurofsky -- Some of it.

"The Commissioner -- Does the practice prevail to any considerable extent among manufacturers or wholesalers, of giving out work directly to people who make it up in their homes?

"Mr. Gurofsky -- They carry that out to a large extent with most of their small work; all children's work goes out in bundles of five, or six or a dozen. To some extent the same thing is carried on in coats of the lower grade and pants. It is only with the last two or three years that two or three pant establishments have started to make up bundles in large quantities; but the bulk give only three or four to one woman, and in that way send them all over the city.

"The Commissioner -- That question will come up later. Is it usual for people who make up clothing at their houses, for manufacturers or contractors, to employ assistance not members of their own families?

"Mr. Gurofsky -- They always get some one who will work for less than nothing. All have some one to help them.

"The Commissioner -- What is the nature of this assistance; are those they employ males or females; adults or children?

"Mr. Gurofsky -- They do mostly children's work in the branch shops: very few men work in the branches except in the larger shops. In the wholesale houses young girls come in who want to learn the trade.

"The Commissioner -- Are such employees usually paid by the piece, or do they generally work by the day or week?

"Mr. Gurofsky -- Myself and those here to-night are all paid by the week, but in some of these places they pay them by the piece.

"The Commissioner -- Speaking more particularly of employees who work in private houses.

"Mr. Gurofsky -- Both piecework and week work.

"The Commissioner -- Are there many shops or places where clothing is made that do not come under the provisions of the Factories Act? I think the statement made by Mr. Brown covers this question.

"Mr. Gurofsky -- Hundreds of them.

"Mr. Jury -- What the Commissioner should do to satisfy himself is to walk up and down Bay Street for a few hours any day in the week and see the great number of women staggering up and down with great bundles of clothing; some of the poor creatures hardly able to walk.

"Mr. Carey -- Yes, he would see baby carriages used to carry these bundles.

"Mr. O'Donoghue -- I know of my own experience that there are children under age working in the factories.

"Mr. Gurofsky -- I could take you to places where the children are making pants with their mothers. These children are under the school age. They are employed sewing on buttons, and the like of that. I know some of the factories where the inspectors go, in which the children work after school hours. They are their own children (the people who run the factories). You might go a dozen times and not see them working there,but I might see them any day.

"Mr. Todd -- The under age question is a hard one to get at. A gentleman I know -- a foreman in a factory where a large number of boys and girls are working -- has often told me that boys come to him whom he belives are under age. He tells them he cannot employ them unless they are over fourteen, and of course they immediately swear that they are over that age. You cannot get the registry of births because not one boy in ten is registered.

"Mr. Gurofsky -- There is a place where you can go to-morrow, a tailor shop on Hagerman Street, where,

should they not notice you coming, you will find a whole family of children working.

"The Commissioner -- How many hours constitute a day's work in shops where the day or week system obtains?

"Mr. Gurofsky -- As far as our coat shop is concerned,where a large number of men are employed, the hours are from 7 to 6 and to 12 o'clock on Saturdays. There was one shop where I worked all hours, where only one or two men are employed. The balance of the employees are girls. There is a place on Elizabeth Street, where you can go at eleven and twelve o'clock at night and five o'clock in the morning and find them working. They never seem to do anything else.

"Mr. O'Donoghue -- With respect to that place on Elizabeth Street, it appears to me they never sleep. It is on the east side of the street.

"The Commissioner -- Do you mean Rosen's place?

"Mr. Gurofsky -- Yes, they are all piece workers there, both men and girls.... In Eaton's or any of these large establishments the power is never turned off. The employees eat their dinner in five minutes, put the rest of the meal hour in at work....

"The Commissioner -- Does the system of fining for imperfect or partially spoiled work prevail to any extent?

"Mr. Gurofsky -- They don't call it a fine. If any one spoils work it is the custom of the trade that he has to pay for it, or trot. In some warehouses they make a practice of fining, as you might call it. A woman brings in her work. The foreman says 'That does not go', and pretends to find some defect. He checks so much of her money. If she does not take what he gives her he says 'There is no more work for you.' We understand that it is carried on to a great extent by one warehouse here.

The woman might say that she would take the work back and finish it properly, but to this the foreman would say he could not wait, she lived too far away, the work was wanted at once, or some like excuse. Then he would check her three cents or more, as the case may be.

"The Commissioner -- Do you get the goods that you spoil?

"Mr. Gurofsky -- Not that I know of. If we spoil a piece worth so much we have to make it good.

"Mr. O'Donoghue -- Have you the privilege of taking it?

"Mr. Jury -- If you spoiled a sleeve you would have to take the whole coat.

"Mr. Gurofsky -- A young fellow working in my shop once spoiled a sleeve and had to pay for it. He did not think it badly damaged and bought some of the same cloth and made himself a coat.

"There is one man in this city gives all his hands piece work, the man Fine I told you of. He makes knickers, coats, ladies' blouses, jackets and all kinds of work. We have to pay, if we spoil anything. I have had to pay, and I know others who have. I have had to pay Mr. Davies once or twice, I believe.

"The Commissioner -- What are the usual wages for hands who work by the week?

"Mr. Gurofsky -- For men who are operators -- there are not many of us here -- the best men get $11 a week, and the wages run down to $5 and $4. This gentleman here (pointing to Sniderman) is the only man in Toronto who gets over $11 per week. At one time pressers used to get $2 per day. Now, instead of having one man to press the whole garment they have four. One for the seams one for the collar and so on. They pay these men from $3 to $5

per week where formerly one man would do the whole thing and make $12 per week. He had been paid as low as $9 per week and as high as $14.

"The Commissioner -- How about the women?

"Mr. Gurofsky -- They run all the way from seventy-five cents.

"The Commissioner -- A week?

"Mr. Gurofsky -- Yes, up to $6, and I doubt if there are half a dozen women earning over $6. The usual wages is $3 to $4.50; but $3 is a fair wage.

"The Commissioner -- Speaking of these girls, are they supposed to know the trade?

"Mr. Gurofsky -- Those earning seventy-five cents know some branch of it.

"The Commissioner -- What is the average age of the women employed?

"Mr. Gurofsky -- Oh, all ages -- 16, 17, 18 and up to 30 years of age.

"Mr. O'Donoghue -- Do you think that $4 or $4.50 is above the average?

"Mr. Gurofsky -- Taking them as a whole I doubt if they would average $4. I may say that there are five men in my shop. Our average wage is $12. The girls there average $4. It has been my experience that in shops where men are employed the wages are higher than where no men are employed. Having the men in the shop has the tendency to increase wages of both girls and men.

"Inspector Brown -- With reference to wages of women. On one occasion I accompanied a reporter to a number of shops in the city making inquiries. I remember one shop where we went and the wages paid ranged from $1 to $3.50 per week for a finisher. When asking the employer

how they could sustain themselves on such small means he replied that he only got thirty-seven and a half cents for making coats and could not afford to give any higher wages.

"Mr. Gurofsky -- It is only within a short time that the wages have gone up to the average I mentioned. There has been a scarcity of hands -- many having gone over to the United States, and the wages have gone up for those who remain.

"The Commissioner -- How about children's wages?

"Mr. Gurofsky -- They generally work for nothing, learning the trade.

"Mr. Jury -- In 1873-4-5 and 6 just after I first came to Toronto, firms used to make up large quantities of stock work in their slack time. They used to pay $3.50, $4 and $4.50, for their best made overcoats. These men tell me there are no such prices paid now.

"Mr. Gurofsky -- You can get the best stock made coat now for $1.50 and the money for cotton, etc. comes out of the pockets of the workers.

"In some instances the tendency has been to increase the wages because there is a scarcity of competent operators. But in others where there is no lack of finishers, pressers, etc., the wages have gone down. The wages have also gone down in the lower grades of operators. In my branch, wages have gone up owing to the scarcity of competent hands. It is the same way with the girls. A number of experienced girl operators got married recently, that has had the tendency to make the wages of remaining competent girl operators go up. In cases of increase in wages in any branch of the work it is due to a scarcity of competent workers in that branch. The prices have come down through contractors. They make particular efforts to draw more people into the trade. Now they have got plenty of men they keep inducing new ones to come in and thus reduce the wages.

"The contractors in this city are not up to date with regard to machinery. There are shops in which gas-irons are burning all the time. There are no attempts at proper ventilation. Morning and night, from twelve to fifteen gas-lights are burning for about two hours, and the stove is going all the time. I have not heard of any establishment being ordered to be properly ventilated. The inspectors look over the closets, but do not see the establishments themselves.

"Inspector Barber -- Mr. Gurofsky speaks about ventilation. Of course it is very bad where gas-irons are used not only in tailor shops, but in laundries, and in tailor shops there is no machinery for supplying fans for artificial ventilation. In the winter season especially, there is apt to be an accumulation of foul air. On the other hand, there seems to be only one way to secure proper ventilation -- through open windows. There is, however, objection raised by those working near the windows, should they be opened. The people in the centre of the room, of course, would not feel the draught.

"I think that there should be ways devised to properly ventilate such establishments. If it could not be done without expensive arrangements, the bosses should be made to go to the expense.

"Inspector Brown -- I will tell you of a place; over the Army and Navy stores on King Street. I went into the shop and could hardly breathe for steam, heat and the smell from the gas-irons. I could not even see the girls, but that was an exceptional occasion. I've been to the place at other times and found it much better.

"Mr. Gurofsky -- I know of shops not larger than this room in which fifteen people are working there under the conditions I have previously described. The only fresh air that gets into the room comes when some one opens the door to go out into the hall or enters from the hall. I think the lady inspector visited one of them more than once. She does not appear to have done much good. We might be

able to make out good cause for extending the provisions of the Factory Act. But no Act will be of any use if the employees do not do their fair share in having it enforced.

"It would be as much as any man's job was worth to be found giving information. I do not think there are enough inspectors. I made two complaints, in a short time, as secretary of my union. My signature was attached to the letters. If the inspector walks into any clothing shop in this city, I am the one who gets the blame. The shop I am in now is the only one I could get work in. The lady inspector visited that shop one time when I happened to be out. When I returned one of the girls told me of the visit. I asked what the inspector did, and she stated that she just looked in and without asking any questions went away. She came again. I think she had been there two or three times but the boss took no notice. If there were more inspectors who could come around at more frequent intervals the boss would have to attend to it. I don't complain about the inspectors. I am perfectly satisfied that they do their duty, but there are not enough of them to go around and visit all these places. I don't think the bosses are prosecuted enough. If we had two or three prosecutions we would have a different state of things.

"The Commissioner -- Then the answer is practically this -- The Factory Act in the opinion of those assembled here ought to be broadened so as to take in smaller shops, and that there should be more inspectors. You will not get complaints from a man working for a boss, by coming forward to place his name on a piece of paper and coming forward to inform on his employer, because if it comes to be found out he will be dismissed. In the Trades and Labour Council it is but an individual representing all the employees of the shop who makes the statement. But his name is taken down by the press and he becomes responsible. If the inspector goes into a shop and speaks to a man or woman, that one is pointed out as the one who gave the information.

"Mr. Gurofsky -- As soon as the inspector goes

into a tailor shop they immediately charge me with being the informer. Any prominent man in the union -- in other trades will be immediately charged. If you had more inspectors and more visitors they would know that the inspectors visited their establishments because it was their turn.

"I worked in a shop in this city where two children died of diphtheria. There were both men and women in the establishment. The man (father of children) used to come down stairs and work in the shop after he had been with the children. We did not know that it was diphtheria until one child died and the other was taken to the hospital. Then the authorities notified us and put a placard upon the door.

"I know of girls working in shops who have consumption and other diseases of that kind.

"Mr. Strachan -- Disease was liable to be contracted in private houses where poverty, sickness and oftentimes filth reigned. No dwelling-house should be allowed to become a factory.

"Work was taken to private houses where mothers employed girls. When there were cases of sickness the clothing was used for bedding, etc. Sweating is the great difficulty. No work should be done in private houses.

"We know that clothing will carry infection, and from the fact that much of this clothing is made up in close and ill-ventilated places where disease would have a chance to spread there is no question at all but that it has carried contagious disease. A great many cases can be traced which sprang from that.

"Mr. Davis -- I know of one place where they have to find their own thread. At the same place I have seen them waiting probably two hours to get a half dozen pairs and bring them back the next day in baby buggies, and probably have several children to look after as well. Then the foreman will pick out four pair and complain that

they are not enough finished, and the woman has either to do the work over again or be fined.

"The hands working in our shops are far better off than those going direct to the manufacturer. When a girl comes to my shop,whatever she gets I see that she gets it, although I cannot afford to pay much. I have been in the business in this city twelve years. I have paid as high as sixteen dollars a week. Now, if I had to pay nine dollars per week I could not afford it.

"They don't run any chances, if they do the work all right. If it is not done right they alter it in the shop, and there is very little blame from it. There is a chance for me getting a hundred of goods back, because they are not done just the way they should be. I bear the cost. The man or girl in my place does not run any responsibility. Besides that,they don't have to take bundles through the streets and wait at the wholesalers for hours to be attended to. There is one place I know of where they pay the people on a little bit of a staircase. The pay day is on Friday, and you can number a hundred or more gathered there to get paid. Even in the coldest weather many of them have to wait two hours for their turn.

"My hands are getting paid even for overtime. The men start in at 7 o'clock in the morning, and the girls at 7:30. They quit at 12 for an hour, then work to six. They stop at 12 on Saturdays. They get their week's pay no matter what happens.

"The only sweating system is where the women are taking out direct from the manufacturers.

"Mr. Gurofsky -- I had the experience not long ago. I was working for the T. Eaton Co., and made eighteen and twenty dollars a week. That company learned a little something. They took a contractor in and gave him the work. The result was that he got a big rake off. The most a man can earn there now is twelve to thirteen dollars

a week. For that reason I believe that we would be better off working for the manufacturer direct. There would be no middlemen taking anything off. Take the firm of W.R. Johnstone for instance. They employ ten or eleven contractors. Each boss has a number of hands that might possibly be done away with if they were all in one establishment. It would be less expense with regard to heating, lighting, power, etc., and instead of ten or eleven men supervising as many establishments, three or four men as foremen would do the work, and save the price of eight men, and the rake off would go to the people employed and it would not cost the warehouseman one cent more to manufacture his stuff.

"The Commissioner -- What object then have the wholesale men in giving their goods out to contractors?

"Mr. Gurofsky -- They rid themselves of the responsibility.

"Mr. Love -- His own words (indicating Gurofsky) condemn themselves. He says that in the T. Eaton Co., he could make $18 per week. The company either paid him more than he was worth or found contract labour the best. I am in favour of day's wages. Once when they could not get work, Mr. Gurofsky got some of his friends who had a little money and started a shop of their own which was not a success. If they're working inside they would just do as other piece workers have done,who worked night and day until the bosses would say that they were making too much money and cut them down. My experience both in the old country and in this country is that if piece hands would do just an ordinary day's work there would not be such low wages. I was one to inform the police that he (Mr. Gurofsky) worked on Sundays even. He was not satisfied with doing six days' work but did it on the seventh.

"Mr. Gurofsky -- I don't ask the man who has the confidence of the bosses to judge me. I am content to have the confidence of my co-workers. If they want my defence they can have it. Mr. Love has not drawn a fair inference. The cause of the contractor being called in at Eaton's was the unfortunate squabble amongst the hands.

There was too much favouritism. They quarrelled among themselves and the firm getting tired of that called in a middleman who gets a large rake off and rids them of responsibility. The reason I could not make the shop referred to go was because I could not grind the men down like the contractors. We did start a co-operative establishment, but as I have said we could not grind each other down as the bosses grind us down and we had to give it up.

"When the week's end came there was no money left. We could have succeeded as well as any in the business by grinding the faces of the people as they do now.

"We had no girls at less than four dollars per week. We employed no apprentices, and the least we paid was four dollars. They all got pay, and you can see the books if you want to.

"Mr. Davis -- Now we have the latest improvements. But it used to be,before we had steam or electric power, that we worked the machines with our feet. In those times, a machine operator could not exist longer than eight or nine years. Since we have the improvements, power to run the machines and so on, and have brought the establishments under the Factory Act, I do not think that we have any diseases peculiar to the trade.

"The Commissioner -- What about handling goods from which the fumes of the dye stuffs arise?

"Mr. Davis -- As long as the shops are well ventilated it does not do much harm.

"The Commissioner -- Is your experience of the shops that they are well ventilated?

"Mr. Davis -- We are trying our best to keep the regulations of the Factory Act. Those who do not do so are made to keep the shops in proper shape, and as long as the place is right there is not much danger.

"Mr. Sniderman -- I am a machine operator myself. I want to say that while the foot power affected the feet and legs, electric power harms the whole body.

"Mr. Davis -- How long did you work by foot power?

"Mr. Sniderman -- Until I could work no longer.

"Mr. Gurofsky -- Only a few establishments in the city have the latest machinery and, even with improved machines, in ten or eleven years a good able-bodied man will be like a broken down street car horse. It does not take so long to break the girls down.

"The Commissioner -- I see frequently advertisements in the papers for apprentices for this and that trade -- and I have about come to the conclusion that it is not apprentices the parties want, but simply cheap workers.

"Mr. Love -- If they are going to learn a trade their parents go with them to see that everything is square. But if a girl comes to us asking for work she is put to some particular branch. No trade can be learned in two or three months.

"Mr. Strachan -- Is there such a thing in your establishment as learning a girl through two or three years until she knows the trade?

"Mr. Love -- No.

"Mr. Trimble -- I have twenty or twenty-five girls working for me, and not one of them could make a coat right through.

"Mr. O'Donoghue -- As a matter of fact, is there any apprenticeship system at all?

"Mr. Trimble -- No. We pay just what wages we have to pay to a girl.

"Mr. O'Donoghue -- And you let her go any time she sees fit?

"Mr. Trimble -- Yes.

"Mr. Sims -- In the custom trade it is a little different. The branches of the trade have girl hands. They make the pants and vest, and when a girl goes to learn the trade she learns it right through.

"Mr. O'Donoghue -- Establishments make a habit of advertising extensively for women and girls. The terms are -- 'Work three weeks for nothing but,if we find during that time that you are really of use,we will pay you something. Then from that forward we pay you so much, and as you improve we pay more.' The result of that dodge -- and I recall one particular instance -- is that the establishment had the labour of from 25 to 40 girls free because they always find fault with them before the three weeks is up. In the case I particularized it was discovered and punished.

"Mr. Gurofsky -- I have known it to exist in the pant and clothing trade. A girl in our trade may have to work three or four years in one particular branch. If she leaves the shop she cannot strike another situation in her particular branch, and having learnt only that, cannot enter another department.

"Mr. Strachan -- A multitude of girls are drawn into the business with a view to learn something which will enable them to make their livelihood. They go in with the idea that they are going to learn the trade thoroughly. But each has to take a certain position and goes from there to the machine. She leaves there in a few years perfectly helpless so far as to being able to complete any branch of the work outside her own department. Men in this city have been three years in the trade and are not capable of earning $6 per week. Girls are the same way, working three years at the same thing. Advertisements

frequently appear for girls to learn coat making. They go and at the end of six months, if they inquire when they are going to start to learn the trade, they are fired. I don't say that these gentlemen would do it.

"Mr. Gurofsky -- There is one thing that you have not brought out. That is about the man going in and getting work from the wholesaler -- at any price -- getting a shop, hiring girls, getting them to work for two weeks, receive his money from the wholesaler, and then skipping out and leaving the girls in the lurch. Our suggestion was that the wholesaler should be responsible that the people who made the work were paid. He (the wholesaler) would then see that he dealt with good contractors."

David Solomon recalls his arrival in Montreal from Britain, age 14 "on Sunday midnight, May 4th, 1904. At 8 A.M. the following morning I was at work earning the munificent sum of 3 dollars per week. The hours were from 8 A.M. to 6 P.M., six days per week. My duties were to sweep the floors of a large five storey building. This building was occupied by the English, Mandlebury Company, manufacturers of rainwear. The first day I worked there, I met a middle aged Irishman in the cutting department. He had been in Canada only a few weeks. He confessed to me, the first time he had set eyes on a Jew in Montreal he was flabbergasted, for he had been told in early childhood, that Jews had cloven feet, tails at the rear and horns sticking out of their foreheads. I worked there a couple of months and became fascinated with the process employed in the cutting room. I took a day off and went knocking at doors on St. Peter St., Lemoine St. and St. Paul St. The question I asked, was, 'do you need an apprentice to learn the cutting trade?' It was in the factory district where various types of garments were made.

"I landed in the premises of Waldman & Sommer, 513 St. Paul St. W. Mr. Sommer interviewed me and told me to come back with my father. I regret I have not kept a copy of the contract my father signed. He literally sold me into slavery: The contract was for a period of six years.

No pay the first six months. Then $1.00 per week for six months. Then $2.00 per week for six months. At the end of six years I was to receive $12.00 per week. By this time I would have reached the age of 20.

"Upon placing his signature on the dotted line, my father turned to me and said, 'If you ever leave this job, don't come home. You see I am making a big sacrifice for you, and I want you to appreciate it.' Well, I didn't work there six years, because by 1909 I had already acquired considerable knowledge of cutting ladies'coats and suits, and then we cutters in Montreal formed a Union and we declared a general strike. I was out of work six weeks without strike pay, which I refused to accept because others were in more desperate circumstances than I, and besides, everyone in the house was working and earning good money. After the strike had been lost I got a job in a competitor's plant and was paid $24.00 per week."

THE BEGINNING OF THE UNION

Another Canadian parliamentary document of that time pinpoints the industries -- even the firms -- which came under inspection in this connection.

Sessional Paper No. 151 of the House of Commons for 1889 is a Return showing the number of contracts entered into by the Government since July 30, 1897 in which there is a clause prohibiting sweating. Of the six contracts listed, four are for clothing (the others are for Oliver equipment) and total some $120,000. They include contractors in Montreal, Toronto and Hamilton. One firm, that of Mark Workman, is identifiably Jewish.

The hours were as long as seventy a week, which sometimes ended with "payday" of $7.00. To compare living costs: meat was 3-4 cents a pound, butter 12 cents; rent for three rooms on De Montigny was $8-10 a month.

Factory modernization began with Small's shop on Beaver Hall Hill and reduced hours to 60 in 1898. Four years later Semi-Ready reduced the hours to 56. By this time the trade had witnessed its first organization.

Michael Rubinstein describes the basis of this effort.

"Most of them (the post 1900 immigrants) were people who had a socialist ideology and they came here and they found no organization. They were looking for a place where they could meet people with the right ideas and help each other because in those days life was very tough....the 'landsmanshaften' had a strong Jewish background, more religious, more bourgeois.

Back in 1891 tailors met secretly in the historic Chenneville St. Synagogue, by now the Austrian Congregation.

All present were sworn to secrecy on the Scroll -- a condition adhered to until the next morning. End of the first union.

The next tale is part of the Canadian epic of the Knights of Labor. Fitzpatrick organized the tailors into a local of the Knights which met at St. Peter and Craig Streets, the heart of the ghetto. ("Twenty-Five Years of Jewish Labor Movement in Montreal," in Unser Vort of the Canadian Labor Party, vol. 1, no. 5, Dec. 23, 1927)

It was in Harvard, but it might have been in Montreal, that student William Lyon Mackenzie King began a conversation with a stranger on the street on Feb. 11, 1899. He "had a short talk with a Jew on socialism. These Jews are a reading class, and I feel convinced that socialism is making much headway through the mass of the people. Not that it may accomplish anything satisfactory; it seems to represent their cause."

Hershman recalls the odd story of a waist factory that had to reorganize as a cooperative after a fire had bankrupted the owners. Two anarchistic idealists led the project and soon found themselves ahead of their colleagues. Most girls refused to join the sharing group and asked only for regular payment. The cooperative leaders, Goldberg and Cars, were forced to hire a well known labor agitator, Industrial Workers of the World leader Carrigan, to organize the workers and to lead them in an unwilling strike for better working conditions, better wages and shorter hours. Those unwilling to picket were forced to do so by their employers. (vol.1, no. 7, Feb. 3, 1928)

The Mutual Aid group, a Jewish labor debating society named in honor of Kropotkin, was the centre for radical intellectuals where not only Carrigan but his colleagues Jack Dorman and Tom Griffiths also found a platform and a home. It was there that Montreal's early May 1 parade was organized in 1905.

Hershman records that on the eve of the parade the Jewish workers, who had taken most of the initiative, proposed not to join in the march as they feared that their Christian comrades would absent themselves, leaving the Jews to march alone. Jack Dorman, poet, intellectual and orator, appeared at the night meeting of the Jewish workers and persuaded them that there should and would be no betrayal.

It worked. Some 1,800 men of all national origins -- most of them Jews, but also Irishmen and French Canadians -- marched to the Champs de Mars to the tune of the Marseillaisse. The twenty Italian musicians knew no other music. (vol. 1, no. 8, March 2, 1928)

The May Day observance in Montreal of 1906 was described as attended nearly entirely of "recently arrived Russian and Rumanian Jews." (Jewish Times, May 4, 1906, P. 194)

The Montreal Star reported that observance,

"Imagine an undisciplined crowd of about 300 led by an execrable brass band, a couple of tawdry, gilded banners, and a few flickering and sputtering torches, and you have the socialistic demonstration of Montreal fully described.

"There were two banners in the procession, upon one 'Workers of the World Unite' and upon the other some motto in Yiddish, and several designs emblematic of the trades pursued by those under it, when not engaged in following the red flag.

"The parade was made up mostly of foreigners all of whom were members of one or the other of the socialistic societies in the city."

Siemiaticki notes that the "prevalence of Jews in this demonstration is indicated by the Yiddish banner, by the presence of needle trade union delegations, such as the United Garment Workers, the Cloak Workers Union and the Cap Makers Union, and by the address made by Hershen to the crowd in Yiddish."

"The city's administration was clearly in no mood for humour. It rallied behind Médéric Martin's outburst that the socialist represented 'this vomit of old Europe that abused the liberty of Canada...'

"In 1907 the city outlawed any socialist parade as a threat to public order, while permitting the socialists to hold a May Day meeting at the Champs de Mars so long as no mass march to the meeting took place.

"Under the leadership of Herman Reich a May Day rally was planned with J. Glensky -- a socialist, gubernatorial candidate from Buffalo -- as the chief speaker. There was no mass parade to the Champs de Mars, but the May Day meeting produced 'one of the largest gatherings that had even been seen there'. The Star estimated that 10,000 people, mostly foreigners, attended.

For a number of years the anti-Zionist Jewish radicals prevented the Poale Zion from participating in May Day as not being Kosher socialists. This was long reflected in the difficulties pro-Israel progressive groups had in winning affiliation and support from Canadian socialist institutions -- to their common loss.