THE CANADIAN RESPONSE TO THE IRISH FAMINE
EMIGRATION OF 1847

by

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B.A. (Hon.), University of Victoria, 1971

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
in the Department
of
History

We accept this thesis as conforming to
the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
April, 1973
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Date  April 10/73
ABSTRACT

In 1847, 215,000 Irish fled their famine-stricken and diseased homeland, and of this number, some 90,000 headed for the shores of Canada. It was both the largest and most diseased and destitute emigration that Canada had ever received, and it caught the colony almost totally by surprise. Many Canadians had been able to follow the course of the potato blight and famine in Ireland, but very few appeared to have considered their impact on the emigration to Canada. They had the assurances of those best informed about the condition of Ireland, the Imperial Government, that no extraordinary measures would be needed; why should their word be doubted?

In the first weeks of the immigration season, Canadians discovered that the Imperial authorities were wrong; the colony found itself forced to deal with an abnormal immigration with only the meagrest preparations. Canadian emigration officials spent the rest of the season attempting to recover from the shock of those first weeks; all they could do was attempt to relieve the sufferings of the immigrants to the best of their ability. Stop-gap relief measures were authorized by the Canadian Government for as long as distress and disease were prevalent; private charitable institutions stepped in to provide
shelter and care for the helpless among the immigrants. In the end, the colony succeeded, despite its financial difficulties, both in enabling the Irish to regain their health and in making them producing members of the community, something which few Canadians, at the height of the crisis, felt would be possible. This successful 'absorption' of the immigrants, however, had been accomplished only with difficulty and at great cost. This thesis examines the Canadian response, and particularly that of the various levels of government, to the immigration crisis which it faced in 1847 and the strains which this crisis placed upon the relations of the Imperial and Colonial governments.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. J. Winter and Dr. M.M. Tolmie who first suggested this topic to me. I am very grateful for the patient and helpful assistance which my thesis supervisor, Dr. R.V. Kubicek, has offered.
I fear that in the course of my thesis I have left many questions unanswered. I have not described the nature of the immigration in any more detail than was necessary for the understanding of the problems which it posed for the Canadian community, and thus, the immigrants figure as little more than distressed and diseased statistics. It was not my intention to describe the process of assimilation of these immigrants, for such a study would require much more time and far greater resources than I had at my disposal. The immigrants themselves are perhaps the most difficult aspect of the study of the assimilation process to research, for they appear to have left very few records; only by choosing one community and spending a great deal of time there, ransacking its various archives, can one attempt a proper study of the acculturation of a group of Irish immigrants. Also, for such a study one must be able to develop an intimate knowledge of the immigrants' host community (something again which is very difficult to achieve without spending a great deal of time in the community itself). What I have done is to lay the groundwork for such a study, for I have brought the immigrants to Canada and, I think, demonstrated the immediate problems which they posed for the Canadian community, as
well as the Canadian responses to and solutions for these problems. The next step in the study of the Irish Famine Immigrants (which I hope to be able to undertake) would be a detailed examination of their assimilation in one Canadian community (perhaps using Oscar Handlin's *Boston's Immigrants* as a model) over a period of thirty to forty years.
Between March and September of 1847, more than 95,000 Irishmen left their blighted and diseased homeland for the shores of Canada; this represented nearly three times the number of immigrants which Canada had received during the course of any previous year. But the magnitude was not the only unprecedented aspect of the immigration; the Irish immigrants of 1847 were by far the most destitute and diseased population which Canada had ever seen. Typhus and dysentery had accompanied the Irish Famine immigrants to Canada; by the end of the year, at least 20,000 Irish had died in Canada, while another 17,000 souls had never reached her shores, perishing during the crossing. Very few of the immigrants who survived the ordeals of the crossing and the quarantine had any resources or skills to fall back upon, and those who did usually passed on to the United States. This meant that Canada had not only to pay for the care of those who had fallen sick, but also had to provide some form of relief for the destitute. Unfortunately, this disaster had struck a Canada which was unprepared to cope with such a large diseased and destitute immigration. In order to better understand the problems which this immigration of 1847 presented to Canada, as well as the Canadian colonists' efforts to deal with these problems, it is necessary first to examine briefly the nature of the society of pre-Famine Ireland, the early movement of the Irish into Canada (1815-44) and Canada's ability to absorb them.
With the help of this study (as well as the benefits of hindsight) the reader will be able to follow the development of a course of action, or inaction, on the parts of the Canadian, English and Irish peoples which was to climax in the disaster of 1847.

For pre-famine Ireland, the crucial factor at the root of most of its political and social ills was the fact that a high proportion of its rapidly increasing population lived below the subsistence level. Between 1785 and 1845, Ireland's population had increased by four million at home and had contributed another 1,750,000 souls to the populations of England and North America. Ireland's population growth during this period had managed to keep pace with that of England, which was then undergoing an unprecedented industrial expansion, a process unknown to Ireland. What encouraged population growth in Ireland was not an expanding economy, but rather the apparent ease with which an Irish peasant could eke out an existence. Early marriage had long been a tradition among the sons of the Irish peasants, but until the early nineteenth century this tendency had been held in check by the difficulties of securing a holding. However, the switch from pasture to arable farming and the improvements of waste land during the years of the Napoleonic Wars had removed this last check. The break-up of the large estates into smaller and smaller units, as the landlords attempted to make a quick profit, and the nearly
total reliance upon the potato as the sole source of food, enabled the Irish to establish and support their families with a minimum of effort and with little check upon their numbers. 6

In 1815, with the return of peace, the British Government could once again direct its undivided attention to the problems which it faced at home, and the condition of Ireland was one of its major concerns. At this time, the Colonial Office was experimenting with emigration schemes to aid those who had been left without work with the end of the Napoleonic Wars, but no emigration scheme could effectively relieve the distressed state of England unless it also dealt with that of Ireland. If the government sincerely desired to raise the British standard of living, it would have to tackle the problem of over-population at its source -- Ireland. If it did not, the government would find that each unemployed Englishman sent to the New World had been replaced by at least two destitute Irishmen who had crossed the Irish Sea to Liverpool. 7

During the next two and one-half decades, the British Government appointed various select committees to investigate the condition of Ireland and to offer solutions to its problems; the consensus of opinion of these committees was that emigration was the only answer. In 1822, Robert Peel, then Secretary for Ireland in the Home Office, voiced the opinion that emigration was "one of the Remedies for
Irish Misery; another vote of money for the employment of the poor was simply "an invitation to be Poor and Distressed."

The Select Committees on Emigration of 1826 and 1827 agreed with Peel; according to the Bishop of Limerick, a member of the 1827 committee, emigration provided an instantaneous relief, for

"the sufferers are at once taken away: and, be it observed, from a country where they are a nuisance and a pest, to a country where they will be a benefit and a blessing."

The bishop then went on to offer a summary of what was to be a major point of discussion concerning the problems of Ireland and their only possible solution -- emigration.

"The question of emigration from Ireland is decided by the population itself, and that which remains for the Legislature to decide is whether it shall be turned to the improvement of the British North American colonies, or whether it shall be suffered and encouraged to take that which will be and is its inevitable course, to deluge Great Britain with poverty and wretchedness and gradually but certainly equalize the state of the English and Irish peasants."

However, the English Legislature, despite the great variety of emigration schemes which were placed before it, was unable, or rather unwilling, to reach any such decision. One of the chief proponents of emigration as the solution to Irish distress was Robert Wilmot Horton, Under-Secretary for War and the Colonies, 1822-30. He had adopted a modified version of Malthus' doctrine, in which population could be redundant where employment
rather than subsistence was concerned; he offered as a solution to this problem the removal of the excess population to parts of the empire where employment was more readily available. What he was advocating was a form of assisted emigration, and one which placed an emphasis upon the repayment of the funds advanced to the emigrants. Between 1823 and 1827, he was able to carry out some experiments in this area, and the basic premise of his experimental schemes was perhaps best stated by Henry Goulbourn, then Chief Secretary for Ireland.

'Government, desirous of alleviating the inconveniences of excess population in Ireland, and at the same time giving the Province of Canada an access to Emigrants capable of improving the advantages afforded by those Colonies to active and industrious men, has taken into consideration the expedient of providing for the transportation and locating of a certain number of settlers on a system which will best insure their immediate comfort and future prosperity.'

In spite of the apparent success of Horton's efforts and the recommendations of the select committees, state-assisted emigration never went beyond the experimental stage. There were objections to the expense of Horton's plans. If emigration was to be of any use to Great Britain, it would have to be taken on a scale that was so enormous that the cost would be prohibitive. In 1832, Viscount Goderich, then head of the Colonial Office, spoke for the majority of the literate British nation when he stated that he did not think
'the necessity would arise for the Government going out of its way to afford pecuniary assistance to those persons disposed to emigration, as the number of voluntary emigrants to Canada had considerably increased within the last year, and he was happy to say that their settlement had been attended with most beneficial effects, both as regarded themselves and the country which they had adopted.'

The 1830's saw the development, under the direction of Edward Gibbon Wakefield, of another school of thought regarding emigration. Wakefield was an advocate of systematic colonization; he proposed to remove Britain's excess population using a plan which would pay for itself. His plan envisioned the sale of colonial lands at a price so fixed as to keep the available land, capital and labour in the proper proportions. Horton's schemes, according to Wakefield, were merely imperfect theories for shovelling out paupers from Great Britain to her colonies, and he particularly objected to the system of land grants which permitted these paupers to become landholders. Wakefield's emigrants, upon arrival in Canada, would enter the labour force to meet the increased demands of the extended settlement and to replace the workers who had acquired sufficient money and experience to entitle them to become the purchasers of the land. The land itself was to be sold at a reasonable price, as it was in the United States, with the proceeds of the sale going to provide for the conveyance of more emigrants to the
colonies. Wakefield won many important supporters for his system, men such as Henry George Grey (Viscount Howick), Lord Durham and Charles Buller, and some of his ideas were employed in the colonization of Australia and New Zealand. However, as far as the British North American colonies were concerned, his suggestions were officially ignored.

During the period of 1815-45, emigration came to be recognized as the most immediate and simplest solution for the relief of Ireland. However, the government, anxious to avoid state interference and any unnecessary expense, remained content to do little more than make information regarding the colonies available to prospective emigrants and watch over the process of emigration to ensure that there were no flagrant violations of the few laws regulating the emigration traffic.

While the legislators of England debated the merits and demerits of assisted emigration schemes, thousands of voluntary emigrants annually found their way to Canadian shores. Between 1825 and 1846, 626,628 emigrants landed at Canadian ports, with the peak year of 1831 witnessing the arrival of more than 34,000 new colonists (the result of a cholera epidemic and famine in Ireland). This minor disaster had done much to loosen the Irish peasants' ties to his homeland; the choice, for many had been emigrate or starve.
But even emigration often did not bring the hoped-for relief; those who pawned their last possessions for the price of the passage to the New World were not always welcomed by their new homelands. Of the immigrants who reached Canada between 1815 and 1832, about one-half were small farmers with some means of their own and one-eighth were artisans of varying skills. The remaining three-eighths were labourers and servants, two-thirds of whom were Roman Catholics. Although there was some variation in the quality of the labourers, most were destitute by Canadian standards, and became, at some time, a charge upon the public charities established for their maintenance.

Of the immigrants landing at Quebec between 1815 and 1832, only one-tenth to one-third planned, or had no choice but to remain in Canada. The cream of the new arrivals passed on to the United States, where conditions for settlement were far better. Many of the small farmers of Ireland had friends in the United States, but there were also other factors which attracted them. Land south of the border was much more readily available in reasonably sized lots and at good prices. In Canada, the land had been thoughtlessly alienated; the Imperial Government had seen Canada as

a land of peasant proprietors, but the indiscriminate policy of free land grants, inter-


spersed with various reserves, scattered settlement over too wide an area which prevented mutual assistance, imposed crushing burdens on all, and threw large tracts of lands into the hands of the speculators.  

For those who attempted to stay in Canada, there were many additional difficulties to be overcome before the land even became their own property. Inaccurate surveying led to needless uncertainty, endless difficulties over land titles, and perhaps even the loss of the land; the system abounded with needless delay and difficulties which harassed and exasperated applicants.  

Wakefield and his followers had understood these problems and had attempted to offer suggestions which would halt the process of re-emigration. The Durham Report, under the direction of Lord Durham and Charles Buller, devoted considerable attention to the subject of emigration to and the colonization of British North America. The authors of the report objected to the emigration which was then taking place — "'without forethought, preparation method or system of any kind.'" But the report did more than just criticize the present system of emigration and colonization, it also offered a number of suggestions for the reform of the system. However, the only government action that resulted from their suggestions was the formation of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, whose sole functions were to dispense
information about the colonies to all prospective emigrants and to provide some supervision of the emigrant traffic.

The creation of the C.L.E.C. had virtually no impact upon the course and nature of the emigration to Canada. The damage had been done; only those who could not afford to emigrate to the United States remained in Canada. From 1836, the emigration reports commented upon the increasing number of unskilled labourers among the emigrants, and by 1840, there was little doubt that they were the predominant class.24 The Canadian emigration agents began annually to make complaints similar to that made by the Chief Emigrant Agent of Canada, A.C. Buchanan, in 1841.

'I quite coincide in the opinion expressed by Mr. Hawke that we receive in Canada quite too large a proportion of mere labourers, that is persons who can only use the spade and pick-axe. Unless when some extensive public work is in operation, there is much less demand for persons of this class in the province than people at home are generally aware of.'25

What these reports failed to point out, however, was that Canada was "a poor man's country."26 There were always complaints as the unskilled immigrants crowded the streets of Quebec and Montreal in the early months of the season, but by the end of the year, very few remained without jobs.27 For those willing to work, there were the government settlements, the canals, the roads and the older settlers all requiring cheap labour. It was only when the
public works were finished that distress among the immigrants became a problem. Such was the case in 1842-43, when the government emigration agencies were forced to close in August, their funds exhausted. Scores of Irish immigrants had been attracted to Canada by the reports of the unlimited jobs available there, but when they reached Canada, they found that they had arrived too late. They were left to further swell the ranks of the destitute. It was against this background that the Great Famine struck Ireland in the fall of 1845.
FOOTNOTES


4Edwards and Williams, The Great Famine, p. 4.


6Ibid., p. 242-4.


11Cited in Cowan, British Emigration, p. 69.

12Cowan, British Emigration, p. 97.

13Cited in Carrothers, Emigration from the British Isles, p. 57.

14Cowan, British Emigration, p. 95.

16 Carrothers, *Emigration from the British Isles*, p. 143.


18 Ibid., p. 192.


21 Ibid., pp. 518-9.


23 Hereafter cited as C.L.E.C.


26 Cowan, *British Emigration*, p. 188.

27 Ibid., pp. 188-9.

FAMINE AND FLIGHT
In the autumn of 1845, the potato blight made a reappearance in Ireland. There had been warnings of its approach — in 1844, the blight had hit the American potato crop. The Irish had ignored this warning, however, for their harvest of that year had been healthy and plentiful. The harvest of 1845 promised to be even greater, when suddenly, within one month (and, in some cases within one week), the blight took its toll. A.M. Sullivan wrote:

'I, myself saw whole tracts of potato growth change in one night from smiling luxuriance to a shrivelled and blackened waste.'

The failure, however, had only been a partial one; only certain districts had been affected. There was no great alarm, for Ireland had witnessed many such partial failures before, and the healthy portion of the crop was expected to yield an average result (so profuse had been the expected crop of that year).

It was not until winter had set in that the Irish made an alarming discovery; the tubers set aside in the storehouses and pits for the seed crop had rotted. The fungus, which was the cause of the blight, could and had remained inactive for a considerable period after it had first entered the potatoes. Farmers immediately attempted to employ every means available to them to replenish their seed stores so as to obtain the largest possible return from the next harvest. Already signs of distress were appearing; farmers flocked to banks, pawn offices and local
money-lenders in an attempt to "beg and borrow on any terms the means whereby to crop the land once more."}

The Irish population in 1845 stood at approximately nine million and the majority lived little more than a hand-to-mouth existence. The Irish nation was totally dependent upon the hazards of one crop, the potato, destitute of any manufacturing industries and utterly without reserves or resources to fall back upon. Ireland's agricultural system, as a result of over-population and the development of the potato diet, had been reduced to a chaotic state. Approximately eighty percent of the population were cottiers -- landless peasants who rented the use of a small patch of land on which they attempted to grow enough potatoes to keep them alive from year to year. The ability of the potato to provide an abundance of food from a fraction of the land needed to provide a similar subsistence grain crop further contributed to the degeneration of the Irish agricultural life. The land had been sub-divided and sub-let to such an extent that the landlord would often have no idea of the number of his tenants. The resultant standard of living was incredibly low, and this, plus the oppressiveness of the English or Anglo-Irish (often absentee) landlords' economic exploitation of the peasants, exerted considerable influence upon the shaping of the character of the Irish peasant.

The Irish cottiers were subjected to a system of
rack rents which pitted one against another as they bid for the use of a small plot of land on which they hoped to eke out an existence — with over-population, landlords were always assured of a waiting list of peasants willing to pay an exorbitant price for a small patch of land. Another of the evils of this system saw the landlords demanding increased rents for any improvements the cottier might make on his land; those who could not meet these demands were evicted. No security of tenure existed, except in Ulster, and the landlords thus owed no contractual obligations to their tenants. The poor cottier remained at the bottom of the social hierarchy with virtually no rights of his own. With the threat of even greater rents hanging over their heads, the peasants were offered little motivation to improve their lots — the concept of progress through self-improvement had lost its meaning for them. They had become reconciled to their situation, remaining relatively docile as long as they could scrape out a meagre existence on their small plot of land. With only limited access to educational facilities, few could read or write.

These were to be the famine emigrants who would invade Canada by the tens of thousands in 1847.

The blight of late 1845, however, did not greatly affect the emigration of that year, for it had struck just as the emigration season was closing. There were some danger
signals, however; at the end of the season there was a marked increase in emigrant mortality and great difficulty was encountered in providing provisions for the Irish vessels. A.C. Buchanan stated that there had been an increase of twenty-six percent in the numbers of emigrants arriving at Quebec during the season of 1845. An increase in the mortality rate was also noted, despite the fact that the passage time for the season had been shorter than in previous years. Fevers and small pox had taken their toll both during the voyage and at the emigrant hospitals within the colony. The cost of providing for the destitute among the 25,375 arrivals had also increased by some two thousand pounds. Buchanan sounded another warning note when he pointed out that the great bulk of the Irish immigrants consisted of agricultural labourers, many of whom had no resources with which to support themselves upon their arrival in Canada. However, the character of the immigration was still very similar to that of the past two years, the only change being the larger numbers of Irish.

The reports of the increased mortality rates among the Irish emigrants did alarm one body; the C.L.E.C. became so apprehensive that it contemplated revising the passenger legislation, but they received no parliamentary support for their suggestions. The British government had adopted a wait-and-see attitude with regard to Ireland; it felt that the situation had probably been greatly
exaggerated. The Government, and the Treasury in particular, wished to avoid any unnecessary expenditures. At all costs, they must not demoralize the people by instituting pauper doles, nor must they interfere with the labour market -- such actions were, as Lord John Russell pointed out, "utterly opposed to the teachings of Adam Smith." Thus everyone sat back and waited to see what would happen to the potato harvest of 1846.

Disaster struck; the potato failure of July and August was total and universal. Those farmers who had staked all their possessions upon this harvest were ruined -- all had been lost. The future had looked promising up until the close of July, when, almost overnight, the blight struck; no portion of the crop escaped. The reaction of the Irish was one of "blank, stolid dismay, a sort of stupor fell upon the people contrasting remarkably with the fierce energy put forth a year before."

The potato blight of 1846-47 brought about the total destruction of the Irish agricultural system; the peasants' means of existence had been practically wiped out for two consecutive years. Not only did the peasants no longer have any food, they also had no land. With the complete destruction of their crop, the cottiers had no means to pay their rent, and many of the landlords took advantage of their tenants' distress and drove them from the land. The cottier's position had been completely undermined.
Ireland no longer offered any hope for the future for them, and the peasant was quickly faced with a choice: he could stay in Ireland, where he would probably starve to death, or he could attempt to escape from Ireland as quickly as possible. This obviously represented little choice at all, and thus, the majority of Irishmen were not leaving their homeland willingly. Their flight was not a planned one -- they were flying from death, "seeking a door that would open and give them access to hope."\textsuperscript{15}

It appeared as if the first failure of 1846 might produce a superior type of emigration. Many of the first to abandon Ireland were the small independent farmers with some capital -- men who had long been debating whether or not to take the final step and emigrate.\textsuperscript{16} The blight now convinced them that their only chance for success lay with emigration. Throughout April and May, the streets of Westport, County Mayo, and Dublin were thronged with "'comfortable farmers, not the destitute'"\textsuperscript{17}, on their way to the New World. By mid-August, however, the situation had changed. It was evident by this time that the failure of the potato crop had been complete, and the ports, both in England and Ireland, were filled with emigrants of the poorest class. The headlong flight from Ireland had begun.

For the first time in Irish history, there was a heavy autumn exodus -- the blight had altered the pattern of Irish emigration.\textsuperscript{18} The Canadian Emigration officials
noted the change; Buchanan remarked that by late June the great majority of the emigrants arriving at Quebec were Irish of limited means. It was among these poor and enfeebled souls that typhus made its first appearance.

The arrival of the Elizabeth and Sarah in late August was to provide Canadians with, unbeknownst to them, a foretaste of the disastrous season of 1847. Dr. George W. Douglas, the Medical Superintendent at the Grosse Isle Quarantine Station, provided a graphic description of this emigrant vessel in a letter to Buchanan. Never had he seen passengers in a more wretched state of filth and disease. Twenty emigrants had died during the voyage (which had lasted seventy-two days); there were twenty-six cases of fever upon its arrival, and by the time the emigrants had landed, the total to be admitted to hospital had risen to fifty. Douglas listed the causes of the disease by order of their importance:—(1) a want of cleanliness and an inattention to ventilation; (2) an insufficiency of food and water, and that of an unwholesome character; and (3) overcrowding.

Douglas was not the only person in the colony who had taken note of the appalling condition of the vessel; the arrival of the Elizabeth and Sarah had also caused a considerable outcry in the Canadian newspapers. In an article in the Montreal Herald one writer stated that he hoped all possible measures would be taken to punish
the guilty parties. He wrote

that such gross fraud and wickedness can be
perpetrated, that Irish ship-brokers can
enrich themselves by such inhuman, such mur­
derous practices, should be a disgrace to the
Government which allowed it.

It was true, however, that the Elizabeth and Sarah was an exception in the 1846 season, and even the Montreal Transcript and the Herald took this into account. But her arriv­al did point out what could occur as increasing numbers of Irish attempted to flee from their now famine-stricken and diseased homeland.

By the thirtieth of October, Buchanan considered the season closed. It was one which had witnessed the largest number of arrivals since 1832, with 32,753 emigrants (an increase again of twenty-nine percent over the 1845 season) reaching Canada's shores. The great majority of these immigrants were Irish who had sailed directly from Irish ports. Many, as stated earlier, had left their homes late in the season, fearing, Buchanan noted, that if they delayed for one more season, they would exhaust their re­main­ing funds and find themselves trapped in Ireland. In many cases these emigrants were entirely dependent upon the ship's stores, stores designed simply to complement the emigrant's own provisions. It was among these emigrants that sickness and distress prevailed, for many landed quite destitute and required assistance to be able to pro-
ceed to their destinations. Again there had been an alarming increase in the numbers of sick and dead, both during the emigrants' passage and upon their arrival in the colony. The deaths stood at two hundred and seventy-two, an increase, Buchanan pointed out, of one hundred percent over the previous season. The total expenditure on immigrant relief was more than ten thousand pounds, another increase of twenty percent; the balance of the fund stood at little more than two thousand pounds, and Buchanan stated that this would soon be "entirely absorbed by the expense of supporting emigrant patients admitted into the Quebec hospitals."

Both Buchanan and Hawke, the Chief Emigrant Agent for Upper Canada, appeared to paint a bleak picture for the season of 1847. They agreed that if the extensive distress in the United Kingdom, and particularly in Ireland, continued in 1847, then Canada would be threatened "with an emigration in the ensuing season such as the province has not yet seen equalled in destitution." Their departments, they feared, would be faced with increased demands for assistance and relief, demands which could not be met unless the Imperial Government provided them with much greater resources than it had previously. Many emigrants, Hawke pointed out, realized that if they could somehow obtain the necessary funds to reach Canada they would then be assisted in reaching their friends. He cited, as
proof, a letter which he had recently seen addressed to persons in Ireland.

'The Government of Canada is good to the poor, and will pay their passage to the country [side], and give them oatmeal and bread to eat on the road, so you may all come if you can pay your passage to Quebec.'

Buchanan went so far as to suggest that perhaps the Imperial Funds set aside for the relief of destitute emigrants might be redirected "to promote the interests of the pauper population in the United Kingdom." In his opinion, the Government's present system, with regard to emigration, permitted, and perhaps even encouraged, the emigration from the Mother Country of a class whose private means were only sufficient to get them as far as the New World. As long as this system was maintained, the number of destitute persons emigrating would continue to increase, and unless the Imperial Government was prepared to increase its grants to the colonies for emigrant relief, Buchanan stated, the results could only be exceedingly harmful. He painted a very grim picture of the colonial scene should there occur any relaxation of the machinery for the supervision of emigration or any inability on the part of his department to maintain its programme of assistance:—the destitute labourers, with their families, would accumulate in the towns and villages of the province, where distress and disease would lead to crime and to a hostile feeling on the part of the native Canadians.
However, neither Hawke nor Buchanan closed their reports on a dismal note. Both stated that there was little or no distress among the season's arrivals; employment opportunities were excellent and provisions were plentiful. Extensive public works projects were then under way, providing many employment opportunities for the unskilled Irish labourers. Hawke even declared that he did not apprehend any difficulty finding work for an even greater number next year if the means to scatter them are placed at the disposal of the agents. The province can maintain in comfort almost any number of labourers, provided they can be transported to the places where they are needed.

It was this promising note, rather than the earlier predictions of doom, that the Imperial colonial officials seized upon in late 1846. Both Lord Grey, who had just recently become the Secretary of State responsible for the Colonies, and Parliament were told that despite the increased number of immigrants, neither the Canadian colonies nor the immigrants had experienced any distress. There had been no lack of employment, and, on the whole, most of the immigrants had had sufficient means to enable them to support themselves until they were able to find a job. It seemed as if neither the Imperial Government nor the Canadian authorities, perhaps because of the abundance of jobs available during the 1846 season, had learned any lesson from the condition of late season departures from Ireland; their lack of preparation for what was to be
known as the "Black '47" certainly must leave one with that impression.

As mentioned earlier, there had been a change of government in the midst of the emigration season of 1846. Earl Grey had replaced Gladstone at the Colonial Office, and many of the people interested in colonial affairs looked forward to his tenure with great expectations because of his long association with such Colonial Reformers as Durham and Buller. He was not, however, the type of man best suited to cope with the problems which the Irish situation presented to emigration and to the colonies. He spent his time looking for a master-stroke which would solve the problems of Ireland and, at the same time, prove beneficial for the development of the colonies "by the simple translation of hundreds of thousands from one side of the Atlantic to the other." While he was dreaming his great dreams, the practical measures, such as the revision of the passenger legislation, which might have restored some order to the chaotic state to which the machinery for the supervision of emigration had been reduced by the ever increasing outpouring of Irishmen were neglected.

This machinery had last been altered in 1842. It consisted of a consolidated Passenger Act (1842) which:

1. limited, in relation to the ship's capacity, the number of passengers which could be carried;
2. insisted upon a minimum of provisions to be available to the emi-
grants; (3) made an attempt to ensure at least tolerable conditions between decks; and (4) tried to offer some protection for the emigrants with regard to the formulation of contracts.\textsuperscript{46} The local supervision of the Act was in the hands of a very small corps of executive officers, often half-pay naval men, who were stationed in the major ports of England, Ireland and British North America. Above them was the C.L.E.C., a board consisting of three men, who, in turn, was responsible to the Colonial Office and Earl Grey. It was the task of the Commissioners and their subordinates to see that the emigrants were assisted and protected, while ensuring that the principles of \textit{laissez-faire} were not subverted. At all costs there must be no interference with the outward flow of emigrants; it was their aim to keep the fares within the reach of all potential emigrants.\textsuperscript{47} Thus the requirements of the poorest emigrants, as well as the capacity of their own administration, it was felt, should always form the limits of their regulations.

Up until the season of 1846, the Commission's machinery had functioned quite effectively -- as long as the numbers emigrating were quite small, it was possible for the naval officers to perform their functions. It became evident, however, towards the end of 1846, that, as the numbers attempting to escape from Ireland increased daily, the structure began to weaken. There was, as was stated earlier,
an alarming increase in the numbers of sick and dead; also, an increasing number of vessels were sailing directly from the smaller Irish ports where no supervisory personnel existed. The Commissioners themselves were aware that signs of weakness did exist, and they discussed them in their Seventh General Report. They were not "insensible to the dangers and deficiencies that must attend so vast an emigration of the humblest persons" but, even after every allowable degree of regulation had been affected, poverty would still inevitably have its ills. The only result of pushing their regulations to immoderate length, they felt, would be that the poor, instead of being carried across the sea in better circumstances, would be detained against their will in a country which could no longer provide them with the means of existence. There must be no interference with the flow of emigration; the machinery which the Colonial Office had developed was the best possible one available. The past season had been an exceptional one, as the 1847 season might also prove to be, but this would not invalidate the observations of the past ten seasons.

The Commissioners had, however, attempted to respond to the problems presented by the Irish situation. They were not as firmly convinced, as their Seventh Report would imply, that they had all that was needed to oversee the process of emigration. As it became evident that the distress in Ireland would continue for another season,
the C.L.E.C. attempted to prepare for what was certain to be a greater emigration than Great Britain had ever previously witnessed. The grant to Canada for the relief of destitute emigrants was increased to ten thousand pounds, although it was not expected that the whole sum would be needed. They also increased their inspection staff by appointing six temporary officers to the Irish ports; this was really little more than a stop-gap measure because they could not possibly provide an inspection staff at every port — they simply did not have the funds. The most comprehensive step they proposed to take was the enactment of a new and more extensive Passenger Act. Their bill was rejected by the government and for the reasons which they themselves had stated in their Seventh General Report — no unnecessary obstacles were to be placed in the path of the Irish exodus. A much watered-down version of their bill was eventually passed in July of 1847, but it was to have little effect upon the 1847 season.

Throughout the autumn and winter of 1846-47, conditions in Ireland continued to worsen. The majority of the population was without any means of support, and to make matters worse, typhus made its appearance among Ireland's enfeebled inhabitants. Famine and fever had a firm grip upon the land. Ireland's work-houses were soon filled, and many thousands of poor had to be turned away from
their doors. Relief works were begun in the autumn of 1846, but by this time most of the poor were far too weak to work. Ireland presented a very grim picture to any visitor; men, women and children lay dead and dying along the roads and in the fields. All who could, made their way to Irish and English ports, selling all their possessions in an attempt to obtain some means to escape the death-trap which their homeland had become.

For the first time, the emigration continued throughout the winter; at least 30,000 Irish left for the United States. The emigrants were mainly small cottiers who could afford no delay; they had just enough funds left to get them to America. So great were the numbers attempting to escape that the shipping trade could not, at first, cope with the great exodus. Fever also broke out among the emigrants. The helplessness and destitution of the winter Irish arrivals greatly angered and shocked the Americans; they felt that Great Britain was using them as a refuse dump. The American Congress responded to the crisis immediately -- it passed two strict passenger acts which effectively reduced the number of passengers per ton by one-third, and, as a result, the passage price to the United States rose accordingly. Boston had been the city hardest hit by the large emigration, and here

the state assembly rushed through a bill requiring all masters to enter bonds of one thousand dollars indemnifying the state against all expenses incurred on the head of any passenger.
This Act was eventually declared unconstitutional, but by that time the damage had been done as far as Canada was concerned. The effect of the American legislation was to turn the most destitute and sickly portion of the famine emigration to the north.

While hundreds of thousands of Irishmen were preparing to flee from their homeland, the concerned Irish landlords and the British Government were still attempting to find a solution for the problems of Ireland. Public works and relief programmes could temporarily alleviate some of Ireland's distress, but they did not strike at the root of the Irish problem — over-population. As in the past, it was decided that systematic emigration, the removal of Ireland's surplus population, offered the only possible solution. The Earl of Clanricarde, an Irish peer, wrote to Russell, then Prime Minister, that

'nothing can effectually and immediately save the country without an extensive emigration. And I have not met in Town, or in the Country, a reflecting man who does not entertain more or less the same opinion.'

Russell, himself, agreed that emigration offered the only hope for the future for Ireland, but in a letter to the Viceroy of Ireland, Lord Bessborough, he pointed out that considerable planning was necessary if the government was to effect any real solution through emigration.

Emigration is now in the hands of Lord Grey. Those who are eager for emigration on a large scale should recollect that the colonies
cannot be prepared at once to receive large masses of helpless beings, and there is no use in sending them from starving at Skiber-een to starve at Montreal.°1

Grey, in December of 1846, was working on emigration schemes to help alleviate Ireland's distress; he hoped to be able to do all that was possible to encourage and assist the natural flow of emigration.°2 He made three recommendations to the C.L.E.C. with this end in mind. First, the C.L.E.C. should be prepared to undertake "the whole charge and risk of carrying out emigrants for whose conveyance a certain sum per head should be paid to them"°3, either by the emigrant's landlord or by his parish. It would be up to the C.L.E.C. to ensure that the emigrants were "of proper description"°4. His second recommendation concerned the colonies, which, he stated, must make arrangements for the reception and distribution of the emigrants; the Imperial Grant and the Immigrant Tax°5 would provide more than adequate funds to carry out such projects.°6 Canada, he stated, could easily absorb an emigration of one hundred thousand people.°7

In his final recommendation, Grey proposed a more systematic colonization scheme which envisioned the preparation of villages for the reception of emigrants by the Canadian Land Companies.°8 The groups of emigrants who were to settle the villages would be accompanied by a clergyman chosen to oversee the operation. Native in-
habitants would be encouraged to join the settlement, where they would labour alongside the immigrants, opening up roads and clearing and cultivating the surrounding land. Each man's work would be evaluated, and he would be paid one-half of his salary; the other half would be saved and placed at his disposal later to help him survive the winter. After the first winter, the immigrants would be expected to pay rent for their homes and, when they had the means, they could purchase a freehold. Grey felt that his scheme would not be very costly, and it would avoid "the premature elevation from labourer to landowner." The Land Company's gains would arise from the increased land values surrounding the villages and new roads. Grey felt that his scheme was just what was needed to further the emigration from Ireland while not harming the Canadian colonies.

Unfortunately for Grey, few others agreed with him. T.F. Elliot, a member of the C.L.E.C., wrote that the Government already offered the best service that it could -- it repressed the frauds against the poor emigrants before they sailed, prevented any abuses on board the ships, and kept "clear and sound the channels in which Emigration flows, without undertaking the conduct of the stream." Any government interference might interrupt the immense extent to which emigration was already beneficially proceeding, for it might bring about the paralysis of in-
dividual effort as well as result in higher passage prices.\textsuperscript{71} Government assistance might also encourage the least industrious and the infirm, rather than the strong and the hard-working, to leave.\textsuperscript{72} In any event, no good could result from any such steps taken on the part of the Government.

Benjamin Hawes, another C.L.E.C. member, agreed with Elliot's assessment.\textsuperscript{73} Cost was a very important consideration in any emigration scheme, and Hawes felt that Grey had considerably underestimated the cost of his plan. In the end, Hawes expressed the opinion that Grey's scheme would probably cause more distress than it would alleviate.

The final blow to Grey's plan came with the extremely unfavourable reaction of the colonies themselves. The Land Companies had earlier attempted to achieve success with plans very similar to that suggested by Grey, and, colonial officials pointed out,\textsuperscript{74} had met with failure each time.

Grey, however, had not been convinced by these counter-arguments, but he was forced to admit that unless he had some support in the colonies, he would be forced to abandon his scheme.\textsuperscript{75} When this was done, the British Government and the Canadian colonies were about to face the 1847 season on approximately the same basis as they had dealt with the seasons of the past; the only difference was that the British Parliament had voted the sum of ten thousand
pounds for the relief of the sick emigrants and for the forwarding of the destitute to places where employment could be found.  

It soon became evident that the policy of supervision and information was totally inadequate. Never before had the ports of the United Kingdom witnessed the flight of such a large number of sickly and impoverished people. It was no longer an organized movement of people, but rather a panic-ridden and hysterical attempt to escape from death.  

By February and March of 1847, the roads to both the English and Irish ports were jammed with emigrants. Many of the Irish were so desperate that more than 85,000 of them sailed directly from the Irish ports of southern and western Ireland. This movement should not have caught the British Government by surprise, for they had been warned as early as December of 1846, that a great number of people were planning to abandon their homes once spring arrived. Commissariat Clerk Hughes at the Skibereen Reserve Depot wrote:—

'one thing is certain, the whole face of the Country is waste and the people, those that can, are preparing, as soon as the Spring opens, to emigrate to America.'  

The heavy winter exodus to the United States should also have provided some foretaste of what might be expected once the emigration season to Canada 'officially' opened. The matter was also brought to the attention of the
Government in early March by Mr. Vesey, the Member of Parliament for Queen's County. He wished to point out to the Government that large bodies of Irishmen were planning to emigrate to Canada. He feared that many of these parties would only be able to get together sufficient to carry them across the Atlantic, and the consequence might be that they would be landed at the quay at Quebec without the means of procuring bread, or the means to pass to the upper parts of Canada.

He then enquired as to what plans had been made to meet just such a problem. The answer to his enquiry was supplied by Benjamin Hawes, who pointed out that there was a fund, albeit a small one, available for the relief of the sick and destitute arrivals, but he did not believe that it could be used to forward emigrants to their destination. All emigrants should be able to provide their own means; they had been warned that it was necessary.

With the imperial officials convinced that no extraordinary measures were needed to cope with the upcoming season, the Colonial Government had little choice but to adopt the same stance. Presumably the Imperial Government was in the best position to offer judgment concerning the nature and extent of the emigration of 1847, and if they stated that the existent machinery regulations were the best available, the colonial authorities had to agree. Emigration and immigration policy was in the hands of the Imperial Government; it set the pattern for dealing with
the famine emigration of 1847. Even if the colonial author­
ities had disagreed (and only one did) with the assess­
ment offered by the imperial officials, they were not in
any position to alter the imperial emigration policy.

While the British Government offered reassurances
that the situation was well under control, the Irish con­
tinued to flee from the homes in ever-increasing numbers.
Death and suffering were clearly visible to all in Ireland.
As stated earlier, the poorest cottiers were the first
to leave Ireland; their resources were so meagre that any
delay on their part would exhaust their funds and leave
them trapped in Ireland. The small-holders, those with
land valued at less than four pounds, were the next to
flee. In southern and western Ireland, thousands of farms
were put up for sale as these small farmers attempted to
secure the funds needed to escape from Ireland. Theirs
was not a planned emigration; all they wanted was to
escape from Ireland. No place could be as bad as Ireland
then was. As the season progressed, the cottiers contin­
ued to swell the ranks of the emigrants; funds secured
from the sale of grain, which were normally destined for
the payment of rent, were kept back and when enough money
had been saved to pay for the price of a passage (the
destination was not important), the cottiers abandoned
their holdings.
It was the small-holders and cottiers who could be seen crowded into the ports of Sligo, Dublin and Waterford awaiting passage across the Atlantic, while those more desperate were sailing from such smaller harbours as Baltimore, Ballina, Westport, Tralee and Killala. In these ports, and even in the great ports, it soon proved impossible to enforce the Passenger Act. In a report from the C.L.E.C., the commissioners declared that the first commencement of the emigration to Canada from his station Lieutenant Hodder, Liverpool, was such as to leave the officers not a single moment to spare from the practical duties at the port.

The C.L.E.C. was forced to provide another lieutenant to assist Hodder and they felt that they might also have to provide further aid in the near future. However, the only other step taken was the publication of a circular concerning the rights of passengers in cases where a ship was unduly detained, "or obliged, from any cause to put back into port after the commencement of the voyage." The report concluded with a restatement of the official policy concerning emigration inspection.

So long as the people have the funds to pay for their passage, and there are ships ready for their conveyance, it is of course essential that neither there should be any stoppage of official inspection, nor yet, on the other hand, any motive to slur over that inspection, which is so important to the welfare and safety of the emigrants.

It was soon to become evident that the existent
machinery for the supervision of emigration could no longer fulfill this function. Fever was breaking out in ships after they cleared port; the handful of inspectors at Liverpool simply could not properly deal with what at one point was three thousand emigrants in one day. Even the C.L.E.C. was forced to admit that there appeared to be "an extraordinary amount of emigration," but it then pointed out that some limitations might arise out of the difficulties which would surely accompany the spread of fever and the gradual increase in the passage price, as the demand for steerage increased. Unfortunately, these factors did not provide any check to the movement of Irish emigrants. For the first quarter of 1847, some forty thousand people had fled from Ireland, as compared with fifteen thousand in the same period for 1846.

While the numbers escaping from Ireland continued to increase, the British Government was attempting to assess the probable impact of the measures adopted by the American Congress and State Assemblies of New York and Massachusetts on the emigration to Canada. Grey declared that he felt that it was the German rather than the British emigrants who the Americans were attempting to exclude. He had suggested to the Governor-General of Canada, the Earl of Elgin, that perhaps Canada should adopt similar measures to exclude the Germans as well, but no action
was taken on this suggestion. Canada had nothing to fear from the Irish who would soon be arriving in her ports. In a few short weeks, Canadians would soon discover just how incorrect Grey's assessment of the situation had been.

The Irish were fleeing from Ireland in anything that would float; passenger brokers jammed emigrants into every available space. Most ships were overcrowded, and few carried the legal quota of provisions and water. The Irish peasants were totally ignorant concerning the length of the voyage, and in their haste to escape from the famine, were often unprepared for it. Robert Whyte, a cabin passenger on an emigrant ship from Ireland, reported that the landlord-assisted emigrants on board knew nothing of Canada and had no means of livelihood other than the labour of the father. All they knew was that they were to land at Quebec (in only three weeks time), from whence they would journey up-country. Few had taken any provisions with them -- many had no resources with which to purchase them, while many others had heard that the ship's stores would supply all that was needed. As stated earlier, these stores had been intended to serve as a supplement to the emigrant's own provisions, and thus, when the ship's master was honest and carried the quota required, it still amounted to little more than a subsistence diet. Thus, if the emigrant managed to avoid the fever, there still remained a stiff
battle to be fought against starvation.

One Irish landlord, Stephen de Vere, journeyed to Canada in steerage with some of his tenants, and he addressed a letter to T.F. Elliot, describing the horrors of the passage. No account can match his in describing the appalling conditions and terrible sufferings which the emigrants had to endure. De Vere realized that the destitution and disease then prevailing in Ireland accounted, to a certain extent, for "the fearful state of disease and debility in which the Irish Emigrants have reached Canada", but he also pointed out that the dreadful condition of the Irish emigrants had been much aggravated "by the neglect of cleanliness, ventilation, and a generally good state of social economy during the passage." The present passenger legislation did not fulfill its function; it did not protect the emigrants.

Before the Emigrant has been a week at sea he is an altered man. How can it be otherwise? Hundreds of poor people, men, women, and children; of all years from the drivelling idiot of 90 to the babe just born; huddled together without light, without air; wallowing in filth and breathing a putrid atmosphere; sick in body; dispirited in heart; -- the fevered Patients lying between the Sound, in sleeping places so narrow as almost to deny them the power of indulging by a change of position the natural restlessness of the disease; by their agonized ravings disturbing those around, & predisposing them through the Effects of the imagination, to imbibe the contagion; living without food or medicine except as Administered by the hand of Casual charity; dying without the voice of Spiritual Consolation; and buried in the deep -- without the rites of the Church.
The food is generally ill selected and seldom sufficiently cooked in consequence of the insufficiency and bad construction of the cooking places. The supply of water hardly enough for cooking and drinking does not allow washing. In many Ships the filthy beds teeming with all abominations are never required to be brought on Deck and aired;-- the narrow space between the Sleeping berths & the piles of Boxes is never washed or scraped; but breathes up a damp and foetid stench, until the day before arrival at Quarantine when all hands are required to "Scrub Up", and put on a fair face for the Doctor and Government Inspector. No moral restraint is attempted, -- the voice of prayer is never heard; -- drunkenness and its consequent train of ruffianly debasement is not discouraged, because it is profitable to the Captain who traffics in the Grog.

The food and water provided on this ship had been of the worst quality and yet, de Vere pointed out, "the case of this ship was not one of peculiar misconduct." The worst consequences of what de Vere described as "this atrocious System of neglect and ill usage" were not only disease and death, but also "the utter demoralization of the Passengers, both Male and Female, by the filth, debasement, and the disease of 2 or 3 months so passed."

The Emigrant enfeebled in body and degraded in mind even though he should have the physical power has not the heart, has not the will to exert himself. -- He has lost his self respect, his elasticity of Spirit -- he no longer stands erect -- he throws himself listlessly upon the daily dole of Government and in order to earn it carelessly lies for weeks upon the contaminated straw of a Fever Lazaretto.

Many emigrants were to discover, too late, that they
had exchanged a probable grave in their homeland for one at sea; some thirty thousand Irishmen in 1847 were not to survive the horrors of the crossing. Those that did arrived in such an enfeebled state that their only hope for survival rested upon the charity of their new fellow-countrymen. This was the crisis which was to burst upon Canada in May, 1847.
FOOTNOTES


5 Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger, p. 412.


8Connell, The Population of Ireland, p. 249.


17 Ibid., p. 214.

18 Ibid., p. 215.


20 Cited in Papers relative to emigration, H.C.,
1847 (771), Vol. XXXIX, p. 27. Dr. G.W. Douglas to A.C. Buchanan, August 20, 1846.

21 The average length of the passage, according to the Colonization Circular No. 7 issued by the C.L.E.C. in March, 1847, was forty-six days.

22 Montreal Transcript, August 29, 1846.

23 Cited in Montreal Transcript, August 29, 1846.

24 Montreal Transcript, August 29, 1846.

25 Ibid., August 29, 1846.


27 Ibid., p. 8.

28 Ibid., p. 28.

29 Ibid., p. 28.

30 Ibid., p. 8.

31 Ibid., p. 8.

32 Ibid., p. 12.

33 Ibid., p. 15.

34 Ibid., p. 15.

35 Ibid., p. 15.

36 Cited in Papers relative to emigration, H.C., 1847 (771), Vol. XXXIX, p. 29. A.B. Hawke to A.C. Buchanan, November 24, 1846.


38 Ibid., p. 15.

39 Ibid., p. 15.

40 Ibid., p. 15-6.
41 Papers relative to emigration, H.C., 1847 (771), Vol. XXXIX, p. 29. A.B. Hawke to A.C. Buchanan, November 24, 1846.


43 Ibid., pp. 15-6.


45 Macdonagh, Pattern of Government Growth, p. 173.


47 Fares to Canada varied from £2 10s to £3 5s, depending on the point of departure, according to the Colonization Circular No. 7 issued by the C.L.E.C. in March, 1847.

48 Great Britain, General Reports from the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners, H.C., 1847 (809), Vol. XXXIII, pp. 16-7.

49 Ibid., p. 3.

50 Papers relative to emigration, H.C., 1847 (771), Vol. XXXIX, p. 11. Copy of a Despatch from Lord Grey to Lord Elgin, April 1, 1847.

51 Macdonagh, Pattern of Government Growth, p. 176.

52 Ibid., p. 176.

53 Ibid., p. 176.


55 Ibid., p. 215.

56 Ibid., p. 215. The price of a passage to the United States rose to seven pounds.

57 Edwards and Williams, eds., The Great Famine, p. 379.
A tax of five shillings was levied on all adult immigrants (fourteen and over, those between one and fourteen years of age paid half that amount); this tax was incorporated into the price of the passage and paid to the colonial officials by the ship's master upon arrival in the colony.

76 Papers relative to emigration, H.C., 1847 (771), Vol. XXXIX, p. 11. Copy of a Despatch from Grey to Elgin, April 1, 1847.

77 Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger, p. 216.


80 Ibid., p. 1241-42.

81 Ibid., p. 1242.

82 Ibid., p. 1242.

83 Dr. G.W. Douglas.


85 Edwards and Williams, eds., The Great Famine, p. 320.

86 Ibid., p. 321.

87 Cousens, "The Regional Pattern of Emigration," Institute of British Geographers, p. 131.

88 Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger, p. 216.

89 Papers relative to emigration, H.C., 1847-8 (50), Vol. XLVII, p. 167. Reports from the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners, Elliot and Rogers to Stephens, April 19, 1847.

90 Ibid., p. 167.

Papers relative to emigration, H.C., 1847-8 (50), Vol. XLVII, p. 167. Reports from the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners, Elliot and Rogers to Stephens, April 19, 1847.

Ibid., p. 167.

Papers relative to emigration, H.C., 1847-8 (50), Vol. XLVII, p. 168. Reports from the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners, Elliot Rogers and Wood to Stephens, April 19, 1847.

Ibid., p. 168.


Ibid., p. 29.

Ibid., p. 29.

Ibid., pp. 25-9.


Ibid., p. 1341.

Ibid., p. 1341.

Ibid., pp. 1341-42.

Ibid., p. 1342.

Ibid., p. 1343.

Ibid., p. 1343.

Ibid., p. 1343.

Edwards and Williams, eds., The Great Famine, p. 371.
The Canadian immigration season of 1847 opened on May 9th, with the arrival at Grosse Isle of the bark Syria from Liverpool. Grosse Isle is located thirty miles below Quebec City, in the St. Lawrence — a rocky and well-wooded island some three miles long and, at its widest point, one mile across. It was here, in 1832, that Canada had established her first quarantine station to care for the victims of a cholera epidemic among the season's Irish and English immigrants.1 By 1847, a stop for a medical inspection at the quarantine station for all vessels carrying passengers had become mandatory; any ships with sickness on board were then detained and the sick were taken to the station's hospital. Dr. George Douglas had, in 1847, been the medical superintendent for the past ten years, and he was assisted by a staff of three:— one steward, one orderly and one nurse.2

The Syria was to provide but a preview of the horrors which the season of 1847 was to bring to Canada. She was filled with Irish emigrants who had crossed to Liverpool to secure their passage; all of the emigrants were "wretched and poor"3. The ship had left Liverpool on March 24th, and shortly after her departure, fever and dysentery broke out among her already weakened 'cargo'.4 During the passage, which lasted forty-six days, there were nine deaths among her 241 passengers, while another immigrant died upon arrival at Grosse Isle.5 There were also eighty-four cases of fever, and Douglas felt that
Quarantine Wharf, Grosse Isle

Quarantine Station and Buildings, Grosse Isle
Old Cemetery, Grosse Isle, Where Victims of 1847 Are Buried

Roman Catholic Church and Presbytery, Grosse Isle
another twenty to twenty-four would also have to be admitted to hospital before the Syria's quarantine period expired. The first ship of the season had provided more than eighty patients for Douglas' hospital at Grosse Isle, a hospital which could accommodate, at the most, no more than two hundred patients. Already doubts were arising in Douglas' mind concerning his ability to cope with the immigration which was likely to follow in the wake of the Syria, and he expressed these doubts to the government. He pointed out that he had reliable information that at least 10,600 emigrants had left the ports of Great Britain since April 19th, and the greater proportion of these emigrants had been Irish. "Judging from the specimens just arrived", he correctly predicted that great numbers would have to be admitted to hospital. He needed permission to erect a new shed to provide additional hospital accommodations; the Executive Government granted his request on May 19th.

Douglas' worst fears were soon realized; by May 21st another seven ships had arrived, all carrying sickness and death within their holds. Douglas told of the "unprecedented illness and distress among the newly arrived immigrants"; the situation was far worse than anything he had ever witnessed. All vessels carrying Irish emigrants, and especially those which sailed from Liverpool and Cork, had lost many of their passengers to fever
and dysentery during the passage. Of the ships' 2778 passengers, 175 had died during the crossing or upon arrival at Grosse Isle, and another 341 were sick. By May 24th, there were seventeen vessels anchored off Grosse Isle; these ships had left with 5607 emigrants, but by the time of their arrival their numbers had been diminished by some two hundred and sixty deaths. More than seven hundred emigrants had been treated at the overcrowded Grosse Isle hospital, while many more were forced to remain on board ship awaiting vacancies in the sheds on shore before they could be treated. Douglas stated flatly that he was "unable to cope with the present arrivals"; further assistance was necessary.

The Canadian newspapers were following the events at Grosse Isle very closely. The Montreal Transcript printed its first description of the scene at the Quarantine Station on May 25th. The paper had received two letters from their Quebec correspondent which, it felt, were calculated to excite serious apprehension and demand the most active measures on the part of the Provincial authorities to prevent the disease thus conveyed to our shores from spreading among the population.

By May 21st, there had been nearly three thousand emigrants at Grosse Isle, and "not a single one had yet reached Quebec." The hospital was nearly full, and the Transcript wondered where the quarantine officials would find room for the healthy. The paper feared, with good reason, that
the present situation was "but a mere foreshadowing of what we may expect hereafter." While not wishing to create any unnecessary alarm, the editor felt that it was his 'duty' to draw attention to the prospect which seemed to await the province.

By May 24th, the situation had worsened; the Transcript of May 27th reported that every building was crowded with the sick, most of whom were without beds; the dead were buried without coffins. Not satisfied with mere reports of the sufferings at Grosse Isle, the Transcript queried the cause of the disaster.

The Government agents can hardly, with the ample notice they have had, have been so culpably neglectful of their duty as our correspondent's letter reports -- although that the actual amount of sickness has gone beyond their calculations, and perhaps led to temporary inconveniences, is by no means unlikely.

The authorities should have realized that this season's immigration would contain much sickness, and they should, therefore, "have been prepared for any emergency." "Why," asks the Transcript, "were not the authorities sufficiently prepared?" But one might also ask why the Transcript, as well as the other major Canadian newspapers, had not earlier demanded some action on the Government's part. The papers were well-informed concerning the conditions in Ireland and the winter exodus to the United States, but they too had not considered their probable impact upon
Canada. Some answers to the Transcript's query have already been suggested, but to understand the situation more fully, it is necessary first to examine the Canadian scene on the eve of the Famine Emigration; second, to provide some understanding of Canada's awareness of the events then taking place in Ireland; and finally, to discover what preparations, if any, were made for the immigration season of 1847.

The second half of the 1840's was not to be a happy time for the United Province of Canada; it was to feel the impact of the Irish blight and famine in more than one way. The 'forties had started well for Canada, and the second half of the decade seemed to promise continued economic growth in the areas of agriculture and lumbering, the basic staples on which the St. Lawrence trading system, centred in Montreal, based its wealth. As part of the British colonial system, the Canadians enjoyed a protected position within this larger economic and political unit. By the Canada Corn Act of 1843, both Canadian wheat and flour were carried into England with only a nominal duty, in contrast to foreign grains which faced a much heavier imposition. This Act, with the assistance of complementary Provincial legislation of the preceding year, stimulated, to a certain extent, the St. Lawrence trade not only in Canadian grain staples, but also in flour ground in the province from American wheat. A considerable amount
of capital, as a result of this legislation, was invested in mills to grind the American wheat for the British market. The economic future for Canada appeared very bright in 1845.

However, there were threats to continued prosperity appearing on the Canadian horizon in 1845, "the height of the good times". The first threat came from the United States which, in 1845-46, passed the Drawback Laws; these laws remitted duties on goods destined for Canada that were imported through the United States and on Canadian exports which were sent overseas via the States. Canada responded in a similar fashion in 1846, repealing the duty on American wheat brought into the province for re-export. Competition between the American canal system and the St. Lawrence trading network had reached a new height; the need for a good canal system linking the Great Lakes with Montreal and the Atlantic seemed more urgent than ever. The Canadian business community, therefore, were doing everything possible to develop a system which would bring their inland commodities to the ocean ports with the greatest speed and the least difficulty.

But the greatest threat to Canadian prosperity was to come from across the Atlantic. The disastrous Irish Famine had provided the opponents of the colonial protective system of trade, the free traders, with just the situation they needed to destroy this system of imperial
preference. Ireland required massive quantities of cheap food, and Robert Peel, then Prime Minister, declared that the only remedy was

'the removal of all impediments to the imports of all kinds of human food -- that is, the total and absolute repeal for ever of all duties on all articles of subsistence.'

The repeal of the Corn Laws meant the end of all preferences for Canadian breadstuffs and any benefits gained under the Canada Corn Act. The destruction of imperial system of preferences was to occur in stages -- preferences under the Canada Corn Act did not wholly disappear until 1849, while the timber preferences were reduced in two stages, one in 1847 and one in 1848. The St. Lawrence trading network, already faced with increased American competition, was now threatened further by the loss of one of its most important advantages over its rival. To make matters even worse, Canada was also struck by a depression shortly after their protected market had been lost, and 'consequently, the change in commercial policy was regarded by the majority of the colonists as the principle or even the sole cause of distress.'

Lord Grey perhaps best summarized the feelings of many Canadian merchants.

'Almost before these arrangements were fully completed [the construction of flour mills in response to the Canada Corn Act], and the newly built mills fairly at work, the Act of 1846 swept away the advantages conferred upon Canada in respect to the corn trade with
this country, and brought upon the Province a frightful amount of loss to the individual and a great derangement of the colonial finances. It soon became evident that Canada could not, at this time, compete with its American neighbour. The massive investment in the canals had not paid off in the manner which Canadians had expected, and had resulted in a heavy burden of debt for the Government. Coupled with the large debt was a growing uncertainty and gloom concerning the economic future of the Province, and a considerable dislocation of Canadian trade. The St. Lawrence trading community's stranglehold over Canadian commerce had been broken once and for all, and for a short period, it was to suffer rather severe economic hardships. By the winter of 1847-48, Canada's staples' trade had been caught in a severe depression; in 1847, forty-five million feet of lumber had been cut to meet a demand of only nineteen million feet, while the wheat and flour exports fell from 3,883,000 bushels in 1847 to 2,248,000 in 1848.

Montreal and the eastern townships were perhaps the hardest hit, as the depression affected farmers, mill-owners, forwarders and merchants alike. Many who had invested heavily in the flour trade were, by 1848, ruined. Much private property became unsaleable and it was nearly impossible to raise any money on credit within the Province. Many Canadians, as they watched the United States thrive on free trade, felt that they had
been robbed of their prosperity by the Imperial Government. Elgin, in a communique to the Colonial Office, stated that it appeared as if the Imperial Government wished

'to make Canada feel more bitterly how much kinder England is to children who desert her than to those who remain faithful.'

The economy was not to provide the only problem for Canada in 1847; another grievance against the Imperial Government was soon to dominate the Canadian scene — that of the Irish Famine Emigrants. Canadians had been able to follow the progress of the Irish Famine through their various newspapers. As often as once a week such papers as the Montreal Transcript, La Minerve, the Toronto Globe and the Quebec Morning Chronicle, would carry vivid descriptions of the sufferings of the Irish nation. But Canada did not need to rely upon second hand accounts of the situation in Ireland; she had already seen (although few seemed to realize it), in the late arrivals of the 1846 emigration season, the depths to which the majority of the Irish population had been reduced. In a letter to the editor of the Transcript in January of 1847, "An Irishman" described the lot to which some of his fellow-countrymen had been reduced. In Montreal, he pointed out, numbers of Irish families had been reduced to a state of destitution because they could find no employment. Not all of the emigrants of the 1846 season
had fared as well as Buchanan's report on the season indicated.

It was not the lot of the Irish in Canada which captured the attention of the Canadian populace, but rather that of the Irish nation itself. In Quebec City, Montreal and Toronto, public meetings were held to raise funds to assist the starving Irish. The Catholic congregation of St. Patrick's Church, Quebec, was the first to act; it formed a committee which was to appoint collectors and to co-operate with the other citizens of Quebec, should they decide to attempt a similar project. The funds raised would be sent to the Catholic and Protestant Archbishops of Dublin. While events were getting off the ground in Quebec, a public meeting was called in Montreal for February 8th, "to adopt measures for contributing toward the relief of the famishing population of Ireland." The meeting was called by some of the leading Irishmen of Montreal:- Hon. D. Daly (member of the Executive Council and the Legislative Assembly), Francis Hincks (a prominent of the reform party in Upper Canada), L.T. Drummond (a member of the Legislative Assembly and a reformer), W.C. Meredith Q.C., E. Meredith (Principal of McGill College), to name but a few. A subscription list was started and the first donations were received from Lord Elgin and Lord Cathcart (Commander of the armed forces in Canada). Those at the meeting declared that it was the duty of all Irishmen to come forward in an
attempt to alleviate the Irish distress, and to this end a subscription list was started. The funds collected for this United Irish and Scottish Relief Fund were to be forwarded to the General Central Relief Committee in Dublin. Donations were soon pouring in, and by February 23rd, the total was more than two thousand pounds.37

A similar public meeting was held in Quebec City on February 12th; according to the Quebec Mercury, it was the largest public meeting which the city had ever seen.38 The leading members of the Quebec community were there -- the Catholic Bishop of Quebec, the Protestant Bishop of Montreal, Rev. P. McMahon of St. Patrick's Church, Hon. R.E. Caron, former mayor of Quebec, Captain R.I. Alleyn R.N. and Mr. A.C. Buchanan. As evidenced by the Rev. Mr. McMahon's attendance, the earlier St. Patrick's movement was incorporated into the greater Quebec organization. Here again it was resolved to collect funds to aid the sufferers in both Ireland and Scotland, with three-fourths of the funds going to the former and the remaining one-fourth to the latter, through the agencies of the Catholic and Protestant Archbishops of Dublin. Rather than establishing a subscription list, several collectors were appointed for various areas of the city.39

While great concern was being shown for the distress of the Irish nation, few people appeared to be giving any thought as to how the continued Irish distress might affect
the upcoming season's emigration to Canada. One of the few men to worry about the approach of the 1847 season was Dr. Douglas; he voiced his concern in a letter to the Executive Council. He asked the Governor-General to ensure that the necessary steps would be taken for the ensuing season's emigrants, many of whom, he feared, would be suffering from fever and dysentery. He compared the previous year's experience with that of 1831, when there had been a partial failure of the potato crop, and consequently much sickness and many deaths among the 31,422 arrivals. Last year's sick and dead, he declared, had far outnumbered those of any previous year; the totals had, in fact, been double the average of former years. With continued distress in Ireland, the emigration situation could only deteriorate, especially if the United States succeeded in its efforts to restrict the emigration of paupers to its shores. Douglas then presented a request for three thousand pounds to cover the expense of preparing for the upcoming season. He did not get his three thousand pounds, but instead received three hundred pounds, plus the permission to hire a sailboat and the steamer St. George, to ply the route between Quebec and Gross Isle.

Toronto citizens also demonstrated their concern with the plight of the Irish people. On February 25th, a public meeting, similar to those held in both Quebec and Montreal, was held under the auspices of the local St. Patrick's Society, Hon. Robert Baldwin, M.P.P. and
Hon. George Duggan, M.P.P., Presidents. Here a committee for the relief of distress in Ireland was appointed to collect funds and provide information concerning the condition of Ireland.

As tales of the horrors which had become daily occurrences in Ireland continued to fill the Canadian newspapers, more Canadians became concerned about the impact which the events in Ireland would have upon the upcoming emigration season. Early in March, the citizens of Quebec felt compelled to address a petition to Lord Grey. In their address they expressed their concern about the increasing numbers of Irish who each year sought to make Canada their new home. The continued distress in Ireland would mean yet another increase in the numbers of poor Irish reaching Canada's shores. The immigrants would not only be ill-equipped to cope with the harsh Canadian winter, but also would, no doubt, bring fever with them. Surely the Canadian Government should take some action to protect its own citizens from diseased and destitute immigrants.

Canadian authorities did not agree with the citizens of Quebec; the emigration officials, upon whom the Government relied for their information, felt that Canada would be able to cope adequately with whatever the next season might bring. Both the Toronto Globe of March 24th and the Montreal Transcript of April 13th supported this interpretation. These papers agreed with the report presented
by the Hon. R.B. Sullivan (a politician of the reform party) to the Mechanic's Institute of Toronto on March 14th. In Sullivan's speech, he pointed out that if done properly, the whole of the surplus population of Britain could be advantageously settled on the lands of Canada. Here was a solution to the Irish problem, but unfortunately Mr. Sullivan failed to point out that the Irish emigration (and especially that of 1847) was rarely 'done properly'.

This 'solution' did not quiet everyone's fears, however, and "An Irishman", in a letter to the editor of the Montreal Transcript of April 22nd, voiced the concern which many Canadians were beginning to experience. Everyone knew that the season's immigration would probably be the largest which Canada had ever seen and he wondered what measures, if any, the Government had taken to prepare to meet the distress which must accompany such an emigration. The editor, in his reply, felt that the Government was aware of the situation, but he did not, however, know of any actions taken by them to meet the emergency. Unless the emigrant had some resources or friends to support him, he would merely be exchanging starvation at home for the same fate on the shores of the New World. If the Government did not offer some scheme of assistance, then obviously the "burden of support must fall upon the wealthy of the community." Everyone realized that it was
dangerous to offer indiscriminate aid, but "a man cannot be made any worse for having employment presented to his hand when in a state of destitution." He hoped, in vain, that the Government would look to both the problem of providing for the season's expected large immigration and the subject of the increasing immigration.

By mid-April, the Canadian newspapers began to carry accounts of the massive flight of the Irish from their homeland. Various community organizations began to take steps which would enable them to cope with the situation. The Toronto Globe of April 28th described the meeting of one such organization, the General Committee of the Emigrant Settlement Society. Their objective was

'to put the emigrants, upon arrival in the city in a way of procuring steady employment, without delay, at a fair yearly wage, and of settling themselves in the interior of the country, and for such purposes, to organize a Committee and to open up an office in Toronto, where emigrants of every class may, upon arrival, receive accurate and useful information to guide them in making the most beneficial arrangements for their speedy settlement in the surrounding country, according to their respective conditions and avocations.'

The Committee invited the co-operation of the entire community, for they intended to aid it as well as the immigrants by placing labourers in touch with anyone who required their services. The operation was to be financed by subscription.

Many of the citizens of Montreal were also worrying
about the impact of a large immigration, especially a destitute one, upon their own community. The Montreal Gazette of April 19th, 1847 feared that Canada would be "inundated with an enormous crowd of poor and destitute emigrants", and demanded that some legislative action be taken. It would be Montreal, rather than Quebec, which would be the hardest hit by the immigration; Quebec was but a stopping-off point, while Montreal lay at the centre of the immigrants' route to the interior. The Gazette's observations were to be substantiated in all too short a time.

The Corporation of Montreal appeared to share the Gazette's concern; at a Corporation meeting on April 29th, the Mayor declared that it was

'necessary to take some measures to prevent the crowding of emigrants into the city upon the arrival of ships from England, who might be the cause of disseminating sickness, if some place is not provided for their reception outside the city.'

He intended to correspond with the Government on the subject, but no concrete steps resulted from his correspondence. A meeting of Montreal citizens was also called, under the auspices of the Montreal Emigration Committee. Held on May 10th, the meeting was to consider what steps should be taken for the upcoming season, but it was so poorly attended that it was quickly adjourned.

Thus the Canadian colony prepared to face a most
extraordinary immigration season with little more than the usual precautionary measures. Despite what Elgin described as the prevalent feeling of alarm lest the immigration "should be excessive this season and lest disease should follow in its train"50, little had been done to cope with the consequences of such a situation. Both the colonial and imperial officials had decided that Canada could easily accommodate another large influx of immigrants without the necessity of any extraordinary measures. Their word had been accepted, despite the growing uneasiness of some people at the local levels. Canada was to meet the largest, most destitute and most diseased immigration season she had ever witnessed with a quarantine station that could accommodate a mere two hundred patients and another Marine and Emigrant Hospital, at Quebec, which had room for three hundred sick51. These accommodations were to prove inadequate before the first month of the season was over, and the colony then had to fight an uphill battle in its attempts to deal with the Irish immigration of 1847.
FOOTNOTES

1Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger, p. 218.


3Appendix to the Sixth Volume of the Journals of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada (Montreal: Rollo Campbell, 1847), Appendix I, Quarantine Station at Grosse Isle and Emigrant Sheds at Quebec - Correspondence and other Documents relative to the management of the Quarantine Station at Grosse Isle, and to the erection of Emigrant Sheds Within the City of Quebec, Douglas to Daly, May 17, 1847.

4Ibid., May 17, 1847

5Ibid., May 17, 1847.

6Ibid., May 17, 1847.

7Ibid., May 17, 1847.

8Ibid., May 17, 1847.

9Ibid., Extract from a Report of the Committee of the Executive Council, May 19, 1847.

10Ibid., Douglas to Daly, May 21, 1847.


12Ibid., p. 1.

13Ibid., p. 1.

14Ibid., p. 1.

15See above, chapter II, pp. 36-40.


18Ibid., p. 108.
19 Careless, The Union of the Canadas, p. 108.

20 Ibid., p. 105.

21 Cited in Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger, p. 50.


23 Tucker, Commercial Revolution, p. 152.


26 Tucker, Commercial Revolution, p. 152.

27 Careless, The Union of the Canadas, p. 122.

28 Ibid., p. 122.

29 Ibid., p. 122.

30 Flood, Irishman, p. 547.

31 Cited in Flood, Irishman, p. 548.

32 Montreal Transcript, January 21, 1847.


34 Ibid., p. 72.

35 Montreal Transcript, February 4, 1847.

36 Ibid., February 4, 1847.

37 Montreal Transcript, February 23, 1847.

38 Cited in the Montreal Transcript, February 18, 1847.

39 By the end of March the sum collected had reached $16,000, with $3600 from St. Peter's Ward, $2200 from St. Lewis' Ward, $1600 each from both Palace and St. Roch's Wards, and $1200 from Champlain Ward. Jordan, The Grosse Isle Tragedy, p. 74.

40 Appendix to Sixth Volume of Journals, Appendix L, Douglas to Daly, February 19, 1847.

Toronto Globe, February 25, 1847.

Toronto Globe, March 3, 1847.


Emphasis my own.

Montreal Transcript, April 13, 1847.


Montreal Transcript, May 1, 1847.


Appendix to Sixth Volume of Journals, Appendix R, Correspondance and Other Documents respecting the erection of buildings for the reception of sick emigrants at Quebec, Joseph Morin to Daly, June 2, 1847.
CANADA - THE DELUGE
By the end of the first month of the 1847 immigration season, the Canadian quarantine system was on the verge of total collapse, and only the unceasing efforts of Dr. Douglas and his small staff kept it going. Shortly after the commencement of the season, Douglas was forced to tell the Government\(^1\) that it was no longer possible to enforce the letter of the quarantine law which required the landing at Grosse Isle of all passengers from the fever ships -- to do so would require sheds which could accommodate from twelve to fifteen thousand emigrants. As it was, he did not even have enough shelter for the sick; he would have to convert the present passenger sheds into a temporary hospital in order to accommodate the ever-increasing numbers of sick. The problem was that he had "never contemplated the possibility of every vessel arriving with fever", as they now did. More staff was needed.

Douglas' request for additional staff was granted, but he was told that the quarantine law would have to be enforced.\(^2\) Here the Government had accepted Buchanan's recommendation\(^3\) that a large supply of tents be procured from the Ordinance Department to house the healthy for their compulsory ten days in quarantine, while the remaining sheds were converted into hospitals for the sick. Douglas objected;\(^4\) all available space was needed for the sick and convalescents. There were now thirty vessels in quarantine, containing approximately thirteen thousand
passengers and from this number, there were 856 cases of fever and dysentery on shore and another 470 still on board ship.\(^5\) The mortality rate on the island was seventy deaths per week, while "twice that number were brought ashore for burial".\(^6\) The only thing which the landing of all passengers would accomplish would be an increase in the mortality rate; they would be landing "poor emaciated wretches, . . . weakened by long fasting and privation, on rocks, without covering, and destitute as many are of everything but the rags that cover them".\(^7\) At least on the ships they would have some shelter.

By this point, it had become obvious to all those who were involved with the immigration machinery that unless steps were taken immediately to deal with this extraordinary situation, disaster would strike. On June 2\(^{nd}\), three doctors, J. Painchaud of Quebec and G. Campbell and M'Donnell of Montreal, were appointed by the Executive Council to form a Medical Commission.\(^8\) They were asked to enquire into the present state of emigration and recommend action.\(^9\)

As the Commission prepared to investigate the conditions at Quebec City and Grosse Isle, the Government received two reports, one from Captain Boxer R.N., Captain of the Port of Quebec, and the other from Robert Christie, an Independent member of the Legislative Assembly. Boxer pointed out\(^10\) that most of the immigrants detained on the
ships were suffering "great privation from want of food"; Buchanan acted immediately upon receipt of this report, sending provisions which were to be provided at purchase price to those who could pay and gratuitously to those who were genuinely destitute. The Government also acted upon several other of Boxer's recommendations:— (1) the erection of hospital sheds to accommodate another two thousand emigrants; (2) an increase in the medical staff and attendants; (3) the acquisition of enough comforts (beds, blankets) for all patients; and (4) the hiring of a small steamboat, under Douglas' charge, for the removal of the sick to the hospital. The Government also rescinded their order concerning the landing of all emigrants at the Quarantine Station; instead, a quarantine period of fifteen days on board ship was acceptable in place of one of ten days on shore.

Christie was more concerned with the Government's "general ineptitude" in its handling of the crisis. He was prepared to prove by an enquiry in Parliament, if necessary, that the proper and seasonal precautions which were required, and which, consistent with our pre-knowledge of the unusual Emigration that undoubtedly would take place, were inexcusably neglected.

The result, Christie continued, was that "expenses were prodigiously increased" as were the "discomforts and sufferings" of the sick and immigrants generally, and the dangers to which Quebec, Montreal and other cities
and towns exposed. But one might ask why, therefore, Mr. Christie had not spoken out sooner, before the situation had deteriorated to such a considerable extent.

The descriptions of the conditions at Grosse Isle and on board the ships in quarantine provide an unending tale of horror. The basic problem, which had resulted in increased suffering among the emigrants during the quarantine period, was the inadequacy of both accommodations and medical aid. Canada simply did not have the facilities needed to cope with an immigration of thousands of diseased, emaciated and spectre-like wretches. If Canada were properly meet the immigration of 1847, she would have required an entirely new quarantine establishment, situated on a larger piece of ground; such a move was, for financial reasons, never considered. It would appear that only one other man, besides Douglas, had "anticipated a very considerable increase in the sickness among Emigrants this season" , but he had not made any official representation to the Government because "it was a subject that did not come within the control of . . . his department" -- that man was A.C. Buchanan. He had felt that the existent machinery would prove adequate; all that was needed was an increase in the numbers of the medical staff. That increase proved very difficult to secure -- while many doctors and medical students stepped forward and willingly volunteered their ser-
vices (for a small fee), Douglas had great difficulty procuring nurses to provide the constant attendance which was necessary in the sheds and nearly three hundred tents (not even the Irish would volunteer to tend their sick). All Douglas could do was to attempt to make the best of a very difficult situation.

Upon arrival at Grosse Isle, each vessel received a medical inspection which, according to Stephen de Vere, was slight and hasty, -- hardly any questions were asked, -- but as the Doctor walked down the file on Deck, he selected those for Hospital who did not look well, and after a very slight examination ordered them on shore. The ill effect of this was two fold. Some were detained in danger who were not ill; and many were actually allowed to proceed who were in fever.

Once on shore, the sick were crowded into every available space, while many more were left to suffer in the filthy holds of the ships. There was a great disparity between conditions -- those in the hospital and the new sheds were as well looked after as was possible, but in the old sheds and tents most patients suffered severely from neglect. Bishop Mountain, the Protestant Bishop of Quebec, described conditions in one of the tents.

\begin{quote}
Bedless persons in tents; saw two lying on wet ground in the rain, one a woman very ill, on a bed of rank wet weeds. Bundle of rags lying on floor of tent; orphan covered up within, dying, and covered with vermin from head to foot, unowned and no connection to be traced. . . . Inmates of one tent, three widows and one widower, with the remnants of their family, all bereft of partners
\end{quote}
on the passage . . . . Three orphans in one little bed in the corner of the tent full of baggage and boxes, one of the three dead, lying by his sick sister.24

If the conditions were bad for many of the sick on shore, they were even worse for those forced to remain on board ship, where the mortality rate was twice as great as it was on shore.25 At least on shore there was some medical attendance and a good supply of food; on the ships, the sick were perhaps visited once every five days and often went without food.26 In many cases, the conditions on the ships were made even worse by the lack of concern on the part of the ship's master; the vessels were in a filthy state, with both the sick and the well kept crowded together below deck.27 Douglas' earlier assessment of the conditions on board ship had proved incorrect, but he simply did not have room for any more immigrants on the island. Every available space was already crowded with the sick and dying; here again, he could only make the best of a dreadful situation and attempt to ensure that the immigrants left on the ships received as much attention as possible.

Conditions at the station were so bad that Joseph Signal, Catholic Archbishop of Quebec felt compelled to address a letter to the hierarchy of Ireland.28

'The voice of religion and humanity imposes on me the sacred and imperative duty of exposing to Your Lordship the dismal fate
that awaits thousands of the unfortunate children of Ireland who come to seek in Canada an asylum from the countless evils affecting them in their native land."

Crowded into ships, many of the emigrants, "weakened beforehand by misery and starvation, have contracted fatal diseases," which were impossible to escape given the wretched conditions in which they were forced to exist. Unfortunately the conditions did not improve once the emigrants reached Canada; many were crowded into sheds, while others were forced to remain on the ships because of want of accommodation, "spreading the contagion among the healthy passengers who were confined in the vessels." Sickness and death were not confined to Grosse Isle alone:

"...many of the unfortunate emigrants, who escape from Grosse Isle in good health, pay tribute to the prevailing disease either at Quebec or Montreal, and overcrowd the hospitals of these two cities."

Even those who managed to escape the disease altogether were "far from realizing, on their arrival here, the ardent hopes they so fondly cherished of meeting with unspeakable comfort and prosperity on the banks of the St. Lawrence."

'I submit these facts to your consideration that Your Lordship may use every endeavour to dissuade your diocesans from emigrating in such numbers to Canada, where they will but too often meet with either a premature death or a fate not less deplorable than the heartrending condition under which they groan
in their unhappy country. Your Lordship will thus open their eyes to their true interests and prevent the honest, religious and confiding Irish peasantry from becoming the victims of speculation, and falling into irretrievable errors and irreparable calamities.'

But the numbers of Irish emigrating continued to mount. Grey, in response to the Bishop's letter, declared that he had anticipated the deplorable sufferings which were being experienced this season, but little could be done to alleviate them. Because of the sufferings which the Irish people had endured during the past winter, the ships, though "well provided as emigrants ships usually were", were a hot bed of fever. Canadian officials were taking every measure possible to alleviate the distress of the Irish emigrants.

'He firmly believed that the sufferings of the emigrants arose entirely from the distress which had existed in Ireland, and that nothing had occurred during the present year which need tend to check or discourage emigrants from proceeding to Canada in future years.'

His answer apparently satisfied the House.

The men connected with the quarantine station at Grosse Isle would not have allowed the Colonial Secretary to escape so easily. While all officials at the station praised the unceasing efforts of Dr. Douglas, they were not as kind in their remarks concerning the British Government. Dr. Joseph Morrin, one of the Commissioners of the Quebec Marine and Emigrant Hospital, stated that the increased sickness among this season's immigrants
could be attributed to the insufficient care on the part on the Imperial authorities "in the selection of emigrants fit to undertake the voyage" and also in the overcrowding of the vessels and the insufficiency of food. The Reverend Mr. O'Reilly, one of the Roman Catholic priests who served at Grosse Isle, supported Dr. Morrin's testimony. It did not matter how much money was spent on providing facilities and care for the emigrants, the situation could not improve as long as the Irish continued to be sent from Britain "crammed up by the hundreds in the hold of the ship, without food, air or the necessary means of procuring cleanliness."

The Canadian Government's reluctance to provide the necessary accommodations and to authorize the large expenditures required to deal with the crisis also came in for some criticism. But the problem was that despite the orders issued by the various authorities, the Canadian immigration establishment had not the facilities nor the manpower to cope with the unprecedented emigration of that year; they could not possibly catch up with the requirements which the continued influx of immigrants demanded. The report of the Medical Commission sent to investigate the conditions at Grosse Isle could only recommend an increase in the number of the staff and the erection of more sheds. They saw no solution to
to the problem as long as ships continued to leave the fever-ridden ports of Britain. By the time Canadian officials had awakened to the true nature and scope of the emigration, it was too late to do anything more than attempt to deal with on a day-to-day basis.

It was soon obvious that the disaster could not be confined to Grosse Isle alone, for, as Douglas explained to Buchanan, of the more than four to five thousand immigrants who had passed through the station during the past week, at least two thousand would fall sick somewhere "before three weeks are over." Both Montreal and Quebec, he suggested, should have accommodations for at least two thousand sick. Of the immigrants themselves, he exclaimed:

all the Cork and Liverpool emigrants are half dead from starvation and want before embarking, and at least bowel complaint, which is sure to come with change of food, finishing them without a struggle. I never saw people so indifferent to life, they would continue in the same berth with a dead person until the seamen or captain dragged out the corpse with boat-hooks. . . . Good God, what evils will befall the city wherever they alight! Hot weather will increase the evil.

As Douglas' letter reveals, the problems of the crossing, as far as the emigrants were concerned, had not ended with their arrival at Grosse Isle; travel within the province was to prove equally as hazardous. To get to the interior from Quebec, Montreal or Kingston, the immigrants were faced with a journey of up to five or
six days in either "small incommodius and ill-ventilated steamers" or open barges. As it was, the numbers wanting passage to the interior were so great that there simply were not enough vessels to satisfy the demand. Thus the immigrants were forced to wait for transportation either in the sickly atmosphere of the sheds (if they were without resources) or in the cheap boarding houses of the cities (perhaps exhausting their remaining funds). If they had not yet taken sick, here was another chance for the fever to catch up with them. Once on board their steamer or barge, there was little improvement in the conditions; sick and healthy were packed together so tightly that there was little space to sit, let alone lie down. In the sultry weather of the Canadian summer these vessels became the breeding ground for disease.

In almost every boat were clearly marked cases of actual fever, in some were deaths, -- the dead and the living were huddled together -- sometimes the crowds were stowed in open barges, and towed after the Steamer, standing like Pigs upon the Deck of a Cork and Bristol Packet. . . . It is the unhesitating opinion of Every man I have spoken to, including Government officers and medical men that a large proportion of the Fever throughout the Country has actually been generated in the River Steamers.

Douglas had had ample cause to call upon Buchanan to "give the authorities of Quebec and Montreal fair warning" of what was about to hit them.

Quebec authorities certainly attempted to respond to Douglas' warning. On June 12th, the City Council
addressed a petition to the Government, calling upon them to erect a temporary hospital at Pointe Levi, across the river from the old city, for the reception of sick immigrants; the present facilities at both Grosse Isle and Quebec's Marine and Emigrant Hospital were already over-taxed. Unless such a measure was adopted, the City Council feared a further loss of immigrant life and the exposure of the health of the city itself to great danger.

Quebec authorities did not restrict their actions solely to petitioning the Government; practical measures were also adopted. By June 11th, Quebec (a community of more than 35,000) had established a Board of Health, a step first authorized by the Executive Council on June 1st. Any city or town which might be called upon to "furnish provisions, medicine and medical attendance to destitute and sick emigrants," was entitled to do so at Government expense, provided they met certain requirements. First, the cities and towns were to provide a hospital or sheds and to appoint a Board of Health, which was "to draw up sanitary [sic] regulations to be observed by the Emigrants receiving provisions and medical aid." Second, the Boards were to be authorized to contract for supplies of meats and breads in such quantities as the number of emigrants required. Third,
in each of these cities and towns, an attendant physician was to be appointed to care for the hospital's sick. Finally, a weekly return of the numbers relieved was to be made in each centre and forwarded to the Provincial Secretary.58

Unfortunately there was a considerable gap between the Government's well-organized plan and the actual functions performed and the successes achieved by the various boards. Quebec's board had a difficult time securing the funds it needed to begin its operation, but eventually they were able to obtain the sum of two hundred and fifty pounds from their own City Council, which was to be reimbursed should the Government provide any funds.59 But inspite of their efforts, as well as those of the local municipal government and the Medical Commissioners, "scenes of want and wretchedness"60 were becoming ordinary sights in the streets of Quebec's Lower Town.

Montreal, a city of some 44,000,61 soon found itself faced with a situation much worse than that in Quebec; it was destined to be the Canadian community which suffered the most as a result of the immigration of 1847. As the "nodal point of transportation"62 and the commercial heart of Canada, it became the destination of a good number of immigrants. Many other immigrants were forced to stop there; it was the first Canadian community which they actually entered after their long ordeal in quarantine63.
and many were either too weak, too ill or just too destitute to continue. Many Montrealeans had realized that large numbers of immigrants would probably congregate within their city, and they too had addressed themselves to the Government on this subject. In late May, the Montreal Emigration Committee wrote to the Governor-General expressing the fear that disease "soon will be among us to carry death into the bosoms of our family without precautionary measures are timely resorted to, to prevent the evil." The only measures taken, however were:-(1) the securing of a wharf for the landing of the immigrants; (2) the erection of a temporary shed at the wharf to provide shelter for the immigrants until they could be moved to the sheds then being erected at Pointe St. Charles; and (3) the erection of another two sheds to house one hundred patients of each sex. Again it was too little, too late.

By June 1st, steamer-loads of sick and dying immigrants were landing at the Montreal wharves, which were situated in one of the densely populated regions of the city; the worst fears of the inhabitants of Montreal were about to be realized. In an attempt to cope with the crisis which had been presented to them (already six thousand immigrants were crowding the streets and wharves of the city), the City Council formed a Board of Health on June 5th. By
June 12th, it was fully organized; it began with a flourish, authorizing the inspection of the boarding and lodging houses in which many of the immigrants congregated. The Board was to close those houses which presented a threat to the public health of the city. Additional hospital facilities were also recommended, as was the prohibition of the landing of immigrants in the heart of the city — the immigrants should be landed at Windmill Point, outside the city, just above the Lachine Canal. Unfortunately no action was taken on any of these suggestions — the Board had no funds with which they could enact their recommendations. The Montreal Transcript of June 15th best described the situation when it declared that it seemed as if no person had been appointed to see to the needs of the pauper immigrants "notwithstanding all the talk and Committee meetings."

As the season progressed and the conditions at Grosse Isle worsened, Montreal found itself burdened with greater numbers of sick and destitute immigrants. Montreal's Board of Health was supposed to have the authority to exclude from the city any immigrants that had a contagious disease, but, in fact, they could not do this because they could not prevent the immigrants from disembarking at the Montreal wharves. Thus, given the little time which the Board had to prepare (even as they organized "the wharves of Montreal were filled with thousands of unfortunate
and enfeebled beings"73) and with the lack of shelter (only three sheds and two small hospitals which were controlled not by the Board but by Montreal's Emigration Agent, Mr. Yarwood), there was nothing the Board could do to prevent the spread of sickness within the city. Immigrants who could not find shelter in the sheds provided by the city, sought refuge in the city's public housing, taking the fever with them. By late June, the death toll among immigrants for one week had risen to its peak of nearly two hundred and fifty.74

The conditions in the Montreal sheds and hospitals were quickly reduced to a deplorable state. The sheds, "a relic of the cholera epidemic of 1832"75 were located in the heart of Montreal, near the Wellington Bridge. Immigrants were arriving at a much faster rate than officials could possibly deal with and the sheds soon were overcrowded. It was impossible to keep the sheds clean; the sick lay side by side with the dying and dead.

Volunteer nurses found hundreds of the sick crouched upon filthy straw mattresses, writhing in the agony of death, numerous children weeping in the arms of their dead mothers, many woman, themselves stricken, seeking for a beloved husband amid a doleful chaos of suffering and evil odours.76

The sheds and hospitals were always understaffed, both as a result of the continued influx of immigrants and of the collapse of many of the attendants as they them-
selves contracted the fever. Thus, those in charge had to spend much of their time writing to the Executive Government, requesting funds so that they might be able to continue to provide for and assist the poor immigrants. On June 24th, the Corporation of Montreal felt obliged to make a presentation to the Governor-General, pointing out that their tax-payers were "already labouring under a heavy burden", and could not be expected to meet the additional call upon the city caused by the influx of sickly immigrants from Europe.

By June 29th, there were thirteen hundred patients in Montreal's sheds, while the General Hospital and Infirmary were "crowded to repletion with fever cases from among the people of the city". It was impossible to keep the immigrants isolated from the rest of the city, but this was partly the fault of the citizens themselves. The sheds, as stated earlier, were located in the heart of the city, and many Montreal citizens spent their Sunday afternoons outside the sheds "pour voir ce qui s'y passe et pour satisfaire une bien coupable curiosité." There also were always those people willing to trade with the immigrants, no matter what the danger. Despite the fact that 'ship's fever' or typhus, was a well-known disease, Canadian authorities were slow to warn citizens of the nature of the disease which had accompanied the immigrants, and, more important, of the
Toronto was incorporated as a city in 1834.
ways to avoid contracting it. Not until late July were reports carried in the various Canadian papers describing the disease. Although doctors did not yet understand the true cause of the disease, they did know how to prevent its dissemination. Canadians were advised that only by avoiding all contact with the immigrants could they be sure of escaping the fever. That the disease was a highly infectious one could not be doubted, especially when one discovers the fate of those who worked with the immigrants. Among those who served at Grosse Isle, few escaped the fever. At Quebec, of the nine priests who attended the sick, six contracted typhus and one died. In Montreal the numbers of sick and dead priests was even higher; of the fifty-six who served in the sheds, nineteen caught typhus and nine of them died. The medical profession also lost several of its members to the disease; the Executive Council received several requests for gratuities from the widows of attendants and doctors who had served in the immigrant sheds and at the hospitals, and had lost their lives in doing so.

The Canadian community best able to cope with the immigration of 1847 was Toronto, for it already had a Board of Health in existence, and being situated much farther inland, it had had more time to prepare, once the nature of the immigration had been ascertained.

Toronto, with a population of 20,000, had commenced
Table 1
Table Showing the Number of Clergy, Medical Men, Hospital Attendants, and others who contracted Fever and died during the season, in attendance upon Sick Emigrants at Grosse Isle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Hospital</th>
<th>Sick</th>
<th>Dead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic priests</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergymen of the Church of England</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical men</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital Stewards</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurses, orderlies and cooks</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policemen</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carters employed to remove the sick, dying and dead</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks, bakers and servants of Mr. Ray, sutler</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ditto Mr. Ray, sutler</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ditto Mr. Bradford</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy emigrant agent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk of ditto</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custom house officers employed to examine baggage</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
its preparations in mid May, at which time Toronto's mayor (W.H. Boulton) questioned the Executive Council, at the Board of Health's request, concerning the steps which the Government planned to take with regard to the season's immigration. Something had to be done to prevent the burden of maintaining the large immigration of paupers expected that season "from falling on that City and other cities where they [the immigrants] may stop in their progress." As already stated, the Government was eventually forced to agree with this statement.

Meanwhile, various city organizations were meeting in an attempt to prepare themselves for the expected influx of destitute and sick Irish. On June 12th, the Trustees of the Toronto General Hospital met with the Board of Health to consider the means which they should adopt to care for the typhus immigrants who were finding their way to the city. The Board of Health acted quickly; on June 19th a code of sanitary regulations was issued. The city had decided that the best way to face the problem which the destitute immigrants presented to them was to move them past Toronto as quickly as possible. Therefore, the Board declared that all immigrants were to be landed at one wharf, "under penalty of the law" and "only those immigrants with friends or neighbours could remain in the city"; all others were to be dispersed as quickly as possible. Any other immigrant found in the
city would be arrested as a "public charge".94

Such a decision no doubt greatly reduced the mortality rate among both the immigrants who were permitted to remain in Toronto and Toronto's citizens themselves. Toronto certainly did not witness the same amount of suffering as did Montreal, nor was its mortality rate as great as that of Kingston.95 However, Toronto did still see its share of destitute and fever-ridden Irish immigrants. By June 23rd, some 7200 immigrants had already found their way to the city, while Toronto's hospital had more than one hundred fever patients in its wards.96 Responding to this situation, the Board of Health recommended the erection of two sheds on the hospital lot to house the immigrants. All those involved with the immigration machinery realized that the situation would get worse before there was any sign of improvement. Toronto besieged the Executive Council with requests for funds and the authority to erect sheds according to the demands which faced it.98 Despite the financial burdens imposed upon the city, it was able to cope quite adequately with the problems dumped on its doorstep. On July 17th, of the sixteen to seventeen thousand immigrants who had arrived at Toronto's wharf, only 238 fever patients remained,99 but it is probable that Toronto was simply passing its destitute on to smaller communities even more ill-equipped to deal with the situation.
It was easy to follow the progress of the immigrants through the Canadian interior; wherever the immigrants touched upon the Canadian soil, fever followed, as did requests for funds and the authority to establish local boards of health. By the beginning of August, the Executive Council had received such requests from nearly every community situated along the St. Lawrence, Lake Ontario and Lake Erie. Letters had been received from Hamilton, Kingston, Bytown, Brantford, Cornwall, Williamsburg, River Trent, Prescott and Picton. It seemed as if no centre was to escape the impact of the Famine immigrants. In Our Forest Home, Eleanor Dunlop wrote from her settlement near Peterborough that

'the typhus fever and dysentery have reached even this remote place. Wherever those wretched immigrants came they brought with them sickness and death. Some members of the board of health have already fallen under its malignant influence.'

Letters also came in from Lachine, St. John's, Guelph, Sandwich, Amherstburgh, Stuartville, Newmarket, London, New Carlisle, Dundee, Matilda, Port Hope, St. Catherine's, Orillia, Barrie, Oakville, Simcoe, Woodstock, Queenstown, and Niagara. All wanted one thing, funds to provide for the maintainence of the destitute and sick immigrants who were landing in their communities; not all had their requests granted. Fever had made its appearance in Bytown, a town of less than eight thousand, in early June, and by July 17th there were more than one thousand cases
of fever and two hundred deaths. Kingston, a recently incorporated city of some eight thousand, also received a large number of immigrant sick — 4326 were admitted to hospital during the season and there were fourteen hundred deaths. Kingston also provided relief for more than twelve thousand immigrants in one short two week period. By June 25th, between nine and ten thousand had been sent further west from that community.

It was not surprising, therefore, that few Canadians, especially as they watched the ship's fever spread to each community visited by the immigrants, were prepared to welcome the Irish into their midst. While nearly everyone sympathized with the plight of the poor Irish, no one wanted them cared for in their neighbourhood. In Quebec, the inhabitant's of St. Roch's ward presented a petition to their City Council, protesting against the erection of temporary sheds for the reception of sick immigrants on the site of the Marine and Emigrant Hospital, which was located in the midst of their ward. They declared that while they sympathized with the plight of their unfortunate brethren, they held grave fears for the health of the city if a "receptacle for the sick" was to be established in the heart of such a densely populated area. If the seeds of disease escaped, they would spread rapidly from ward to ward, threatening the extensive shipyards which also bordered upon this area. The
citizens also asked that the Burial Ground be moved, for they saw it as a threat to their supply of drinking water which was drained from a nearby field. Ignoring the pleas of the inhabitants of St. Roch and acting upon the reports from its various experts, the Executive Council decided that the best possible measures had been taken. However, the Government did not wish to alienate the city and therefore, they suggested that if the City Council, despite their assurances, still objected to the site of the sheds, then the Government would place the funds at the disposal of the Council and they could erect the sheds on a site of their own choice.

This suggestion quickly brought a petition from the freeholders and inhabitants of the Parish of St. Joseph de la Pointe Levi (the alternate site suggested for the erection of the sheds). The petitioners declared that it is with the greatest alarm and terror that your Petitioners have learned from the public papers, that it is proposed to erect in the Parish aforesaid, Hospitals and other buildings for the reception and treatment of Emigrants attacked by contagious pestilential diseases, and that they view with the greatest uneasiness the bringing of diseases of a contagious nature into a thickly peopled neighbourhood, and are sincerely of the opinion that it is their duty to declare to Your Excellency, that they should hold themselves wanting in their duty to their families, to themselves, and to the inhabitants of the neighbouring parishes, if they willingly allowed the establishment among them and among a dense population, of receptacles for the sick, which would thus become a focus of infection whence contagious diseases might
spread rapidly from parish to parish, and thence perhaps throughout the rest of the country.  

One of their suggestions was the extension of the facilities at Grosse Isle; any site, but the one in their midst, was acceptable to them. The petition carried 442 signatures; all but a very few were French and 340 of the petitioners were illiterate, making their mark with an 'X'.

The citizens of Montreal were also awakening to the danger represented by the fever sheds in their midst. While most official sources declared that the health of the city was quite good, \(^{114}\) many people were growing uneasy about the increasing number of immigrants, both sick and healthy, roaming Montreal's streets. The master of the steamer the John Munn was vilified in Montreal newspapers, when he dared to land his immigrant passengers in the heart of the city "in defiance of public opinion and the orders of the authorities." \(^ {115}\) Citizens of Montreal, under the direction of the Montreal Emigration Committee (headed by Adam Ferrie), demanded the removal of the sheds to some location, such as Boucherville Island, below the city. \(^ {116}\) It was the Committee's opinion that the present site presented too much of a threat to the public health of the city — it was too easily accessible to Montreal inhabitants. \(^ {117}\) The Committee's suggestion was very popular with much of the Montreal community, especially as
the numbers of the sick at the sheds continued to rise.\textsuperscript{118} The Transcript of July 10\textsuperscript{th} pointed out that the interests of the city were beginning to suffer seriously from the alarm which had been excited by the distress of this season's immigration; there were far fewer American tourists this summer than previously. Something had to be done to reduce the numbers of sick in Montreal.

The suggestion of the Montreal Emigration Committee was referred to Montreal's Immigration Commission\textsuperscript{119}, established by the Executive Council on July 7\textsuperscript{th}.\textsuperscript{120} The Immigration Commission, despite Ferrie's presence, rejected the Emigration Committee's proposal.\textsuperscript{121} Their rejection of the Boucherville site and their decision to erect additional sheds at Windmill Point and Pointe St. Charles caused considerable protest.\textsuperscript{122} Public meetings were held and angry letters were exchanged in the Montreal newspapers, but the Commissioners would not reverse their decision.\textsuperscript{123} If the site were moved to the Island, the Commissioners feared that it would become another Grosse Isle; the present location was the best one available.\textsuperscript{124} Whether or not this was true is difficult to ascertain, but an important consideration in the refusal to accede to the citizens' demands was the fact that preparations were already underway at the Pointe St. Charles location. \textit{La Minerve} described the decision as
one of an administration which had decided "to oppose all popular measures and all arrangements recommended by the majority"; however, it did not find this astonishing on "the part of a cabinet which governs with two to three voices and which must fear the majority."

The question was carried to the chambers of the Legislative Council, but they too, in the end, supported the decision of the Montreal Immigration Commission. Those who objected to the Pointe St. Charles location were told that it was too late to move the large numbers of sick then being cared for and that as long as the citizens avoided any contact with the immigrants there was little danger to their health. But the citizens of Montreal were not convinced; a public meeting, chaired by Adam Ferrie, was held and the citizens decided to appeal directly to the Governor-General. In their opinion, the Montreal Immigration Commission had offered a "wanton insult" to them by ignoring their requests. Elgin, on the advice of the Executive Council, who were in turn supported by their experts, the Immigration and Medical Commissions, also ignored Montreal's demands. The transfer of the immigrants to the sheds at Pointe St. Charles was eventually carried out in early August, but this did not bring an end to the complaints from Montreal residents. The mood in Montreal was not a happy one, but no violent demonstrations took place; expressions of discontent
were limited to editorials and letters to the editor.\textsuperscript{131} Toronto was never faced with the difficulties that Montreal and Quebec were; from the start, the city made sure that the immigrants were kept well-segregated from the city's native population. Despite the fact that the situation was well under control in Toronto, the city still felt it necessary to object to the condition in which the immigrants arrived on its wharves. Montreal, declared the Toronto \textit{Globe}\textsuperscript{132}, was merely dumping its refuse into Toronto's lap; the paper did not realize that the immigrants forwarded on to them represented the best of the Irish who had made it to Montreal. The real refuse of the season's immigration were still in the sheds and hospitals of both Grosse Isle and Montreal.

However, the Canadian community did open its heart to one group among the immigrants; the plight of the Irish orphans, and, to a certain extent, the widows as well, captured the attention of many of Canada's charitable organizations. Early in the season the Government's consideration had been directed to the one hundred and fifty Irish children who had lost their parents by the time they had reached Montreal.\textsuperscript{133} Arrangements were being made by the Government to provide shelter and care for the orphans, when various private charitable organizations stepped in and offered to take control of the situation in return for some financial assistance.\textsuperscript{134}
In Montreal, Bishop Bourget, through the offices of his secretary Father Cazeau, the Grey Nuns and the Montreal Protestant Orphan Asylum all offered their services to the Government and had their offers accepted. The Montreal Ladies' Benevolent Institution also joined in, but their frame of reference was slightly different from that of the other groups. While the Executive Council agreed that immigrant orphans should certainly be cared for at the Government's expense, at least until suitable situations could be found for them in rural parishes, they did not feel the same responsibility towards the widows whom the Benevolent Institution also wished to assist. This attitude did not daunt the Benevolent Ladies' Institution nor the women directors of the Protestant Orphan Asylum, who also provided shelter for widows. Both organizations used the funds granted to them by the Government to provide for the orphans and relied upon private donations to afford temporary relief to those widows in need. Once the widows, and older children as well, were able to work, places of employment were provided for them.

An organization similar to those in Montreal was established in Toronto, under the direction of William Allen, a prominent Toronto businessman. The Association received a grant of one hundred pounds from the Executive Council and undertook to raise that same amount from
private donations. On August 21st, an appeal for funds was made in the pages of the Toronto Globe; it was to be a very successful appeal. At the same time the nature and aims of the organization were set forth. For the thirty widows then under its care, the association hoped to provide temporary food and shelter until employment could be found for them; while for the one hundred and forty orphans, it was hoped that new homes could be found among the citizens of Toronto and the neighbouring communities. Institutions designed to provide assistance to destitute widows and orphans also appeared in such smaller communities as Peterborough and Kingston, although the Government knew nothing about them until very late in the season when they applied for financial assistance.

The organizations were all highly successful in finding new homes for their charges. At one point, in Montreal, there were not enough healthy children to meet the demand. In Quebec alone, through the offices of the Roman Catholic Church, places were found for more than eight hundred orphans by the time the immigration season closed. There was no hesitation on the Government's part in providing aid for those who could, because of age or sex, be expected to manage on their own.

But as the scenes of destitution and suffering became commonplace in Canadian communities, people became less concerned about refusing aid to anyone who was in any way
employable. A letter from the Transcript’s Quebec correspondent captured the mood of many of Quebec’s and Montreal’s inhabitants. He stated that the situation of the destitute Irish immigrant in Canada now demanded that the donations of charity to the Irish Relief Fund be spent in Canada, "to relieve the victims of the Famine seen dragging along their enfeebled frames through the streets of our cities." On June 22nd, the balance of the United Fund was applied to this end. Some Quebec citizens obviously agreed with the Transcript correspondent, for on June 23rd they held a public meeting (which was not as well-attended as the organizers had hoped) "to take into consideration the condition of the Emigrants" and to discuss the adoption of measures for the emigrant’s assistance and protection. The citizens planned to work through the offices of the Quebec Emigration Society (founded in 1819), which was to solicit funds from among the inhabitants of Quebec. One of the speakers, a Mr. J.B. Forsyth, stated that this was a golden opportunity for the private citizens to step in and aid the Government in its efforts to deal with the unprecedented sickness and destitution among the season's immigrants. The Society, presided over by Quebec's mayor, G. O'Kill Stuart, was to examine the effectiveness of the quarantine system and assist the distressed immigrants. It was also to petition the legislature, demanding an investigation into
the state of immigration. However, no reports were issued on behalf of the Society and thus it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of their proposed actions. A similar meeting was held in Toronto, again not too numerously attended. Its organizers had hoped to establish an asylum for convalescent immigrants, but again there is no evidence that they were able to effect their plan.

Practical measures did not occupy all the time of the Canadian communities; they also found time to voice their objections concerning the nature of the season's immigration to both their own and the imperial governments. The Corporation of Montreal complained directly to the Queen. On June 23rd a petition was addressed to Her Majesty by John E. Mills, Mayor of Montreal, pointing out that while Canadians had always welcomed "a wholesome immigration" of men willing and able to work, an immigration of "paupers unused to labour, of mendicants with large families, averse from every industrial pursuit, of whole cargoes of human beings in a state of destitution, and every state of disease — must and do prove a grievous burden to the colony." The City of Montreal, despite suggestions to the contrary, had done everything possible to provide for the wants of the immigrants stopping in their city, but the numbers had been so great that the resources of the city were quickly exhausted. The community, in a very short space of time, had been forced to provide for
more than five hundred orphaned immigrant children alone. Unless some action was taken by the Imperial authorities, the petitioners foresaw great suffering and mortality prevailing in the cities in which the immigrants congregated during the long and severe winter. With food both scarce and very expensive, hundreds would perish. Only assistance from the Imperial Government could prevent such a calamity, because the colonies, unlike their neighbours to the south, could not "reject the starving shiploads."

The Toronto Globe of August 4th and 7th told the imperial authorities that they had "much to answer for, in not watching over these destitute and helpless ones, and seeing that they were fit for the voyage, and had the requisite accommodations provided for them."152

Anger and frustration with the problem which had been dumped in Canada's lap by the Home Government eventually permeated even Canadian governmental circles. Early in May, before the first boats had arrived, Elgin had described the prevalent feeling in Canada as one of alarm concerning the expected immigration.153 As we have seen, this feeling was well-justified, and the Executive Council, with Elgin at its head, soon found itself bombarded with requests for the authority and the financial support to carry out relief measures. Canada's government during
the period of crisis was in the hands of the Tories, under Henry Sherwood; they had a majority of no more than two, and hence their position was not a strong one. The Baldwin-Lafontaine reform coalition, in opposition, could see that the Government was on its last legs and had decided to sit and back and wait for it to fall in the election that all knew must come very shortly. The opposition's position was further strengthened by the stance adopted by Canada's new Governor-General, Lord Elgin. Elgin and his superior at the Colonial Office, Lord Grey, were both firmly committed to a policy of responsible government for the colonies. "Government was to rest on whatever party controlled parliament, and change only when that control itself changed."154

It was under these circumstances, a weak government which had little of the people's confidence, and an opposition which was waiting for the next election, that Canada had to cope with the largest and most destitute and sickly immigration that she had ever witnessed. The Government had no unified plan when the immigrants first hit Canada's shores, but as the magnitude of the immigrants' distress became increasingly apparent, the Executive Council, as has been noted, authorized the establishment of local boards of health to provide some form of relief to the destitute Irish who had reached Canada. This move was necessitated by the fact that the Canadian communities
had no local rates of their own which could be used to support this influx of paupers. To further complicate the situation, the financial resources available to the executive branch of the Government were very limited. The extensive public works projects of the early 'forties had severely strained the Province's resources, and with the Province now facing a commercial depression as well, sufficient funds to meet the crisis were very hard to obtain. From the end of May to well past the close of the season, the Executive Council was to spend much of its time considering requests for funds to provide medical aid, relief and shelter for the immigrants, and searching for private charitable organizations to help in the maintenance of the many orphans thrust upon Canadian communities.

Not all Canadians were satisfied with the steps taken by the Executive. It was attacked in the Legislative Assembly. On June 16th, Mr. T.C. Alywin (a member of the Reform coalition from Quebec City) demanded that all papers related to the management of Grosse Isle be placed before the House, in order that complaints concerning the conditions there might be answered knowledgeably. His request was granted on June 21st. His motion was also used as an opportunity to criticize the Government's handling of the crisis; Dr. Nelson (Alywin's colleague from Richelieu) accused the Government of responding
much too slowly, while Mr. Chabot (the other reform member from Quebec) "condemned the apathy of the Government". Members of the Government responded by stating that there was far more misery than they could possibly hope to deal with; the fault was not theirs, but rested rather with those across the sea who sent out such enfeebled creatures. There was some justification in this argument, but none in that of Mr. Cayley (the representative from Huron), who accused the Canadians of standing by "with their hands in their pockets" waiting for the Government to act, rather than stepping forward themselves.

The subject of immigration continued to crop up in the Assembly, although no positive actions were taken. In response to a speech made by Dr. Nelson, in which he had called attention "to the alarming state of the emigrants at the sheds and the danger thereby incurred to the health of the city [Montreal]", the Solicitor-General, J.H. Cameron, moved that the Assembly make an address to the Queen "on the subject of the present system of emigration." This address, dated June 25th, described the apprehensions which the colony had entertained from the unprecedented influx of immigrants "in a state of destitution, starvation and disease unparalleled in the history of the province." The preparations which the colony had made on the advice of the imperial authorities had proven totally inadequate;
their quarantine system had collapsed and, as a result, fever was making an appearance throughout the colony. While Canada was always prepared to welcome immigrants, they felt that the present immigration was calculated to produce a most injurious effect on their prosperity and they asked that the emigration which was then underway not be allowed to continue under the present conditions. However, no suggestions were offered as to how the Imperial Government might alter the nature of the emigration in mid-stream; that was their problem. Attention was also directed to the large expenditures which the distressed condition of the emigration had necessitated; the Assembly stated that they hoped that these expenses would be met from Imperial funds, thus beginning a debate which was to continue for almost a year.

Both the Executive and Legislative Councils lent their voices to that of the Assembly, and the texts of their addresses were, for the most part, similar to that of the Assembly. The Legislative Council's address, however, also contained a veiled threat; the Council hoped that it would be able to avoid the necessity of adopting any legal provisions, similar to those adopted by the United States, for the protection of their inhabitants. If the Mother Country wished to prevent such an occurrence, she must take steps to protect her colony from the type of emigration which was then underway. The Colony was certainly not in any position to bear
the burden which was being thrust upon it.

By early July, there were very few colonial officials who did not feel that the Imperial Government should provide the funds for the maintainence of the destitute and sick immigrants who had found their way to Canada's shores. Elgin, in a private letter to Grey, assessed the mood of the colony. Elgin himself described the immigration as "a frightful scourge".

Thousands upon thousands of poor wretches are coming here, incapable of work, and scattering the seeds of disease and death.

As for the impact of the immigration on the colony itself:

Considerable panic exists among the inhabitants. Political motives contribute to swell the amount of dissatisfaction produced by this state of things. The opposition make the want of adequate provisions to meet this overwhelming calamity in the shape of hospitals, etc., a matter of charge against the Provincial administration. That section of the French who dislike British Immigration at all times find, as might be expected, in the circumstances of this year, a theme for copious declamations. Persons who cherish republican sympathies ascribe these evils to our dependent position as colony. 'The states of the Union' they say, 'can take care of themselves, and avert the scourge from their shores, but we are the victims on whom inhuman Irish landlords, etc., can charge the consequences of their neglect and rapacity.'

It was the opinion of the majority of the Canadians, Elgin told Grey, that "Great Britain must make good to the Province the expense entailed upon it by this visitation." At Montreal alone, the expenses incurred
by July 12th were already more than twelve thousand pounds. Elgin asked Grey to understand the difficulties of his position; to this point, Elgin rightly pointed out, the colony had shown a good deal of "forebearance and good feeling", but this was slowly beginning to wear thin.

The aspect of affairs is becoming more and more alarming. The panic which prevails in Montreal and Quebec is beginning to manifest itself in the Upper Province, and farmers are unwilling to hire even the healthy immigrants because it appears that since the warm weather set in typhus has broken out in many cases among those who were taken into service at the commencement of the season as being perfectly free from disease.

The Home Government must do everything within its power to prevent the current type of emigration from continuing.

Grey's reply offered very few assurances; he was 'grieved' to learn of the distressed and diseased state of the immigrants, but there were no offers of imperial financial assistance. He addressed Elgin:

You will I am sure do what is necessary and not more, the relief really required must of course be given but I am sure the experience we have had in Ireland will without my pressing it upon you sufficiently prove to you the absolute necessity of giving it in such a form as not to be accepted by those who can dispense with it -- for the able-bodied food for wh. they shd be compelled to work is what alone shd be given— as to the sick and infirm there is less danger of abuse, but it must never be forgot that it is the nature of these people to endeavour by every imaginable art to throw themselves for support upon others.

Grey's remarks demonstrate very clearly his inability
to understand the problems presented to the colony by the Irish immigration. He did not know, as the colonial officials did, how few of the Irish immigrants were able-bodied enough to support themselves when they first reached the colony. Canadian officials were as careful as possible when providing assistance, both medical and financial, to the immigrants, but in the midst of such great suffering the "nature of these people" was soon forgotten by most Canadians.

Throughout July, the newspaper columns were full of tales of the sufferings of the Irish and of the frauds committed against them. Government actions were debated in the Legislative Council; steps taken, or not taken, were criticized, and then defended, but again no practical suggestions emerged from all these debates.

La Minerve, on July 4th, was already worrying about the fate of the immigrants once winter arrived; there not enough jobs for Canada's own labourers.

This statement represented a considerable exaggeration on the paper's part, for although employment opportunities were scarce in the larger towns, there was always a demand for cheap farm labour in Canada. However, as Elgin pointed
out, most farmers would not hire the Irish; they could not overcome "their dread of infection and they even left work unexecuted, rather than admit into their family labour which had recently arrived". But even if the farmers had been willing to hire the Irish, the majority of the immigrants, after their arduous journey, had neither the strength, the skill nor the resources to support themselves. They were, for a time, completely at the mercy of the Canadians' good will and generosity, which was to serve them well. On July 29th, the Legislative Assembly was prorogued, and the Executive Council was left to deal with the immigration on nearly the same basis as it had begun the season; the only change was a vote of twenty thousand pounds from the Legislative Assembly, a sum which would just meet the expenses incurred by Montreal to that date.

By August, conditions seemed to have improved somewhat. With the exception of Montreal, the fever had been confined to the immigrant sheds; even in Montreal, only certain suburbs were affected by the disease, but this did not prevent the circulation of many wild rumours concerning the state of Montreal's public health. The Transcript of August 10th complained about the rumours which described Montreal as "a pest-house" in which at least one-half of the population was dying; trade suffered quite badly because of such stories. The Transcript pointed
out that the number of deaths was declining.

Even as immigrants continued to arrive at Grosse Isle, thoughts in the colony were being turned to the consideration of ways to prevent a repetition of the past season's disasters. In the August 10th and 11th editions of the Quebec Morning Chronicle, "P.A." offered his suggestions. Deploiring the conditions under which the Irish had been shipped to Canada, he pointed out (with good reason) that if these conditions were improved, and here he offered a number of practical suggestions such as the establishment of further inspection facilities in Great Britain and the appointment of doctors to all vessels carrying more than fifty passengers, then a good deal of the sickness would be avoided. With regard to the reception of healthy immigrants, there should be a separate location established for them near Grosse Isle and a scheme should be devised for quickly forwarding any immigrants who wished to work on public works projects to the area where their labour was required. If such steps were taken, the colony need have no fears about a repetition of the events of 1847.

Further criticism of both the Home and Colonial Governments' handling of the crisis also made its appearance in Canadian papers during the month of August. The Toronto Globe of August 7th felt that the Home Government deserved much blame for not taking the necessary measures
to prevent many of the emigrants from leaving "until they were in a fit state for encountering the voyage", and "in providing proper sea supplies for the poorer sort."

The paper failed to point out, however, what a radical change which such actions would have entailed; it would have involved subverting all the principles upon which the Whig political philosophy was based. The Irish Famine, much to the misfortune of the Irish nation, had occurred at the height of *laissez-faire* politics.

Montreal's Board of Health, in its report of August 12th, 178 launched a far more scathing attack on both the Imperial and Colonial administrations. Colonial inaction came in for heavy criticism. Not only had the Colonial Government waited until July 1st, by which time disease and destitution were rife in Montreal, before appointing local organizations to deal with the crisis, but also it then proceeded to establish two separate bodies, who adopted opposing stances concerning the measures best suited to deal with the crisis. This was done "dans un temp où les circonstances demandent imperieusement l'action prompt, energique, et décisive d'un seul homme."

As a result:—

*on a virtuellement converti* de sang-froid et avec délibération une cité populeuse, la métro-pole d'un pays étendu, en une station de quar-tantaine par la détention dans ses limites de milliers d'individus malades et infectés de maladies contagieuses à qui l'on permet d'être en libre communication avec les citoyens et
de porter leur exhalaisons contagieuses dans chaque maison.

The Board also questioned the right of the Imperial Government to throw its surplus population of poor on to the shores of another country, even when the country was its own colony. In very accurately assessing its own position, the Board felt that their recommendations had been ignored and that it had had no powers or resources to effect any changes in the state of Montreal's public health. They had asked the Government to dissolve the Board, but had been refused. All that was left to them was to issue the latest statistics concerning the state of Montreal's public health, which showed a marked increase in the number of fever victims among Montreal's residents.179

Table 2

Official Report of Burials in Montreal from June 5 to August 7, 1847.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residents of Montreal</th>
<th>924</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emigrants buried in the city cemetery</td>
<td>444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emigrants who died in city and were buried at the sheds</td>
<td>362 806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 29 to August 10 - deaths in city</td>
<td>1730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emigrant deaths in the sheds</td>
<td>1510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total deaths in 9 weeks</td>
<td>3240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1846 Emigrant deaths</td>
<td>491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in 1847</td>
<td>2846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 weeks - cases of fever among residents</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1846 ditto</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Montreal Grand Jury felt that Montreal's increased crime rate could be attributed in part to the large numbers of destitute immigrants which crowded the streets. A suggested solution, popular with all Montreal citizens but those with the power to effect the change, was the removal of the immigrant sheds to a spot well below the city.

One private citizen, Dr. William Oscar Dunn, from Coteau-du-Lac, was so angered by the nature of the season's immigration that he addressed a pamphlet to the Prime Minister, Lord John Russell, on the subject. This season's immigration had witnessed "the most glaring acts of injustice, both to the poor, deluded, suffering immigrants, as well as to the industrious and benevolent inhabitants of this province." He had frequently visited Montreal's sheds, where he had seen nearly two thousand adults in different stages of disease and whose numbers were reduced by some twenty to forty each day. Montreal also had two to three hundred orphans left in its charge, some only twenty days old; under the care of Bishop Bourget, they were gradually being found homes among the French Canadian families of the surrounding area. It was obvious, Dunn stated, that something was radically wrong with the emigration system; this was not the work of Providence, but that of degenerate men. The fault
could be traced to the rapacity of the Irish landlords; the British Government long ago should have forced these men to do their duty "as men and Christians." Here was a man who truly understood the nature of Ireland's troubles. In Ireland, one had two sharply divided worlds, that of the starving Irish peasant, reduced to idleness and inactivity, and that of the bloated Irish aristocracy.

Would this gloomy and dark state of affairs ever have taken place, if the rich and influential had been moving in their proper sphere of action; if they had had a proper regard for the welfare and happiness of their fellow-man; if they had been actuated by the divine principle of philosophy and the employment of part of their super-abundance of wealth for the benefits of their fellow-man; if they had formed an Emigration Association on a large, liberal and efficient scale, giving a healthy tone to society, by the reduction of the numbers of labourers and the consequent increase in the price of labour to such a pitch it would enable a man to support his family with some degree of comfort.

But these developments had not taken place and consequently Canada was forced to suffer.

Emigrants are now thrown by the tens of thousands upon our shores, spreading disease and sorrow, and death among the unoffending inhabitants of this Province, who are daily treading the path of virtue and the path of duty, by faithfully fulfilling their respective occupations.

Several of Canada's leading citizens had already sacrificed their lives in their attempts to assist their suffering fellow human beings, a sacrifice made by very
few of the Irish landlords. The British Government must use the powers at its disposal "to work a radical cure for Ireland" and put an end to this fatal emigration.

At the local level, appeals for public charity and denunciations of the British Government still occupied the pages of the local newspapers. The Transcript of August 28th declared that

"too strong language can scarcely be found to express the sentiments of the people of this country towards those persons at home who have had the superintendence of emigration committed to their charge, or towards those, however exalted they may be, who have thus ruthlessly forced upon the shores of Canada, thousands of their fellow creatures, only fit for the hospital in the Mother Country, whence they have been shipped away for America, as a band of outcasts, none caring, or at least seeming to care, for their comfort or even their lives, or the lives of those among whom they have been sent, with seeds of pestilence among them, scattering disease and death wherever they have planted their footsteps."

There was also a growing concern for the immigrants' plight once winter struck. "What are they to do when winter approaches, God only knows -- thousands of the poor wretches must perish." Quebec's Board of Health voiced a similar fear:

"these persons [the sick] it is feared will be thrown upon the inhabitants of Quebec in great numbers, and appalling will be the suffering both to themselves and the Quebec public, if timely and efficient measures be not taken to meet the emergency."

La Minerve of September 9th expressed much the same con-
cern, asking if Montreal was ready to care for the immigrants who would be left at the doorstep once the Grosse Isle Quarantine Station closed for the winter. "Alors, quel sera le sort des citoyens durant l'hiver entourés d'une population sans pains et sans abris?"195

One organization, however, did more than just express its fears; a Grand Jury at the Mayor's Court, Toronto, offered, in its presentiments, some suggestions on the very topical subject of immigration.196 Certain that there would be "great numbers of poor, without means of support throughout the coming winter", and convinced that it would be a great injustice to charge their support on the City or the Province, the Jury suggested a plan of relief which was to be paid for by the Imperial Government. Funds should be placed at the disposal of the various cities and towns for the employment and support of the indigent immigrants. A public meeting held in Toronto in late September, recommended the building of a House of Industry for the employment of any distressed immigrants.197 But no action was taken on this recommendation, for the Executive Council, in response to a similar request from Montreal, had refused to supply the funds for the establishment of such institutions.198 The Government was not justified in providing at public expense, for the continued maintainence and support of those, who, having been kept during sickness and convalescence at public expense, have been dis-
charged from Hospital in a condition equal with the other poor, to earn their livelihood by their own exertions. Some distress would undoubtedly result, but the responsibility of alleviating it must rest with the various communities in which the immigrants congregated. The Government was prepared to offer assistance only to those still requiring care at the sheds, and even here, those able to work would be required to spend part of their day at a special shed either picking oakum or engaged in some other equally useful occupation. Public charity was left to and did alleviate the distress of those able-bodied immigrants unable to find work.

By late September, plans were being made for the closure of most of Canada's immigration facilities. It had been decided that the convalescents and sick left at Grosse Isle at the closure of the navigation season would be removed to the sheds at Quebec and Montreal, which were already suitable as winter quarters. In mid-September, A.B. Hawke made a tour of the Province, visiting the various boards of health, and he recommended the closure of those where the numbers of immigrants were not sufficient to warrant the existence of winter accommodations. He found that the services of twenty-one of the twenty-eight local boards could be dispensed with; winter quarters would have to be furnished in Kingston, Montreal, Toronto and Quebec, with the sick left in other communities
being transferred to one of these locations. Even at the close of the season, the past year's immigration continued to be a much discussed subject. The Grand Juries of six Canadian districts quite spontaneously took it upon themselves to discuss the topic in their various presentiments. The judge to whom the reports were offered stated that "these remonstrances... may be looked upon as expressing very generally the sentiments and feelings of their respective districts." All the juries deplored the destitute and diseased state in which the emigrants had arrived and the losses, both human and financial, which the emigration had entailed. A wholesome, well-directed and well-organized emigration was always welcome, but unfortunately last season's had been far from this. The Prince Edward and Niagara Juries both felt that the British Government had simply permitted yet another injury to an already stricken colony.

The Grand Jury, aware of the great injury the commercial interests of this province have sustained in consequence of the policy the British Government has lately deemed it prudent to pursue by the deprivation of those advantages which as colonists we possessed in the British market, cannot but express their regret that so great an additional injury should have been inflicted upon the people of Canada as the unchecked translation to this province of thousands of the pauper population of the mother-country, many of whom, on their embarkation, exhibited symptoms of that fatal disease which
has swept away such vast numbers, not of the emigrants alone, but also of the settled inhabitants of this province. All but one Grand Jury, that of Newcastle District, expressed their loud disapproval of the actions of the Irish landlords; the Grand Jury of the Midland District was at a loss to find language sufficiently strong to express its deprecation of the moral turpidity of the leading men and landlords who have advised, encouraged and assisted to leave their native land... such a large body of destitute countrymen, many of them too old to work for their living, others exhausted by famine and sickness, and some of them even blind and crippled, who congregated into dense masses on board ship, without wholesome food or fresh air, have generated such contagious diseases as usually accompany such complications of misery, and without any reference to the evil consequences resulting to the inhabitants of this province.

Several of the Juries suggested public works projects, such as the construction of a road from Kingston to the Ottawa River, by which the immigrants could support themselves, rather than having to rely upon government relief or private charity. But no consideration was given to this suggestion; the funds available for such projects had already been exhausted. Thoughts of the upcoming winter and the fate of the immigrants was also a topic for discussion.

Did this grand jury consider that with the approach of winter all difficulties would disappear, they would forbear bringing their opinions forward on the occasion, but they feel that after the summer pestilence
has passed away it has left in the province
tens of thousands of sickly and unacclimated
persons to endure the bitterness of a Cana­
dian winter; and unless the people of the
province are taxed beyond their means, many
of these unfortunate creatures must perish
for want, to all of which they would submit
without a murmur did the cause of this
affliction originate in the colony; but it
is evident beyond a doubt that the misery
which the people of this province have en­
dured has been brought upon them for the
relief of the landlords at home, and if the
landlords are the parties relieved, then
upon them should fall the burden of meeting
the present exigencies and want.²¹³

There appeared to be no doubt in the minds of the various
members of the juries that it was the responsibility
of the Imperial Government to pay for the costs of the
season's disastrous immigration; it was also the respon­
sibility of both the Colonial and Imperial administration
to take any measures necessary to prevent a repetition
of the events of the past season.²¹⁴

By October 28th, the last of the fever patients had
been removed from Grosse Isle and sent to the hospital at
Montreal, and on October 30th the quarantine station was
closed.²¹⁵ The immigration season of 1847 had finally
drawn to a close; the colony could now sit back and attempt
to assess the costs incurred and the damage done by the
calamitous and unprecedented season, as well as consider the
measures necessary to prevent a repetition of the disasters
of 1847.

But Canada, much to her horror, soon discovered
that she had not yet seen her last emigrant ship; during
the first week of November the last two ships of the season, the **Lord Ashburton** and the **Richard Watson**, arrived at Quebec, the Quarantine Station now being closed. Both ships contained tenants from Lord Palmerston's estates, 169 on the **Richard Watson** and 174 of the 481 passengers on the **Lord Ashburton**, who had been assisted by Palmerston's agents in their flight from Ireland. During the year, Irish landlords had assisted more than six thousand of their tenants (who otherwise could not have left) to reach Canada, by paying for their passage and providing provisions for the journey. In 1847, many of the landlords, whose estates were over-populated, began to use assisted emigration as an alternative to eviction, as they attempted to rid their estates of large numbers of destitute tenants. Assisted emigration, in the long run, was the most beneficial process, financially, for the landlord;

> the cost of emigrating a pauper was generally about half the cost of maintaining him in the work-house for one year, and once the ship had sailed the destitute were effectually got rid of, for they could only return with immense difficulty.

There was no regulation of the landlord assisted emigration but landlords wishing to send immigrants to Canada were told by the C.L.E.C. that funds should be provided for the immigrants on their arrival in the colony. An apparatus for forwarding landing money to the colony was established by the C.L.E.C., but it was never used.
The arrival of Palmerston's tenants, all destitute, and many very sickly (the Ashburton had lost sixty-eight emigrants during the crossing), caused considerable outrage in the colony. The landing of destitute assisted emigrants had, throughout the year, evoked critical comment from Canadians, and the debarkation of the assisted tenants of one of the Imperial Government's own ministers, after the end of the season, was the last straw. Imperial authorities and the Irish landlords were roundly attacked from all sides. The Gazette du Quebec wrote

'par trop mal! Le procédé est un disgrace pour les autorités imperiales, affligeant pour l'humanité et ruineux pour la colonie, dont un si grand nombre d'habitants les plus charitables et les plus respectables ont peri par suite de leur contact avec les émigrés, et où chaque jour de nouveau cas d'infection se découvrent dans différentes parties de la province.'

Another Quebec newspaper declared

'that the expatriation of the poverty-stricken of Great Britain has been systematized and most zealously carried out is beyond dispute; and that mercenary motives alone have dictated their transmission hither is equally certain. In support of our assertions we have only to refer to the Lord Ashburton, a vessel which sailed from Liverpool on the 13th of September with passengers. But we have yet a more striking, and a more melancholy, proof to record:-- it is that of the Richard Watson, from Sligo, with 169 passengers, which (after a quick run) arrived here on Sunday last. We must premise our sad narrative by stating that these poor creatures were the tenants of Lord Palmerston, and sent out by his agent, Mr. Smith. The tenants already sent out this year from this nobleman's estate had almost become a by-word for wretchedness. Of these passengers,
about one fourth were males, the remainder
women and children; and we have been assured
by a gentleman who saw them when they arrived
in port that a more destitute and helpless
set have not come out this year.

Who is to succour the paupers thrown among
us?
Can it be supposed that our fellow colonists
will submit to this wholesale and iniquitous
transfer of an obligation, only to be met
in the shape of a tax -- voluntary or other-
wise as circumstances may determine. No.
And this monosyllable must be expressive.  

Adam Ferrie (a member of the Legislative Council
and Chairman of Montreal's Emigration Society), was so
angered by the emigration, and especially that of the
assisted variety, which he had witnessed during the past
season that he addressed a letter, also published in pam-
phlet form, to the Colonial Secretary, Lord Grey, on this
subject.  

While declaring that it was not his intention
to impugn the motives of those landed pro-
prietary or the Mother Country, who have
sought, through the great stream of emi-
gation, to rid themselves of the burden
of a worn out and unprofitable population,
wholly destitute of that mental and phys-
ical exertion indispensable to useful labour
and the success of honest industry,

he then proceeded to do just that. When emigrants were
questioned concerning their reasons for emigrating in
such a debilitated and destitute state, they said that
"they were starving at home, and were induced to that
step by being promised many advantages, which they had
never realized. For example, Palmerston's tenants had been promised clothing and a good sum of money (from two to five pounds) upon arrival in Canada; these promises were never fulfilled. Ferrie also described the sufferings which the emigrants had endured during the passage: vessels were crowded with twice the number of passengers they were authorized by law to carry; provisions were either spoiled or insufficient to meet the needs of the emigrants. Ferrie felt compelled to express his deep regret that men pretending to be Christians, and especially the British, could be guilty of such barbarity, evidently for the paltry purpose of freeing themselves from the natural and just burden of assistance to support and provide for their own poor.

Canada, Ferrie pointed out, while always ready to welcome emigrants, must "protest against the introduction of such hordes of beggars and vagrants as have been so unceremoniously thrust upon this young and thinly populated land." It was to be hoped that the Government will wisely profit by the sad consequences which have resulted from the injudicious and arbitrary measures pursued by the Landed Proprietors and their mercenary agents; and that they will avail themselves of those facilities which may be offered by the people of Canada ... to secure more humane, liberal and beneficial planning of
emigration than hitherto attempted.\textsuperscript{231}

Palmerston's agents, in replying to Ferrie's charges,\textsuperscript{232} described many of his statements as "puerile and absurd", presented in a "careless and flippant manner". The agents, Kincaid and Stewart, felt that Ferrie had been deceived by the emigrants who had, no doubt, given "exaggerated statements of their destitution and poverty . . . in order to call forth the sympathy and liberality of their new friends", a rather lame explanation when one considers the description of the immigrants. No promises of clothing or money had been made to the emigrants; adequate provisions, exceeding the amount required by law, had been provided.\textsuperscript{233} It was also pointed out that the tenants themselves had requested assistance to enable them to emigrate, and they had been forced to turn down many requests, so great was the desire to escape from Ireland. (But then who would not want to emigrate when faced with the loss of one's home, starvation and fever.) Elsewhere, Kincaid and Stewart offered a less flattering portrait of those they had assisted.

'It is unnecessary to say that all persons were of the poorest class of farmer, very little better than paupers. If they had been able to retain their small farms and maintain themselves and their families at home they would not have entreated your Lordship [Palmerston] to send them to a strange country, nor is it probable that your Lordship would have incurred so great an expense for the purpose of removing from your estate a large body of tenantry solvent and able to pay their rent.'\textsuperscript{234}
1. Appendix to Sixth Volume of Journals, Appendix L, Douglas to Daly, May 21, 1847.

2. Ibid., Extract from a Report of the Committee of the Executive Council, May 24, 1847.

3. Ibid., Memorandum of A.C. Buchanan, May 21, 1847.

4. Ibid., Douglas to Daly, May 25, 1847.

5. Ibid., Douglas to Daly, May 29, 1847.

6. Ibid., May 29, 1847.

7. Ibid., May 29, 1847.

8. Ibid., Buchanan to Campbell, May 29, 1847.

9. Ibid., Daly to Painchaud, June 2, 1847.

10. Ibid., Boxer to Daly, June 1, 1847.

11. Ibid., Buchanan to Campbell, May 31, 1847.

12. Ibid., Boxer to Daly, June 1, 1847.

13. Ibid., Extract from a Report of the Committee of the Executive Council, June 1, 1847.

14. Ibid., Christie to Daly, May 31, 1847.

15. Ibid., May 31, 1847.

16. Ibid., May 31, 1847. Christie did get his request.

17. Appendix to Sixth Volume of Journals, Appendix RRR, Quarantine Station at Grosse Isle - Report of the Special Committee appointed to inquire into the Management of the Quarantine Station at Grosse Isle, Minutes of Evidence, Dr. G.W. Douglas, July 18, 1847.

18. Ibid., Minutes of Evidence, A.C. Buchanan, July 21, 1847.

19. Ibid., Minutes of Evidence, A.C. Buchanan, July 21, 1847.
Appendix to Sixth Volume of Journals, Appendix RRR, Minutes of Evidence, A.C. Buchanan, July 21, 1847.

Ibid., Minutes of Evidence, G.M. Douglas, July 18, 1847.


Appendix to Sixth Volume of Journals, Appendix RRR, Minutes of Evidence, Rev. Mr. Moylan, July 13, 1847.


Appendix to Sixth Volume of Journals, Appendix RRR, Minutes of Evidence, Rev. Mr. Moylan, July 13, 1847.

Ibid., Minutes of Evidence, G.M. Douglas, July 18, 1847.

Ibid., Minutes of Evidence, Rev. Mr. Moylan, July 13, 1847.


Ibid., p. 54.

Ibid., p. 54.

Ibid., p. 54.

Ibid., p. 54.

Ibid., p. 55.

Ibid., p. 55.

Ibid., p. 55.

Ibid., p. 55.


Ibid., p. 181.

Ibid., p. 182.

Appendix to Sixth Volume of Journals, Appendix RRR, Minutes of Evidence, Dr. J. Morin, July 17, 1847.
Appendix to Sixth Volume of Journals, Appendix RRR, Minutes of Evidence, Rev. Mr. O'Reilly, July 23, 1847.

Ibid., Minutes of Evidence, Rev. Mr. O'Reilly, July 23, 1847.

Ibid., Minutes of Evidence, Rev. Mr. O'Reilly, July 23, 1847 and Captain R.N. Boxer, July 20, 1847.

Appendix to Sixth Volume of Journals, Appendix L, Campbell and M'Donnell to Daly, June 4, 1847 and Campbell and M'Donnell to Douglas, June 5, 1847.

Ibid., Campbell and M'Donnell to Daly, June 4, 1847.

Ibid., Campbell and M'Donnell to Daly, June 4, 1847.


Ibid., p. 5.

Ibid., p. 5.


Ibid., p. 1345.


Appendix to Sixth Volume of Journals, Appendix R, Emigrant Sheds and Hospital at Quebec - Correspondence and other Documents respecting the erection of buildings for the reception of the sick emigrants, Petition of the Mayor and Council of the City of Quebec to the Earl of Elgin, June 12, 1847.

Careless, The Union of the Canadas, p. 21.

The Morning Chronicle (Quebec), June 11, 1847.

Canada, State Books, Volume F, June 1, 1847, pp. 600-01.

Ibid., pp. 600-01.
56 Canada, State Books, Volume F, June 1, 1847, p. 601.

57 Ibid., p. 601.

58 Ibid., p. 601.

59 The Morning Chronicle (Quebec), June 11, 1847.

60 Montreal Transcript, June 15, 1847.

61 Coleman, Passage to America, p. 149.


63 Most immigrants saw only the wharves of Quebec City.

64 Tucker, Commercial Revolution, p. 119.

65 Appendix to Sixth Volume of Journals, Appendix L, Memorandum of A.C. Buchanan, May 21, 1847.

66 Montreal Transcript, June 12, 1847.

67 Ibid., June 12, 1847.

68 Ibid., June 12, 1847.

69 Ibid., June 12, 1847.


71 The only positive step taken here was by the Harbour Commission, which in late June forbade the steamers to land their passengers in the heart of the city, but only after many deaths had occurred on the wharves. Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger, p. 233.

72 La Minerve (Montreal), August 19, 1847.

73 Ibid., August 19, 1847.


75 Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger, p. 233.


78 *Montreal Transcript*, June 24, 1847.


81 *La Minerve* (Montreal), June 28, 1847.

82 *Montreal Transcript*, June 21 and 24, 1847 and *La Minerve*, July 26, 1847.

83 See Table 1.


87 The Board was first established to deal with the cholera epidemic of 1832.


96 *Toronto Globe*, June 23, 1847.
Gallagher, "The Irish Emigration," _Irish Ecclesiastical Record_, p. 53.


_Toronto Globe_, July 17, 1847.


Cowan, _British Emigration_, p. 185.

Gallagher, "The Irish Emigration," _Irish Ecclesiastical Record_, p. 52.

Cowan, _British Emigration_, p. 185.

Gallagher, "The Irish Emigration," _Irish Ecclesiastical Record_, pp. 52-3.

_Ibid._, pp. 52-3.

_The Morning Chronicle_ (Quebec), June 25, 1847.

Appendix to Sixth Volume of Journals, Appendix R, Inhabitants of St. Roch's Ward to the Mayor and Council of Quebec, June 10, 1847.


_Ibid._, June 15, 1847.

_Ibid._, Humble Petition of the undersigned freeholders and inhabitants of the Parish of St. Joseph de la Pointe Levi, in the County of Dorchester, in the District of Quebec to the Earl of Elgin, June 15, 1847.

_Ibid._, June 15, 1847.

Montreal Transcript, July 1, 1847 and _La Minerve_, June 28 and July 4, 1847.

Montreal Transcript, July 8, 1847.

_Ibid._, July 8, 1847.
The Commission members were John Mills, Mayor of Montreal, Adam Ferrie, a member of the Legislative Council and chairman of the Montreal Emigration Committee, John Dougall, the editor of the Montreal Witness, John Tobin and John Ryan.


La Minerve, July 15, 1847.

Ibid., July 15, 1847.

Montreal Transcript, July 15 and 20, 1847.

Ibid., July 20, 1847.

La Minerve, July 15, 1847.

Ibid., July 15, 1847.

Ibid., July 15, 1847.

Ibid., July 22, 1847.

Ibid., July 22, 1847.

Montreal Transcript, July 17, 1847.

Ibid., August 3, 1847.

Ibid., August 31, 1847.

Montreal Transcript, August 31, 1847 and La Minerve, August 5, 1847.

Toronto Globe, July 28, 1847.


Ibid., August 4, 1847, pp. 218-19.

Ibid., September 8, 1847, pp. 370-71.

Ibid., August 11, 1847, pp. 238-9.

Ibid., p. 239.


O'Reilly, "The Irish Famine," Irish Ecclesiastical Record, p. 877.

Montreal Transcript, June 15, 1847.

Ibid., June 22, 1847.

The Morning Chronicle, June 23, 1847.

Ibid., June 23, 1847.

Ibid., June 23, 1847.

Toronto Globe, July 17, 1847.

Papers relative to emigration, H.C., 1847-8 (50), Vol. XLVII, p. 8. John E. Mills, Mayor of Montreal to Her Majesty the Queen, June 23, 1847.

See below, p. 111.

Toronto Globe, August 4, 1847.


Careless, The Union of the Canadas, p. 115.

Tucker, Commercial Revolution, p. 120.

Careless, The Union of the Canadas, p. 114.


Montreal Transcript, June 17, 1847.
Appendix to Sixth Volume of Journals, Appendix

Montreal Transcript, June 17, 1847.

Ibid., June 17, 1847.

Ibid., June 17, 1847.

Ibid., June 26, 1847.

Ibid., June 26, 1847.

Papers relative to emigration, H.C., 1847-8 (50), Vol. XLVII, p. 7. Allan N. Mac Nab, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, to the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty, June 25, 1847.


Papers relative to emigration, H.C., 1847-8 (50), Vol. XLVII, p. 10.


The Morning Chronicle, July 12, 1847.


Montreal Transcript, July 22, 1847.

Ibid., July 22, 1847.


Ibid., p. 59.

Montreal Transcript, July 29, 1847.

La Minerve, August 19, 1847.

See Table 2.

La Minerve, August 19, 1847.

Ibid., August 19, 1847.

A Citizen (Oscar Dunn), Thoughts on Emigration, Education, etc., In a Letter addressed to the Rt. Hon. Lord John Russell, Prime Minister of England (Montreal: J. Beckett, 1847).

Ibid., pp. 5-6.

Ibid., p. 16.

Ibid., pp. 6-7.

Ibid., p. 7.

Ibid., p. 9.

Ibid., p. 13.

Ibid., p. 13.


Ibid., pp. 13-14.

Ibid., p. 24.

Montreal Transcript, August 28, 1847.

The Morning Chronicle, August 12, 1847.

La Minerve, September 9, 1847.

Toronto Globe, September 4, 1847.

Ibid., September 22, 1847.


Ibid., p. 75.

Ibid., p. 75.

Ibid., p. 75.

Ibid., p. 20.

Ibid., p. 20.

Prince Edward, Niagara, Midland, Newcastle, Colborne and Victoria.


Papers relative to emigration, H.C., 1848 (932), Vol. XLVII, p. 7, Elgin to Grey, December 8, 1847.


Papers relative to emigration, H.C., 1848 (932), Vol. XLVII, p. 10.

Papers relative to emigration, H.C., 1847-8 (50), Vol. XLVII, p. 22.

Ibid., p. 23.

Papers relative to emigration, H.C., 1848 (932), Vol. XLVII, p. 9.

Ibid., p. 9.

Montreal Transcript, October 28, 1847.


Ibid., pp. 23-4.

Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger, p. 228.
Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger*, p. 228.

Ibid., p. 228.


Cited in *La Minerve*, November 4, 1847.


Ibid., p. 5.

Ibid., p. 7.

Ibid., p. 7.

Ibid., pp. 8-9.

Ibid., p. 9.

Ibid., p. 12.

Ibid., p. 16.


Ibid., p. 39.

AFTERMATH AND CONCLUSIONS
Despite the closure of navigation, conditions within the colony were not yet back to normal. On November 2\textsuperscript{nd}, the mayor of Quebec told the Executive Council that all the beds at the Marine and Emigrant Hospital were filled and would probably remain so throughout the winter.\textsuperscript{1} Requests for funds to meet the expenses of the boards of health were still being received.\textsuperscript{2} Elgin wrote on November 18\textsuperscript{th}:-

fever cases among the leading persons in the community here still continue to excite much comment and alarm. This day the Mayor of Montreal (J.E. Mills) died, a very estimable man who did much for the emigrants — and to whose frimmness and philanthropy we chiefly owe it that the Immigrant Sheds were not tossed into the river by the people of the town during the summer.\textsuperscript{3} He has fallen a victim to his zeal on behalf of the poor plague stricken strangers, having died of ship fever caught at the shed.\textsuperscript{4}

Elgin also included in his letter to Grey an extract from a Hamilton paper, concerning the season's immigration. The paper was angered by Hawke's decision to close its sheds and hospital, transferring all the patients that could be moved to Toronto.

'The determination of the Emigrant Department not too afford any farther relief to the poor and sickly emigrants, will bear particularly hard on this city [of nearly ten thousand],\textsuperscript{5} which seems to have been made a sort of rallying point for those who cannot get employment in this section of the country. Some idea may be
formed of the evil which exists, when we state, on the authority of the Health Officer, that there are one thousand persons sick and destitute within the limits of the City! Many of these wretched beings are huddled together in damp cellars without food or clothing! Disease will surely result from this lamentable state of the poor emigrants, -- contagion will spread, and the wealthiest and healthiest will have to take his chance with the poor and weakly. This is not all of the evil. Every day the poor emigrants are seen coming into the city to seek that shelter for the winter which they cannot find in the country."

The Imperial Government did not escape criticism.

'This is a state of matters which the people of this city should strongly protest against. The inhumanity and heartlessness of parties in the mother country, have been the cause of overwhelming us with disease and poverty. The Imperial Government has not done its duty towards us. There was no attention paid to the number and health of the emigrants. It seemed the only object was to get rid of the poor, that they might not be a drag on the rich. They are bound therefore to relieve us from the pecuniary infliction -- the penalty of disease we unhappily must bear.'

Many Canadians were also now turning their attention to the magnitude and nature of the past season's immigration. One of the earliest and most accurate assessments of the season was offered by A.B. Hawke. According to his estimates, at least 92,000 emigrants had entered Canada during the past year, of which some 18,990 were merely passing through on their way to the United States. Of those who had remained in Canada, the majority had proceeded to Canada West. He asserted, rather optimistically, that fifty thousand of the immigrants had settled and found employment in various parts of
Canada, while death had claimed 15,046 and sickness another 5,136. The remaining seven thousand could be found "hanging loose upon society, especially about the towns". But Hawke then contradicted his glowing record with a devastating description of the season's immigrants. Seventy-five percent of the emigrants (fifty percent would have been more accurate but then one must remember that almost thirty thousand of the healthiest immigrants did not stop in Canada) had been diseased in body and of the lowest class of unskilled labourer. Few upon arrival were fit enough for farm labour, and even when they were, most farmers were afraid to employ them. Throughout Canada "an immigrant with a shaven head ... [was] an object of terror." Also included among the immigrants were a good number of aged and infirm who would never be able to support themselves. Widows with large families were also a problem; in three towns which had already provided their returns, there were 108 widows with 321 children, and forty-one of these had been widowed in Ireland and sent out by their landlords. This immigration had brought nothing but trouble to the colony; the immigrants had been "dirty in habits and unreasonable in their expectations as to wages" and had shown "little ambition or desire to adapt themselves to their new surroundings." This is a rather harsh judgment of the Irish who obviously were expected to be able to ad-
just immediately to their new surroundings despite their long ordeal and sufferings. Hawke concluded his report by stating that it had been fortunate for Canada that many of the immigrants had had friends or relatives who had been able to support them; the burden could have been much greater.

The Executive Council also offered its opinions concerning the past season's immigration. Repeating what was the general consensus of opinion among Canadians concerning immigration, the Council reassured the Imperial Government that a well-conducted emigration, consisting of settlers with adequate resources to establish themselves upon the land and healthy, vigorous labourers, was recognized as a beneficial addition to the colony, but unfortunately few of last season's arrivals had met these qualifications. Of the more than 84,000 emigrants which they estimated had reached Canada, approximately six-sevenths were Irish, many of whom were
decrepit, maimed, lame, the subjects of chronic disease, widows with large families of tender age, and others who, from infirmity or confirmed habits, were incapable of maintaining themselves at home by their own labour. These emigrants had, for the most part, been sent to Canada, either by their parish or their landlord. More than fifteen thousand of the poor Irish had died during the crossing or upon arrival, and another thirty thousand had required medical attention; nearly forty
thousand emigrants had received some form of relief at one time or another. The Council was at a loss to discover what advantage the province could obtain from the year's immigration:—it had (1) caused the loss of numbers of the colonies' most estimable citizens; (2) diverted from the province most of the usual summer American travellers; (3) exercised a most depressing influence upon the trade and commerce of the colony's principle cities; and (4) led to the utmost alarm and apprehension throughout the province. Canada's experience over the past season was contrasted with that of New York, which had been able to adopt stringent measures concerning the transportation of indigent emigrants to their port. Measures, similar

Table 3

A Comparison of Canada's Emigration Expenditures with that of the Emigration Committee appointed by the Legislature of New York

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In the Province of Canada</th>
<th>In the State of New York</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For the entire season - deaths</td>
<td>9,572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For the entire season - sick</td>
<td>27,163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At an expense of</td>
<td>£106,001 15s 3d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From May 5 to September 30 - deaths</td>
<td>703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From May 5 to September 30 - sick</td>
<td>6,761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At an Expenditure of nearly</td>
<td>£23,000 currency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to those which had protected the United States (but not as stringent), were suggested, hoping that they would be able to prevent a recurrence of the past season's miseries.  

The report of the Montreal Emigration Committee followed quickly on the heels of that of the Executive Council. In no period since the Conquest had Canada witnessed "such fearful scenes of destitution and suffering" as she had during the past year.

From Grosse Isle, the great charnel pit of victimized humanity, up to Port Sarnia and all along the borders of our magnificent river; upon the shores of Lake Ontario and Lake Erie -- wherever the tide of emigration has extended, are to be found the final resting places of the sons and daughters of Erin; one unbroken chain of graves where repose fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers in one commingled heap without a tear bedewing the soil or the stone marking the spot.

The Committee went on to describe their efforts of the past season, the attempts to assist the late Mr. Yarwood (another typhus victim), the Government Emigrant Agent, relieve the suffering and want which at times were almost beyond relief. In July, when the fever was at its worst, they had taken control of the sheds, but their funds had soon been exhausted. They had also provided assistance to those emigrants able to work by forwarding them to works along the line of the St. Lawrence and Atlantic railway. They had also forwarded many destitute
emigrants to the United States in order to prevent them from becoming a further burden upon the Canadian community. The Irish landlords and their agents were soundly criticized for the condition and manner in which they sent out their tenants. Canada had no use for "a refuse or work-house population", nor was its society structured to support such a population; the Committee protested "in the name of all that is just and right against being flooded with indolence combined with pauperism." It was obvious that the Imperial Government must institute stricter standards regarding the transportation of emigrants.

William Hedge, the Secretary of the Committee, took it upon himself to address a letter to the editor of the Montreal Transcript. In his letter he pointed out that Canada had not yet absorbed all of the immigrants of the past season, and until she had done so, no increase in immigration was needed; the influx of immigrants during the past year had exceeded the demand for labour by three times. Here Hedge considerably exaggerated the unemployment situation in the colony; as stated earlier, there was always a good demand for cheap farm labour in the colony, and once the farmers overcame their fear of the immigrants many easily found jobs in various Canadian communities. It was only in the eastern townships where
the employment situation was rather bleak, because of the stagnation of trade, that there were any large numbers of destitute Irish. Hedge quite rightly concluded however that the majority of the past season's immigrants had not been drawn to Canada by jobs

but were forced upon us, to rid a famine-stricken land of a surplus; or of such as she could not, or felt unwilling to support; and besides thus flooding a new country (relatively speaking) with such immense masses, a large proportion of which are qualified merely to act as drains upon society, operated injuries in many ways.

About the same time, a public meeting was held in Toronto to consider the steps that should be taken to prevent a recurrence of the disasters of the past season. It was pointed out at the meeting that to February 1st, 38,560 immigrants had been received in the city; this number had been disposed of in a variety of ways.

Table 4
The manner of the disposal of emigrants arriving at Toronto during the 1847 season.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arrived</th>
<th>38,560</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To Niagara, Hamilton and other places via the water routes</td>
<td>26,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To various parts of the country by land</td>
<td>8,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Died in the emigrant hospital and in lodgings in the town</td>
<td>1,124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Hospital still</td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the convalescent home</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the emigrant sheds</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the widows and orphans asylum</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In lodgings in the city</td>
<td>781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38,560</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of this total, 4355 had at some time been admitted to hospital, and 863 had died there. The Widows' and Orphans' Asylum had found places for 334 of their charges either in or near the city. Those at the meeting felt that Toronto had borne a heavy portion of the burden of last season's immigration and were determined to prevent a recurrence of this situation. They called on the Imperial Government for regulations which would offer the emigrants some protection during their passage and "would guard against the indiscriminate landing in Canada, of poor, helpless, unfortunate beings, who ought not to be allowed, in their sick, frail, impoverished condition, to leave their own country." Toronto had seen too many deaths and too many beggars filled its streets as a result of the past season's immigration. Those at the meeting asked:—

Was it right that this young country should be made the asylum of the sick and destitute in the mother country; that the responsibility of the Irish landowners should be transferred to Canada?

Of course not! It was decided that the meeting would present an address to the Governor-General, who was to forward it to the proper imperial officials, as well as one to the Legislative Assembly, requesting that the responsible officials adopt the necessary preventive measures.

It was not until late March, when the 1848 season
was nearly upon the colony, that the official statistics
for the past season were known. Buchanan, in his descrip-
tion of the character of the immigration, supported the
earlier statements of his fellow citizens. The nature
of the immigration had been exceedingly unfavourable; the
Irish immigrants had been of the lowest class.

Apart from the effects of disease, the mass of
the Irish emigrants, suffering from long priva-
tions, showed in every feature a great reduc-
tion in physical standards, while its moral
character evinced more plainly than under
former ordinary circumstances the general ab-
sence of industrial education and an extreme
want of such a counteracting force to oppose
the native tendency towards sloth and apathy.

As far as the numerical analysis was concerned, Buchanan's
figures substantiated, in all but the numbers proceeding
to the United States, those offered earlier by Hawke.

From among those who chose to, or were forced to, remain
in Canada, the majority chose Canada West as their destina-
tion as soon as they were healthy enough to travel.

A variety of explanations can be offered for this
phenomenon. First, as stated earlier, in the larger
eastern townships, there were few jobs open for unskilled
workers, and the Irish faced stiff competition from the
French Canadians for the few jobs that were available.
The Irish also would have found it even more difficult
to fit in to the one sector where work was available,
the small French Canadian agricultural communities. Not
Table 5
Distribution of emigrants who arrived in the Province of Canada during the year 1847 as near as can be ascertained.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Emigrants from the United Kingdom, via the river St. Lawrence</td>
<td>89,454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number arrived in Western Canada, via the United States</td>
<td>5,580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deduct mortality to March 1, Canada East</td>
<td>4,234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deduct mortality to March 1, Canada West</td>
<td>3,911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers proceeded to the United States via St. John's</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers proceeded to the United States from Canada West</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated number remaining in the districts of Quebec and Montreal and in the eastern townships</td>
<td>3,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number settled at Bytown and at various places on the Ottawa and Rideau</td>
<td>6,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Kingston and Bay of Quinte, and in the Hastings, Prince Edward and Midland districts</td>
<td>5,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Coburg, Port Hope, Windsor, Whitby and Darlington, and in the Colborne and Newcastle districts</td>
<td>7,123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Toronto and in the Home and Simcoe districts</td>
<td>16,318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Port Credit, Oakville, and Hamilton, and the Wellington and Gore districts</td>
<td>12,639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In London, Western, and Huron districts</td>
<td>4,320</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 56,880
only was the agricultural system totally alien to the Irish, but also they obviously could not speak French. The Irish immigrants were faced with enough difficulties without trying to begin a new life in a community where they could not communicate with their neighbours. As it was, the immigrants who remained in Canada East settled in mainly English-speaking areas. Canada West offered both better employment opportunities and a slightly less alien social structure for the Irish, and as Hawke had pointed out, many of the Irish had friends and relatives located here.

Canada East did, however, witness just as much suffering as did her western counterpart, with Montreal receiving at least three times the number of sick as any one other community, and spending more on the relief and care of the sick than both Toronto and Quebec combined. One explanation of Montreal's plight has already been offered; it was the first central stopping off point on the route to the interior and, unlike Toronto, the immigrants were not refused entry to the city. In fact, the immigrants were allowed too much freedom, as those in charge of the city's public health had not the powers or the resources to keep the immigrants isolated from the rest of the community. One of the major problems was that the immigrants had descended upon the unsuspecting citizens with very little real warning (although they were
### Table 6

Return of the Number of Admissions into Hospital, Discharges and Deaths of Emigrants who arrived in Canada during the Season of 1847

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hospital</th>
<th>Adm</th>
<th>Dis</th>
<th>Ds</th>
<th>Rs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quarantine Hospital</td>
<td>8,691</td>
<td>5,302</td>
<td>3,389</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine and Emigrant Hospital, Quebec</td>
<td>3,313</td>
<td>2,531</td>
<td>712</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point St. Charles Hospital, Montreal, to January 1, 1848</td>
<td>13,189</td>
<td>9,734</td>
<td>3,350</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board of Health, St. John's</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board of Health, Lachine</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emigrant Hospital, Toronto, to February 2, 1848</td>
<td>4,355</td>
<td>2,869</td>
<td>863</td>
<td>623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The several Boards of Health established in Western Canada</td>
<td>12,478</td>
<td>9,430</td>
<td>3,048</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>42,540</td>
<td>30,179</td>
<td>11,543</td>
<td>818</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Admitted  
2 Discharged  
3 Deaths  
4 Remaining
certainly aware of the events taking place in Ireland), and the authorities were forced to house the sick in the dreadful old sheds in the heart of the city until other more suitable accommodations were ready. Isolation was impossible in the early portion of the season, and thus typhus spread rapidly among those inhabitants who had had some contact with the immigrants. Montreal and Quebec, again unlike Toronto, were also faced with at least two authorities in charge of their immigration policy, and with one responsible to the citizens and the other to the Executive Government, there was often much debate at a time when quick decisions and actions were required.

Among the immigrants, the numbers of men, women and children were almost equal. Of the more than 35,000 adult male immigrants who had set sail for Canada, only 1,191 had any skill or trade, the remainder were farmers and agricultural and common labourers. It must be kept in mind also that probably about one-half of the men, the most skilled and the wealthiest, had proceeded on to the United States.

The cost of the 1847 immigration, both financially and in terms of human lives, had been great. Very few communities had escaped the ravages of the ship fever; the immigrant mortality rate had greatly increased. The mortality rate among the Irish emigrants had been 10.49% (from Liverpool it was 15.39% and from Cork, 18.73%) as compared with a rate of 1.26% for the German
Table 7

Return of the Number of Emigrants Embarked, with the Number of Births and Deaths during the Voyage and in Quarantine, the Total Number landed in the Colony, distinguishing Males from Females and Adults from Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numbers Embarked</th>
<th>Adults</th>
<th>Children 1-14</th>
<th>Infants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35,827</td>
<td>27,728</td>
<td>14,894</td>
<td>13,897</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deaths on Passage</th>
<th>Adults</th>
<th>Children 1-14</th>
<th>Infants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,329</td>
<td>914</td>
<td>1,223</td>
<td>1,069</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deaths in Quarantine</th>
<th>Adults</th>
<th>Children 1-14</th>
<th>Infants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,388</td>
<td>948</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>439</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landed in the Colony</th>
<th>Adults</th>
<th>Children 1-14</th>
<th>Infants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33,110</td>
<td>25,866</td>
<td>13,218</td>
<td>12,389</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Males - 46,328
Total Females - 38,255
Table 8

Return of the Trades or Calling of the Emigrants who arrived at the Ports of Quebec and Montreal during the Year 1847

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trade</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bakers</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butchers</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bricklayers and Masons</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacksmiths and Whitesmiths</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bookbinders</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blockmakers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braziers</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet-makers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenters and Joiners</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coopers</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartmakers and Wheelwrights</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineers</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardeners</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hatters</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millers and Millwrights</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miners</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moulders</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painters</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plasterers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printers</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarrymen</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ropemakers</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sawyers</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sail-makers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saddlers</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stonemasons</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailors</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanners</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watchmakers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Servants</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers and Agricultural Labourers</td>
<td>11,397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Labourers</td>
<td>23,239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boot and Shoemakers</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Death of male adults at quarantine: 1,388
Death of male adults at sea: 1,329

Total: 35,827
emigrants. There had also been a marked increase in the numbers of sick and dead at Grosse Isle.

However, Buchanan did not end his report on a pessimistic note, for at the time of his writing, certain signs of improvement had been noted. The reports which he had received from his various agents indicated that although there remained in the large towns and ports of landing, some families whose continued destitution is unrelieved, the really industrious are, to a great extent, earning ample subsistence.

The testimony of the newspapers supported Buchanan's assertions; there were isolated reports of destitution, but by the new year little was heard concerning the plight of the immigrants. Once the Canadians had overcome their fear of the immigrants as a source of infection, they were more than willing to put them to work.

In the meantime, in both unofficial and official circles, the problem of meeting the expenses occasioned by the season's immigration had been and continued to be a much discussed topic. Elgin thoroughly understood the Province's problems in this area, and as early as August, he had attempted to explain the situation to Grey.

The funds available to the Province, the proceeds from the Immigrant Tax and the Imperial Government's grant of ten thousand pounds, had been absorbed by the expenditures of only one facet of the immigrant relief programme. Canada, in her attempt to prevent too many immigrants
from congregating within her cities, had provided free transportation to the interior for the destitute; funds still had to be found to meet the cost of care for the sick and the maintainence of the quarantine establishment and the sheds set up throughout the country. Canada, as a colony, had been debarred from taking any action to prevent this inundation of sick and destitute Irish. Here Elgin chose to ignore the fact that few Canadians had shown any concern about the upcoming season until it was far too late to take any effective action. By the time Canadians had realized what was happening, the only possible action that they could have taken to stop the influx of Irish was to blockade the St. Lawrence. Still, Elgin was justified in demanding some compensation for Canada; if anyone had to be ultimately responsible for the disasters of 1847, it was the British Government.

Elgin carefully pointed out that Grey's dictates had been followed; relief had been provided with "the utmost caution and economy", but the numbers had been so great and the pestilence so widespread that the funds at the provinces disposal would not suffice to meet the necessary expenditures. Despite all the efforts made by the colonists, the disease had spread to the interior; the colony had become one vast poor-house. Private charity was almost exhausted, and there were no local rates to
fall back upon. Who was to bear the expense? Elgin agreed that if the colony were to gain some advantage from the immigration, then it should pay, but, he concluded, it was highly doubtful that any advantage (Elgin should have added immediate) could be gained from this season's numbers, especially when most of those who still have their health and some resources were simply passing through the colony on their way to the United States. 49

Five days later, the Executive Council pointed out to Elgin that despite the grant which they had received from the Legislative Assembly, the warrants for expenses already exceeded the sums on hand by six thousand pounds and requests for warrants continued to be received daily from the various boards of health. 50 In an attempt to cut down their expenditures and to establish a uniform rate of expenses, an agent was appointed to supervise the affairs of the boards. 51 The agent, appointed at the suggestion of A.B. Hawke, was "to visit the various boards and examine the state of the Accounts, the mode of management and report back as quickly as possible." 52 The prevailing destitution was so great, however, that the agent was unable to reduce the rate or extent of the expenditures. 53

While the Canadian communities were making their preparations for the coming winter, the Government, through the office of the Governor-General, continued its
efforts to secure funds from the Imperial Government to pay for the season's immigration. On September 14th, Elgin again wrote to Grey, describing the colony's financial position. The Provincial Exchequer was in "a deplorable condition"; "all the money which the banks will advance has been borrowed", but the balance on hand still remained at zero. Warrants to meet the immigration expenses had exhausted the funds intended to meet the interest on the Imperial Loan, which was due in January. Elgin stated that unless some measures were taken immediately, "the guarantee of the Imperial Government will be called actively into play." This plea secured an additional twenty thousand pounds from the Imperial Treasury, but the Executive Council quickly pointed out that this sum was insufficient, for at the end of September, the Provincial debt was more than thirty-five thousand pounds. This debt had been met with an advance of thirty-five thousand pounds from a Montreal Bank. But shortly after this crisis had been met, the Council received requests for another eleven thousand pounds to defray "the most pressing claims" among the immigration expenses; more requests for funds were certainly expected. The Provincial Surplus had been totally exhausted; what the Council wanted was a credit of forty to fifty thousand pounds with the Bank of England "which might be made applicable to the payment of her Semi-Annual Dividends
there, while She [Canada] disburses the equivalent within the Province to sustain this helpless Emigration."59 Grey felt that this request was highly unreasonable; the colony would eventually benefit from the immigration (although he did not specify when or how) and should, therefore, pay its fair share of the expenses.60

The debate was obviously not yet settled; it was, in fact, not to be settled until April of 1848. In November of 1847, William Cayley, the Inspector General of Accounts, wrote that the expenses for the season stood at £100,565 2s 7d, from which the Province could deduct £57,257 4s 3d which it had received from the immigrant tax and imperial funds.61 The demand of various communities for funds to meet immigration expenses continued to be "heavy and pressing" and the provincial chest was in "no position to answer these calls";62 further imperial assistance was necessary. This letter did, in January, bring an advance "in aid of expenses incurred by the Canadian Government for the relief of distressed emigrants."63 But the Imperial Government still had not admitted that it should or would bear the whole cost of the season; it was content to continue to offer stop-gap measures to meet the various Canadian financial crises, stepping in each time the Canadians ran out of funds.

Canadian officials continued to press their case with the Imperial officials. The Executive Council pointed out to Lord Grey that
the limited reserves of the colony make it impossible to provide for both services
(the payment of interest on its Imperial Loan and emigration expenses) and the uni-
versal depression of the money market has rendered it equally impossible to issue
debentures. 64

The stop-gap imperial advances had not solved the colony's financial problems; each week brought new demands upon the Province's limited resources. 65 The colony was simply not prepared to admit that the Imperial Government had any right to ask the colony to bear any portion of the season's immigration expenses.

Apart from the question of sickness and contagious fever, a destitute population, too enfeebled to gain its livelihood by labour, is a serious burden upon the inhabitants of this province; but when, in addition to these disabilities, the emigration has been found to embrace idiots and cripples, widows and orphan children, we know not in what terms a demand can be made on the province for pecuniary aid, or by what arguments such a demand can be justified. 66

But Grey was not yet convinced; he wrote to Elgin:-

I cannot agree with you as to its being reasonable for Canada to expect that the whole cost of the emigration of the present year should be defrayed by this country. 67

Grey still insisted that Canada would benefit economically from the past season's influx; he did offer, however, to bear half of the burden. 68

Colonial officials were not prepared to agree to this arrangement. In March 1848, F. Hincks, now the Inspector General, submitted another statement of the immigration accounts, which showed an outstanding
balance of £82,924 14s. 8d. He also stated, in a more
moderate tone than had his predecessor, that
while, therefore, his Excellency's advisors
are prepared, in respectful compliance with
the expectations of Her Majesty's Government,
to contribute, to the utmost extent of the
available financial resources of the province,
to the extraordinary expenses of the emigration
last year, it is hoped by them that the contri-
bution will not be insisted upon. 70

Elgin continued to back the colonial position. On
March 2nd, he wrote privately to Grey that he considered
the line of argument which you adopt . . .
in favour of saddling the Province with a
portion of this outlay, a dangerous one in
the present temper of men's minds.

The question being asked by most Canadians was:-

'Do we love her Britain enough, is her connexion sufficiently valuable to us to
refuse to clasp the hand which is stretched
out toward us by a great neighbour and kin-
dred nation, with whose prosperity and rapid
advance as contrasted with our comparatively
slow progress we are constantly taunted by
British Statesmen. '

The situation with regard to immigration, therefore, must
obviously handled with the greatest caution, but Elgin
felt it was very unlikely that the colonists could be
persuaded to "pay heavily something they regard as a
grievous calamity entailed upon them as a consequence
of their dependent position", especially if the Imperial
authorities threatened to reject any legislative measures
adopted by the colony to prevent a recurrence of the
disasters suffered during the past season. 72 Grey's
suggestions, Elgin declared, were received with sus­
picion in the colony; he was seen as the representative
of "the interests of an over-peopled metropolis -- or,
what is still worse, of the Irish landlords." Elgin offered
some final advice.

My own opinion is, that the British North Amer­
ican Colonies should be left as much as possible
to themselves to take the measures for the pre­
vention of a diseased Immigration, and for meet­
ing the expenses of the service. If, under the
influence of the temporary excitement, they were
at any time to subject Immigration to improper
restrictions, the injury which various Provin­
cial interests would thereby sustain would
ensure a prompt return to a more judicious and
liberal Policy.

Elgin's opinion carried the day.

With the receipt of both Hinck's and Elgin's state­
ments, the Imperial authorities finally relented. On
April 14th, 1848, Grey wrote73 that the Home Government
was prepared to recommend the payment of all expenses
incurred, but there was one condition attached. From
this point on, Canada must undertake the full respon­
sibility of meeting all future immigration expenses, and
in order to complete this arrangement, the Imperial
Government would hand over to the Canadian Government
the entire management of the immigration service. In
early May, the Province agreed to the terms set by Grey.74
The final expenses for the season, to be met by the
Imperial Government, were £167,226 2s 8d.75
Table 9

The total expenditures for emigration purposes to March 1, 1848

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>£</th>
<th>s</th>
<th>d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Quarantine Establishment</td>
<td>34,950</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The medical relief of the sick</td>
<td>83,591</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The support and inland transport of the destitute</td>
<td>48,684</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>£167,226</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Disbursement of expenses at the Quarantine Establishment:

- Hospital buildings erected, including also accommodations for the healthy emigrants detained: 10,682 19 11
- Hospital expenses, including furniture, pay of physicians and apothecaries, and attendants of all ranks, medicines, medical comforts, supplies, and necessaries for the sick and convalescent: 21,019 14 3
- Provisions supplied to the destitute healthy emigrants in detention: 3,117 9 4
- The expenses attendant on the appointment of a medical commission: 130 0 0

**£34,950** 3 6

Disbursement of expenses for the medical relief of the sick:

- Buildings erected as hospitals and their dependencies at Quebec and Montreal, and at Kingston and Toronto and other places at which Boards of Health were recognized: 20,467 16 8
- The furniture required for their completion for the purposes intended: 8,321 14 0

**Subtotal**  £28,789 10 8
## Table 9

### Disbursement of expenses for the medical relief of the sick (cont'd):
- Carried forward: £28,789 10 8
- The salaries paid to the physicians and apothecaries: £11,954 19 0
- The attendant's pay, including that of stewards, nurses, orderlies, and servants: £9,339 6 6
  - Subtotal of fees: £21,294 5 6
- The medicines employed: £1,640 17 2
- The medical comforts, including spirits and groceries: £9,213 8 5
  - Provisions and supplies: £10,425 14 2
  - Subtotal of supplies: £21,279 19 9
- The expenses of burial: £3,526 0 8
- The expenses of the clergy, Protestant and Roman Catholic who constituted missions at Grosse Isle, including their travelling expenses and maintenance: £1,270 15 10
- The care and support of the destitute orphans taken charge of by the clergy, pending their adoption by private individuals: £2,458 2 8
- The balance of expenditure is made up of sums disbursed under the heads not enumerated above, such as expenses of wrecked emigrants. Removal of hospitals and patients at the close of the season. Medical commissions, and for articles not classified, as milk, ice, straw, fuel, etc.: £4,973 2 11
  - Total expenditure: £83,591 18 0

### Disbursement of expenses for inland transport and support of emigrants:
- Transport: £36,104 3 1
- Provisions: £5,708 5 2
- Medical aid: £2,325 9 7
- Buildings: £946 1 11
- Agencies: £3,600 1 5
  - Total expenditure: £48,684 1 2
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>£</th>
<th>s</th>
<th>d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grosse Isle</td>
<td>9,121</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>4,889</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port St. Francis</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montreal</td>
<td>15,864</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bytown</td>
<td>1,677</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingston</td>
<td>9,409</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coburg and Port Hope</td>
<td>1,114</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>3,468</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>3,069</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>£ 48,684</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the middle of the debate over the finances, a Canadian election had been called and during the next two months of the campaign immigration news almost disappeared from the Canadian papers. The election, held in January, witnessed the triumph of the reform parties in both Upper and Lower Canada; when the results were known, the number of Government supporters had been reduced to twenty-five, while the reform opposition "had swelled to fifty-six." Elgin, faithful to his belief in responsible government, had not involved himself in the fray. The results of the election had not been decided by any one issue, but mainly "by the state of the times and the dissatisfaction with the existing government." The stagnation of commerce, with the seeming collapse of the St. Lawrence trading network, and the fears for Canada's economic future aroused by the triumph of free trade in Great Britain, also played an important part in the defeat of the Government. In contrast, the immigration of the past season had played little part in the Government's collapse, despite Elgin's statement that many of the candidates in their addresses to the Provincial constituencies advert to Immigration as a grave matter on which legislation is called for.

The candidates referred to were members of both political parties. No Canadian politician seemed to feel that Canada had been adequately served by her existing
immigration legislation; the only disagreement occurred in the discussion of the measures to be adopted.

Once the election had been decided, preparations for the upcoming season again became a major topic for discussion. Two Montreal newspapers, La Minerve and the Transcript took it upon themselves to offer suggestions concerning the steps necessary to prevent another disastrous immigration. Both made the point that it was not immigration which the colony was complaining about, but rather pauperization -- the abuse of the system of emigration which saw the colony used as the poor-house for the short-comings of another country. Now, said La Minerve, was the time "to look for the means to protect ourselves against the disastrous effects of an ill-considered and mis-directed emigration." However, both the Transcript and La Minerve realized that the solution did not rest with the colony alone; the Imperial Government must take the initiative.

The Imperial authorities had taken an initiative of sorts. As early as November, Grey had advised Elgin to recommend to the Provincial Legislature that it

pass laws making it in the interests of the shipowners and brokers to bring out passengers in good health by doubling the tax on all ships forced by sickness to be put in quarantine, and increasing it still more if the quarantine is prolonged.

If the province acted upon this suggestion and also im-
posed an extra charge upon emigrants (the old, women and children) who would have to rely upon public relief for their support, Grey felt that the Province would have little difficulty meeting the burden imposed upon it by immigration. Grey reiterated his suggestions in two later communications. He hoped that Elgin would be able to persuade Provincial authorities to follow these suggestions and

pass a Provincial Act effectual for checking the abuses and yet not so rigorous as to create a remonstrance here which would compel me to disallow it.

Elgin had taken note of Grey's recommendations, but no action could be taken until the Assembly met again after the elections. The defeat of the Government had complicated the situation somewhat; on January 22nd, Elgin wrote that the change of Government occurred at an inconvenient moment "inasmuch as it defers legislation, and, what is worse, precludes me from offering any assurances as to what may be the sentiment of the local Government upon it." However, on February 5th he wrote more hopefully; he felt a bill on emigration which embodied the principles which Grey had suggested, could be passed before a new Ministry was formed. A measure of this description was so loudly called for by the Province "that the dominant Party will hardly, . . . venture to obstruct its progress through the Legisla-
Elgin's assessment of the situation again proved to be correct. The Assembly met on February 25th and elected A.N. Morin, a member of the Reform Party, speaker instead of the Government's choice, A.N. McNab. It was obvious that Sherwood could not hold on to the reigns of government for very much longer. There were, however, some measures which required immediate attention (one of which was immigration), and the Government decided to attempt to obtain their passage. On February 29th, the Attorney-General for Canada East, William Badgley, moved that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, to consider amendments to the existing Indigent Emigrants Act. The Government was pressed for time because they wished to have their amendments passed in time to make the March 3rd sailing of the steamer to Great Britain. If there were any further delay, the Bill would arrive too late to affect the first sailings of that season. The Government's resolutions, meeting with little opposition, were hurried through the House and received their final approval on March 1st. The principal changes embodied in the Bill were:-(1) an increase in both the amount of the immigrant tax (from five to ten shillings) and those required to pay it (all passengers irrespective of age); (2) a graduated duty charged on each ship forced to stop in quarantine, which increased according
to the length of time spent in quarantine; (3) a doubling or trebling of the immigrant tax on ships arriving after the 10th of September and the 1st of October respectively; and (4) a bond of twenty pounds to be paid by the master of the ship for any of his passengers likely to become a public charge (the master could substitute an additional payment of forty shillings on each emigrant for the bond). 91

Grey, upon receipt of the Bill, wrote privately to Elgin that the Imperial Government had "no thoughts of disallowing it, not at least whilst this season's emigration is proceeding." 92 However, he did think that the taxes and fines which the colony proposed to levy were "very high" 93. As stated earlier, the Imperial Government eventually decided to permit the colony to exercise full control over its immigration laws and machinery in order to relieve the Imperial Government from any further financial responsibilities for the programme. Canada had achieved a fully responsible position in the field of immigration.

The revised Emigrant Act was not the only step taken by the Canadian Government in the field of immigration. On March 31st and April 22nd, the Executive Council, now controlled by the Baldwin-Lafontaine coalition, issued orders for the reorganization of the quarantine station. 92 The establishment was enlarged, both physically and in the numbers of its staff, and placed under the control of the military (who were to establish a post on the island).
On the 12th of April, further orders were issued by the Council for the reorganization of the system of inland transportation. A government-owned steamboat was placed at the disposal of the Emigrant Agent at Quebec, to maintain service between Grosse Isle and Quebec. The Government was also to secure the services of two vessels for the transportation of immigrants to various centres along Canada's waterways. Assistance was to be provided to the immigrants who had not the means to reach their destination, but agents were "to use the utmost diligence and care in distinguishing between the really destitute Emigrants and those not in fact requiring assistance." The colony was now ready to face the next season.

Canada had survived the 1847 season, and fortunately she was not witness another similar to it. The numbers which reached Canada's shores during 1848 were much smaller; many emigrant ships had altered their course in mid-Atlantic upon learning of Canada's new legislation, and shipping brokers refused to accept any emigrants that appeared as if they might become public charges. Only 28,000 emigrants reached Canada in 1848 and they were much healthier than were the emigrants of 1847, although many were still very poor. The total number of deaths in the Province for the entire season was only one hundred and fifty, while the sum expended on relief, £12,500, was fully covered by the proceeds from the Immigrant Tax.
Canada's revised legislation had obviously fulfilled its purpose extremely effectively.98

The immigrants of 1847, the largest number which the colony of Canada had received in her brief history, arrived at what most Canadians felt was a most inopportune time. It appeared to many Canadians that the economic foundations of their country were on the verge of collapse. The adoption of a policy of free trade on the part of the Imperial Government had dealt the colony's economy a very hard blow; many colonists felt that the Imperial Government had deserted and betrayed her colony, for Canada's staples trade was not immediately able to meet the competitive challenge which free trade posed.

The Imperial Government soon found itself blamed for Canada's economic troubles. The fault, however, did not rest solely with Britain, although very few Canadians could be expected to, or did realize this. The economic depression which was then affecting Canada was part of a world-wide cyclic depression;99 Canada was not alone in her sufferings, but this meant little to the colony, concerned as she was with her own particular problems. Still, Canada's economic condition had been made just that much worse by the change in Imperial policy.100

Canada's relations with Great Britain obviously underwent very little improvement with the first arrivals of the immigration season of 1847; here was but another
cross for the colony to bear. Not only was the magnitude of the immigration unprecedented, but also never before had the immigrants been so diseased and destitute. The arrival of these large numbers of enfeebled and destitute wretches placed a further strain upon both the colony's economy and her relations with Britain. During 1847, all Canada's available resources went to provide for the care and support of Canada's new 'citizens'. The Government had been forced to stop work on certain public works projects which were quite advanced because the funds were needed to meet immigration expenses. The colony had found itself called upon to support a population which it had not asked for and did not want.

Yet, despite the complaints made to the Imperial authorities, the colony was eventually able to absorb most of the immigration of the 1847 season. Colonial officials at the local levels, with at times little more than promises of financial support from their government, had been able to establish relief organizations adequate enough to prevent the disease and suffering from getting completely out of hand. With the grumbling support of their fellow citizens, they were able to provide sufficient assistance, both medical and financial, to get the Irish back on their feet again and able to support themselves. They chose to ignore, at the height of the crisis, the commands from above ordering that no assistance be
afforded to those able to work, and were thus able to prevent too many destitute but 'able-bodied' Irish from collecting in the larger centres by forwarding them to the destination of their choice. Assistance was not limited to government agencies; many private organizations also stepped in to provide aid to those recognized by all as the helpless -- orphans and widows. In the end, the colony was able to absorb nearly all of the immigrants who had chosen to remain in Canada; the economy had proved stronger (with the eventual receipt of the Imperial funds) than Canadians had believed it was. In fact, there was a labour shortage in Canada throughout 1847, and once the various employers, both in towns and on the farms, overcame their fear of infection, jobs were readily available to the Irish. The immigrants who, a short time ago, had been judged "as drains upon society" were soon producing members of Canadian society.

The Canadians had attempted, with much compassion, to alleviate the sufferings of the Irish, for they realized that the immigrants could not be blamed for the disasters of 1847; if anyone was at fault it was, Canadians decided, the Irish landlords and the British Government. For this reason Canadian officials and citizens both demanded that the Imperial authorities pay the entire cost of the season's immigration. Canada, as a colony, had had no control over its own immigration policy; it was in the
hands of the Imperial Government. The mishandling of the Irish Famine Emigration by them had resulted in huge relief expenditures in Canada, and it was only right, in the colonists' eyes, that the British pay the costs which their mistakes had incurred. However the colony had some difficulty in persuading the Imperial authorities to accept their interpretation of the Imperial responsibility; much of the colony's ultimate success in this matter must be attributed to Governor-General Elgin, who persistently and admirably supported and argued the colony's case for nearly a year.

The Irish Famine Emigration had provided the colony with a valuable insight into its relationship with the Imperial Government, as well as its own ability to cope with a crisis situation. In 1847, Canada had run up against a British Government which was attempting to solve its Irish problem almost at the expense of one of its colonies. In an area of great importance to a young colony, that of immigration, Canadians suddenly realized that they exercised no control and, at a time of what they believed to be, and was to a certain extent, economic depression, here were the authorities who were supposed to have their best interests at heart relieving distress at home by sending it to the colony under often the most inhuman conditions. Canada's position as a colony was, under these circumstances, questioned and the resultant debate became more fierce
as the Imperial authorities continued to deny that they had any but the most minor responsibilities to the colony under the circumstances. Fortunately for both Canada and Britain, the highest Imperial official in Canada, Lord Elgin, recognized the justice of the Canadian claims and was eventually able to persuade Britain to recognize it as well. With Elgin's help, Canada was able to take an important step along the road to self-government. The colony gained complete control over her own immigration policy, and once in control, she took immediate steps to ensure that the disasters of 1847 would not be repeated.

Canada had been able, in the end, to make the best of a very bad situation. At the height of the crisis, she had done everything within her power to relieve the distress and sufferings of the Irish immigrants, and had been able, although at great cost both to the colony and to the immigrants themselves, to restore them to a state which would allow them to become producing members of society. Given the political philosophy of the time and the condition of Ireland, the disasters of 1847 had been unavoidable, but at least Canada had learned from her experiences. The Famine Emigration of 1847 had provided a lesson that was not quickly forgotten.
FOOTNOTES


2 Ibid., November 24, 1847, p. 630 and November 26, 1847, p. 642 and p. 651.

3 This was a slight exaggeration on Elgin's part.


5 Cowan, British Emigration, p. 185.


9 When the final returns were in, Hawke's estimation of the numbers proceeding to the United States proved to be much too small. See below, p.


14 Ibid., p. 20.

15 Ibid., p. 20.

The practical suggestions were:—(1) an addition to the emigrant tax to be paid by the ship; (2) increased accommodations for emigrants, one passenger for every fourteen feet of deck; (3) no more than two tiers of berths of six feet in length by eighteen inches in width; and (4) the compelling of each vessel carrying more than one hundred passengers to be provided with a medical attendant. Papers relative to emigration, H.C., 1848 (932), Vol. XLVII, p. 7. Extract of a Report of the Committee of the Executive Council on Matters of State, December 8, 1847.

Montreal Transcript, January 22, 1848.

Ibid., January 29, 1848.

Toronto Globe, February 2, 1848. The meeting was held on February 1, 1848.

See Table 4.


Ibid., p. 22.

Toronto Globe, February 2, 1848.

Ibid., February 2, 1848.

Ibid., February 2, 1848.

Papers relative to emigration, H.C., 1848 (932), Vol. XLVII, pp. 21-2. Enclosure in Elgin to Grey, February 19, 1848.

Ibid., p. 16.

See Table 5.

See Table 5.

Edwards and Williams, eds., The Great Famine, pp. 4-6.

See Table 5.


See Tables 6 and 9.

See Table 7.

See Table 8.

See Table 5.


Ibid., p. 15.

Ibid., p. 15.

Ibid., p. 19.


Ibid., pp. 64-5. Elgin to Grey, August 13, 1847.


Canada, State Books, Volume G, August 20, 1847, pp. 302-03.

Ibid., August 23, 1847, pp. 310-12.

Ibid., August 23, 1847, p. 311.


57 Ibid., p. 480.

58 Ibid., p. 480.


60 Ibid., p. 18.

61 Papers relative to emigration, H.C., 1848 (932), Vol. XLVII, p. 2. Enclosure in Elgin to Grey, November 20, 1847.

62 Ibid., p. 2.

63 Papers relative to emigration, H.C., 1848 (932), Vol. XLVII, p. 3. Grey to Elgin, January 6, 1848.

64 Papers relative to emigration, H.C., 1848 (932), Vol. XLVII, p. 12. Elgin to Grey, December 8, 1847.

65 Ibid., p. 12.

66 Ibid., p. 12.


68 Ibid., p. 116.

69 Papers relative to emigration, H.C., 1848 (932), Vol. XLVII, p. 31. Enclosure in Elgin to Grey, March 17, 1848.

70 Ibid., p. 31.

See below, p. 174.

Papers relative to emigration, H.C., 1848 (932), Vol. XLVII, p. 34. Grey to Elgin, April 14, 1848.


Careless, The Union of the Canadas, p. 118.


Montreal Transcript, February 3, 1848 and La Minerve, February 7, 1848.


Ibid., p. 79.


Ibid., p. 122.
Careless, The Union of the Canadas, p. 119.
Montreal Transcript, March 6, 1848.
Ibid., March 6, 1848.
Ibid., March 21, 1848.
Grey to Elgin, April 7, 1848.
Ibid., p. 133.
Ibid., April 12, 1848, pp. 370-2.
Ibid., April 12, 1848, p. 372.
Edwards and Williams, eds., The Great Famine, p. 375.
Ibid., p. 374.
Ibid., p. 374.
For the first time in the history of the emigrant traffic, it cost more to travel by streeage to Canada than to the United States. Edwards and Williams, eds., The Great Famine, p. 485, n. 18.
Tucker, Commercial Revolution, p. 158.
Ibid., pp. 158-9.
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