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THE REGIONAL ADMINISTRATION OF PUBLIC  
WELFARE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

A Survey of the present administration in the  
light of its historical development

by

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## A B S T R A C T

This thesis examines public welfare administration in British Columbia. An historical review reveals the beginnings of the present administration as a number of "bits and pieces" of welfare legislation which were gradually co-ordinated over a period of fifty years.

The present operations of the administration are examined in general, but focus is taken particularly on headquarters relationships with field units or regions. These are discussed and evaluated in the light of current administrative principles and against the background of difficult terrain and isolated regions common to the province. Delegations of authority from headquarters to the field receive special attention.

The greater part of the material for the thesis was obtained by direct interview with provincial officials. With considerable reference to theory the information was then subjected to critical analysis. It was found that the public welfare organization had achieved: (a) A unified administration of technically good design; (b) A plan for headquarters field-relationship suitable to provincial terrain; (c) A partial implementation of the plan.

Several unsolved problems prevented fuller use of the plan: (a) Lack of agreement among all elements of the administration regarding the decentralization. (b) Scarcity of personnel professionally trained in social work. (c) Cumbersome provincial-municipal relationships in regard to public welfare.

These problems point to still existing needs: (a) A redefinition of administrative objectives acceptable to all elements. (b) A

greater supply of professionally trained personnel. (c) Increased standards of treatment and supervision in the field.

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THE REGIONAL ADMINISTRATION OF PUBLIC  
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## CHAPTER I

### GENESIS OF THE PRESENT ADMINISTRATION

The growth of public welfare services in British Columbia has been one of continuing development. In 1874, the third year after confederation, all expenditures which might be remotely termed "welfare" did not exceed \$12,000.<sup>1</sup> Seventy-five years later public expenditure for social services was exceeding \$7,000,000. annually.<sup>2</sup> In 1949 the Minister of Health and Welfare headed one of the largest departments in the government. The Welfare Branch of the Department alone employed a staff numbering in the hundreds, and maintained some twenty-four offices throughout the regions and municipalities of the province.

To accompany this growth there has been a slower development of administrative method. In the past, the administrative side of things frequently failed to keep pace with the quality of program being offered. At more than one point good services were hindered by inept administrative structure. Reforms were introduced from time to

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1 British Columbia, Public Accounts, 1874, p.160 ff. Of this amount \$11,000. were grants to hospitals.

2 British Columbia, Public Accounts, 1948, p. EE139 ff. The actual expenditure given is \$7,382,577.00. This figure is exclusive of public health expenditure.

time to remedy these discrepancies but these almost always lagged behind the need. Recently, extensive changes were undertaken including the institution of regional authorities and the decentralization of several major responsibilities from the central office in Victoria to these authorities. This study concerns itself with various aspects of this decentralization, why it came about, its present stage of development and finally, its likely future course.

Physical Factors Influencing Development. In its physical sense British Columbia is easily accessible neither to the traveller nor the administrator. The province presents a vast stretch of 366,255 square miles, most of which consist of heavily folded mountain range. This runs with little interruption, north-south from the United States of America to Alaska and extends from the coast with its islands to the Alberta boundary on the east. Breaking the pattern are numerous river and lake valleys and a number of large upland plateaux. These allow space for the flow of communication and concentrations of population.

The total effect is a pattern of natural regions isolated each from the other by difficult physical barriers. These in turn are separated from any central point of government by the added obstacles of sheer distance and poor communication. The location of the provincial capital at Victoria in the south-west corner of the province does not improve the communication picture. Until recently, the journey from Victoria to the Peace River in the north-east,



a direct distance of 540 miles, involved a travel distance of 1,340 miles, a substantial detour into the province of Alberta, and a continuous travelling time of sixty hours by boat and train.

Alleviated now by modern transportation, these distances weighed heavily on the administrators of the province in the early days. In a brief presented in 1911 to the Dominion Government entitled Memorandum Respecting Claims of British Columbia for Better Terms, one of the chief claims for increased federal grants to the province rested on the excessive cost of administration caused by:

"physical configuration of the Province, which renders local administration exceptionally expensive and difficult, and in a ratio of great disparity as compared with those of other provinces".<sup>3</sup>

An even earlier statement notes that:

"British Columbia's per capita expenditure for Civil Government, arising out of the services of the Government, required in widely scattered communities is over nine times that of the average of the other provinces."<sup>4</sup>

The isolated regional nature of the province had then, and still continues to have, a deep influence on the provincial administrator and the ways in which he attempts to bring services to people. Whatever other problems he may have to face he must grapple continuously with the distance and isolation of his administrative outposts. In all his calculations, these are the constant factors. A good deal of recent

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3 British Columbia, Memorandum Respecting Claims of British Columbia for Better Terms, p. 1, cited in British Columbia in the Canadian Confederation, Victoria, King's Printer, 1938, p. 17.

4 British Columbia's Sessional Papers, 1905, p. D-7, cited in British Columbia in the Canadian Confederation, p. 15.

planning has gone toward finding solutions to these problems of "separation".

In British Columbia, geography raises a second barrier to administration. With a population of 817,861 and a density of 2.28 persons per square mile in 1941, the province can be characterized as underpopulated.<sup>5</sup> The direct administrative result of vast territory and sparse population is that the usual municipal forms of civil government have never completely matured in British Columbia. This follows from the fact that in extensive areas, local concentrations of population have always been much too weak to support municipal institutions and services. Consequently the provincial level has been forced to absorb the jurisdictions and provisions of services which, in the older more thickly populated provinces of Eastern Canada, were the normal concerns of the local counties and townships. Cassidy comments on this situation:

"The importance of the provincial government in public affairs is further to be explained by the incomplete coverage and relative weakness of the municipal system. Only one-half of one per cent out of the total land area is within municipal boundaries and some 204,000 people or twenty-four per cent of the population lived in unorganized territory in 1941"<sup>6</sup>

Distribution is a further problem. The population, small as it is, does not spread evenly throughout the province. As noted, concentrations of population are restricted to provincial "open spaces." The most accessible of these,

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<sup>5</sup> Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, The Canada Year Book, 1948, p. 149, Table 6.

<sup>6</sup> Cassidy, H.M., Public Health and Welfare Re-Organization, Toronto, Ryerson Press, 1945, p. 39.

surrounding the lower mainland city of Vancouver and the island capital of Victoria, contains nearly half of the total population of the province.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, the actual population density in the upcountry area is much lower than the average figure of 2.28 per square mile. Municipal organization is correspondingly weak. By the same token, provincial organizations through sheer necessity have developed to fill the gaps.

The rugged terrain contributes further to municipal weakness by the type of industry it makes possible. While manufacturing is slowly growing in importance, forestry, mining and fishing have always been important occupations of the hinterlands.<sup>8</sup> These industries, characteristically mobile, contribute only slightly to the growth of permanent settlement in the areas they exploit. The labour forces which they employ do not become settled residents of areas which are continually shifting as the timber stands or veins of ore peter out. In consequence, the hinterland of the province has developed, through its particular natural resources, a succession of shifting, rootless communities and camps, literally here today and gone tomorrow. The contribution of these to a strong municipal system is obviously negligible.

In British Columbia, administration plainly faces a severe geographical problem. Great distances, isolated areas and scattered population, add to the costs of adminis-

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7 Statistics give the populations for 1941 as: Greater Vancouver, 351,491; Greater Victoria, 75,218. The total population of the province is given as 817,861.

8 Fishing, mining, forestry and trapping accounted for 12.37 per cent of the gainfully employed in B.C. in 1931. Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, The Canada Year Book, 1936, p. 806.

tration at the same time as they weaken municipal development. They must be considered in any administrative plan devised for the province and they must be taken into account in evaluating present efficiency or desirable future developments.

Evolution of Welfare Administration. The province entered Confederation in 1871. In consequence the jurisdiction and responsibility clauses of the British North America Act were thereafter in force and placed the general area of welfare within the responsibilities of the province.<sup>9</sup> The province in turn by means of the Municipalities Act of 1871 delegated this responsibility to the municipalities.<sup>10</sup> This move was completely in accord with the social principles of the time which regarded the care of the poor and sick as a local affair.

To induce local participation of a private nature, a new Charitable Associations Act had been passed by the Province in 1871 to encourage the incorporation of private charitable institutions.<sup>11</sup> With these provisions, the obvious design of both the Dominion and the Province was to relegate welfare to the local institutions, public and private, encourage these as much as possible and then have done with the matter. This pattern had been followed for centuries from the time of the Elizabethan Poor Law. Unfortunately, under provincial conditions the plan was inadequate. Owing to the

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9 Sections 91 and 92 of the British North America Act.

10 Province of British Columbia, Department of Health and Welfare, Annual Report of the Social Welfare Branch, 1948, p. 8.

11 British Columbia in the Canadian Confederation, p. 98

dearth of municipalities, the needs of the destitute persons resident in unorganized territory were not being met, simply because no local authority was there to meet them.

As a result, a Destitute, Poor and Sick Fund was set up in the provincial treasury in 1880 to care for such persons. Their number was few, and the amounts paid out were trifling. Nevertheless, the step was unprecedented inasmuch as it marked the first entrance of the provincial government into the field of public welfare.<sup>12</sup> The move was not significant administratively, since no legislation was passed to direct the fund, and no agency was set up to regulate its operation. Applicants for help merely petitioned their local representative in the provincial legislature and payments were made by the provincial treasury.

Thus modestly initiated, provincial participation lead inevitably to more participation. If public opinion in the larger centers demanded certain measures of welfare, these also in all fairness had to be offered to citizens living in the remote areas. In the years beginning the present century, public opinion did demand increasing amounts of social provisions. In 1901 an Act relating to child welfare was passed. This Act provided for the legal transfer of guardianship of orphaned or neglected children to the state and for the incorporation of Children's Aid Societies to give care to such children. In 1920 pensions were provided for mothers without support; in 1927 pensions for the aged were made available. With the exception of the latter,

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<sup>12</sup> The total disbursements for the year 1886 equalled \$428.00. The British Columbia in the Canadian Confederation, p.169, Table 83.

the administrative details of these programs could be handled locally, the province retiring to a regulatory position. Outside the municipal boundaries, however, the province was faced with the standing dilemma of "unorganized territory" after the passage of every new welfare act. To apply its legislation universally, the government was eventually forced to act as its own agent, over the greater part of the province, on an ever-increasing scale. The precedent of intervention suggested by the Destitute Poor and Sick Fund, charitably innocuous as it may have seemed, gradually became an inescapable "fact of life" for public welfare in British Columbia.

Whether to participate or not was only the beginning problem. Administrative considerations came to the fore, complete with geographical complications. Firstly, under what authority in the structure of government were welfare acts to be administered? Secondly, how were the services provided by law to be offered to the inhabitants of remote regions? In modern administrative terminology, these were questions involving central office and field organization. There was no such clarity of administrative concept in the first decades of the century. To begin with, social welfare was by tradition, foreign to senior levels of government. In older provinces and states in North America and Europe, with few exceptions, local authorities dealt with social measures. Few precedents for senior level administrations of welfare were therefore in existence. Certainly

there existed no convenient provincial department of welfare where new legislation could be deposited. In addition, welfare measures were at first isolated and relatively unimportant in stature. They did not appear all at once in the fully blown, mass-program form common today. They therefore did not loom as matters of the first magnitude to the legislatures of the day who took a categorical attitude toward them.

As a result, temporary solutions were devised. Each piece of welfare legislation as it developed was placed under the administrative jurisdiction of an already existing department, preferably one that was not too heavily overloaded. This "ad hoc" policy had in time imposing results. For example, the Department of the Provincial Secretary, generally selected as a welfare "catch-all", which had expenditures in 1876 of \$2,355.<sup>13</sup>, ended the year 1944 with a total expenditure of \$8,758,217.<sup>14</sup> The greater part of this latter amount was directly due to the welfare functions of the department, not to its original functions. Many other departments were subsequently involved from time to time with "foundling" welfare legislation, and for a time this method of dispersion was followed with relative success.

In 1901 the Infants' ~~s~~ Act was passed by the government extending state care to children having no parent or parent capable of providing care. Administration was first

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<sup>13</sup> British Columbia, Public Accounts, 1876-1936, cited in British Columbia in the Canadian Confederation, p. 169, Table 83.

<sup>14</sup> British Columbia, Public Accounts, 1943-44, pp. EE151 ff. Of this total expenditure the original functions of the Department accounted for only one-eighth. The remainder represented combined expenditure on health and welfare services.

entrusted to the Attorney General's Department, and subsequently to the Department of the Provincial Secretary. In 1919 as the demands upon the administration were increased, a Superintendent of Neglected Children was appointed as immediate supervisor of the program. In 1920 the Adoption Act and in 1922 the Children of Unmarried Parents Act were also added to the responsibilities of the Superintendent. This individual, under his superiors in the Department came to be the senior administrator of this collective program for children. The problem of covering the field of operations was met by using every provincial representative that was available. The provisions of the Act were carried out by local law officers, magistrates and government agents. These constituted a "field staff" but they were not truly welfare personnel.

In 1920 The Mothers' Pensions Act was passed, to provide, "a widowed deserving mother with an income sufficient to allow her to give her children her undivided attention and care." The administration of this Act was placed first with the Superintendent of Neglected Children (under the Attorney General's Department) until 1922, then with the Workmen's Compensation Board under the Department of Labour until 1931. Finally it was lodged with the Provincial Secretary in that year. The superintendent of Neglected Children, by now under the Provincial Secretary, was given immediate supervision of the new arrival under the alternative title of Superintendent of Welfare. This official now rep-



resented the senior administrator of both the children's and the mothers' programs. This situation continued until 1935 when a separate Childrens' Division was set up and two distinct appointments were made to the offices of Superintendent of Welfare and the Superintendent of Neglected Children.

A third major program was set up in 1927. The Old Age Pension Act was passed in conjunction with federal legislation of that year. Central administration was placed with the Workmen's Compensation Board under the Department of Labor and a separate field service was instituted in 1931.

This categorical institution of welfare programs was continued with the onset of the depression in the 1930's. A fourth government welfare administration, the Unemployment Relief Branch of the Department of Labor was instituted to meet unemployment distress. This service expanded rapidly in accordance with the corresponding growth in need. A senior supervisor was appointed and special staffs of investigators were recruited to form a field service. To facilitate the field operations, relief offices were opened in numerous districts throughout the province and a field force was instituted. In setting up these field operations the old age pension and relief programs were following, to some degree, an earlier and more elaborate lead of the mothers' pensions program. The original legislation of the Mothers' Pensions Act had attempted to face up to the administrative

difficulties of the province by providing a specialized field service to operate in all sections of the province. To begin with, local advisory boards were authorized in various districts of the province "to maintain certain control over applications and recipients."<sup>15</sup> In 1924 six women were appointed to do the necessary investigation in the large cities and the accessible rural ones. Police officers continued to act as agents in the remote districts. Thus began a field service devoted exclusively to welfare matters. One of the reasons behind the move was to be found in the developing concept that welfare programs were to offer "services" not only in cash but in counselling or case-work. Treatment, aimed at rehabilitation for welfare recipients was emerging as the goal of modern welfare programs. Police officers and magistrates heretofore employed as field agents were not in a position to offer such treatment services owing to their other duties. More importantly, they were also not trained to do so. It was coming to be recognized that efficient counselling required special training. The new profession of social work was taking definite shape and form with its own established principles on how persons in trouble could best be helped. Training was required to implement these principles.

In 1931, with the transfer of the administration to the Provincial Secretary, a significant step was taken in the province. Dr. Charlotte Whitten of the Canadian Welfare Council was brought to British Columbia to do a study of the

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15 Social Welfare Branch, Annual Report, 1948, p. 10.

mothers pensions service. A similar study had been made three years previously of the Childrens' Aid Societies of Vancouver. The cumulative result of these two investigations into the welfare services of the province led to significant administrative change. These studies urged the employment of professionally trained social workers to give treatment services whether in public or private agencies. Following their recommendation, the province came to subscribe to the principle that public welfare services should not only provide immediate aid but treatment aimed at rehabilitation.

Five new pension visitors, under the supervision of a professional social worker, were sent to establish offices in four parts of the Province: Nanaimo, Kamloops, New Westminster and Nelson. "Their work was enlarged beyond that of checking continuing eligibility and included services with respect to the health of the family, the education of the children and social problems that invariably arise when one parent is carrying the whole burden of caring for children."<sup>16</sup> These field visitors were also employed by the Children's Division of the Provincial Secretary "to obtain social information and to take such action as the Superintendent (of Neglected Children) ordered".<sup>17</sup> Thus was established the nucleus of a welfare field organization using professional social-work methods to provide treatment in the area of family and child welfare. With this early start in developing professional social-work supervision, the childrens and mothers programs became in a sense "specialized" services,

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16 Ibid p. 10

17 Ibid p. 11

administered in accordance with professional principles of social treatment. The field workers serving these programs also came to consist largely of professionally trained personnel. In these two respects they differed significantly from the other welfare programs such as old age pensions and relief. The latter were designed on the older restricted basis of meeting need with cash outlay alone. The field staff which implemented these services reflected their basis of organization in being for the most part professionally untrained personnel.

To recapitulate, the first three decades of the century, which could be termed the Era of Dispersion, saw the institution of four major welfare programs in the province, Child Welfare, Mothers' Pensions, Old Age Pensions and Unemployment Relief. Separate central administrations and separate field organizations were features of all. The exception was the use of a single field service by the Children's and Mothers' divisions. It was on the whole, a period of separate programs, separate administrations and separate field services. It was also the period marking the entrance of professional social workers into public welfare field. These were concentrated in the childrens' and mothers' services.

Undoubtedly, it was a time of great welfare progress but many problems became prominent in the face of such categorical growth. At an administrative level the various divisions found that duplication and overlapping of

services and records was inescapable and the necessary co-ordination of their respective programs was difficult to achieve. For one thing, divisions operated in different departments of the government and were thus effectively isolated. In the field, co-ordination was several steps more difficult since channels of authority were greatly extended and no co-ordination existed between divisions at Victoria even when the field established workable channels to headquarters. With the prevailing structure of separate field forces for each administration, the numbers of agents available in the field for each program was smaller than should be for the large territories included. Up to 1934 the field service employed by the Mothers' Pensions and Child Welfare divisions consisted of a dozen visitors, some of whom were stationed in the larger cities. Finally, as the population of the province increased, there came also an ever-increasing demand for the services of all divisions, with consequent increases in costs of administration as each overlapping division expanded to meet the demand. The crying need was co-ordination and an end to duplication.

A small start was made in 1935 with the creation of a separate welfare administration within the Provincial Secretary's Department. The divisions of Mothers' Pensions (renamed "Mothers' Allowances" in 1937), and Child Welfare were co-ordinated under a new senior administrative officer, the Director of Social Welfare. Other services, including the Destitute Poor and Sick Fund and the Industrial Schools,

were also placed under this official.

At the same time the field service, originally the creation of the Mothers' Pensions division was enlarged, renamed the Welfare Field Service and officially placed at the disposal of the welfare administration. The amount of co-ordination achieved can be estimated from the services handled by this single field service. They included child welfare, mothers' pensions, the Destitute Poor and Sick Fund, tuberculosis control, mental hospitals, industrial schools and institutional collections. With its efficiency in presenting this varied program of services to the public, the Welfare Field Service represented a working example of the advantages of integrating field staffs. Similarly, better co-ordination at the divisional administrative level illustrated the advantages to be gained from a unified general administration.

Re-organization within the Provincial Secretary's Department now reduced to three the number of completely separate welfare administrations and field staffs. In spite of it, the co-ordination problem of the total welfare program remained largely unsolved. Duplication in field staffs and local offices continued, as did overlapping and duplications of services. There were many reasons for bringing about further unification of administration. As an Annual Report of the Social Welfare Branch comments on the period:

"Maintaining separate field staffs was extremely costly and resulted in much confusion and overlapping. There was an obvious need for a co-

ordinating office which would give orderly direction and formulate uniform policies to govern all social services."<sup>18</sup>

There was also at this time a movement among the administration in favor of a single comprehensive "family service" which would be implemented by trained social workers and would cover all areas of need served in the past by the various categories, such as old age pensions, mothers' pensions, etc. The official record of the period notes the trend briefly,

"There was also support of the idea that a generalized family service given by competent social workers was more suited to public welfare administration than specialized services and would at the same time provide a more efficient service to all the people."<sup>19</sup>

The idea of a generalized service was attractive for a variety of reasons. From the point of meeting need, an elimination of categories with their usually restrictive governing regulations would make for more flexibility. Obviously treatment would also be more uniform if it were authorized from a single source. (For example the present discrepancy between old age pensions and social allowances would not exist.) Administratively, a single generalized service would lend immense help to the process of uniting various field staffs. On the other hand, if the idea of categorical services prevailed in the field, specialists in each category would have to be appointed to district offices to handle each service. This would again amount to three field staffs. However, with all field workers handling one

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, pp. 21-22.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 22

single service, the number of staff to each office could be adjusted flexibly to case load requirements. The provincial area, in spite of its extent, could then be staffed in the most economical and efficient manner.

Several disadvantages also appeared. A generalized service, because of its very flexibility, would require highly trained social workers for the field staff, to assure that need would be met equitably and (because of the absence of specific regulations) according to high professional standards of treatment. Plainly, if direction was no longer to be afforded by categorical legislation and regulation, it had to be furnished from a base of professional training and standards. The field staff available to the administration at this time did not fully meet these requirements. If the field forces of all existing categories were united to form a single service, more than half of all the workers would be untrained to do social work in the desired professional sense. Such a union could have no other effect but to lower the professional standards of treatment established within the welfare field service of the mothers' and childrens' programs. It would also make a flexible, generalized service more difficult to execute properly.

In response to administrative demands for co-ordination but in the face of the noted difficulties regarding trained staff, amalgamation of all services was begun in 1942. A united general administration was devised within the Provincial Secretary's Department. The head of the ad-



ministration occupied a newly created post of Assistant Deputy Provincial Secretary and his assistants were titled the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent of Welfare. All welfare services including child welfare, mothers' allowances, old age pensions and relief were brought under the direction of this general administration. A single unified headquarters organization was thus achieved.

A similar union was made in the field. One staff was formed from the three existing ones, with immediate success in the avoidance of duplication or indeed, triplication. It was, however, a union of professional and non-professional personnel on a supposedly equal basis. Since the administration continued to have rehabilitation as a major objective of its new combined program, it was felt that some social work training was necessary for the hitherto untrained relief and old age pension field personnel.

Four six-week periods of in-service training were therefore offered by a professional social worker to all non-trained field staff during the following year. It was also discovered that professional workers continued in scarce supply and some vacancies had to be filled with non-professionals. On entry, these were given three months of in-service training. These efforts resulted, by 1948, in a staff make-up of two-thirds professionally trained social workers and one-third personnel with in-service training. This picture was (and still is) complicated by a rather high rate of staff turn-over. However, through these efforts,

field integration was achieved and duplication was abolished with a minimum of upset in the former field staffs. At the same time, the in-service training program assured that work standards of the mixed professional and non-professional field staff were as uniform as circumstances permitted. Great care was taken to see that the supervisors and officials located at divisional offices were thoroughly trained and experienced professional social workers.

The single generalized family service was not realized for a variety of reasons more fully developed later. However, the collective program of categorical services, which was inaugurated, was regarded as a prototype of an eventual single service to meet every type of need. The replacement of unemployment relief of the depression era by the more flexible system of the Social Allowances in 1945, brought the realization of a single welfare service much closer to reality.

As might be expected, the actual physical problem of integrating diverse programs and field organization was not an easy one. The field services to this point had incompletely blanketed the province with three layers of staff. The problem now was to reduce the three layers to one, thus extending field coverage more completely. The strategic placement of offices and staff was also a problem in itself owing to the diversity and extent of the natural regions of the province. Records, staff and offices all had to be sorted out on a co-ordinated basis and evenly distributed.

This phase of re-organization was implemented by five senior officials from the former Unemployment Relief Branch who were familiar with the major areas, of the province. These were designated Regional Supervisors. Each was assigned a general area and entrusted with the defining of a region and the re-distribution of offices and staff within it. To meet this task, these officials were delegated full authority by the Superintendent of Welfare and were responsible only to that official for their decisions. The appointment of regional supervisors with delegated authority from the central office to redistribute field staffs, marked the first use of decentralization in the provincial welfare administrative structure. With one exception, none of these supervisors had formal training in professional social work.

The total reorganization of welfare administration up to the year 1943 has been set out as follows:

"....the Provincial social services, with respect to their administration to the people who stood in need of them, was under one central authority, the General Administration of the Social Assistance Branch. Supervision and administrative direction with respect to the individual Acts, regulations and policies were given to the field staff by the specialized divisions. In twelve district offices, forty-three members of the Field Service Staff were giving a generalized service to the people within the territories to which they were assigned."<sup>20</sup>

Unity had finally been achieved in administration, in field staff and partially achieved in the program of services. A centralized administration had evolved, phase by phase, from the bits of foundling social legislation,

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<sup>20</sup> Annual Report of the Social Welfare Branch, 1948, p.22. Note: The term "generalized service" as employed here actually refers to a composite of categorical services applied by every field worker, not to a single generalized service covering all areas of need.

at one time scattered throughout the departments of government. A first phase saw the government forced to accept the responsibility of welfare services for the inhabitants of unorganized areas. A second saw the independent development of various programs, from child welfare to old age pensions, and their administrations. This phase also saw the introduction of professional social work and the concept of "treatment" into the administration of services. Both of these innovations had important subsequent influences on administrative structure. A third witnessed the progressive amalgamation of welfare services under a unified administration. In a fourth phase not yet completed, welfare administrators are seeking solutions to problems concerning decentralization and the concept of a generalized service.

## CHAPTER II

### THE DECENTRALIZED ADMINISTRATION

The welfare services emerged from the reforms of 1942 under a single head and served by a single field force. At least the outward framework of unity had been achieved. Solid gains had been made in devising a single general administration and by welding three field staffs into one. But it soon became apparent that in administrations as in other things, "the more things change the more they remain the same thing." The simple act of placing heretofore separate services together, did not, as it turned out, create an essential "unity" of them all. For example, although the categorical services of child welfare, old age pensions and unemployment relief had been amalgamated in the one administration, these same categories retained a good deal of their individuality in the guise of headquarters divisions. The latter were in essence the old head offices of the former separate services and were retained in the new structure to protect the legislative standards of the respective categories. These were necessary because amalgamation was undertaken without substantial alteration of the legislation governing services. No single generalized service was in

fact achieved.

This divisional exclusiveness was now projected into the field. Whereas the divisions remained multiple, the field was now one. The problem therefore arose of protecting the interests of each individual service in field operations. On the other hand the general administration wished to confirm its right to control all field operations. These opposing aims were not unique. They are notorious in administrations of any size, which serve multiple purposes. The ultimate and most evil resolution of this dilemma occurs when the respective divisions, in the interests of standards, literally "take over" control of field operations by means of their supervisions or specialist field advisors. As can easily be seen, this results in a divided administration just as surely as if the union had been dissolved and the categories were again on their own. Under these conditions truly unified administration becomes remote. All these problems were inherent in the united administration after 1942.

Another arose from the union of "treatment" and "non-treatment" categories, professional and non-professional administrative officials, and trained and untrained field personnel. It must again be recognized that the amalgamation of all welfare services brought together personnel and philosophies which differed radically in background and purpose. The child welfare and family categories had been served and administered by professional social workers who saw welfare largely in terms of prevention and treatment. On the other

hand, the unemployment relief administrations and personnel were mainly civil servants experienced in supplying rigidly regulated cash-aid for unemployment needs. The personnel of the old age pension service fell somewhere between the two. The unity of personnel was therefore not a unity and it became an immediate task of the general administration to work out a "modus vivendi" which would be acceptable to all personnel and permit the total organization to move toward one set of objectives. A training program was set up for this purpose to give non-professionals acquaintance with social work principles and a careful tack was taken toward what seemed to be a "modified treatment" program (i. e. treatment was to be the aim of the administration insofar as the training and the numbers of personnel permitted it.) Certain realities of the time confirmed this course, notably a war time shortage of any personnel, let alone of professional personnel, and also the relatively low output of new social workers from the professional schools. Combined with the increase of welfare demand, these considerations made necessary the use of personnel who could not have fitted into a program with more elevated concepts of treatment. The strictly professional tradition in the welfare administration, as exemplified by the child welfare division, had to adjust itself to a definite lowering of standards so that the objectives of unity and co-ordination might be obtained.

The most impressive problem for the new administration, however, turned out to be British Columbia itself.

Certain creakings in headquarters-field relationships drew attention to the most pressing problem of all. The stress was caused by the stretching of communication lines as the central office at Victoria sought to control and supervise the enlarged operations of the welfare field service. The old problem of geography was beginning to assert its influence on the new administration. Priority was therefore given to finding a solution to the critical problem of communications. The other difficulties, critical as they were in their own right, lost the immediate concern of the welfare directors.

Because of distance and terrain, the field forces were inevitably separated from the central office, especially from the divisions which continued to furnish supervision to the field. Consequently, authorization and supervision were slowed because of the attenuated communication lines. In estimating the reasons for subsequent decentralization, official reports emphasize the effect of the physical separation of field and headquarters.

"The burden was....great upon the divisions, for the professional supervisors guiding the workers, new to the separate specializations, had to make their supervisory memoranda exhaustive. The time-lag in receiving reports from the field and issuing of supervisory instructions and advice slowed up the work of the field staff."<sup>1</sup>

The tempo of field activity, thus geared to the work-load capacity of the divisional offices, began to decrease as the demand for services increased and as the services themselves

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1 Social Welfare Branch, Annual Report, 1948, pp.22-23.



grew in number and scope. Any such decrease also meant a decrease in the meeting of needs. The ultimate purposes of the administration and its programs were therefore seriously hampered.

To complicate central-field relations from another angle, the welfare organizations were at the same time, entering into rather intricate relationships with the municipalities. The Social Assistance Act of 1945 set out regulations and standards for municipal departments which for financial and broad co-ordinative reasons, required an increased amount of supervision by the provincial welfare authorities. These matters of community relationships became most difficult to control centrally. Channels of communication between central office and its field service at least existed even if in a congested state. Between the municipalities and the central office, however, there were no clearly defined methods of communication. The municipal authorities, were in need of close liaison, for on the whole they were unfamiliar with the provincial services and standards which they were to administer in their respective areas. There existed, therefore, an urgent need for central office to have close continuing contact with the municipalities, preferably personal contact by experienced senior field personnel if this were possible. No such personnel existed. The field service in itself became a large undertaking. The plant necessary to its operations increased accordingly. Offices, records, stenographic staff, motor transport and similar

# SOCIAL WELFARE BRANCH

DEPT. OF HEALTH & WELFARE

PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

*Showing*  
REGIONS - DISTRICT OFFICES -  
MUNICIPAL OFFICES

LEGEND:  
 (X) REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS (AND DISTRICT OFFICE)  
 (●) DISTRICT OFFICES  
 (★) MUNICIPAL OFFICES

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION...  
 Director of Welfare  
 Assistant Director of Welfare  
 Research Consultant  
 Training Supervisor

DIVISIONAL STAFF...

FAMILY DIVISION Provincial Supervisor 1  
 Social Workers 1

CHILD WELFARE DIVISION Superintendent & Deputy Supervisors 2  
 Social Workers 4

OLD AGE PENSION BOARD Provincial Supervisor 1  
 Social Worker 1

MEDICAL SERVICES DIVISION Director 1  
 Provincial Supervisor 1

PSYCHIATRIC DIVISION (Provincial Supervisor) Supervisors 2  
 Social Workers 13  
 Clinic Supervisor 6

CHILD GUIDANCE CLINIC Provincial Supervisor 1  
 Social Workers 2

T.B. & V.D. DIVISIONS (Public Health) Provincial Supervisor 1  
 Social Workers 8  
 V.D. DIVISION Supervisor 2  
 Social Workers 2

BOYS' & GIRLS' INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL Social Workers 3

FIELD STAFF

REGION 1. REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR 1  
 FIELD CONSULTANT 1  
 DISTRICT SUPERVISORS 13  
 SOCIAL WORKERS 5  
 AMALGAMATED MUNICIPAL OFFICES 2.  
 CASE LOAD 8,870.

REGION 2. REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR 2  
 FIELD CONSULTANT 1  
 DISTRICT SUPERVISORS 5  
 SOCIAL WORKERS 62  
 AMALGAMATED MUNICIPAL OFFICES 7.  
 CASE LOAD 26,877.

REGION 3. REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR 1  
 FIELD CONSULTANT 1  
 DISTRICT SUPERVISORS 3  
 SOCIAL WORKERS 19  
 AMALGAMATED MUNICIPAL OFFICES 4.  
 CASE LOAD 5,344.

REGION 4. REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR 1  
 FIELD CONSULTANT 1  
 DISTRICT SUPERVISORS 3  
 SOCIAL WORKERS 14  
 AMALGAMATED MUNICIPAL OFFICES 7  
 CASE LOAD 12,112.

REGION 5. REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR 1  
 FIELD CONSULTANT 1  
 DISTRICT SUPERVISORS 2  
 SOCIAL WORKERS 12  
 AMALGAMATED MUNICIPAL OFFICES 9

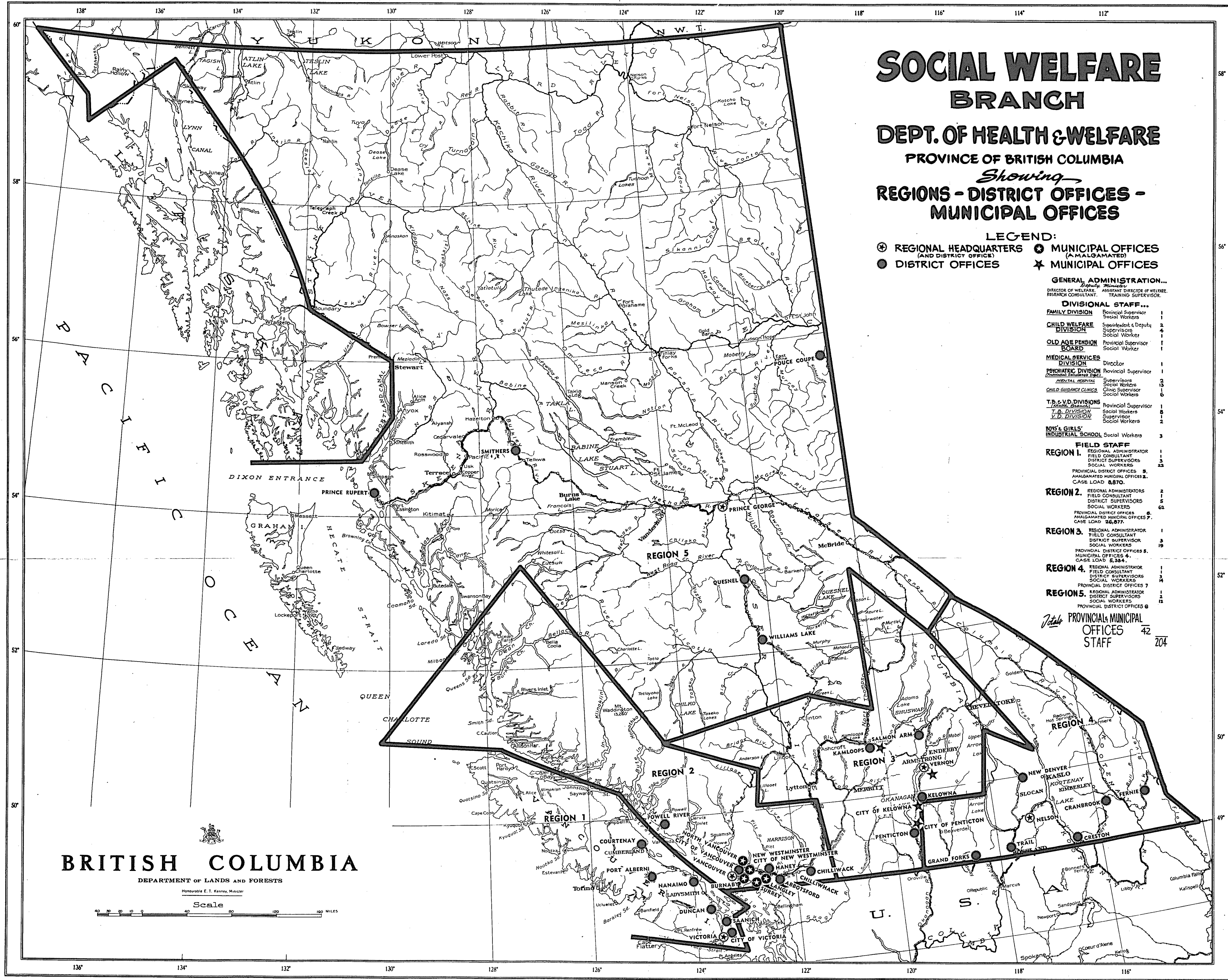
TOTALS PROVINCIAL & MUNICIPAL OFFICES 42  
 STAFF 204

BRITISH COLUMBIA

DEPARTMENT OF LANDS AND FORESTS

Honourable E. T. Kenney, Minister

Scale  
 0 20 40 60 80 100 120 140 160 180 200 MILES



services all required supervision as field operations expanded.

With respect to all these problems of communications, the central office was at a particular disadvantage. All of its powers of direction and supervision, whether divisional or originating in the general administration, were anchored at Victoria or Vancouver, and most ineffectually so as it was turning out. The obvious course was to shorten communication channels and since the field could not come to headquarters, the directing powers must need go to the field. This was done in 1946. Decentralization was sought as a solution.

The grand blueprint of the scheme adopted had the general administration and the divisions remaining at Victoria or Vancouver but with these divisional offices divested of their supervisors. These were placed out close to operations in the district offices. In turn, the district offices with their field workers and supervisors, were placed under the direction of regional administrators. These were found in the five regional supervisors, senior officials from the unemployment relief administration, who had been assigned in 1942 to re-allocate field staffs and offices. Under the new scheme, these represented the final authorities in the field and were answerable to the general administration for operations within their respective regions.

Preparatory to altering administrative control, two important steps were undertaken. The former unemployment

relief program was discontinued and replaced by a more flexible but restricted program of Social Allowances designed to meet the needs of unemployed unemployables. Secondly, the total welfare organization was transferred from the Provincial Secretary's Department and combined with the provincial health authority to form the Department of Health and Welfare. It was now known as the Social Welfare Branch of that department.

The Decentralized Structure. The administration instituted in 1946 is best described in its two major sections, the central office and the field. The former consisted of the general administration and the divisions, the latter of regions, each staffed with a regional administrator, district supervisors and field workers.

The general administration of the central office was headed by the chief executive of the Branch, the Deputy Minister of Welfare, who now possessed jurisdiction over the operation and promotion of all social welfare services set up under provincial legislation. He was to be legally responsible for all the functions of management, planning, organizing, staffing, directing, co-ordinating, reporting and budgeting. To aid him in these tasks, the Deputy Minister delegated authority to his executive assistants, the Director of Welfare and the Assistant Director. Although some of these functions were to be achieved jointly, the Director was in general responsible for over-all policy and directing and the Assistant Director for staffing, reporting and field services. Also attached to central office were advisory units

to assist the general administration in its tasks. Units of Accounting, Research and Medical Services were to be advisory to the Director of Social Welfare and a Training and Publications unit to the Assistant Director.

There were three specialized divisions established, responsible through the general administration to the chief executive. These divisions administered the separate statutes that made up the provincial social legislation. Firstly the Family Division was the headquarters office in which the Social Assistance Act, the family services for which it provided and the Mothers' Allowance Act were to be administered so far as details of accounting and special problems were concerned. This division was placed in charge of a senior social worker. Secondly, the Old Age Pension Board made up a division which administered the Federal Old Age and Blind Pensions Act. The chairman of the Board was to be the chief executive of this division. Thirdly, the Child Welfare Division was to administer the Protection of Children Act, the Adoption of Children Act and the Children of Unmarried Parents Act insofar as legal regulations and extraordinary problems were concerned. In addition, this division was to be responsible for foster home payments for children in care. The chief official in this division remained the Superintendent of Child Welfare assisted by a staff of social workers.<sup>2</sup>

In the second major section of the administration, the field, there were set up five geographical units each headed by a regional administrator. These operated under the

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<sup>2</sup> There are two more nominal divisions of Industrial Schools and the Provincial Home but these are not headed up by senior personnel of divisional rank. For purposes of this paper there are only three main divisions.

delegated authority of the Director of Welfare in authorizing expenditures under the Social Assistance Act (i.e. Social Allowances) and under the Assistant Director of Welfare in matters of personnel, office, administration, statistics and transportation. In the districts of each region, the district supervisors gave face to face supervision to the social workers in the district and municipal offices assigned to them. They also sanctioned expenditure at the district level and fulfilled the teaching function necessary to maintain work standards. Finally came the field social workers, who were the operational personnel "per se" and were located in both district and municipal offices. The former carried out the generalized services offered by the region, the latter, the work involved in social assistance programs only.<sup>3</sup>

It was recognized that since the region was the instrument by which services were to be brought to the people, inter-regional communications would be a prime factor in the designing of these units. Natural areas, travel routes and geographical and physical barriers were all significant to regional disposition. In general, therefore, the natural regions of the province were used to fix boundary lines. Across the lower half of the province, four such natural areas lie side by side, Vancouver Island, the lower mainland and adjacent coastline, the Kamloops-Okanagan Lake Area, and the Kootenays. As reference to the appended map will indicate, these areas were chosen as the bases for Regions I to IV.

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<sup>3</sup> Summarized from the Social Welfare Branch Annual Report, 1947, p. 09, 1948, pp.29-30.

The remaining vast northern area of the province was constituted Region V. It can be noted that the smaller regions correspond roughly with the denser areas of population of the lower province and the one large region with the lightly populated upper reaches. This latter unit, covering as it does, well over half the provincial area, cannot be said to correspond to a natural region. However, it may claim a unity of sorts by virtue of the trans-provincial branch of the Canadian National Railway from Prince Rupert to Jasper and the bus and rail connections from Prince George south to Quesnel and Williams Lake. Within its vast extent, however, are several virtually isolated districts; notably the Peace River area, which is properly a "region" in its own right. Air transportation has lessened some of the difficulties of this out-size northern unit but it is evident that communications still present great difficulties which will increase as the population grows.

The lower mainland area, Region II, contains over a third of the provincial population but yet compares favourably in size with the other regions of the southern province. This dispreponderance of population and potential work load places an undue strain upon the administrative machinery of this region. Undoubtedly the factor of population density was not considered sufficiently in the original regional disposition, possibly for reasons (e.g., lack of personnel), beyond the control of the administration at the time.

Within each region, the field administration

operated to apply the general services of the administration. At present there are five district offices located in each region with the exception of Region V where there are six. This number of offices is not part of a fixed plan. New offices are opened wherever population increases and demand for services require them.

With these provisions for decentralization, the general administration hoped to eliminate extended central-field communication lines and to plant senior liason personnel effectively close to the municipalities. It is also worthy of particular note that the movement of the supervisors from the categorical divisions to the generalized field was well designed to abort the problem of the divisions splitting the field by overcontrolling it in the interests of particular services. Decentralization therefore seemed to offer the hope of ending specialist control of the field. In so transferring supervision from the divisions out to the field, an important change was made in the status of each supervisor. Previously, each had been a specialist attached to a particular division. Now with decentralization and the supervisory movement to the field, each supervisor became, through necessity, a generalist charged with all services. The planned result was an effective weakening of the categorical influence of the divisions since they were not now to be consulted in the ordinary course of operations. Their position was designed to be advisory, both to the field and to the general administration.



Once again though, the gains obtained from the decentralization were not all clear ones. Needless to say, such a change was not made without strain, both on the quality of the supervision and on the supervisory personnel themselves. Whereas before, the supervisor's concern had been with the legislation and regulations of a particular service (i. e. child welfare) and the professional principles appropriate to that service, her concern now was with the legislation and regulations of all services, plus the professional principles associated with them. She had also now the management of a district office to divert her attentions. Initially at least, what decentralization "gained on the swings" it "lost on the roundabouts". What was gained in communications was lost in standards. Perhaps under the circumstances this was all that could be hoped for.

Obviously however, the decentralized structure which had been set up was also under obligation to cope with other problems, than communications, notably the "treatment" vs. "non-treatment" problem and the functional vs. geographical basis of organization which was minimized but not completely eliminated, since divisions still existed. The solving of these latter problems has proven a lengthy matter involving transformations which are still going on at present and which threaten to go on for some time to come.

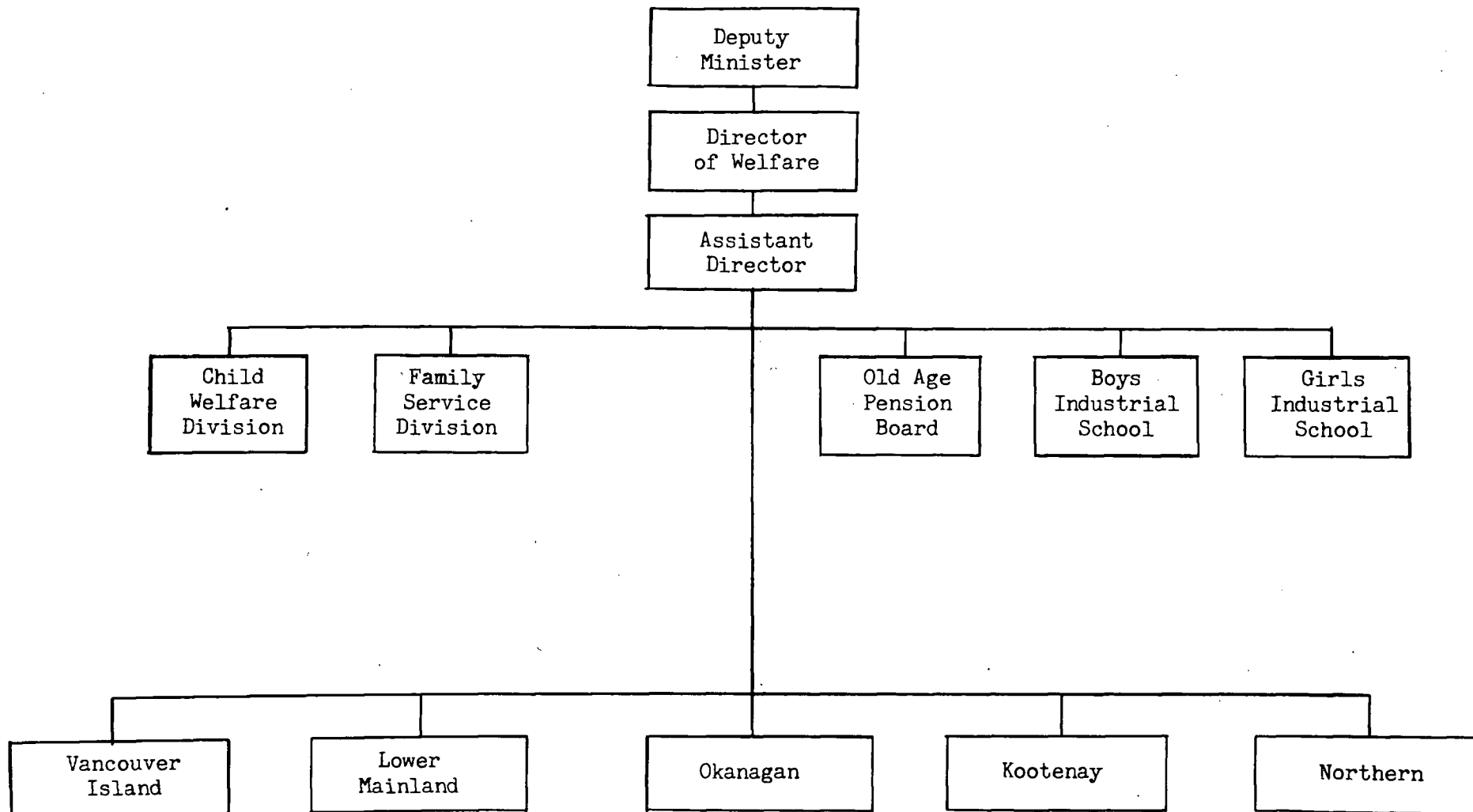


Chart of the General Administration, Divisions and Regions of the Welfare Branch, Department of Health and Welfare.

### CHAPTER III

#### DELEGATION TO THE REGION - SERVICES

In deciding to disperse the centres of administration and to employ regions to carry out field operations, the heads of the welfare branch presented themselves with a series of wholly new problems which were more purely administrative. These revolved around the question of authority. The new system (counting the central office as a single unit) now contained six units where authority was to be concentrated. The task of the central office was to control these scattered units of responsibility so that each could operate most effectively, as a distance from headquarters, without pulling out of the latter's orbit altogether. The problem somewhat resembled an exercise in physics, a balancing of centripetal and centrifugal forces. In administrative phrasing, the ingredients which the executive had to juggle to achieve such balance were "delegations of authority" and "controls over authority". Expressed differently these reduced to "how much authority shall the central office delegate to the field, how much control shall it continue to exercise over the field and how shall the delegations be made?" Needless to say the

solutions to these technical problems are crucial to the proper operation of any decentralized structure. Moreover solutions are not simple to obtain. If the Scylla of too much control is successfully avoided, the Charybdis of excessive regional autonomy may be encountered. Many administrations have failed at this very point.

To this problem the executives of the welfare administration devised specific solutions. As stated, the "how" of delegating consisted of erecting regional units staffed with field workers and supervisors and headed up by a single responsible administrator entrusted with the stewardship of his particular region. His powers were to lie in the making of operational decisions of broad character which were formerly the responsibility of the divisions, in controlling financial disbursements for services and in liaison with organized municipalities. His authorities were in turn to be subject to post-auditing by the general administration and to the regulations and policies issued by that headquarters. His major function as a member of the field force was to accept authority and responsibility to make decisions in the field so that the flow of work over vast areas might be speeded up. The next question to be answered was "how much authority should be given to the regional head?" The solution to this question as supplied by the general administration requires an examination of the most important transfers of authority from central office to the regions, as well as the amount and kind of restraints and checks set up by head-

quarters to control the field. In other words a technical survey of the structure of the administration is required. A logical starting place is provided by those transfers associated with services.

Delegations of authority. Services to people -- the end-product of the organization -- are the sole excuse for administration of any sort. In this sense the degree of authority over services delegated by central office to the region represents a fairly accurate gauge of the extent of the decentralization actually employed. Failing this direct concern with the "real" work of the administration, the region head becomes something akin to an on-the-spot troubleshooter or manager. He is not an integral part of the production machine but an external attendant who sees that it runs properly. This is not to deny that the attendant function has its proper place among the duties of any administration, field or headquarters. It merely serves to point up the fact that, to achieve full effectiveness and speed the flow of work, the device of decentralizing authority must include authority over services as well as managerial authority over field activities. In this respect the regional administrator in the Social Welfare Branch has not yet received the responsibilities he was designed to receive by the decentralized plan of 1946.

It is true that the administrator of the region acts in an indirect or managerial capacity for all services projected into his region by the divisions.<sup>1</sup> He oversees with

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1 For complete list of services implemented by the field services see Appendix A.

his supervisory personnel the field activities related to child welfare, family services and pensions and old age pensions which together constitute the main services of the administration. He also directs local office management, sees to the proper location of personnel, provides transportation and in general makes it possible for field personnel to provide services to clients in an effective and efficient manner. It is extremely significant however that the regional head has direct authority over, and responsibility for, only two services, namely social allowances granted to unemployed unemployables and the family case-work services. All others remain partially or wholly centralized.

As has been suggested, the machinery of decentralization, once set up, ideally should be used to its fullest capacities if it is really to do the job for which it is designed. (i. e., to remove detail from headquarters and improve communications). The welfare administration violates this conception by retaining centralized services in a decentralized structure. Examining the major services in turn, the pattern of delegations to the regions is manifestly incomplete.

Services Still Centralized. The Child Welfare Division, which provides children's services is one division that remains partially centralized. This division, one of the earliest organized welfare administrations in the province operated as highly centralized structure after amalgamation with other units had taken place. When the regions

were devised to disperse the mounting load of operations from central office to the field, the division participated only partially. Supervision of cases was delegated to the regions but very little else.<sup>2</sup>

The reasons behind this non-participation in the decentralization of services extend deeply in the historical development of child welfare in the province. Prior to amalgamation this division was a professional service employing trained social workers in its field staff and embracing the principles of prevention and treatment as being essential to a good child welfare program. As a service, it obtained the advantages of co-ordination with other services when amalgamation took place in 1942. It also received the benefits of a more comprehensive field force. Although the professional training of this field force was considerably reduced, this disadvantage was minimized by the retention at divisional head offices of supervision of the field. In this way the division could ensure that its supervisors, at least, were trained personnel, well acquainted with professional techniques of treatment. With decentralization, however, and the movement of supervision to the field, this safeguard was lost. The division therefore, held back

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- 2 The following are the powers retained by the division:
1. Authority to apprehend children for their protection
  2. Authority to admit children to non-ward care.
  3. Authority to rescind committals under the Protection Act.
  4. Responsibility for submission of final reports and recommendations to the Court in adoption cases.
  5. Responsibility for disbursing support collections under the Children of Unmarried Parents Act.
  6. Responsibility for making reports to the courts on custody of children's applications.
  7. Payment of all accounts for children in care.
- Social Welfare Branch, Annual Report, 1947, p. 14.

specific controls over the operations of its services, which require the field to report to the division before it can proceed with certain operations, notably the apprehending of children for their protection and the rescinding of such committals. The placing of children for adoption is similarly controlled. In general, crucial operations involving the whole futures and future well-being of children seem to have been retained under divisional control.

In withholding these controls in spite of the general movement toward decentralization and its benefits, the division has underscored the principle that childrens' services, at least, should be professionally supervised and should be aimed at the highest levels of treatment and rehabilitation. At the same time, by so doing, it has stated, in effect, that the supervision provided in the district offices and by the regional administrators of the decentralized structure was not of sufficiently high calibre to entrust with the complete authority over child welfare services. In the face of the facts, at the time of decentralization and since, this statement was correct. As suggested, the movement of supervision to the field added tremendously to the responsibilities of the individual supervisor. She now became a "generalist" supervisor and a district administrator instead of a specialist in one service. It was not surprising that the average supervisor would be unable to give the same individual attention to each case as previously. In addition, the final authorities in the field, the regional administrators were,



without exception, inexperienced in child welfare and with one exception "non-professionals", recruited from the former unemployment relief service. The child welfare division took the attitude that these administrators were not equipped to assume final authority over the complicated services for children. For these reasons, the division refused to participate in the complete decentralization envisioned by the general administration. Instead it forced a compromise of centralization and decentralization which still exists today. In doing so the division weighed the importance of technically good administrative structure against the importance of a professionally sound child welfare program and decided in favor of the latter.

It was able to do so by strong legislative backing. Acts dating back many years confer on the Superintendent of Child Welfare (i.e., the head of the child welfare division), statutory powers which make that official independent, in certain aspects, of any authority in the welfare branch, even of the chief executive. They make possible the anomaly of a division of the central office matching in authority the chief executive of the whole administration. These powers are so great that in relation to decentralization the Superintendent of Child Welfare has been able to say:

"The authorities and responsibilities vested in the Superintendent of Child Welfare under our three pieces of children's legislation - Protection of Children Act, and Children of Unmarried Parents Act - are essential and basic to a good child welfare program. They could not and should not be weakened by a complete decentralization.

We therefore delegated to the field those duties and responsibilities which tend to simplify and improve service to the client, and retained in Divisional office those responsibilities and authorities we believe provide the necessary safeguards to an overall child welfare program"<sup>3</sup>

This statement leaves no doubt that the division in question has not only the desire to remain centralized but the power as well.

The administrative effect of this stand by the child welfare division has been to prevent the full implementation of decentralization. It is easily seen therefore that in the public welfare administration, the problem of delegating authorities over services to the regional heads is not a simple one of balancing authority with controls. It is instead, an extremely complex one involving in succession, factors of historical development, principles of treatment and rehabilitation, professional training for personnel, categorical vs. generalized services, and functional vs. geographical bases of organization. The technical problem of balancing control with authority seems far overshadowed by these more basic considerations.

The second major service which has not been delegated to the authority of the regional administrator, is that of old age pensions. At present all applications for pensions must be approved by the division office in Vancouver. This means that in spite of the adoption of decentralization as a general pattern by the welfare administration, this division, in common with the child welfare division, does

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<sup>3</sup> Social Welfare Branch, Annual Report, 1947, p. 14

not participate fully. Its reasons for not doing so are, however, substantially different from the child welfare divisions attempt to preserve professional standards of treatment.

An immediate reason may be found in the regulations governing the Old Age and Blind Pensions Act. These were devised in 1927 and were federal in origin since the Act is a national one. The aim of this legislation was to permit the provinces to administer the program of pensions set up under the Act but at the same time to allow sufficient federal control to ensure that the actual provision of pensions to the aged was more or less uniform throughout the country. In safeguarding these aims, federal legislation specified the formation of provincial boards which would control all pension grants and hear appeals for pensions not approved. These regulations, in effect, permitted a decentralized administration to be set up on the federal level but ensured at the same time that the provinces would be forced to administer the service centrally. The old age pension thus remains very much a categorical service because of the effect of restrictive federal legislation.

Even more basic than federal legislation imposing regulations on provincial services is the fact that the present method of federal financing encourages the formation of categories, which then must be centrally controlled for national uniformity. The old "perennial" of federal-provincial financial agreements plays a determining role in the whole

problem. Since no broad agreements exist between the two levels of government regarding support for welfare programs, individual agreements must be made for individual services. These are specific grants for specific purposes and following the practice usually associated with such grants, specific ways of spending them are imposed by the federal government, with the results seen above in old age pensions. If broader, more flexible financial agreements could be arranged for the provinces, the emphasis on categories and restrictions could then be dropped by the federal government. In such provinces as British Columbia, a more complete decentralization would then be possible if this were thought advisable.

It is sufficient for present purposes to state that for these reasons, authority over old age and blind pensions has not yet been delegated to the regional administrator of the decentralized administration. This official controls only the managerial aspects of this service, inasmuch as it is his responsibility to see that his field personnel handle this service to best advantage. Any further delegation would require alteration of federal legislation affecting nine provinces which seems unlikely for the present.

In a similar but less complicated manner, Mothers' Allowances, a service of the Family Division, is centrally controlled because of legislative restrictions in the authorizing act, which place responsibility with the Director of Welfare. Further delegation in regard to Mothers' Allowances are however, not hindered by federal specifications since the

the Act is provincial in origin. As a matter of record, mothers' allowances are coming into disuse and are being gradually replaced by the more flexible social allowances.<sup>4</sup> They therefore do not constitute a deep-seated problem to decentralization as do the child welfare and old age pension services. It seems likely that their use will be entirely discontinued in the near future, thus avoiding the necessity for altering the legislation.

Decentralized Services. In contrast to these centralized services, the administration of Social Allowances, authorized by the Social Assistance Act of 1945, has been completely delegated to the field. The regional administrator is solely responsible for the granting of allowances in his region. Central office controls are retained only in the way of statistics and periodical case audits. The division (in this case the Family Division) remains as a consultative authority in difficult cases. However, essential control is placed with the regional administrator and it is he who finally authorizes or prevents the granting of allowances.

The detail of this authority is worthy of note since it suggests the intended pattern for future decentralization of services which may devolve upon the region. Allowances are initially authorized at the district office level by case-work supervisors. A complete record of all such authorizations (or cancellations) are then forwarded monthly from district offices to the regional administrator's office. Here they are reviewed and receive final authorization or adjustment.

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<sup>4</sup> Rasmussen, W., "An Evaluation of Mothers' Allowances in British Columbia", Vancouver, B.C. 1950, Chap. IV.

Total regional increases are then sent to the accounting department of the Branch for final recording. The virtues of the system are evident. The method of authorization is simple, the total work load is divided among five regions and special circumstances can be dealt with directly and quickly by the administrator in his region. Most importantly, the authorization process is not hampered by the necessity of central office decision and the central office is in turn not hampered by the necessity of making these decisions. Initial authorization can be given at once at the district level by the supervisor familiar with the case and confirmed quickly at the regional level. Only those cases requiring specialist interpretation need be referred to the division in central office. In contrast with the situation prior to delegation in which one official, the Director of Welfare passed on all authorizations, the present system has obvious administrative advantages of speed and equality of workload.

For the basic family case work service offered by the family service division, decentralization is almost complete.<sup>5</sup> However, the regional administrator occupies an unusual position in regard to these services. Being, in most instances, a general administrator rather than a professionally trained social worker, effectual control of family casework is exercised almost completely by the professionally

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<sup>5</sup> Family service is officially defined as "that group of cases...where case-work (counselling) services are required and given, but where the problem is not primarily financial need, nor does it fall within the areas of need for which statutory or specialized provision has been made." This definition is made for statistical purposes to avoid duplications. Family services in practice, often accompany other specialized or statutory services.

trained district supervisors within his region. Extraordinary problems are referred back to the family services division which acts on a consultative basis but, essentially, the regional administrator assumes only a managerial role in relation to family services. In time, it is hoped that the development of professional qualifications in the regional administrators will enable them to participate more closely in the administration and direction of the family services. At the present time, although authority has been delegated to the regional administrators, they are not in a position to exercise it effectively because of lack of professional training.

Reviewing these services and the degree of decentralization they imply, it may readily be seen that although the Social Welfare Branch set out to implement a decentralized system of administration, the delegation of authority to the field in regard to services is by no means complete. In three services out of five discussed, such transfers have not occurred in the fullest sense, and in only two has full authority been delegated. It is not amiss to emphasize that in not one instance of failure to decentralize has the purely technical problem of balancing delegation with control been the major factor. In those services which have been delegated to the authority of the regional administrators, these details seem to have been executed to the satisfaction of the general administration and of the demands of the services. Difficulties far more extensive than mere administrative

"bugs" have very evidently assailed the structure which was designed to eliminate the communications bottleneck of the old centralized organization.

In the one service, that of child welfare, the tradition that emphasized professional treatment services of highest calibre has asserted itself sufficiently to prevent the complete realization of decentralization. This has occurred because decentralization did not provide a sufficiently high standard of supervision. In the second service of old age pensions, a similar blocking of decentralization has occurred but in this case for reasons of restrictive financial and legislative arrangements between the federal and provincial levels. In a third service, that of mother's allowances, centralization has continued to exist for no other reason than the existence of an anachronistic piece of restrictive legislation. Presumably some difficulty would be encountered in the alteration of this legislation and since the use of the service is gradually being discontinued, it was perhaps the easier course to allow it to lapse rather than attempt to change it. To these bastions of centralization in a professedly decentralized structure may be added the fact that the regional administrators have not been able to assume an effective role in regard to the decentralized family case-work services because of their lack of professional social work training. This lack may therefore be added to those considerations which at the moment are impeding the administrations plan for dispersing authority to the field.



To the reasons already considered for not delegating more authority to the regions may be added a very practical, though not so serious, consideration. Even though legislative and personnel deficiencies were to be remedied, a very real obstacle to a complete, efficient decentralization would still remain in the present physical structure of the regions. To date the regions have had transferred to them complete authority over two services only. With these alone the regional heads are hard pressed.<sup>6</sup> The fact appears that they would be unable to accept further delegations of authority if these were offered to them. Five regional divisions are plainly not enough to absorb a total decentralization of services. It therefore is apparent, that the size of the present regions would have to be reduced and the number of regional heads correspondingly increased, before further transfers of authority could safely occur.

Controls Over Authority. Incomplete though they may be, if the central office confers powers of action and decision to the outer regions, it must also place restrictions on the use of these powers or the unity of the organization will dissolve and the regions become independent. These restrictions are given the administrative term "controls".

Chief of these is the central office control maintained through field consultants. Three consultants, who are professional social workers, tour the field on behalf of the central office, checking standards of work and dealing with special problems in the realm of services. Their function

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<sup>6</sup> The percentage of case turnover in Social Allowances is extremely high. The Administrator of Region II reported the turnover for Jan. 1950 to be 23% per cent.

is to "trouble-shoot" the whole range of services from child welfare to old age pensions. More than that, these central office representatives in the field perform one of the most delicate and difficult tasks in the administration. Their function is really two-fold. They are both inspectors and helpers of the field service. As top-ranking specialists, not only must they advise the field but gauge its standards of operations as well. The task is not so obvious as it might appear. The question of headquarters specialists operating within the field has plagued administration since the time of the Roman Empire. On the one hand, the special consultant must be friendly counselor and on the other, objective observer and reporter. He must walk on an extremely high fence which has not always been successfully negotiated in the public welfare system.

At the time that regions were first used and supervision began to come from the local offices instead of headquarters divisions, it was realized that the inexperienced local supervisors needed skilled direction and advice in regard to the numerous services which had now become their responsibility. Headquarters therefore appointed three experienced personnel to act as chief or regional supervisors and these were assigned to the three regions which were most heavily populated. These supervisors had numerous duties but essentially they were to act as experts on social matters<sup>7</sup>.

The creation of these positions dealt effectively with the

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7 The duties of the Regional Supervisors have been listed as follows:

1. To act as chief supervisors to the district supervisors
2. To make decisions on problems of pre-division status.
3. To act as a link between the field and the divisions.
4. To conduct audits of case work standards.

problem of giving experienced supervision to the regions which required it most. But the scheme was not successful. In spite of the fact that such overall supervision was urgently required in the field, the appointing of chief supervisors to specific regions introduced into each region concerned a second powerful executive of a specialist type. The regions then presented the picture of administrations with virtually two executives, one an administrative general manager, the other a specialist on services. Theoretically this arrangement should have worked well. If the specialist stayed close to service problems the regional administrator could handle more general and less professional problems without difficulty. But it was soon found that problems did not separate themselves so neatly. Inevitably conflict ensued between the regional administrator and the regional supervisor as to which one of them was to be the final regional authority. The situation was not clearly in favour of the one over the other. Being a professional person, the regional supervisor without doubt was often in the strongest position, when a predominately professional case-work problem arose. At the same time, the regional administrator was officially responsible for the management of his region and was therefore accountable for all decisions affecting it. The claims and counter-claims of the specialist representing the divisions and the generalist representing the chief executive were never satisfactorily settled and the position of regional supervisor was eventually abolished.

As a result of this experience, the positions of field consultants have since been established to meet the control requirements of the central office. These differ from the regional supervisors in not being appointed to specific regions. Also they are directly responsible to the general administration and report back to their superiors and to the regional administrators rather than make major field decisions on their own. The actual change in duties is suggested by the title "consultant". In this role, these roving headquarters personnel move throughout all regions advising regional administrators and district supervisors alike, reporting on standards and extraordinary problems to headquarters. In all of these ways they service as control agents for the central office and help to keep the various regions of the administration operating in unison.

As an illustration of their work the following is typical. During the course of her travels, one of the field consultants may come across a case that is marginal, that is, it falls just outside standard regulations. The case, however, may show definite need, which from a general interpretation of the legislation, the provincial services should meet. This case is noted by the consultants and should further cases of a similar nature appear they will be discussed at a consultants' conference which is held regularly. If there appears to be a consistent pattern of such marginal cases the consultants may then refer them to the planning

council of the central office for consideration. Eventually if these cases seem to justify the change, an alteration is made in the regulations so that such cases will be covered by them.

One of the important tasks of the consultants is to give a "controlled" flexibility to the regulations affecting services. It is their job to adjust the services of the administration to extraordinary need. This is an important function but the consultants are restricted and hampered in it by some of the more rigidly regulated services such as old age pensions and mothers' allowances. On the other hand they are able to operate effectively with the more modern legislation such as the Social Allowance Act.

In spite of this drawback, the field consultants by emphasizing the consultant and helping aspects of their position have achieved their control aims with more success than did the regional supervisors. By interfering as little as possible with the direct line of command from the central office to the field they have achieved their twin functions of advising and controlling field operations.

Even so, the present administration of the welfare department admits that the ideal state of affairs has not been reached. In effect, field consultants at large within the regions represent headquarters specialist personnel "peering" over the shoulder of the regional administrator as he works. No matter how diplomatically this is done, at times it will appear as interference. This ideal solution

foreseen by present administrative heads is again a twofold matter of time and training. It is hoped that with experience, the district supervisors will become capable of handling most specialist problems at the district level.

To this end, the present field consultants are giving special training to the district supervisors. A further step toward eliminating the field consultants is planned in future appointments of regional administrators. It is hoped to appoint personnel to these positions who combine both specialist and generalist qualifications. A definite attempt will be made to recruit these rare individuals who combine administrative ability with professional case-work training and approach. In these two ways it is hoped that the headquarters personnel in the field may be eliminated and with them the difficulties which are so often associated with such forms of control. Such an elimination will mark a definite switch in the type of regulation employed by the central office. In place of direct inspection of the field, more reliance will be placed on the training of key personnel within the regional administration to maintain uniform standards and furnish headquarters with adequate reports and information. In discussing field consultants only one of the many methods of regional control by the central office has been investigated but in so doing the major answer to the question "how much control over services shall be retained by the central office?" has been considered.

In short this answer has been that to control ser-

vices the central office makes use of its own representatives, the field consultants. The use of this type of control has given trouble in the past but a modified form now operates more successfully to review field operations without interfering too much with the chain of command. It is not felt that the consultants represent the ultimate form of control. Rather, field personnel themselves, when sufficiently expert, will represent the best form of assuring high standards of work, by their adherence to their own professional codes and goals. Relating the answers of the two technical questions about "delegations of authority" and "controls over authority" it is evident that the incomplete answer to the former has been influenced by factors beyond the purely administrative. On the other hand the answer to the question regarding controls shows a more normal application of theory to the problem of controlling a decentralized administration. In brief, delegation <sup>of</sup> ~~over~~ authority over services "went wrong" because of external factors of professionalism and provincial-federal relationships but control over the authorities delegated succeeded in a normal fashion.

## CHAPTER IV

### DELEGATION TO THE REGION - FIELD MANAGEMENT

Effective decentralization demands a balance between authority and control in areas other than services to people. For convenience these can be grouped under the term "field management". They include personnel practices, budget formulation, accounting, procedures, and communications. As a group they form the auxiliary or secondary activities which keep the total organization in running order and make possible the main goal of offering services to people.

A decentralized system of administration is particularly suited to handle auxiliary field operations efficiently. The local office problems of a wide-spread administration are after all, local concerns best dealt with in their proper context. Although the central office may wish to know accurately what has been done in the regions about certain problems, it is obviously well advised to be as free as possible from devising petty answers to petty problems which in the aggregate, could be overwhelming to a headquarters. Decentralization enables an executive to rise above local detail in just such a fashion. Strategically delegated authorities to the field, together with good controls, leave the



central office in its best position in regard to the field, namely, that of a checker and general observer. At the same time, the regions are left free to meet local problems on a local basis. Again the vital key to the decentralization is the balance between authority and control achieved by headquarters. Field activities must not be allowed to deteriorate into autonomous operations. Nor on the other hand should central office controls be permitted to cramp field operations. A consideration of personnel practices, budget formulation, fiscal and accounting policies and communications will illustrate the balance obtained in the public welfare organization.

Personnel Practices. Authorities over personnel are divided between the central office and the field on what appears to be a good basis of capability. For example, recruitment of personnel, which would be difficult for the regions to do, is carried on by headquarters. On the other hand work performance evaluations are done by the region since it is the unit most familiar with the standards of work being achieved.

Considering first the central office authorities, personnel supply is the direct responsibility of the Assistant Director of Welfare. Theoretically, since provincial government employment is controlled by a civil service commission set up independently of any department, all personnel should be supplied to the departments by this commission. However, because of the special requirements of welfare positions in the way of professional training, applicants are

first screened by the Assistant Director of Welfare before their appointments are confirmed by the civil service commission. This co-operative arrangement attempts to meet the particular professional requirements of the welfare administration, in addition to the general requirements set up by the civil service commission for all government employees. Within broad limits, the central office is restricted by the commission as to the number of personnel it may employ.

It is possible to take issue with such a method of recruiting. While less satisfactory arrangements exist within the regular civil service commission regarding the recruitment of professional or specialist personnel, no doubt the present course is justified. However, in most modern administrations, either governmental or industrial, the whole matter of personnel, from recruitment to retirement, is being handled by specialized staff units. These are headed up by trained personnel officers, backed up and assisted in their tasks by all the modern developments of job classification and personnel practices. The point hardly needs to be made that such a task, which is more specialized than accounting or any other technical staff service, should not be made the direct responsibility of a member of the general administration. Necessary pressures should be brought to bear upon the civil service commission to provide such trained services or failing this a separate welfare unit should be developed to work in conjunction with the commission. The present situation in regard to personnel is analogous to an industrial

vice-president in charge of field operations also being responsible for the provision of headquarters and field personnel.

Staff appointments have tended increasingly to be made from professionally trained applicants.<sup>1</sup> This trend has eliminated the need for a specially designed training program for a greater part of new personnel. However for new, untrained personnel, a period of in-service training is provided. This consists of a three-month indoctrination period in which professional theories and the routines of services are taught and practice work is done under supervision. The program is under the direction of a training supervisor who is attached to the office of the Assistant Director of Welfare. This training office constitutes a central staff unit. The function of the training supervisor has also been enlarged to include the development of a central reference library and the publication of a monthly journal for purposes of further personnel development in the field.

When the new employee has been recruited and trained he comes next under the direction of the regional administrator, since authorities over most of the remaining personnel practices have been delegated to that official. For the first six months the worker receives a temporary appointment. At the end of that time his performance is evaluated by his district supervisor. This report is then submitted to the regional administrator who will, on the basis of the evalua-

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1 Social Welfare Branch of the Department of Health and Welfare, Annual Report, 1948, p. 28, states that by 1948 two-thirds of personnel were professionally trained in social work.

tion, recommend that the worker be given a permanent appointment, or be carried for a further period as temporary staff. This recommendation is forwarded to central office for authorization and then is submitted to the civil service commission. In this evaluating process, the recommendation of the regional administrator carries considerable weight and for all practical purposes the authority for such personnel evaluations has been delegated to the field.

At the completion of one year in the field the worker's performance is again audited by his immediate supervisor and the report submitted to the regional head who, in the event of a favourable evaluation, recommends the worker for a statutory increase in salary. This recommendation follows the usual channels to central office through to the civil service commission. An unfavourable recommendation follows a similar course. In either case, specific reasons for an increase or a withholding of an increase must be given. In regard to promotion, the regional administrator again initiates recommendations to the central office. Promotion usually follows a substantial time in the field on the part of the worker thus giving the administrator an opportunity to acquire personal knowledge of the individual's capabilities. This first-hand acquaintance is supplemented by the usual formal evaluation of the worker by his supervisor. The latter is in turn, often further enlarged by direct consultation between the regional administrator and the supervisor. By these means an adequate assessment can be made of

the worker's capabilities and progress in general field work. A recommendation of promotion then being made, it passes to the Assistant Director, to the Deputy Minister and with his final approval to the civil service commission. Transfers of personnel from one office to another within a region or between regions are accomplished by the same means and follow the same hierarchical channels for approval.

It is the aim of the administration to conduct an annual audit of each field worker. At the present stage of development this aim is not being met for several reasons. These are, principally, lack of time on the part of field supervisors and the high mobility of the personnel, due to transfers and resignations. Nevertheless, a fairly complete audit is accomplished by the evaluations required as above, for permanent appointment, increases in salary, promotions and transfers. In addition to these formal evaluations, the field workers are necessarily in close working relationship with their respective district supervisors and in this way a constant informal audit is carried on. As a further check on personnel performance, the field consultants whose functions were described in the preceeding chapter, carry out case record audits at regular periods in all district offices. The performance standards of field personnel may thus be indirectly reviewed in the course of these audits.

Considering the whole field of personnel practices a satisfactory balance of authorities retained and authorities delegated seems to have been achieved. With the generalized

functions of recruitment and training being retained by headquarters and the remaining "on the job" functions being transferred to the field, a workable decentralization of authorities over personnel has been set up. The manner in which headquarters handles its personnel functions does seem questionable. Broadly speaking, however, each unit seems best fitted to discharge the responsibilities assigned to it.

It seems hardly necessary to point up the controls exercised by headquarters over the field in relation to personnel. These consist mainly of control over recruiting and the final authorizations given to regional recommendations. They appear well designed to guide field personnel activities without unduly interfering with or over-controlling them.

Budget Formulation. Overall budget formulation is a central office responsibility. Nevertheless each region is delegated the authority to submit individual estimates of regional requirements which are used to make up the main budget. With estimates originating in the regions and subject only to headquarters approval, the major conditions of a balanced decentralization are present. The actual process involves the regional head preparing and submitting to central office an estimate of regional requirements for the coming year. This estimate is drawn up well in advance (usually six months) of the provincial fiscal year which begins in April. In the estimate are considered all the physical elements required to maintain the region in the field. These fall into two main categories, personnel and office plant. To obtain

personnel, the regional head estimates from his previous year's field service reports the work loads occurring in the various districts of his region. If certain offices report consistent work loads beyond the capabilities of present staff, he requisitions additional personnel from the central office personnel officer and indicates the district which requires reinforcement. This method is followed for both professional and clerical requirements.

The regional administrator must submit estimates not only for the maintenance of existing offices and equipment but also for any new offices which may have to be opened within the forthcoming fiscal year. Existing district offices may require additions to their physical assets in the way of furniture, filing needs, increased space, additions to motor transport and so on. All these items must be requisitioned and once obtained, all such plant is the direct responsibility of the regional head. Current costs must also be listed, such as rentals. New offices may be required in certain districts because of the increase of population and consequent demands for more intense field operations. The estimate also includes such new additions. The regional administrator is responsible for such field development and the location of new offices and general arrangements for space and leases are within his authority. However, close relations are maintained with central office in such matters. Since the regional estimates in general are concerned with personnel and office requirements they are submitted by the various regional ad-

ministrators to the Assistant Director who consolidates these estimates and presents a total field estimate to the Director and Deputy Minister of Welfare. Viewing the total budget-making process therefore, it may be seen that for his own particular area, the regional administrator exercises considerable control over the formulation of his section of the budget. He is genuinely in a position to request from headquarters what materials he feels the region requires. Although his request is subject to central office review this seems only consistent with the demands of a unified administration.

Fiscal and accounting functions, as carried on within the region, are restricted to relatively simple operations. Three major categories are represented under fiscal matters, expenditures in connection with services, current expenses of district offices, and salaries. Social allowance expenditures are the sole service disbursements under regional responsibility. Payment of these allowances is made directly by the district offices with the assistance of the local government agent who issues the allowance cheques. Similarly, accounting is a district office responsibility, although as noted previously, a complete statement of case turnover in social allowances and expenditures involved is submitted monthly by each district office to the regional administrator. In connection with social allowance expenditures, the central office examines district office accounts once each year by means of an inspection team working from the auditing unit



attached to headquarters. This team conducts a spot audit of allowance cases in each district, reviews the office operating accounts and submits a report directly to the Director of Welfare. This official then notifies the regional administrator of any discrepancies. In the event of necessary changes in district accounting practices the regional head may call upon the audit unit to assist in making these corrections. Running costs in the district offices for such items as repairs are held to a minimum by the device of requisitioning supplies from a central government supply agency. District office accounts are kept for administrative or "housekeeping" services and these are included under the usual central office audit.

Salaries for personnel of all district offices are handled by the regional administrator. His office maintains filed classification data for all personnel and salary cheques are issued from regional headquarters once each month. In all budget and fiscal matters a clear pattern of authority and control balance is apparent. The regions have been given the right to formulate their own estimates of need, keep their own books and pay their own salaries. In the case of the decentralized service of social allowances, power to make payments has also been delegated. On the control side, headquarters in each case retains the right to authorize budget estimates and to inspect accounts periodically. These arrangements seem workable and sound.

Communications. Communications are not strictly divisible into field and headquarters authorities. They may be discussed in terms of channels (what routes does information travel) or devices (what forms does it take). But essentially, communications usually comprise an administration-wide pattern or network and do not fall into headquarters or field compartments. On the contrary, some forms such as policy and procedure manuals, are clearly central office field controls. The point to be determined in regard to their treatment under a decentralization is not so much the balance between authority and control but the amount of field participation that exists in these communication devices. For example, a critical question in regard to channels of communication might be, "Is the regional administrator regularly bypassed by communication channels?"

In answering this question it might be stated that channels for the flow of information should follow the general chain of command, whether information is flowing from the field to the chief executive or in reverse. This principle holds valid in the public welfare organization. Points of contact between the field and the central office are the Assistant Director of Welfare and the regional administrator. These two form the main central-field bridge over which information directives, reports and statistics flow in either direction.

Several minor bridges also exist between the divisions and the field. In the case of those divisions exer-

cising directive functions, information from the field and advice to the field is channeled through a direct circuit from the division to the district offices. It is significant that definite limitations are set on the nature of information given to the field by the divisions. This must be of an advisory nature only and must be related to services. In short the divisions are not permitted to engage in control of field operations and may not by-pass the regional head. This limitation is essential to the preservation of the chain of command within which the head of the regional office is responsible to the general administration for operations within his area.

A final channel of communications may be established between central office and its inspection and consultant officers operating within the field. Reports from these sources are generally submitted both to the regional heads and the general administration. In all cases, the pattern of communication is a definitely established one and at no essential point do channels circumvent the position of the regional administrator.

Communication devices are the "tools" of administration. They include directives, policy and procedure manuals, reports and statistics and central-field conferences and planning councils. Policy and procedure materials have the main purpose of establishing uniform methods of carrying on operations and represent a major form of central office control over the field. In the public welfare administration they fall into three groups, the first of which is the Office

Practices manual. This manual has been in use since 1944 and sets out for every office in the regions, details of a uniform filing system and general office routine. Such a manual is particularly important to a decentralized system. By providing uniformity of procedure it enables personnel to be transferred from office to office without need for "breaking in". In addition, by ensuring that filing is carried on in exactly the same manner in each office, the regulations contained in the manual make possible easy transfers of cases from office to office and district to district. What the manual achieves is a standardized office routine throughout the field.

A second manual contains headquarters policy on the services offered by the Welfare Branch. Each division has written up specific sections which offer detailed information on social allowances, old age and blind pensions, child welfare, medical services and on through all the services. Each component and service of the provincial administration is fully dealt with for the guidance of the individual worker as well as his supervisor and regional administrator. Alterations to these permanent manuals are obtained by using a system of serial letters employed by headquarters to issue new directives, and cancel or modify old ones. With this device, policy and regulations are kept constantly up to date and changes may be introduced into all district offices simultaneously without confusion. Each office keeps a special indexed file of serial letters.

The manuals and the letter index just described are vital to decentralization. By means of them each office and each social worker is kept up to date on policy developments. As a result services are offered in a standard way throughout the province. Of direct benefit to the regional administrator, these manuals represent a uniform, secure base of regulation and policy from which he and his regional staff may operate to meet those individual situations that call for an approach slightly different from those put forth by the official manuals.

Reports and statistics are the most common devices employed to inform a central office of field work operations. Statistical reporting is particularly important to the dispersed administration, for only on the basis of good information from the field can intelligent planning of future operations be carried on.

The individual regions do not as yet issue reports such as might be contained within an annual report of the total administration. However, the last annual report foreshadows such regional reporting for next year. This seems significant of the real growth of regional decentralization. For the first time statistics will be compiled and issued solely for regional purposes and will show operations solely in terms of what was done in each region. It does not seem too far-fetched to suppose that such official recognition of regional entities marks a divide on the road to a fully implemented decentralization, indicating that the downward slope

to an eventual goal has rightly begun. Until this year all reports published annually have been compiled by the central office, by the general administration and by the divisional heads from statistics supplied from the regions. Representing the points of authority and control as they have, it has been fitting that the divisions should report operations in divisional terms. It is true after all that statistics and reports should be derived from significant operations. It is therefore indicative of a developing decentralization that the regions are now beginning official reporting to the people of the province.

At present, regional statistical reporting is designed firstly to supply to regional personnel, information of how operations are proceeding. Everyone in operations from the field worker to the district supervisor, to the regional administrator has a vital interest in the statistical picture for each month. Such a picture is required for evaluating work done and planning new work. Secondly, reporting in the regions is designed to bring up to the central office, at regular intervals, consolidated statistics on the activities of all the regions. The system of reporting employed in the branch is well designed to accomplish both of these aims.

The base of the statistical scheme is the field worker's daily work sheet. At monthly intervals the records of the daily flow of work are totalled by the worker on a field service report. Each worker then sends his report up

to his district supervisor who consolidates the reports of all the workers in his district, retains copies of the results for district use and hands these statistics on to the regional administrator. In turn each district of a region performs a similar consolidation until total regional statistics are obtained. The five regional heads submit their statistics to the central office (specifically to the Assistant Director) and they are again consolidated by that official to give a complete picture of welfare branch activity. From the field worker's daily work sheet to the consolidated report of the total administration, the statistical system appears simple and straight forward. It is however the product of a great deal of experimentation and at present is capable of satisfying several complicated statistical requirements. For example the statistics must allow for a good deal of moving about on the part of individual cases. Movement may be between districts or between regions and duplication could occur in such instances unless provided against. Also, individual cases may qualify for a number of services. Indiscriminate tallying could misrepresent such a single case to be a number of cases. The statistical system employed, avoids these possibilities and, all things considered, the complete system seems to have been brought to a high stage of refinement. It performs accurately the task for which it is designed; that is, to count work accomplished, where it is accomplished without duplication.

Communications within an administration may also

include methods used for planning. Future moves cannot be formulated adequately without proper information. The central office, therefore, relies on adequate information and communication from the field in order to fulfill its planning operations. These operations, if properly carried out, are in themselves forms of communications.

Planning operations in the public welfare system are carried on actively by a planning council. This body consists of the Assistant Director of Welfare as chairman, the heads of the principal divisions and a representative of the regional administrators, usually the administrator of Region II. Although prevented by distance from attending regularly, the other regional heads are attached to the council on a consultive basis. The council meets monthly and discusses operational progress. In addition to the regular statistics and reports with which it is supplied, the council considers special information which may be brought to its attention by individuals in the field -- workers, supervisors and regional heads. Such information follows regular channels to reach the planning council and the regional administrators are largely responsible for presenting it to the planning body. In this manner, the regions participate positively in the overall planning of the administration.

The planning group as a whole wields considerable influence on the future developments of the organization. Although it does not make policy directly, it serves as an advisory body to the Director of Welfare and the Deputy



Minister, and its recommendations are rarely disregarded. New procedures and regulations for existing policies also originate in the council. With the co-operation of the regions, new procedures are experimented with in actual operations. Decisions are then made on the basis of regional reports on these experiments, and after tentative regional approval has been given to the ideas being tested. This use of the regions and the fact that the field is represented directly on the council illustrates the extent to which the field is permitted by the central office to participate in planning. Obviously, a definite attempt is made to utilize field experience and to gain field agreement in the formulation of new procedure. Annual meetings of all the regional administrators also give the field further opportunity to pass on broad policy matters.

In an administration where the field plays such a large part in operations it is only to be expected that it should play a correspondingly large part in planning. In arranging that it should do so, the central office seems to follow a general rule for its treatment of all field management activities. This, in short, may be expressed, "Let authorities and responsibilities be given to the unit best able to discharge them." It is apparent that the general administration have taken an enlightened position in regard to this rule. Central office is not invariably regarded as the "unit best able". On the contrary, by means of the substantial authorities which it has delegated to the regions

and the non-interfering type of controls imposed, central office has shown itself willing and able to take full advantage of the benefits of decentralization, in management affairs at least. The innumerable details associated with personnel practices, budget formulation, accounting and statistical reporting have been "farmed out" on a regulated basis. In this manner headquarters has placed itself in a truly directive position where it may operate to best advantage.

## CHAPTER V

### DELEGATION TO THE REGION - COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

Because he is necessarily in close contact with the immediate field of operations, the regional administrator of any decentralized organization is normally responsible for a large proportion of the relationships established between the administration and the local communities. In British Columbia this is particularly true. In addition to the usual formal relationships of a public relations variety, maintained between an administration and the communities it serves, the municipalities of the province have always occupied a special position in relation to the provincial authority.

The municipalities have been charged since Confederation with the care of their sick and indigent poor. These responsibilities had not been altered in succeeding years, with the result that provincial programs of welfare, in the course of universal application throughout the province, became of necessity the administrative responsibilities of the municipalities. Such a division of administration would not have presented unusual difficulties if the average municipality had been of sufficient stature to shoulder the burden of welfare services. Unfortunately, such was not the

case. On the one hand the municipalities were small in area, poor in resources and unsophisticated in administration; on the other, public welfare programs progressively were becoming more numerous, more costly and relatively more complex in structure. In effect, the municipalities found themselves playing in a major welfare league with minor league resources. If, within the municipalities, gaps in services appeared and standards of administration were low, these were understandable when seen in the light of the difficulties which existed.

In consequence, several steps were taken by the province to improve the stature of the municipalities in relation to welfare services. The first was aimed at raising administrative standards to a uniform level. In 1945, the Social Assistance Act made it obligatory for the municipalities to implement the full range of public welfare services as offered by the provincial welfare administration. To assist the local units in fulfilling this obligation, the Act furnished administrative help in three ways: supervision, personnel and finance. Three methods of obtaining this assistance were set out. Those municipalities of over 10,000 population by the 1941 census were required to install their own welfare departments. Staff were to be supplied on a matching basis, the province providing one worker for each one supplied by the municipality. Municipalities under 10,000 population could follow the above scheme or could "contract" for provincial services at the rate of .15¢ per capita of population per annum. In the event of only one worker being

required by a municipal department, the province agreed to pay fifty percent of the worker's salary. It was further required that all staff employed by the municipalities meet provincial personnel standards. As a final safeguard for uniformity of standards, supervision for workers in municipal departments was to be carried out by the district supervisors of the region within which the municipality was located.<sup>1</sup>

The second step taken by the province to improve the position of the municipalities was more purely financial. In spite of the fact that financial help had been provided for administration as detailed above, a large percentage of the costs of the services themselves remained with the local units. The tax resources of the municipalities, strained before the passage of the Social Assistance Act in 1945, were completely unable to meet the rising costs of a general welfare program. In response to municipal protest therefore, the province in 1947 set up the Goldenberg Commission to examine the situation. It was recommended by the commission that the province reimburse the municipalities by 80 percent of the costs involved in direct expenditures for all forms of social aid.<sup>2</sup> This plan was adopted and since February 1947, the province has paid 80 percent "of the costs of social allowances, medical services, emergency health aid, boarding and nursing-home care, foster home care

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1 This is not a uniform practice but is substantially followed with smaller local units.

2 Report of the Royal Commission on Provincial-Municipal Relations.

for children, who may be either wards of the Superintendent of Child Welfare or under that official's temporary guardianship, and for the tuberculosis allowances and special, more expensive boarding-home care that may be required for tuberculosis convalescents.<sup>3</sup>"

As may be expected, the inter-relationships set up between the provincial welfare authorities and the municipalities as the result of these financial and administrative agreements necessitated a close liaison on a continuing basis. The region appeared as the logical administrative unit to carry out this co-operation since regional boundaries included in each case both municipal and unorganized territory. In addition, regional administrators and personnel, supervisors and field workers, were strategically situated to be familiar with local problems. In the case of contracting municipalities, regional personnel actually carried on the welfare administration of the local unit. Even in exclusively municipal departments, regional supervisors and regional field workers constituted integral parts of the administration. It was therefore expedient, that the regional unit comprise the point of contact between the provincial administration and the municipalities and that the regional administrator be delegated authority to deal with the municipalities on matters of administration, personnel and those services for which he was ultimately responsible within the provincial administration.

Upon examination, this delegation resolves into

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<sup>3</sup> Social Welfare Branch of the Department of Health and Welfare, Annual Report, 1948, p. 26.

a number of specific tasks. Chief among these is enforcement of the provisions of the Social Assistance Act. Although the Act specifies certain requirements of the municipalities as noted above, it contains no enforcement clauses other than stoppage of provincial financial participation in the event of non-co-operation. This sanction, if applied, is equivalent to a complete negation of the aims of the Act itself and as such is not a particularly effective measure for inducing municipal co-operation. In fact, it is now apparent that the Act attempted to combine lofty social aims with political acceptability. In so doing it succeeded in falling into that class of legislation best described as "all mouth and no teeth". By placating the municipalities at the same time as it tried to reform them, the Act left the provincial welfare administration in an extremely weak position. Provincial policy has therefore, of necessity, been designed on a basis of interpretation to the municipalities of the advantages, social and financial, "contingent upon proper compliance with the Act".

This interpretive function is not an easy one. Provincial-municipal relationships have been traditionally weak in British Columbia, principally for financial reasons. From long experience with restricted budgets, municipal officials have tended to view with suspicion provincially initiated programs which result in major increases in municipal expenditure. In addition, local officials concerned with local problems, have been on the whole unacquainted

with broad issues of welfare development and the need for welfare services. Council officials are generally, in a very real sense, amateurs in the field of public service, entering into public life for short periods and often without previous experience. For these reasons, interpretation is primarily concentrated on the municipal council level, which constitutes the head of municipal resistance (if any), and the official point of co-operation, if such exists.

The regional administrator aims first at establishing a working relationship based on minor provincial-municipal transactions. He then employs this relationship to interpret provincial policies and their value to the community. One of the most invaluable methods of achieving this relationship is the annual presentation to every municipal council of the total provincial expenditures for all welfare services within the confines of the municipality. This "balance sheet" illustrates in a striking way the amount of purchasing power poured into the municipality by the province in return for the municipal investment of 20 percent of direct assistance costs.<sup>4</sup> The regional administrator presents this statement in joint meeting with the municipal reeve and council and thus has personal opportunity to discuss the welfare problems of each local unit in detail. On such occasions the type of local administration may be reviewed. If the municipality has developed beyond the 10,000 level of population the necessary arrangements for setting up a municipal department may be put forward and the questions of staff and administra-

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4 Appendix B contains a sample balance sheet of welfare expenditure.



tive financial participation explored. Succeeding joint consultations between the council and the regional administrator are then held to complete necessary arrangements. In the nearest census year a change-over is then made to the new agreement. It is by such persuasive means that the Social Assistance Act is enforced and uniformity of provincial-municipal services is achieved.

This process, because of the nature of municipal politics, is a continuous one. Council elections are held yearly and it is not impossible for a completely new council to replace one with which relationships have successfully been established. In this event, the regional administrator must again begin to establish a relationship and proceed with his interpretive function as before. This repetitive task, multiplied by the number of municipalities within the administrator's region, gives some measure of the scope and difficulty associated with this delegation of function to the regional administrator.

Because of this very lack of continuity, provincial authorities have recognized that more permanent community relationships can only be achieved by correspondingly more basic approaches. In a paper on this topic the administrator for Region II has stated:

"In long term planning...services will largely live or die depending on the wishes of the average citizen. For a certain length of time a service or an idea may be imposed on a community but if the service is not interpreted to the community it is only a matter of time before the average citizen will express his wish and have the service discontinued. Therefore...we

must go a step further (than the council) and carry on a programme in the community."<sup>5</sup>

He suggests further that this program should not be carried out directly by the regional administrator because of his official position. Instead he envisages the social workers doing the job, working as interpreters with local community organizations, service clubs, women's organizations and church groups. In time there would be established a broad base of community interest and understanding of welfare services. With such a background, the more official relationships with the municipal councils could become relatively easier. The community itself would provide continuity to its successive councils. This scheme of community education on the part of the social workers has in fact been fostered by the regional administrators with satisfactory results. Under present conditions of high case loads, however, community participation by field workers on a formal basis is severely limited by the amount of time available to them for such purposes.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, turnover of personnel in the field has also been high with the result that opportunities for field workers to become influential, integral parts of the community is again reduced.<sup>7</sup> Finally, community participation of an effective type requires a natural ability and inclination not universally possessed.

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5 Sadler, J. A., "Community Organization", Vancouver, 1948.

6 Average case loads for 1947-48 were 287. Welfare Branch Annual Report, 1948, p. 32.

7 During the year 1947-48 total staff appointments were 44, resignations 29. The total average staff was 147.

To be most influential, specialized training is also indicated. Improvement is being shown here inasmuch as training is becoming more available as the number of professionally trained staff increases in the field service.

In spite of these drawbacks of lack of time, high field staff turnover and the scarcity of formal skills in community organization, a significant amount of interpretation is being done by the field personnel on a more informal basis. This is effected through opportunities presented by the normal field routine of offering services to the community. The following, suitably altered, is a brief example of interpreting a specific case to a community as carried out by a field worker in the course of his work:

"A family of five, because of its common-law basis, had fallen into disfavour with the local small community. The father became ill and was unable to support and although social assistance had been granted, the family's major trouble, non-acceptance by the community, effectively prevented any thorough-going rehabilitation. The children were having trouble at school and the father, when he did recover his health, found employment difficult to obtain. However, he had served with a good record in the armed forces, and on the basis of this the worker was able to approach the local veterans' association concerning this man's problems. Receiving support he next approached the teacher and through her, interested the parent-teacher association in the problems of the children. Both of these groups provided help to the family and enabled its members to re-establish themselves within the community. The man obtained a job and the children's school relationships improved."<sup>8</sup>

Although this is not a difficult or unusual case, the worker found that in the course of swinging community support behind this one family he had been able to interpret

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<sup>8</sup> Obtained in an interview with District Worker, W. Rasmussen, June 1950.

welfare services to important local organizations on a rather broad basis. He had thus encouraged community relationships with his department without specifically setting out to do so beyond the confines of his case.

The regional administrator, although not directly implicated in this type of activity, does foster it by encouraging such policy in his relationships with his field supervisors and personnel. He is also able to act as a "resource person" to the field worker through his relationships with the local community officials.

Important as liaison is, other relationships may not be neglected. In those municipalities purchasing provincial services on a per capita basis, the relationships with the regional administrator are essentially those described for the field offices located in unorganized territory. The regional head has service and managerial authorities within this municipal category precisely the same as those he exercises within the region proper.

In the remaining category of municipally administered welfare departments, his authorities are somewhat more restricted. His ultimate authority over the granting of the provincial share of social allowances remains unaltered, although in practice the municipal administrations determine the eligibility of applications within their areas. The latter however, submit monthly reports of social allowances case turn-overs to the regional head for his approval. Similarly all cases of an extraordinary nature are generally

settled by personal communications between the regional and municipal administrators. In addition the municipalities forward to the regional administrator a monthly work report listing the number of cases handled in all services including social allowances. This report corresponds to the field work report submitted by the district offices located in unorganized territory and is used by the regional head in compiling region-wide statistical summaries.

In respect to managerial duties as described in the preceeding chapter, the regional administrator does not infringe on the sphere of the municipal departments. These are the concern of the municipal administrator. Similarly, in regard to personnel, the regional administrator exercises control only over those staff provided by the province under the agreement of the Social Assistance Act. Personnel practices for municipal staff are within the jurisdiction of the municipal welfare administrator.

A major exception (in theory, if not in practice), to the above general working relationships between region and municipalities is represented by the City of Vancouver. Contrary to the usual municipal welfare department which is organized under the terms of the Social Assistance Act, the Vancouver Social Service Department is constituted under the city charter. In broad terms it may be said therefore that Vancouver, alone among the local units of British Columbia, operates an independent welfare department of its own institution. However the agreements set forth in the Social Assis-

tance Act as regards services offered, the sharing of direct service costs, and the matching of personnel again hold force. Regional relationships are maintained inasmuch as the city department furnishes the administration of the region within which the city falls, with complete monthly work reports for all services. A monthly blanket statement of social allowances costs is also submitted which constitutes a slight departure from the more detailed social allowance reports furnished by the remaining municipalities. In spite of these "usual" relationships with the region it may be noted that because of its size, the Vancouver Social Service Department in matters of broad policy, tends to deal more directly with the general administration of the Social Welfare Branch than is the case with the smaller municipalities.<sup>9</sup>

In a theoretical administrative sense this situation does not necessarily represent a circumvention of the chain of command since on policy matters affecting both the region and the City, the regional administrator is inevitably an active participant in discussions. However, his role may be regarded principally as a co-ordinating rather than a directive one, as it is with the smaller local units.

The relationships reviewed above are among the most important which exist between the provincial authorities and the municipalities. As administrative operations

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<sup>9</sup> According to an unpublished survey made in 1948 by the Welfare Director of the Vancouver Social Service Department, the case load for Vancouver accounted for approximately one-third of total provincial cases in Social Allowances, Old Age Pensions and Mothers' Allowances.

go, they are also most extensive. Fifteen municipalities are at present operating social service departments and a further number are contracting for provincial services. Negotiations must be carried on with each of these local units. Traditionally, such negotiations between the provincial authorities and the municipalities are most difficult. Moreover, as has been stated, the task of interpretation is often a repetitive one. Without doubt, central office has relieved itself of a mighty burden by delegating responsibility for these relationships to the regions. Whether it has served the regions equally as well is a matter for conjecture. The very complexity and extent of this section of field operations raise questions regarding its valid existence. Undoubtedly regional administrators should handle provincial-municipal transactions. No doubt even, they should, if anyone should, carry the onerous burden imposed by the Social Assistance Act. It is an open question, however, if the aims of the Act should have to be enforced by a form of salesmanship as they now are. The semi-voluntary basis of this legislation makes its implementation a formidable and time consuming task. The political implications involved in stiffer enforcement clauses for the Act cannot be ignored, of course. But neither can be ignored the draining and diverting effect these intricate municipal affairs exert upon the proper development of decentralization. Working contrary to the proper aim of decentralization (i.e. to delegate authorities to the field) is the fact that at the

present time regional heads cannot accept more responsibility because of their numerous commitments with the municipalities. The toothless condition of the Social Assistance Act is in good part responsible for this state of affairs. It is profitable to speculate on what effect a redesigning of this Act could have in releasing the regional head from his present pre-occupation with the municipalities.



## CHAPTER VI

### PRESENT APPRAISAL AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS OF DECENTRALIZATION

The material in the preceding chapters has suggested that decentralization is needed in British Columbia principally because the nature of the province demands it. Without making this a main point of argument, it appears that this statement can be strongly supported by the precarious state of the centralized administration following amalgamation of all services in 1942. The deterioration of central-field communications at that time virtually forced a readjustment of administrative structure and the decentralization implemented seemed not only desirable but imperative. The other advantages this system introduced, economy in field personnel, the chance to implement a single flexible service based on need and most importantly, a medium for dealing with welfare counterparts in the municipalities, all of these clear gains made decentralization the obvious choice in administrative remedies.

The material reviewed also suggests rather definitely that the process of decentralization was done well, when and where it consisted of a purely technical process, free from other impeding factors. The most notable example of

this mechanical success may be found in the efficient and soundly designed delegations in regard to statistics and records, accounts, and in fact, practically the whole operation of the "management" or "housekeeping" side of field activity. In respect to these elements, delegations have been such as to permit the regional heads and supervisors freedom to act and sufficient power to act but within a framework of controls sufficient to safeguard general policy. These are major objectives in decentralization.

Impressive as this display of technical excellence may be it cannot obscure the fact that regarded over its whole extent, the welfare administration is not entirely an example of a harmonious, well-balanced, efficiently operating, decentralized administration. Internal stresses and strains exist and very apparently prevent the complete realization of the intended course of decentralization. This fact seems to argue convincingly that no structure for administering so complex an undertaking as a public welfare program can be based on technical soundness alone. All elements peculiar to the problem to be met must be considered or even the most theoretically correct structure will meet with difficulty in its execution. There is no reason to suppose that this knowledge escaped the designers of the decentralization. Many external realities affecting the administration were met and dealt with, most notably the need for a unified department in the first place. There are others; the answer of in-service training to the wartime manpower shortage, the

attempt to settle relationships with the municipalities through the Social Assistance Act of 1945 and the fostering of reasonably attractive personnel practices to attract staff - all these matters of concern were dealt with in one way or another as the need arose.

There seems to have been one problem, however, vital to the decentralization, that was nevertheless relatively neglected or ignored. This revolved around the treatment objectives of the new administration. What were the treatment objectives of decentralization at its inception? In review, these seem to have been "a generalized family service implemented by trained social workers." Nevertheless it appears that this stated objective was so heavily compromised in the course of decentralization that the only fully professional service, that of child welfare, refused to participate in total decentralization and still remains aloof till this day. This could only mean that the field personnel, district supervisors, regional administrators and field consultants of the new administration were not considered capable of maintaining the standards to which the division aspired. There seems little doubt that they were not. The field personnel were, more than fifty per cent of them, untrained, as were four of the five regional administrators. The district supervisors, where they were trained, lacked sufficient experience and (equally important) sufficient uninterrupted time to give proper direction to services.

The more economical use of each worker, which the

unification of the field forces produced, also produced larger case loads for each worker and larger supervisory loads for each district supervisor. To the directors of the child welfare program the immediate but repelling result of decentralization was that of superficial efficiency. Authorities were being decentralized but not principles. This result was not compatible with their expressed objectives of protection and rehabilitation for children at a professional level. They therefore held back and partially because of their reluctance, the decentralization assumed its present hybrid form. It plainly appears that the external reality of professional social work standards within public welfare and their potential effect on the course of the decentralization was not sufficiently taken into account before the plan was launched. It is in this sense that technical efficiency alone failed to guarantee a workable administrative structure.

The other external factor, which resulted in diverting the original plan for dispersion, consisted of that enduring monolith of national politics, federal-provincial relationships. The categorical and centralized form of old age and blind pensions has already been related to these chronic negotiations and the lack of broad financial agreements which accompany them. These, by breeding categorical regulations, prevented old age pensions from joining the decentralization and a generalized family service just as effectively as the child welfare service was prevented by

professional standards and objectives. The difference is, of course, that much less could have been done about the former. Progress here depended on mutual agreement among ten provincial governments, and was out of reach of the planners of one provincial department. Treatment objectives on the other hand were directly within their jurisdiction.

When considered together, it does stand out that these two, rather unrelated, but decisive problems of professionalism and federal-provincial relationships were not native to the decentralization. Rather they dated back to the time of the amalgamation in 1942 and before that to the developmental history of welfare services from the earliest days. What becomes apparent, when the present development of decentralization in British Columbia is reviewed, is the fact that this administrative device was imposed upon an essentially divided and disunited administration, which was composed of elements of services with widely varying points of view. Officially one, these elements were actually still divided, in objectives, in philosophy, in training and in legislation. It is therefore little surprise that when decentralization was superimposed on this structure it did not, and could not, follow a normal course of development. It could take full effect only in those directions permitted by the unresolved conflicts created by amalgamation. The present semi-decentralized structure was the result, a technically correct but a philosophically confused entity.

The question of whether decentralization was under-

taken in spite of a knowledge of the likely outcome of divided objectives or whether it was begun in some ignorance of it, is an interesting one. Nevertheless, at this point, it is largely academic. The problems which beset the decentralization must be dealt with regardless of their origin. It seems probable that what can be done to eliminate the obstacles toward fuller dispersion of authorities, will be done at the earliest opportunity. The problem most amenable to attack is that of field standards of treatment. There is every indication that the administration has recognized the necessity for improved professional standards, not merely because the child welfare division has impressed its point and further decentralization is clearly seen as depending on improved treatment objectives. Much more significantly, it is becoming increasingly clear in its own right that public welfare must henceforth be conducted in such a way as to provide first-rate prevention services, supplemented by successful rehabilitation for the socially handicapped, if it is to avoid becoming an ever increasing drain on public resources. Welfare costs in all countries are continually on the rise and this province is no exception. Administrative refinements are merely palliative. The only possible way to cut ensuing costs, short of cutting services also, is to ensure that public services do provide a maximum of successful prevention and rehabilitation. The emphasis on "successful" here is deliberate. No half-measures will suffice.

Such an emphasis requires another, that of top-

flight professional personnel to achieve these aims. It is an administrative truism to say that the quality of services is only as good as the quality of men who implement them. In those services where prevention and treatment are the predominant elements, this statement holds particularly true. It is no secret why public health administrations, in this province and in others, recruit only the most highly trained professionals to staff their preventative programs. The best way to control disease is to prevent it and only personnel with the best possible training are adequate to prevention. Social illnesses are equally best controlled by prevention and by use of the highest calibre of personnel available.

There is considerable evidence to suggest that the public welfare administration shares such thinking. The specialist services maintained by the welfare branch, such as the psychiatric division attached to the mental hospitals and the child guidance clinic, are staffed exclusively by university trained personnel of the highest standards. This is obviously in recognition of the need for such personnel in this purely preventative and rehabilitative setting. This trend is also extending to some degree into the general field. The statement has been made by the administration's director for personnel that the dilemma of the non-professional regional administrators in being unable to accept authority for treatment services will be resolved by the ultimate appointment of administrators with full training qualifications. Presumably, this is some time away in the

future but it is nevertheless indicative of the general direction of trends. Furthermore, emphasis on professionalism is also apparent in the district supervisory staff, which has been developing under decentralization. This staff without exception, is fully trained.

In regard to the field workers, the standards are admittedly not quite so high. Scarcities of professional social workers still exist. Allied with this is some administrative opinion that services have not reached the point of development in British Columbia where they demand exclusive professional attention. From some vantage points this is a correct view. But most of these reasons are negative ones which do not argue conclusively against eventual establishment of high professional standards in field personnel. For example, it is argued that case loads are in general too high to permit maximum use of professional skills in a really effective manner. Secondly, a large number of essentially non-treatment services occupy a good deal of the individual workers time, trained or untrained. These arguments, of course, weakly ignore the fact that since the present generalized service is administered by a single worker in a given area, that worker should be a fully qualified one if he is to implement existing treatment services, no matter how few they may be, or what small part of field-time they occupy. In addition it does seem apparent, that from a financial point of view, the present services are not pitched at a sufficiently high level to make a thorough



going preventative and rehabilitative program possible.

Ultimately this will be revealed as false economy but presently, in the fact of such tremendous welfare costs, it has the tendency to appear merely reasonable. Obstacles enough, real and unreal, exist therefore, to prevent the implementation of good treatment services, which would automatically require the best in field personnel, which would in turn solve the problem of decentralizing the child welfare services.

It is important, however, in spite of existing circumstances, to aim at the proper objectives, even if these cannot be reached immediately. Both for the particular reason of administrative harmony and the general reason of "whither welfare in British Columbia", treatment services provided by professional social workers must be that aim. This statement becomes more imperative, viewed in the light of the few treatment services available from private welfare agencies in the province. These are, in comparison with other provinces and states, negligible in the overall picture. In the past, at present, and for sometime in the future, the public welfare administration will be responsible for bringing the best in welfare services to its citizens, if only for the reason that there is no one else to do this job.

Some of the things which may aid in this task are more obvious than radical. For one, modern personnel practices put into effect by a trained personnel officer would

have a salutary effect on recruiting and keeping the right kind of trained workers. Salary recognition for extra training is still a thing of the future. No opportunity exists for workers to compete for preferred positions. Turnover in personnel is still too great to allow the gradual accumulation of a field force which is both trained and experienced. The latter point is a particularly acute one. Training alone does not guarantee an efficient field service, it merely makes one feasible. A truly productive field force is the one that stays put for reasonable lengths of time. For this reason, special efforts could be taken to encourage male recruitment, since men presumably would enter the service to make a career, not to prepare for one. Increased numbers of male graduates from the social work schools strengthen the possibility of this suggestion.

The position of the regional administrators could be improved in respect to treatment aims and the decentralization. More regions with more appointments of administrators are indicated for the final realization of both objectives. New appointments should invariably be from professionally trained personnel. These moves would eventually produce regional administrators capable of accepting the burden of full delegation. It is perhaps excessively optimistic to hope that something could be done to remove or ease the burden on the administrators of "caring" for the municipalities. A revision of the Social Assistance Act would suffice but seems remote. Perhaps enough time has passed to

warrant the hope that the municipal welfare flux, which requires so much care, will stabilize into routines most effectively handled by assistants to the administrator.

The obvious supervisory flaw restraining further decentralization, consists of the amount of administrative routines and procedural skills with which each supervisor must cope. Although unwelcome because they exclude attention to better treatment standards, these are yet indispensable and important. A sufficiently experienced staff would considerably reduce the supervisor's concern with such detail. Failing this, and as district offices grow, technical assistants could well be used to remove from the supervisors the excessive burden of routines.

Finally, since the major roadblock to a more comprehensive decentralization has essentially been one of principle, a redefinition of the administration's objectives and principles in treatment would alone be of tremendous service. A redefinition of principle need not involve an immediate and carte blanche realignment of the administration to suit such principles. This might not be possible, as indeed it might not be desirable. Many serious problems must first be solved. The point involved, however, has been well described by a former ambassador to the United States. Speaking of world affairs in general he said,

"Our tasks are: to define what is desirable; to define what is possible at anytime within the scheme of what is desirable; to carry out what is possible in the spirit of what is desirable"<sup>1</sup>

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1 Senor Salvador de Madariaga. Ambassador from the late Republic of Spain to the U. S. A.

Within such a conception of action the "possible" and the "desirable" do not compromise but instead reinforce one another. They therefore allow concerted action of the whole organization toward specified objectives in spite of presenting problems. Although the welfare administration has continually made skillful use of the "possible", it is not clear that thoroughgoing, specific, black-and-white statements of what is desirable in the way of long range objectives have ever been agreed upon by the whole administration. This is a crippling handicap to its function. In the end, this omission reduces the administration to the position in which it resembles a boat containing a number of people all wanting to travel to different destinations. There is grave probability that the resultant voyage will be highly circular and that none of the passengers will truly have their hearts in the trip.

It is imperative, however visionary or however elevated it may be, that a common objective be obtained, satisfactory to all elements of the administration so that it may be maintained through every expediency as a final goal to which the total administration is moving. Modern concepts of prevention and rehabilitation for all human handicap, physical, mental and emotional, seem well suited to form such an objective. It is only in this direction that the amalgamated services will eventually find unity and a complete decentralization.

## APPENDIX A

### SERVICES

#### A. General Case-work Services.

#### B. Specific Services.

1. Child Welfare.
2. Mothers' Allowances.
3. Social Allowances.
4. Old Age Pensions.
5. Tuberculosis Division.
6. Venereal Disease Division.
7. Mental Hospitals.
8. Child Guidance Clinic.
9. Boys Industrial School.
10. Girls Industrial School.
11. Hospital Inspection Branch.
12. Provincial Home and Infirmaries.
13. Collections Service.
14. Law Courts.
15. Family Allowances (Federal).
16. Veterans Affairs (Federal).
17. Indian Affairs (Federal).

Services in regard to tuberculosis, venereal disease, the mental hospitals, the child guidance clinic and hospital inspection are carried out by special divisions of field workers who are attached to the appropriate administration or agency governing the service. For example tuberculosis, venereal disease and hospital inspection services are carried out by public welfare workers attached to the Public Health Branch of the Department of Health and Welfare. Workers serving the mental hospitals and the child guidance clinic are attached to the Provincial Secretary's Department. These services are therefore not direct concerns of the regional administrators.

# APPENDIX B

## Sample Balance Sheet of Welfare Expenditure as Employed by Regional Administrators.

### STATEMENT FOR "X" MUNICIPALITY

#### Caseload as at April 1950

|                        |     |
|------------------------|-----|
| Social Allowance.....  | 75  |
| Mothers Allowance..... | 15  |
| Old Age Pension .....  | 333 |
| Family Service .....   | 10  |
| Child Welfare .....    | 24  |
| Others .....           | 12  |

#### Disbursements for month of April 1950

|                   | <u>Amount</u>     | <u>Municipal</u>  | <u>Provincial</u> | <u>Inter-</u>     | <u>Federal</u>    |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
|                   | <u>disbursed</u>  | <u>share</u>      | <u>share</u>      | <u>Municipal</u>  | <u>share</u>      |
|                   |                   |                   |                   | <u>share</u>      |                   |
| Social Allowance  | 3,637.00          | 540.00            | 3,000.00          | 97.00             | -                 |
| Mothers Allowance | 649.50            | -                 | 649.50            | -                 | -                 |
| Old Age Pension   | 13,320.00         | -                 | 5,827.50          | -                 | 7,492.50          |
| Child Welfare     | <u>130.00</u>     | <u>26.12</u>      | <u>104.48</u>     | <u>-</u>          | <u>-</u>          |
|                   | 17,736.50         | 566.12            | 9,581.48          | 97.00             | 7,492.50          |
|                   | <u>          </u> | <u>          </u> | <u>          </u> | <u>          </u> | <u>          </u> |

|                                    | <u>Municipal</u>             | <u>Provincial</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Approximate Medical Costs per Year | 630.00                       | 2,400.00          | 3,030.00     |
| Administrative Costs per Month     | \$ 860.00 (Provincial share) |                   |              |

Provincial Government pays Hospital Insurance for Social Allowance, Mothers Allowance and Old Age Pension cases.

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The above is a composite statement compiled  
from several actual statements and applies to no specific  
municipality.

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