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CUSTODIAL CARE OF DOUKHOBOR CHILDREN IN BRITISH COLUMBIA
1929 TO 1933

by

RONALD HENRY CLARKE HOOPER

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Ronald H.C. Hooper

Vancouver, B.C.
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Custodial Care of Doukhobor Children in British Columbia

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In 1932 a total of 365 children of the Doukhobor sect known as Sons of Freedom were taken into custodial care by the provincial government of British Columbia while their parents were undergoing penal servitude. This thesis is a study of that episode in the history of child care in British Columbia. It deals primarily with the problems that were met in administering this emergency child welfare programme.

These children were admitted to non-ward care by the Superintendent of Neglected Children and placed in Vancouver, New Westminster and Victoria for a period of one year. The Children's Aid Society of Vancouver cared for 119 children ranging in age from 2 months to 12 years. These children were all placed in approved foster homes by that agency. The Alexandra Orphanage, Vancouver, the Loyal Protestant Home, New Westminster, and the B.C. Protestant Orphans Home, Victoria, cared for a total of 75 children in the age group of 3 to 9 years, within their institutional facilities. The Provincial Industrial School for Girls and the Provincial Industrial School for Boys accepted 75 and 92 children respectively. These children ranged in age from 7 to 18 years and were segregated from the regular inmates who were committed to the industrial schools on authority of the juvenile court.

The agency and institutions undertook the immediate responsibility of caring for these children. Physical and emotional well-being were maintained, and the customs and beliefs of the Sons of Freedom were respected wherever possible. Thus, when the children were returned to

the Doukhobor colonies no serious problems of re-adjustment were encountered.

The parents had been penalized for their refusal to recognize man-made laws, and the provincial authorities hoped that these placements would serve to instruct the children in the rights and obligations of Canadian citizenship. In this the experiment was ineffective. If the agency and institutions had seriously endeavoured to re-educate the children, emotional conflicts would have arisen when the Doukhobor families were re-united. The children would have been torn between their desire to conform to the wishes and beliefs of their parents and to their newly acquired ideologies.

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PREFACE

This thesis is a study of the custodial care given by the Province of British Columbia to the children of the Doukhobor sect known as Sons of Freedom, after the disturbances of 1929 and 1932. It is hoped that the discussion of the problems encountered in administering this emergency type of child welfare programme will be of interest to the social worker.

The material used in writing this thesis has been largely secured from original sources. For this reason the writer feels he has something to contribute in furthering that understanding of the Doukhobor peoples which is so essential to their future assimilation into Canadian life.

The writer is indebted for his use of case records and files to the Children's Aid Society of Vancouver and the Child Welfare Division of the Department of Health and Welfare, Province of British Columbia, and acknowledges the valuable assistance given by present and former officials of the Provincial Industrial School for Girls, the Provincial Industrial School for Boys, and Alexandra Orphanage. He is especially indebted to Miss Z. Collins, formerly Manager of the Children's Aid Society of Vancouver, and to members of the Department of Social Work at the University of British Columbia.

CHAPTER I

RELIGIOUS AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Before undertaking the study of any problem relating to the Doukhobor sects, it is necessary to have some knowledge of their religious concepts and precepts; indeed, to attempt an understanding of their socio-cultural patterns without this knowledge would be futile. This small group of the Russian peasantry has assumed in Canada an importance far out of proportion to its numbers, traceable in part to its endeavours to realize a Christian way of life. Classified in a descriptive range varying from ignorant fanaticism to virtual sainthood, the Doukhobors have interpreted the Gospel freely and incorporated the resulting tenets into their social structure. In so doing they have drawn attention to themselves by an unwillingness to assume those obligations of Canadian citizenship which have not been in harmony with their beliefs.

While this study is primarily concerned with the Sons of Freedom or Svobodniki, a later sect, the religious doctrines upon which the Doukhobor faith was founded must be examined before the devious paths of the sects can be traced. Though the absence of a written text and the injected teachings of the respective leaders have created confusion within the minds of the Doukhobors, and have altered many of

the outer manifestations of their faith, these original concepts have not varied in substance. To-day, as in the past, the adherents to this faith reaffirm those doctrines which are the essence of their religion. To these doctrines can be traced several differentiating beliefs: the divinely inspired conscience of the individual; the equality of man in the eyes of God; the recognition of a Kingdom of God on earth; and the necessity of undergoing persecution to gain favour with the Almighty.

While the origin of this Christian denomination is obscure, the followers are believed to have dissented from the Russian Orthodox Church in the middle of the eighteenth century. The name Doukhobor or Dukhobortsy is a connotation originated by the Orthodox clergy to denote them as "spirit wrestlers" or vanquishers of the accepted doctrine of the Holy Spirit. However, the Doukhobors prefer to interpret this name as a recognition of their struggle against the forces of evil with the aid of the Holy Spirit. Some of these people have formed themselves into distinct sects such as the Sons of Freedom. Nevertheless, they have adhered sufficiently to the principal tenets to be identified as Doukhobors.

Aylmer Maude draws attention to two contrasting features in the tenets of the Doukhobor faith:

The one is calm, moderate, persuasive, couched almost in the Orthodox phraseology of the Eastern Church, but importing a philosophical truth into the conventional phrases, and, at dangerous points, taking refuge in mysticism. The other is clear, resolute, radical: there is no mysticism or secrecy about it; but it is often harsh, contemptuous, and inimical, not merely to all authority in Church and State, but towards all who do not agree once and absolutely.¹

Of these features, the one is evident in the doctrines of equality, Christian love, and the godliness of man; with mysticism present in the acceptance of adversity as a sanction of God. The other is observed in the rejection of the non-believer, the refusal to undertake civil obligations, and in the persecutory beliefs of the Doukhobors.

The Doukhobors are monotheistic. They believe that God dwells in the soul and only reveals Himself through man. With the human body merely confining the soul, the individual is then identified entirely with his soul which is a reflected image of God. Man is thus godlike and is guided by His inner word, the conscience. This divinely inspired conscience is the motivating force behind all human thought and action. If equally godlike,

1 Maude, Aylmer, A Peculiar People: the Doukhobors, New York, Funk and Wagnalls, 1904.

it follows then that all men should be regarded as equals. But inconsistently, in holding to a doctrine of equality, the Doukhobors also accept the not uncommon belief that they are a God-chosen society. At the same time, though imbued with the brotherhood of man idea, these people are also prepared to recognize the superiority of their own sect.

Both the Immaculate Conception and the Ressurrection are discarded, but the Doukhobors do credit the coming of Jesus in the flesh, His works, teachings and crucifixion. Jesus was without sin, and God manifested Himself to a greater extent in Jesus than in any of His contemporaries. Jesus attuned Himself to receive the inner word of God, and by His faith and acts is to be revered as the greatest of men.² The life of Jesus should be regarded as a model to be duplicated by the individual; the spirit of Jesus within must be " . . . Begotten, born, grow up, teach, suffer, die, revive, and ascend " ³

2 In the practice of their faith however, the Doukhobors must attribute some divinity to Jesus, for their leaders, accepted as His successors by the transmigration of the soul, have long been revered as the retainers of Divine Power. This pronounced differentiation between belief and practise can be largely traced to the influence of the later leaders in their desire for religious authority.

3 Evalenko, Alexander M., comp., The Message of the Doukhobors, New York, The International Library, 1913.

The suffering of Christ on earth justifies the inevitable sacrifice and persecution which those who cling to the Truth must undergo in the practice of their beliefs, at the hands of the retrenching forces of evil. This concept of the Suffering Servant has played a prominent role in the Doukhobor religion, where the endurance of enmity and injury are often welcomed as a privileged sharing in the persecution of the Lord.

There can be no existence of man, save on this earth, either on the reformation of the soul, or after death; the Kingdom of God represents a future state of perfection in human society. Within this, immortality will be in the memories which the deceased leaves with his fellowmen. In these memories the soul will live on in eternal torment or happiness, depending on the temper of those memories retained by the living.

While the Doukhobors tend to place symbolic values on the Scriptures, they do believe that the only living faith is a full acceptance of the Gospel, and an endeavour to live in the Gospel spirit of love. All relationships between men, and between men and animals are founded on that spirit of love. In keeping with this, they are opposed to killing and to the use of force. Force is unnecessary and should be supplanted by the powers of reason.

Passions and sensual desires are evils, which, if uncontrolled, will prevent the attaining of spiritual perfection. Conversely, as the body, with its senses, confines the soul, by denying himself sensory pleasures, man is freeing his soul from

the authority of his body and will be more receptive to the word of God.

Within this framework it is possible to examine briefly the Doukhobor interpretation of other Christian beliefs and customs. Fasting is merely an avoidance of gluttony or the denial of excessive indulgence. Marriage is contracted by mutual consent and in good faith, without ceremony; the marriage agreement is not inviolate. The Holy Communion is believed to be an unnecessary symbolic practice. Baptism is not observed outwardly, but automatically takes place when the individual repents his sins with a pure and willing heart. As the body exists before the soul enters it, the new born child cannot achieve Baptism; "The soul enters the child's body gradually from about the sixth to the fifteenth year. The period during which the child is learning from the 'book of life,' and the manifestations of spirit-memory, reason and will - are developed and shaped in it." ⁴ Only then can Baptism occur.

The teachings of the Doukhobor church are not recorded, nor is the printed Bible authorized. Instead, the sacred songs, chants, prayers and quotations are passed on from one generation to the next by word of mouth. Collectively they are called the "Book of Life."

⁴ Gregory, Phyllis Marie, A Sociological Survey of the Doukhobors, University of British Columbia, 1925.

Similarly, the Doukhobors do not recognize religious edifices nor sanctify localities. Worship is conducted wherever two or more people congregate, usually outdoors, especially in the summertime when they appear at these services bareheaded and barefoot. At each meeting the individuals greet the members of their respective sexes by clasping of right hands, bowing and kissing. The holding of hands signifies mutual love and understanding, the bows and kisses represent the cleansing of the body and the repulsion of pride. This salutation is followed by singing, quoting from the scriptures, and prayers. Each member of the congregation contributes to the service and the children are encouraged to recite the psalms and prayers which they have learned from their parents.

In the following hymn, translated from the original Russian, the doctrine of suffering on which the Doukhobors place such emphasis is quite pronounced:

Lord, you are the light in my life,
Of my death you are resurrection,
For my sin You came to suffer,
On the cross of blood have torment.

For my debt Jesus stands my guarantee
And His blood gave it for payment.

Let follow you on to Golgotha,
Go up with hearty emotions
And with contrite soul,
Go see through all your torments.

At my mind about your love
Poured the tears from eyes.

In Gethsemane and in prayer,
In tears, in sweat, and in wrestling,
There till death Christ pray all night
For my fault and sin.

For people's sin, bloody sweat,
Christ poured His love on to the ground.
The glory of our God. ⁵

Influence of Peter V. Veregin.

Peter Vasselivitch Veregin profoundly influenced the Doukhobors before and after their immigration to Canada. Avowing his divine right to the spiritual and economic guidance of his people, this leader instituted a religious revival and added a new asceticism to the established Doukhobor faith. Reaffirming the doctrine of brotherly love, he instructed his followers to maintain equality of the sexes, to remove all traces of caste system from their society, and participate in communal living. Upholding the use of non-violence, he denounced all forms of cruelty and bloodshed, including warfare, and instituted vegetarianism. He believed that the Doukhobors were servants of the Lord, bound by the laws of God only. To serve the one master with a clear conscience they should not swear allegiance to civil government, which was, after all, based on force and upheld by the courts and by military authority; they should not hold public office or undertake any civil contracts or encumbrances.

5 Ibid., pp. 46

Excepting simple literacy, Mr. Veregin regarded formal education as unnecessary and detrimental. Schools were "pernicious" and evil; renouncing the Christian doctrine of love and equality, they paved the way for vice, indulgence, and a thirsting greed for material wealth. Again, schools were associated by him with military drill and civil allegiance.

Influenced by the philosophy of Leo Tolstoi, from whose writings he extensively plagiarized, Mr. Veregin also encouraged his followers to practice self-discipline and denial. There should be complete abstinence from the use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco; only the plainest foods should be eaten - uncooked if possible .

Immigration to Canada.

In the year 1899, 7,363 Doukhobors immigrated to Canada, leaving in Russia Peter V. Veregin the reigning successor to Christ, whom the Czar had exiled to Siberia in 1887, and half their brethren who had left the fold and established themselves independently. To Canada they brought their worldly possessions, their Slavonic customs, and a new religious faith. Assisted in the migration by the Quakers and other sympathetic groups, they entered on terms drawn up by the Canadian authorities, and agreed to in advance by their representatives. These terms of entry fall under six main divisions:

1. To apply for land individually, in compliance with the Homestead Act. ⁶
2. To conform to the laws of the country, pay taxes, and supply information to the Vital Statistics Department.
3. To register marriages.
4. To have religious freedom.
5. To abide by the ruling of the individual provinces in matters relating to education.
6. To be exempt from military service under Section 21 of the Militia Act. ⁷

The question arises as to why these people accepted the given terms of entry, when they wished to leave Russia to escape governmental restrictions. Certainly, they were in belief opposed not only to the principles underlying the individual terms of entry, but to all civil and military control. In reality, though the representatives agreed to the conditions, they kept the main body of Doukhobors unaware of these terms of entry, which caused them to regard Canada as a

6. To gain title to a government homestead under this Act, the applicant was required to register the land, clear a stipulated amount, and take out naturalization papers. Within three years he could then qualify for the title. To facilitate communal farming, land was issued to the Doukhobors in blocks, and the required labour to be expended on it within the allotted time was assessed on each sectional unit, rather than on the individual grant.
7. This exemption was expressly incorporated into the Militia Act by Order-in-Council during World War I.

promised land where they could live in complete freedom and liberty, devoid of any civil controls.

The first settlements occurred in Saskatchewan and a number of colonies arose, principally Thunder Hill, South Colony, and North Colony. Within the respective colonies which were self-contained and managed by central administrative bodies, village communes were organized the members of which lived in austere community houses and worked the common lands. All capital was set aside for the purchase of common goods and equipment, the individual members receiving basic commodities from the storehouse in relation to their needs. These communes stemmed from the traditional village commune or Mir, a Slavonic institution suited to economic conditions in Russia.

While the Doukhobors showed little regard for Canadian laws, friction soon arose within the colonies as well. Many, intrigued by the economic possibilities inherent in private farming, complied with the conditions of the Homestead Act. Gaining titles to their original land grants, they soon divorced themselves from the central authorities and became known as Independents. Within the communes some refused to work and lived off the labours of their brethren, taxing the limited resources of the colonies. Among those who remained in the colonies a nebulous body arose, consisting of ardent and almost fanatical Doukhobors. Fanned by Mr. Veregin's later texts, this minority group became an extremist sect, soon to be known as the Sons of Freedom. They destroyed all metal implements -

as a gesture of sympathy for workers in the mines - turned their animals loose in the forests, and gave away any money they might possess. Some went so far as to concede that all work itself was sinful, quoting the Gospel as their authority.

In 1902 Mr. Veregin's many letters referred to a "Kingdom of God." This Kingdom, which appealed to the Sons of Freedom, has been aptly portrayed by James F. C. Wright:

In that promised land, somewhere to the south, natural fruits grow on vines and trees ever green. So abundantly do these fruits grow that it is not necessary to 'enslave our poor brothers, the animals,' in pulling plows, because plows in that place are not necessary. Also it is unnecessary to keep cows for milk and butter, the luscious fruits providing a variety of food. No animals need ever be killed, because leather boots and sheepskin coats are not necessary there. Even for men and women to work at physical labour is not necessary. Governments, land laws, taxes, schools and mosquitoes are not there. Little is necessary - except contemplation of higher things amidst the living of a truly spiritual life, in harmony with the ever green fruit trees, gentle rains and sunshine. ⁸

In September, after the government had refused their request to trek to this unspecified place to the south, some hundreds set out on their own accord. Offering no physical resistance, the women and children, later the men, were halted and returned to their colonies by the authorities. On this pilgrimage, the Sons of Freedom attracted considerable attention by parading in the nude. This nudity was

8 Wright, James Frederick Church, Slava Bohu, The Story of the Doukhebers, Toronto, Farrar and Rhinehart, 1940.

inspired by certain references by Veregin to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden in the first instance. On later occasions it merely served as a means of gaining public attention.

In November 1902, Peter V. Veregin's exile was terminated and he was permitted to enter Canada. Recognizing the precarious position of the colonies, particularly in regard to the lands which were not registered in many communes, he now encouraged the Doukhobors to gain title to their lands, and co-operate with the government by registering marriages, births and deaths. In the interests of agricultural efficiency, he also authorized the use of draft horses; and though many of the colonists refused to utilize any dairy products, it was suggested that bulls might be raised as breeding stock.

In May 1903, another nude pilgrimage was undertaken. Veregin, alarmed at the adverse publicity which the Sons of Freedom were creating, ordered the other Doukhobors to whip them, while he himself openly denounced their actions to the police, the government and the press. The Sons of Freedom, unable to comprehend the motives behind Veregin's change of heart and devious conduct, believed that these vicious attacks on them were devised by him to test their religious faith.

Veregin amalgamated Thunder Hill Colony and South Colony in 1903, forming the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood. Within this Bolshoi regime, all land, livestock, implements, buildings and money were held in common, and work on the fields was carried out collectively. The North Colony did not join Veregin's Brotherhood.

With the two colonies united under his leadership, and the third loyal in principle and belief, Peter V. Veregin now played an increasingly important administrative role among the Doukhobors, improving the welfare of his people and accumulating a sizeable fortune on his own behalf.

This dynamic personality with his inspiring orations and business acumen could not, however, effect a compromise with the two extremist factions, the Sons of Freedom and the Independents. The Sons of Freedom in their religious zeal, were disrupting the life of the Christian Community. The Independents, on the other hand, now numbered 1,000, and were increasing at an alarming rate. Veregin successfully discouraged further growth of the Sons of Freedom movement, but met with misfortune when he endeavoured to halt the trend toward independent farming. Reasoning that the Doukhobors would not leave the Community without a clear title to their lands, he forbade them to register the homesteads. But in so doing he did not anticipate the government intervention of 1907, when those Doukhobors who had not complied with the terms of the Homestead Act were obliged to forfeit all but fifteen acres of each original holding. This was a loss to the Community of 400,000 acres, nearly two-fifths of their entire property. While criticism may be levelled at both Veregin and the Dominion government for their respective stands in this matter, the Doukhobor people were kept in the dark by a misrepresentation of facts, and felt unjustly persecuted.

Settlements in British Columbia.

Faced with the necessity of acquiring additional lands, Veregin saw that by purchasing as a corporate body through private sources the Community members would be free of the impositions governing the Homestead Act, and individuals would be unable to leave the Community unless they surrendered their allotment. Attracted by the milder climate and the cheap available lands, he purchased extensive properties in the interior of British Columbia, pledging Community assets in Saskatchewan as collateral. In 1909 the colony at Brilliant was established, followed by neighboring settlements at Grand Forks, Champion Creek, Glade, Pass Creek, and Crescent Valley. By 1912, 5,000 Doukhobors, including the majority of the Sons of Freedom, had settled in British Columbia.

In British Columbia, all efforts to gain the desired co-operation from the Doukhobors were unsuccessful in matters relating to taxation, registration, census taking and education. Though schools were erected, attendance was irregular, and it was estimated in 1912 that 700 school-aged children had never entered a classroom. The same year a Royal Commission was appointed in Victoria to explore the perplexing Doukhobor question. Since the Commissioner, William Blakemore, was unversed in the Russian language and the Doukhobors were suspicious of any inquiries, it is not to be wondered that the final report was of little value. The only repercussion of this investigation was a tendency on the part of Community to unite more closely behind Veregin.

On October 28, 1924, Peter Vaselivitch Veregin was killed by an exploding bomb while travelling in a railroad coach near Brilliant. His assassins were not identified, but a belief arose among the Sons of Freedom that the "government" had murdered him. In their folklore he soon attained the proportions of a martyr.

On September 16, 1926, Peter Petrovitch Veregin, son of Peter V. Veregin, arrived in Canada to assume his dual role as spiritual leader of the Doukhobor people and as president of the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood. This leader, the self-styled Chestiakov, "The Purger," bode ill for the colonists. His many vices, obscene tirades, and erratic management, tested the faith of even his most devoted followers. Held in contempt by many of the Doukhobors in his declining years, this off-termed "Peter Rasputin" kept the Sons of Freedom in a state of spellbound confusion for some time. The more ardent accepted his many heresies as necessary measures temporarily designed to mislead the government and to test the moral strength of his disciples.

It is to the credit of Peter P. Veregin that he immediately saw and stressed the need for unity within the Doukhobor fraternity. With this in mind he disregarded the existing cliques and united all those who recognized him as his father's successor. Including Independents, Community Doukhobors and Sons of Freedom, this new organization was called the Society of Named Doukhobors. However, the older existing bonds were now firmly entrenched and the Society soon

dwindled into obscurity.

Under his tutelage there was a noticeable resurgence in the ranks of the Sons of Freedom, the new sympathizers coming largely from the Community Doukhobor aggregation. By 1929, of the 6,000 Doukhobors within the Brotherhood, over 400 were Sons of Freedom. In passing it is interesting to note that at this time there were approximately 8,000 Independent Doukhobors living apart from the Community on privately owned lands. Many of these people refused to recognize P. P. Veregin as their spiritual leader, or to attach any divine values to his person.

Mr. Veregin's endeavours to unite the Doukhobors soon created problems similar to those experienced by his father some years before. To win full co-operation from the Sons of Freedom he encouraged them in their extremist practices and openly denounced schools, registration of statistical information, and the payment of taxes. In so doing he found that they now carried their resentment of governmental control to the extent of opposing the Doukhobor hierarchy itself and refusing to pay levies into the central coffers of the Community. The many Community Doukhobors, who turned to the Sons of Freedom rather than abide by the irreligious and "modernistic" practices of the new leader, also accepted this concept, and a serious depletion of Community revenues resulted.

In 1929, the burning of school houses in the colonies, the refusal to obey laws, and the frequent nude parades aroused public indignation. It was natural that the responsibility for much of this unrest should be placed on the shoulders of the leader, especially when

the British Columbian newspapers were carrying lurid accounts of his private life. Then again, it was common knowledge that Mr. Veregin was denouncing the provincial government and arousing the religious fervour of his people. Among the many solutions put forth in an effort to solve the Doukhobor dilemma was the very real suggestion that Veregin be deported from Canada. Faced with this adverse publicity, Veregin sent a delegation to Ottawa to inform Prime Minister W. L. McKenzie King that the Doukhobors were now desirous of conforming to the laws of Canada. At the same time he endeavoured to vindicate himself and the Community Doukhobors by heaping abuse on the Sons of Freedom and asking the Brotherhood to purge them from its midst.

In singling out the Sons of Freedom, Veregin not only answered the critics who wondered why a leader could not control his people, but also selected a logical scapegoat. It was evident that the Independents were now fairly well assimilated into the Canadian pattern of life, and the Community Doukhobors were in the main sending their children to school and obeying compulsory laws. By publicizing the fact that some Sons of Freedom refused to permit their children to attend school (those who did send their children were still opposed in principle to formal education), and emphasizing their vociferous disregard for all authority, he could place the onus on these people with some credibility.

Within the Community, the expulsion of the Sons of Freedom would not mean a serious economic loss. Their religious unrest and

frequent religious gathering had resulted in a low level of agricultural productivity; they were barely able to sustain themselves, let alone contribute to the general treasury and assist in the payment of Community debts. To this financial picture we must also add their unwillingness to pay levies to the treasury.

Finally, Veregin knew that the Sons of Freedom, though uncompromising in certain religious matters, were intensely loyal in spirit. He was, after all, their religious leader and felt that these people would remain loyal to him regardless of his actions. The Sons of Freedom would in all likelihood accept these new instances of persecution, as they had done before, as a test of their ability to undergo duress and suffering in the cause of Christianity. It would follow then that they could be expelled with a minimum of opposition and still retain enough loyalty to contribute to the leader's private purse when the need arose.

On September 21, 1929, over 200 men, women and children were ejected from the colony at Brilliant and paraded on the Nelson highway in search of the promised land. While it was decided by the authorities that these people should be charged with vagrancy, this was impossible as all the provincial jails were fully occupied. As an alternative, the Sons of Freedom were escorted by the police to Porto Rico, B. C., where they promised to settle on some unused lands belonging to the Christian Community. These expulsions continued, and by 1931 nearly all the Sons of Freedom were living in separate villages on Community land, or had

resettled on newly acquired tracts.

The Christian Community.

The communal life of the Doukhobors under P. P. Veregin centred around the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood Limited, the original Community of his father's time having been incorporated under a Dominion charter on April 25, 1917 with a capitalization of \$1,000,000. This corporation had profited by rising market prices during the Great War and, though incompetent management, lack of initiative, and unskilled labour all contributed to its later insolvency, was still in a favorable financial position in 1930. In that year Snegarev listed the total Community assets at \$6,385,922.17.⁹ These consisted of land, implements, livestock, factories and buildings in the provinces of Saskatchewan and British Columbia. In British Columbia alone, where he estimated that 4,050 of the entire 5,300 Community members resided, the assets amounted to \$4,091,827. The outstanding debts of the corporation at that time were \$420,000.

This corporation was governed by a General Management of fourteen directors, with Mr. Veregin as president and religious leader. The directors were elected by an assembly of village representatives, or elders, who in turn were appointed by the individual villages. The

⁹ Snegarev, Vladimir Nicolas, (Harry Trevor), The Doukhobors in British Columbia, University of British Columbia, 1931.

executive staff consisted of two vice-presidents, a secretary, and a business manager. The central governing body administered the general finances and operated the retail stores, canneries, grain elevators and saw mills. The villages were assessed on a per capita basis, and in return for these levies the families of each commune received from the Community, shelter, flour, potatoes, salt, and a cash allowance for the purchase of clothing and incidentals.

In each communal village dwelt one hundred Doukhobors, presided over by an Elder. The village populace cultivated 150 acres of Community land and raised sufficient fruits and vegetables for their own consumption in the village gardens. The Doukhobors varied somewhat in their housing facilities, but a common arrangement in each village was to have three housing units complete with out-buildings and Russian steam bath. Individual dwellings were of two stories. Divided into two large rooms, the lower floor of each dwelling contained a combined kitchen-dining room and a sitting room, while the upper story was partitioned into eight small bedrooms. These houses were simply furnished with the bare necessities, and were usually kept clean and tidy. The younger children slept together in one bedroom until they approached puberty, when they were given separate rooms.

With the exodus of the Sons of Freedom from the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood Limited during the years 1929-31, a total of 525 members of this sect resettled on new lands at Flodorodnoe,

God's Valley and Thrums. Another 50 Doukhobors, who might be classified as Sons of Freedom, continued to live within the Community villages at Crestovoe, but refused to fulfil the obligations imposed upon them by the Central Administration. The colonists at Thrums had encamped on a Canadian Pacific railway tract and were, until 1931, living in tents. The other Sons of Freedom found that on leaving the Brotherhood they were now obliged to accept a greatly reduced standard of living. Housing accommodation was very inadequate - many families sleeping on shelves in a common bedroom at God's Valley -, and only sub-marginal lands were available for cultivation. It is not to be wondered then that many of these zealots wore homespun, and were obliged to beg from their relatively prosperous Community Doukhobor relatives.

Between 1929 and 1931, a total of twenty-five school houses were destroyed by fire in Doukhobor areas in Saskatchewan alone. Similar vandalism in the form of bombings and incendiarism has occurred in British Columbia. To the long list of gutted schools in the interior of the latter province can be added Community stores, factories and homes. Still prevalent, this terrorism has often been attributed to members of the Sons of Freedom sect. Though individual Sons of Freedom have in some instances been convicted of arson, incriminating evidence has also pointed strongly to non-Doukhobor elements. An impartial inquiry would undoubtedly reveal that internal strife within the Doukhobor sects has been responsible for much of this destruction. It would also indicate that in an increasing number of cases, non-Doukhobors resident in the interior, prejudiced against this minority group, have successfully endeavoured to discredit them by committing these acts, and then accused the Doukhobors themselves.

CHAPTER II

THE EXPERIMENTAL PLACEMENTS OF 1929

The summer of 1929 witnessed the first concerted attempt on the part of the provincial authorities in British Columbia, to wrestle with the problem of Doukhobor assimilation. Attorney-General R. H. Pooley, alarmed at the increasing unrest in the Community villages, was determined that the Sons of Freedom be made to conform with the provincial laws, by force if necessary. Provincial Police patrols were strengthened in the Nelson area and seven Sons of Freedom were imprisoned on June 20, for refusal to give census returns. But the Sons of Freedom, already under bitter attack from Veregin and the Community Doukhobors, reacted to these newly manifested "persecutions" by uniting more strongly in a religiously inspired defiance of the government and police. The ardour of these people is best expressed in the text of the following banners and placards carried on religious parades near Nelson, in August of that year:

We are followers of Christ.
Therefore we cannot serve two masters.
We cannot pay taxes on which firearms and
ammunition are constructed for our brothers.

We can no longer endure to see our brothers being confined in prison and tortured to death innocently.

You have took our outer clothes we will render you our under also.

We have determined on Saturday to restore our flesh for freedom or turancy (sic) as Christ did.

Flesh to Satan and Deeds to God.

We decided this.

Give us land our share from God without any taxation or if you comply with the authority act as was dealt with Christ.

Mr. Veregin expells us and proposes to leave the community land.

How many wars, murders, crimes would have been if Human race had realised that truth as given by Christ 2,000 years ago.

The first man, who having enclosed some land thought of saying this is mine and found people simple enough to believe him was the real founder of the present rotten civilized system.

Present school system is egoistic and selfish, most people go to school to acquire ability to live on easy street such as swindery (sic), fraudulence, and powerful exploitation of the working class of people, the toilers of the land we conferm (sic) our children to learn.

In spite of frequent warnings, the Sons of Freedom staged a nude parade at the village of South Slocan, British Columbia, on August 29, 1929, and 126 were arrested on charges of indecent exposure.¹ While charges were dropped in some cases, 55 women and 49 men were convicted by the Stipendiary Magistrate, J. Cartmel, in the Nelson Court House and sentenced to six months hard labour in Oakalla Prison, New Westminster. Seven girls and one boy, ranging from fourteen to sixteen years in age, were arrested with their parents; but in view of their legal minority, no charges were laid. However, instead of being permitted to remain with relatives during the incarceration of the adults, they were presented in court as "neglected children" under the Infants' Act of British Columbia, and committed to care as wards of the Superintendent of Neglected Children, Mr. T. Menzies.² In committing them to care, Magistrate Cartmel decreed that they should remain in custody until the parents, ". . . behave themselves and live in such a manner that they will be able to look after these children" ³

1. Criminal Code of Canada, Chap. 112, Sec. 56.

2. Infants' Act, Sec. 56, Sub. (1), (R.S.B.C. 1924). Under this Act a child was deemed to be neglected if his parents, or only parent, were undergoing imprisonment, or had been convicted under the Criminal Code of Canada.

3. Official Court Record, Nelson Court House, 6 September, 1929.

Stating that the parents were not competent to be entrusted with the upbringing of their children, the magistrate supported a commonly held belief that the only way to cope with stubborn resistance of the Sons of Freedom was to remove the children from their homes in the colonies and rear them in a more conventional environment. This placement would be an experiment to test that belief.

On receiving advice that the committal papers had been signed, Mr. Menzies asked the Children's Aid Society of Vancouver to care for them temporarily in its shelter on Wall Street, Vancouver. While official decision was withheld in regard to more permanent placement Mr. Menzies hoped that circumstances would warrant later care in separate foster homes supervised by that agency, where, apart from each other, they would gain a true perspective of normal Canadian family life.

On September 11, 1929, Miss Laura Holland, Manager of the Vancouver Children's Aid Society, escorted the children to the agency shelter on the special train which was transporting the adults to Oakalla Prison. The Vancouver newspapers gave the entire event wide coverage, emphasizing the more dramatic and colorful features, such as the bright peasant garb of the women and the fare of apples, bread and peanuts consumed on the train. But in keeping with the official policy, Miss Holland declined to give the press any information concerning the disposal of the children. This security measure was deemed advisable in view of the unknown reaction of the Christian Community to the removal of the children.

Institutional Care.

Although the Children's Aid Society had been reluctant to accept these Doukhobors because of their advanced age grouping, the staff, ill-equipped as it was to cope with adolescents, endeavoured to win the co-operation of the children and to make them as comfortable as possible. They were provided with their accustomed vegetarian fare - raw and cooked vegetables, fruit, bread, vegetable oil, salt and peanuts - and were permitted to wear their traditional clothing, full skirts, cotton blouses and colorful kerchiefs. Freedom of worship was granted, and the children spent much of their time in religious observance, usually singing psalms. While they refused to carry out routine duties such as sweeping or dusting, and would not participate in any recreational activities, compulsion was never resorted to, and they were given a marked degree of liberty within the confines of the shelter. The staff endeavoured to gain their confidence, but was greatly handicapped by the language barrier. Only one girl among the eight could converse in English, and then only to a limited extent. In the absence of a full time interpreter, all communications were necessarily laborious.

From the general discontent and the policy of passive resistance adopted by the children, it was evident that they felt a deep resentment toward the authorities and the agency, whom they blamed for the arrest of their parents. Then too, they felt insecure and disturbed

in these foreign surroundings, away from their families and homes. These normal responses are reflected in the translation of a letter written by one of the girls:

Dear relatives:-

We are alive and healthy, thanks to God. We have been taken to an Orphan Home. We would have been more pleased to go to jail to be together with our people and work, than just to stay in the house.

They sent for an interpreter and he said 'What do you eat?' and we said 'We eat vegetables and fruit.' They say 'Sleep in beds,' and we say 'No,' and they offer us inducements, but we say 'No.' They turn on gramophone; we do not like it and we walk upstairs.

On September 17, the eight children ran away from the shelter and were located a short time later by the provincial police on Grandview Highway. On returning they explained that they were on their way to Oakalla Prison to visit their parents. Several days later a similar incident occurred. This time, anticipating their purpose, a member of the agency located them on Grandview Highway. Unable to take them all back to the shelter in one trip, she persuaded five of the girls to get into the automobile and the remaining boy and two girls to wait by the roadside until she could return for them. A short time later she came back to find the three quietly sitting near the spot she had indicated, awaiting her arrival. The following day the children were reassured that a visit to their parents would be arranged in the near future.

By the end of September the executive of the Children's Aid Society asked the Superintendent of Neglected Children to make other arrangements for the care of these children as soon as possible. It was becoming increasingly apparent to the agency that the shelter was unable to care for them adequately and that it was detrimental to the welfare of eight active children to have them continually idle. Study had shown that foster home care would not be possible, in view of their advanced ages and their inability to co-operate with the staff.

Mr. Menzies then approached the Attorney-General's Department, and on October 3, the boy was placed in the Provincial Industrial School for Boys, Port Coquitlam, B. C., where he remained until the release of his father. Here he was relieved of all duties, allowed to eat the foods of his choice, and was permitted to visit his father at Oakalla Prison at regular intervals in recognition of the earlier promise given by the Children's Aid Society. Being over the compulsory school age of fifteen, no efforts were made to induce him into the class room.

On the same day, the seven girls were placed in the Provincial Industrial Home for Girls, a corrective school for juvenile offenders situated in Vancouver. Here they were segregated from the other inmates, who were in detention by authority of the court. In a separate dormitory, they continued to enjoy the same privileges they had received in the shelter in matters relating to food and clothing. On October 15, though still withdrawn and uncommunicative, they appeared to be more settled

than they had been in the shelter. By the end of November they were beginning to speak English, showed less reserve in their contacts with the staff, and evidenced visible pleasure and excitement during the monthly meetings with their parents at Oakalla Prison. On the other hand, while some efforts were made to instruct them in the classroom, they refused to participate in the lessons. Similarly it was difficult to induce them to carry out any chores within the institution, and with the exception of sewing, they showed little interest in recreational activities.

Within a very few months it became increasingly apparent that in removing these Doukhobor children from the interior, where they could have readily lived with relatives during the period of incarceration, physical well-being was maintained, but little else. Foster home care was not feasible, and the endeavours to give them training in citizenship through institutional care were not producing the desired results. This impasse discouraged any further planning. The children were returned to the interior on the subsequent release of their parents in February, 1930.

This experiment was not successful in accomplishing the original objectives of Mr. Menzies and magistrate Cartmel. The Children's Aid Society and the two institutions were not able to give the specialized care required, nor were the children young enough to profit by a re-educational programme. But the children did return to the

colonies with less distrust toward the authorities, and those staff members who had any direct contact with them gained experience which was to prove invaluable in planning and caring for the 365 Doukhobor children who were to follow in 1932. In terms of citizenship, the episode was perhaps a victory for the Sons of Freedom, for, in spite of their negativistic responses, the children were attractive, endearing themselves in the hearts of those with whom they came in contact.

CHAPTER III

THE PLACEMENTS OF 1932

Early in 1932, Premier S. F. Tolmie of British Columbia conferred with the federal government, hoping to arrive at some measure of joint control in coping with the renewed lawlessness and unrest in the Doukhobor colonies. Determined to settle the problem once and for all, the premier recognized that additional police patrols in the interior were not effective in curbing the increasing number of nude demonstrations, nor in preventing the wave of incendiarism which was being commonly attributed to the Sons of Freedom. He now felt that there must be a showdown with the Sons of Freedom, and solicited Dominion financial assistance in what might otherwise prove to be an expensive proposition for British Columbia.

By 1931, Canada was feeling the impact of the economic depression. The Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood Limited, hindered by mismanagement and diminishing returns, was in a weakened financial condition. But the Sons of Freedom, following their expulsion from the established Community farms in 1929, were in a more serious predicament. They were now dwelling on sub-marginal lands, and their spirit of religious unrest had had a telling effect on their labour

efficiency. With a low level of productivity and falling market prices, these people were actually undergoing physical privation. This destitution served to heighten their religious zeal and their contempt for the provincial government.

Tension increased when P. P. Veregin was sentenced by the Assize Court at Yorkton, Saskatchewan, to serve a three-year sentence on summary conviction for perjury. In 1931, he became involved in a lengthy lawsuit with a former Community member over a property title. In the course of the dispute information was laid against both litigants for perjury. While charges against the other Doukhobors were dismissed, Veregin was found guilty of giving false evidence in court. The Doukhobors followed proceedings with keen interest, and on Veregin's conviction, tales of persecution spread rapidly throughout the colonies, resulting in additional demonstrations.

The initial steps in what the Vancouver newspapers called a Provincial "War on the Doukhobors," were taken by Attorney-General R. H. Pooley of British Columbia. In an interview with the press on May 2, 1932, he announced the arrest of 117 nude paraders at the village of Thrums. These people had been committed to the Nelson jail, and were to be prosecuted with the full co-operation of the Dominion government, under a new subsection of the Criminal Code, inserted a year earlier at his specific request.¹ This amendment raised the maximum penalty for

1. Criminal Code of Canada, Sec. 205, Sub. A.

indecent exposure from six months imprisonment and a fifty dollar fine, to a direct penalty of three years imprisonment. Applying specifically to the Sons of Freedom, it defined indecent exposure as appearing in the nude, individually or in a group, in a public place or in public view.

Not only was it hoped that implementation of this subsection would deter the Sons of Freedom, but in the event of conviction, it would also give the provincial government the federal assistance it had constantly requested in meeting the Doukhobor situation. In Canada, all criminals sentenced to detention for a period of less than two years became provincial charges and are housed in a provincial jail, while those sentenced for a period of two years or longer, are committed to a federal penitentiary, administered and maintained by the federal department of justice. If the Sons of Freedom were now convicted of indecent exposure, the courts, by imposing sentences of three years, could transfer complete responsibility for the incarceration to the federal government.

In the press announcement of May 2, Attorney-General Pooley continued by saying that British Columbia would now proceed to enforce the law throughout the Doukhobor communities:

In future the Doukhobors must send all their children to school, they must register births, marriages, and deaths, and they must live peaceably from now on the Doukhobors of British Columbia must obey our laws exactly

like other people. We intend now to have a complete showdown, with the fullest co-operation between the two governments. ²

On May 6, the 117 adult offenders were sentenced to prison for a term of three years by Magistrate J. Cartmel of Nelson, and temporarily lodged in the Nelson jail.

Disregarding another warning issued by Mr. Pooley, in which he stated that his government was prepared to arrest 6,000 Doukhobors if necessary in an effort to stamp out what he termed the recent "Doukhobor outrages," the Sons of Freedom continued to defy the authorities. Entire families and villages, infected with the spirit of persecution would now hold sympathy demonstrations for their brethren in the Nelson jail, in defiance of the efforts of the police to disperse them. On May 9, 209 men, women and children appeared in the nude near Nelson and were arrested on similar charges. Another 131 were apprehended at Grand Forks on May 13. By the middle of June, nearly 600 adult offenders, including wives or husbands who had sought arrest to remain with their spouses, had been arrested and sentenced to serve a three year term in prison.

While these people were now a direct liability on the central government, the federal department of justice was unable to provide immediate accommodation for them in its institutions. The provincial authorities then agreed to maintain them, at federal expense, in

2. Vancouver Daily Province, May 2, 1932, P. 1.

temporary confinement at Oakalla Prison and in emergency camps at Nelson, Grand Forks and Boundary Falls, until the department of justice could assume responsibility.

On June 15, 1932, the federal government announced that it was negotiating a lease on Piers Island, a small privately-owned island, 20 miles north of the city of Victoria, in Haro Straits, and would construct a penal colony there. The erection of separate compounds for the men and women, a pier and administrative buildings, was immediately undertaken, and on September 3, the first group of twenty Doukhobors was transferred to the island. By December, in all but six isolated cases where women were in the later stages of pregnancy or actually nursing babies, the total body of 575 adult offenders had been committed to Piers Island, where they remained until their release in 1934 and 1935.

Planning for the Care of the Children.

In the demonstrations that followed the arrest of the original 117 adults on May 2, 1932, entire families participated. Mothers paraded with new-born babies, and young children wandered naked in the assemblages, presenting yet another problem for those who had sought to settle the Doukhobor problem by amending the Criminal Code. Unprepared for this turn of events, the provincial police, unable to leave the children on the roadside, had no recourse but to place them on trucks with their parents and transfer them to the temporary prison camps provided by the province until more permanent plans could be made. In these camps the family units lived in tents or dormitories and prepared their own meals

in communal kitchens.

On May 9, following the arrest of 67 minors (under 18 years of age) the previous day, Attorney-General Pooley, and Mr. W. Manson, Superintendent of Neglected Children, and Miss Laura Holland, Deputy Superintendent of Neglected Children, held the first of several conferences in Victoria to determine how these children and those expected to follow, would be cared for during the next three years. It was quite apparent that they were a direct responsibility of the province, for, in the final analysis, all were neglected children as defined by the Infants' Act of British Columbia. If, therefore, the problem was directed along the legal channels provided under the Act, a provisional court, on satisfying itself that a state of neglect did exist, could commit those under 18 years of age to care, as wards of the Superintendent of Neglected Children.³ On subsequent release from penitentiary, the parents would then apply to the court and, on giving satisfactory evidence of their ability to reassume parental responsibility, would be reinstated as guardians of their children.

After some deliberation, however, it was decided that these minors would be maintained by the British Columbia government on a non-ward basis, and would not be presented in court and committed to care as wards of the Superintendent. British Columbia thus assumed

3. V. Supra, P. 25.

responsibility for the maintenance of these Doukhobor children - as destitutes - but the parents were permitted to retain and exercise their natural rights of guardianship, and would automatically receive the children at the termination of the three-year sentence. While the acceptance of children for care on a non-ward basis by a constituted authority is an accepted practice in child welfare administration, it is normally undertaken in times of emergency when the parent or guardian, though competent, is unable to provide for the child over a temporary period, often as a result of illness or during confinement of the mother. As the child is not legally neglected there is no statutory authority behind the admission and parental consent must be given.

There were two defects in the assuming of care on a non-ward basis, perhaps unforeseen at the time. Firstly it is to be noted that many parents in prison were unwilling to part with or consent to the placing of their children and in these cases the children were placed without parental consent on the advice of the attorney-general of British Columbia. Undertaken in the best interests of the Sons of Freedom, this action was nevertheless ultra vires. Secondly, as non-wards, no surgical operations could be performed on the children without parental consent. The majority of parents would not give this permission and, although a solution was effected after prolonged negotiations, a critical situation might easily have developed if the need for emergency surgery had arisen.

Having then decided on non-ward care the provincial authorities

were faced with the pressing problem of actually placing the original 67 children. But further difficulties arose. As plans were being formulated for the disposal of this group, new arrests were being made in the interior. By May 21, 201 children were in custody of the police; and by June 25, this number had swollen to 362, to be increased again in 1933 by the birth of three babies to imprisoned parents.

It was originally suggested that two unoccupied highway construction camps in the interior be remodelled. Adequately staffed and equipped, these camps could be operated as separate institutions for the respective sexes. This plan was considered, but the welfare authorities soon agreed that if the younger children - especially those under two years of age - must be separated from their parents, they should be placed in private foster homes, where they could receive individualized attention in a family environment. Further discussion revealed that a number of babies were still being nursed by their mothers. Recognizing the dangers involved in transferring them to foster homes, it was felt that these infants should remain in jail with their mothers until they had reached the age of six months.

With these infants placed in a special category, it was now felt that it would be unwise to place the remaining boys and girls in the two proposed camps. Instead, the younger children should be segregated from the older and divided into small groups so that they could adjust more readily to the new environment. This view is expressed

in the following statement:

It is where we have small groups that the children are more easily managed; the moment you get the older ones with the younger ones, their influence is detrimental to their behaviour and creates difficulties that do not exist when you have smaller groups. I cannot believe that the public could question seriously a plan which will effect the very thing we are attempting to do, namely, to change the point of view of the youth of the Doukhobors by breaking them up into groups so that they will assimilate more quickly Canadian ideas⁴

Those children ranging from two to seven years of age requiring more specialized care - and more amenable to the accepted social patterns - could perhaps be placed in foster homes through the Vancouver Children's Aid Society and in established orphanages in the Province, while the remainder, ranging from seven to eighteen years could be maintained in the two industrial schools on a similar basis to those placed in 1929. The majority in this group would be unsuitable for foster home or orphanage care, in view of their relatively advanced age and their greater resistance to change. By placing them in the industrial schools, the entire group could now be cared for within the existing welfare structure and the erection of the special camps would be unnecessary.

Transfer of the Children.

Negotiations were then undertaken with the existing Protestant, non-sectarian, and governmental agencies and institutions in the Province.

4. Holland, Miss L., letter to Mr. W. Manson, 11 May, 1932.

The Alexandra Orphanage of Vancouver, a non-sectarian institution with a normal load of 50 children in care, and the Loyal Protestant Home, New Westminster, with an average of 45 children in care, agreed to accept quotas of 26 and 34 Doukhobor children respectively. A third orphanage, the British Columbia Protestant Orphans' Home, Victoria, normally accommodating 35 children, was willing to take 15 Doukhobor children. All three institutions offered full co-operation within the limit of their facilities and were to be reimbursed by the Provincial Government at the rate of \$4.00 per week or 51.42¢ per diem per child.

The board and executive of the Children's Aid Society of Vancouver recognized the need for the particular services which the agency was equipped to give and offered the facilities of its placement department. While this agency originally agreed to accept and place in foster homes only the infants of two years and under, it was soon necessary to extend this service. As the arrests continued the three orphanages filled their quotas, and the balance of those in the age group of three to seven years, with the addition of several older children, were admitted as non-wards and placed in foster homes. Total admissions to the Children's Aid Society numbered 119, raising to 570 the number of Doukhobor and non-Doukhobor children in care. Maintenance was paid by the provincial government at a rate of \$4.00 per week until June, 1933, when this was reduced to \$3.60 per week or 51.42¢ per diem per child.

The remaining institutions from which assistance was solicited were the Provincial Industrial School for Boys at Port Coquitlam, and

the Provincial Industrial School for Girls in Vancouver. The former, with total accommodations for 200 youths, accepted 92 of the boys in the same age group in addition to its regular inmates who numbered 42.

In the meantime, with the co-operation of the Provincial Police, lists of the children were prepared following each demonstration, giving names, ages, and where, possible family groupings. From these lists, drafts were prepared - the children being designated to the respective institutions by the Superintendent - and transportation was arranged. Speed was essential, for the attorney-general's department was anxious to transfer the parents from the overcrowded temporary camps to Oakalla Prison, but could not do so until the children were removed. On May 12, 31 boys ranging from seven to eighteen years of age were entrained under police escort at Nelson, and admitted to the Provincial Industrial School for Boys. Though the movement was made as quietly as possible, both parents and boys were emotionally upset at the time of departure. The following morning the Sons of Freedom remaining in confinement at Nelson went on a hunger strike that lasted four days; only those women actually nursing babies consenting to take food.

On May 16, 54 boys and girls of all ages were separated from their parents at Nelson and put aboard another special coach in transit to the three orphanages, the industrial schools and the Children's Aid Society of Vancouver. The older children wore tags giving personal identity and destination, while the infants carried this information on

strips of adhesive tape placed on their wrists. This party was also under a police escort which included several women who took charge of the younger children. Foodstuffs, principally bread, apples, oranges, peanuts and crackers, were provided, and arrangements were made to pick up supplies of fresh milk at points along the route. Many parents and children were grief stricken over parting but all acted in an orderly fashion seeking solace in religious services. These children were followed by a large draft of nearly 150 on May 27. By June 20, all but 31 children had been removed from their parents and brought to Vancouver and Victoria. Eventually becoming non-wards of the Children's Aid Society of Vancouver, the later admissions consisted of 17 infants who remained with their mothers in Oakalla Prison until June 25, 1932, four babies who were transferred from the Vancouver Infants' Hospital in August, and six children who were taken into custody by the Provincial Police in the spring of 1933.

While these child caring institutions and agencies accepted the children of the Sons of Freedom and agreed to maintain them for the three year period of the Doukhobor incarceration, this service was not fully utilized. In the spring of 1933 the Provincial Secretary's Department was faced with a greatly reduced budget for the coming fiscal year, as a result of which the children were transferred to the interior and placed with the approved Doukhobor families in the Christian Community.

CHAPTER IV

FOSTER HOME PROGRAMME, 1932 - 3

The Vancouver Children's Aid Society admitted to care a total of 106 Doukhobor children in the months of May and June, 1932, and an additional 13 children at intervals throughout the remainder of that year and during the spring of 1933. In offering their services, the board and executive of this agency recognized that the Doukhobor children were temporarily removed from their parents and in need of care. As such they would be afforded the identical level of service given to any other children coming into care. In keeping with the policy of the Society, the right of self-determination of the Sons of Freedom would be respected, and efforts made to maintain family ties and Doukhobor customs. While the emphasis would be laid on the maintenance of physical and emotional well being, and growth of each child, it was hoped that some of the distrust of the children toward the outer world would diminish as a result of the new associations.

On the arrival of the children in Vancouver, they were met by Society staff members and taken to the agency receiving home where they were temporarily housed. After being given a medical examination and the additional protection of diphtheria toxoid and small pox vaccine by staff physicians, they were outfitted with additional clothing and placed in

foster homes, usually within two days of arrival. Faced with this influx of children, 14 of whom exceeded the age of 7 years, the initial task of the Child Placement Department was to find suitable foster homes. While it was hoped to use as many previously approved foster homes as possible, the agency soon recognized that such accommodation would be insufficient and that additional homes must be solicited. Happily, newspaper publicity surrounding the episode drew an excellent response, and hundreds of families wrote letters to the Deputy Superintendent and to the agency signifying their willingness to accept Doukhobor children. These applications exhibited in the main a keen sympathy for the children and a desire to help. One woman writing, said, "This is a Christian home and we would bring them up under the word of God and the laws of the land" Another woman, after expressing a desire to care for two children, added the following postscript, "It would be better still if you could send some white children now in government homes if you wanted to make room for Doukhobors there." A public official applying on behalf of a constituent concluded, "... She is anxious also on account of her financial position to do this in order to assist herself in these days of depression."¹ Though each letter

1. The right of foster parents to receive financial compensation for their invaluable contribution to the child welfare programme is gaining favour to-day. It is interesting to note however, that in this instance while, clothing and medical care were provided by the agency, the foster parents were required to supply food, shelter and additional services for a weekly stipend of only four dollars per child.

TABLE I

Distribution by Age and Sex of the Doukhobor Children Admitted to
the Children's Aid Society of Vancouver, 1932 - 33.

Age in Years	Boys	Girls	Total
0 - 1	15	15	30
1 - 2	2	7	9
2 - 3	16	14	30
3 - 4	2	6	8
4 - 5	5	2	7
5 - 6	6	5	11
6 - 7	7	3	10
7 - 8	-	7	7
8 - 9	-	1	1
9 - 10	-	1	1
10 - 11	-	3	3
11 - 12	-	1	1
12 - 13	-	1	1
Total	53	66	119

was answered, applications from rural points were eliminated for administrative economy and many requests from Greater Vancouver were refused when the desired quota had been attained.

Of the 54 homes in which Doukhobor children were placed, 28 were approved foster homes already caring for children of the agency, and the remaining 26 were selected from the new applicants after a standard appraisal was made in each instance, and foster home application papers formally signed. While it was the wish of the agency to place the children in the most desirable homes it was necessary in several instances, in view of the urgent need for immediate placement and the overtaxed facilities of the receiving home, to use homes that could give only a reasonable standard of care. In some cases foster homes were approved where living quarters were apt to be overcrowded, or the home itself situated in a district which would not provide the most suitable environment for the children. In no case however were they placed in homes that might prove detrimental to the welfare of the individual child.

The 119 children came originally from 85 Doukhobor homes; in 55 cases only one child from each family was admitted by the agency, in 26 instances two children from the individual family came into care, and in three cases, four children from one family were admitted to care. To maintain family unity efforts were made to place as many siblings as possible in the same home. While this policy was followed wherever possible at the time of initial placement, it was often difficult to identify siblings from the information listed in the records. Not only

did several families frequently have the same surname, but ages were often inaccurate and names frequently misspelled. This caused the unintentional separation of a number of brothers and sisters. As these discrepancies were rectified, the child placement department was then able to make whatever changes of placement were necessary, giving due consideration to the fact that after remaining in the original foster home for several weeks or months, the children may have become fairly well adjusted to the new homes and the foster parents very attached to the children.

The foster parents were sympathetic and co-operative in this regard, recognizing that the changes were in the best interest of the children. They were assisted in gaining this understanding by circular letters sent out by the agency. On November 7, 1932, Miss Zella Collins, Manager of the Children's Aid Society, wrote as follows to the foster parents soliciting their support in effecting these changes of placement:

Through our letters to Doukhobor mothers we learn that ever since the death of her mother, a little girl in our care had lived with two other little girls, also in our care. Both foster mothers were approached with the result that the three little girls, who to quote the mother were 'just like sisters,' are in one home together. Another little boy is going to the foster home of his sister. There is another Doukhobor child in this home, which means that when these three children go back to the Doukhobor community, they too will be like brother and sister. The foster mothers were loathe to part with their little charges, but I am sure they realize not only the wisdom but the actual necessity for making such changes.

From this you can see that helping the Society to make a really constructive plan may mean giving up the child in your care, or it may mean taking another into your home.

Within the foster home programme, both foster parents and children were under supervision of the child placement department. Each foster home was visited on the average of two or three times a month by a staff nurse or social worker; the physical development of each child was carefully watched and any signs of illness were reported to the agency by the foster mother as soon as possible; and problems of adjustment and behaviour difficulties were approached on a case work level. While these younger children evidenced few Sons of Freedom traits, efforts were made to preserve Doukhobor customs wherever possible. Although the children were issued leather shoes, and 27 of school age were officially registered and attended the public schools, the children were encouraged to speak Russian with each other, and both foster mothers and the children who could write were asked to correspond every month with the Doukhobor parents. From the parents it was soon learned that while the children were permitted to drink milk, eat eggs and both raw and cooked vegetables, it was not permissible for them to eat meat. Instructions were then issued to the foster parents specifically requesting them to comply with this wish of the parents.

The children proved to be of normal health and intelligence, and considering the traumatic nature of the episode showed an excellent response to the treatment they received from both foster parents and the agency. The foster parents, with few exceptions, gained considerable satisfaction in caring for the children. During the period the 119 children were in care, it was only necessary to change placements in 30

TABLE II

Grading by the Children's Aid Society of Vancouver
of Approved Foster Homes Caring for Doukhobor Children, June 1932.

Fair	Fairly Good	Good	Very Good	Excellent
5	3	33	6	5

instances, involving 27 children. Of these changes, in 11 cases children were moved to be with siblings, in 6 instances transfers were made at the request of the foster mother, while the remaining 13 changes in placement were necessitated by external conditions such as ill-health of the foster mother.

The letters sent to the Doukhobor parents by the children and foster parents testify to the level of care afforded in many of the foster homes. On September 25, 1932, one girl of 8 years wrote enthusiastically of her many activities and interests:

Dear Mama: I play with lots of girls, Joyce, Rhona, Muriel and Donnie. Tania and Billy (her siblings) live in one house with me and Mary, Peter and Jimmie in another house close by. We have fun playing together and swings,

lots of rabbits. We play house and have lots of dollies. I sew lots of clothes dresses and hats for mine. One day we went on car to park and saw monkeys, birds, bears, goats, deer, ducks, swans, and then we went to the beach and played in the sand and saw lots of big boats. One day we went on ferry boat to North Vancouver. Last week we all go to beach and have swim. I can swim with a red rubber ring. I put the rubber ring over my head so I keep my head up. I have a black bathing suit. Donnie and I went swimming. We took our lunch to the beach.

Sunday we go for nice walks. I have lots of nice new dresses. I am getting fat and had my hair cut like Mary's. Sometimes I have my hair curled with rags, then go down town. I have 2 pairs new shoes and new coat. Mary and Peter getting fat too. Peter's teeth coming out. John is good. Mary came out to see us. We had races and balloons. Write me nice letter soon. Love and Kisses.

Annie.

The foster mother enclosed a note with this letter telling of the child's diet in the home:

You will be glad to know Annie is well and happy. She enjoys her meals, she has porridge, corn flakes, shredded wheat for breakfast with cream and lots of milk to drink. Annie, Tonia and Billy have a busy time counting all the vegetables at lunch. To-day Annie counted ten vegetables. She then has bread, eggs, peanut butter, honey, jam and milk. For supper she has rice tapioca or nice milk pudding made with eggs, cream, and milk, then bread and butter and jelly and jam. We have lots of apple trees and the children will soon have lots of apples. So your little girl is getting nice and plump, her eyes are bright, and she seems real happy, singing and playing. The girls all admire Annie's sewing, and she is very clever with her knitting. She is crocheting herself a pink wool tam. Annie has made and embroidered a pretty mauve apron for herself.

In corresponding, another foster mother gave evidence of her endorsement of the agency's endeavours to keep family ties alive:

Our friends have given them a lot of toys and your picture is in a frame in their bedroom, and there is a

small table underneath it and they keep fresh flowers in a small vase in front of your picture. They say, 'Good night dear mother,' and 'Good morning dear mother.' I like them to tell us about you, their father, and your home.

Shortly after this letter was written, the foster father died and the children were a great solace to the bereaved widow. One night, unable to sleep, the foster mother went into the living room. A little girl in her care, awakened by the footsteps, followed downstairs and insisted that she return to her bedroom. The child then climbed in bed beside her saying, "I am going to warm you and help you to sleep."

The Gregory Foster Home.

Among the many applicants offering to accept the Doukhobor children were a Mr. and Mrs. J. E. Gregory of Rosedale. On the strength of this family's excellent recommendations, Miss Holland agreed to their request before it had been decided that all placements would be made under the jurisdiction of the Children's Aid Society of Vancouver, and only in the area of Greater Vancouver. On June 19, 1932, four Doukhobor girls were placed in the Gregory home. These children, two of whom were sisters, ranged in age from seven to eleven years. This home was under the supervision of the deputy superintendent, and Mrs. Gregory was to receive \$15.00 a month for the maintenance of each child. In a letter dated June 19, Miss Holland stipulated that Mrs. Gregory must ". . . provide (them) with clothes and other necessities of life, and will see that they attend school regularly

when school re-opens in September . . ." She was also instructed to contact a public health nurse and notify Miss Holland in the advent of illness, and to forward progress reports at stipulated intervals. From these detailed reports a comprehensive picture of the gradual adjustment to the foster home can be formed.

For the first week the girls were very quiet and wept continually for their parents. But a response to the sympathetic treatment of Mrs. Gregory and her 'teen age daughter was soon noticeable. The children began to take an interest in the picking and preparing of fruits and vegetables, and in setting the table at mealtimes. By August 25, they were accompanying the Gregorys to the store, were playing together on the school yard swings. They also enjoyed sitting in the living room when visitors called, though they would not participate in the conversation. But the children still wept on the receipt of letters from their parents, perhaps due in part to the unhappy tidings these letters brought. About this time, one father, not having received a letter from his daughter in the past month, wrote an angry letter to Miss Holland reminding her that even prisoners were allowed to send one letter every three weeks.

The Rosedale School Board was very reluctant to accept these Doukhobor children, and in acceding to their admission retained the right to have the four girls removed on thirty days' notice. The girls themselves were apprehensive and reticent on the first day of classes,

and were escorted to the school by the Gregory daughter who remained with them in the classroom for the first week. They attracted little attention in the school, as the neighboring children had by then learned to accept them, particularly at the nearby "swimming hole." Though handicapped by a poor command of the English language, their progress in studies was very favourable and their application excellent.

Still experiencing very understandable periods of unhappiness during the fall months, the children had nevertheless lost much of their tendency to withdraw. Where formerly they had made little effort to converse with the Gregory family in English, they now joined in the topic of discussion with interest. While they were not permitted to be alone outside the home after school hours, Mrs. Gregory planned and accompanied them on a number of outings, to a fair, to church, to neighborly social gatherings, and to a Women's Institute exhibition where one of the girls won a first prize in a competition for folded paper doll's furniture. In the foster home, they now preferred to wear their hair in curls instead of pigtails, ate all foodstuffs but meat, and played contentedly with dolls. As Hallowe'en's Day approached their interest was absorbed in preparations for a masquerade party held in the school. They assisted the foster mother in the designing of costumes and attended the party dressed as a Hawaiian dancing girl, a flapper, an Indian brave, and an ear of Indian corn. The girls were photographed in these costumes and the snapshots forwarded to the Doukhor parents.

Christmas Day is not celebrated by the Sons of Freedom and was a new experience for these children. In letters to their parents they constantly referred to "Crees Mus," and each spent several weeks secretly making gifts for her friends, relatives and the foster family. During the festivities, while refusing to eat turkey, they did enjoy great quantities of ice cream and candy. The Christmas tree was a particular source of satisfaction and was removed after New Year's day amid loud protestations.

On March 30, 1933, one of these girls was removed from the Gregory home and returned to the care of relatives in the Community. She was followed on April 9, by the remaining three. By this time they were becoming quite popular with their classmates, and less upset on the receipt of letters from their parents. It should be noted that as a result of Mrs. Gregory's friendly letters to the parents, the parents themselves wrote less disturbing letters to their children.

Anticipating that she would be asked to care for them over the full three years of their parents' incarceration, this transfer was unexpected, giving Mrs. Gregory little opportunity to prepare the girls for their departure. Her letter of April 26, to Miss Holland would indicate that the experience was a traumatic one:

Your letter came yesterday and was a great shock to our household. I did not tell the children until evening and oh! what a task it was - and this morning is a sorrowful time with everybody weeping. However it must be done.

The sentiments of the foster family on parting with the girls are conveyed in another letter addressed to Miss Holland:

We miss them terribly and they felt so keenly about it, I cannot tell you how badly they felt for days - and giving up their school work. I had a little Garden Tea for their teachers - our minister and his wife, and our nurse, on Thursday, before they went away. Everybody regrets their going - however it is over and past.

These four have corresponded with Mrs. Gregory over the ensuing years, and recently, one of the girls visited the home, accompanied by her husband and children.

CHAPTER V

INSTITUTIONAL CARE PROVIDED, 1932 - 33.

The Loyal Protestant Home, the British Columbia Protestant Orphans' Home, and the Alexandra Orphanage cared for a total of 75 children from May, 1932, until May, 1933. With the exception of meat which was not included in their diet, the Doukhobor children were afforded the regular services and facilities of these orphanages. They were provided with clothing and leather shoes, also medical care and recreational activities in common with the other inmates; and those of school age were registered at public schools in the vicinity of the respective institutions. Intermingling freely with the non-Doukhobor children, they were readily accepted by the staff members who often became devoted to these young Sons of Freedom. Apart from difficulties arising out of the language barrier they presented no abnormal behaviour problems and made a favourable adjustment to orphanage routine.

Alexandra Orphanage.

The level of care given by Alexandra Orphanage is representative of the three institutions. On arrival, the children were given a medical examination, outfitted with additional clothing, and assigned to beds in dormitories. They were introduced to the supervised play activities of the Orphanage and, after the newness of the experience had worn off, participated in many games and activities organized by the staff. During the summer months they attended the holiday camp operated by the

institution, and in the month of September, 12 were enrolled at Lord Tennyson School in Vancouver where they made a satisfactory adjustment.

The only unusual problem with which the staff had to contend related to their diet. As many of the children were unaccustomed to conventional food or the use of cutlery they were permitted for a time to eat with their fingers in the privacy of a separate dining room, and their diet was altered to include a greater portion of peanuts, fruit and raw vegetables.

TABLE III

Distribution by Age and Sex of the Doukhobor children

Admitted to Orphanage care, 1932 - 33

Age in Years	Boys	Girls	Total
3 - 4	6	12	18
4 - 5	12	6	18
5 - 6	7	8	15
6 - 7	8	9	17
7 - 8	-	5	5
8 - 9	-	-	-
9 - 10	-	2	2
Total	33	42	75

At the end of the second month they were dining in common with the other children, using cutlery, and eating all the foodstuffs on the regular menu with the exception of meat. To compensate for this deficiency their diet was supplemented by additional rations of milk and eggs.

While the staffs of the two industrial schools found the 'teen-age children of the Sons of Freedom interesting and pleasant, they nevertheless encountered many difficulties not experienced by those working with the younger children. Undergoing the same separation from their families, these older children were in addition, resentful of the government for its militant actions, and hostile toward the institutions to which they were sent. With adolescence they had absorbed the basic concepts of the "Book of Life," and played an active part in the religious, social and economic life of the Sons of Freedom colonies. Approaching maturity, the entire episode had a broader significance for them, many believing that they were actively participating in one of the many persecutions their people must undergo at the hands of the oppressor. By adopting a familiar pattern of passive resistance during the initial period they not only lived in accord with the tenets of their church but also found an emotional outlet for the hostilities arising out of their feeling of persecution.

Provincial Industrial School for Girls.

On May 12, 1932, Mrs. A. B. Westman, Superintendent of the Provincial Industrial School for Girls, agreed to accept and care for seven Doukhobor girls between the ages of eleven and fourteen years. She

informed that this placement might be of a temporary nature, and the matter of foster home care would be discussed at a later date. However, when the arrested Sons of Freedom ran into unexpected numbers, these plans were revised and a total of 75 girls were placed in the school between May 16 and June 17, 1932.

On the evening of May 26, having prepared for the arrival of seven Doukhobor girls on the midnight train from Nelson, Mrs. Westman was surprised to learn that instead of seven, she might expect forty. With only one assistant available, she succeeded in chartering two buses and brought the girls to the institution under police escort. No sooner were they seated in the buses than the children commenced singing hymns at the top of their voices and continued to do so until the buses stopped at the entrance to the grounds. On arrival, the girls descended from the buses but would not enter the institution. Declining the assistance of the police, Mrs. Westman and her assistant opened the doors and gently pushed the girls through the doorway and up to the third floor dormitories. They were then assigned cots and requested to undress and bathe before retiring. Though the majority spoke or understood English, they all commenced to get into bed with their clothes on under the pretext of not understanding her instructions. Greeted by silence when she again asked them to undress, explaining that a bath would be refreshing after the long train ride, Mrs. Westman removed the clothes from one of the older girls and led her to a bath tub. This girl offered no resistance, and by taking the initiative in this manner, Mrs. Westman was then able to persuade the others to undress and bathe. By 6 a.m., all were in bed and asleep.

TABLE IV

Distribution by Age of the Doukhobor Girls admitted to the
Provincial Industrial School for Girls 1932 - 3

<u>Age in</u> <u>Years</u>	<u>Number</u> <u>In Care</u>
7 - 8	2
8 - 9	4
9 - 10	3
10 - 11	5
11 - 12	9
12 - 13	10
13 - 14	8
14 - 15	9
15 - 16	6
16 - 17	9
17 - 18	10
Total	75

Awakened the next afternoon, they were escorted to the dining room for their first meal. Here, the past experience of the school in caring for Doukhobor children came in useful. Knowing that the girls were hungry, yet unwilling to eat, a simple fare was provided; one that would satisfy the desires of the most ardent Sons of Freedom. On the bare tables were placed platters of raw potatoes, raw onions, and pieces of broken bread. In the centre of each table were two bowls, one containing salt and the other vegetable oil. After saying grace, the girls sat down and proceeded to eat, taking the potatoes and onions in their fingers and dipping them in the oil and the salt. Within a few minutes the platters were empty and the tables littered with bread crumbs, oil and sodden salt.

In requisitioning the facilities of the industrial school, Miss Holland stipulated that this institution should segregate the Doukhobor girls from the regular inmates who had been committed by the Juvenile Court. To comply with this ruling, four dormitories were equipped for the Doukhobors, and a gymnasium was furnished to serve as a dining hall and recreation room. While the other inmates expressed a desire to associate with these girls, there was no contact between them except at concerts, at which they sat in the same room.

In caring for the children, the school was to provide food, clothing, medical services, educational and recreational facilities. Over and above this, the girls should be encouraged to indulge in sewing and other useful handicrafts, and through an educational programme,

assisted in developing a more amenable attitude toward governmental authority and citizenship. The superintendent of the institution recognized that they would eventually return to their accustomed mode of life and allowed them full freedom in the practice of their religion.

During the first week the girls underwent medical examinations, but were otherwise free, within the confines of their quarters, to spend the time as they saw fit. Maintaining group solidarity, they resisted the efforts of the staff to interest them in any activities, preferring to sing psalms or sit quietly by themselves. But the industrial school was dependent on the services of the inmates to operate the laundry, bakery, kitchen and dining room under the supervision of the staff, and friction soon arose as the regular charges objected to being overtaxed with additional work while the Doukhobor girls remained idle. It was important then that they undertake their own services as soon as possible. In the second week they were required to make their own beds and clean the dormitories, and by July 15 the scope of these activities had been broadened to include laundry, baking of bread, gardening, and the preparation of their own meals. Few of the girls had any previous experience in these domestic chores, and on questioning explained this unfamiliarity by indicating that in the colonies their mothers did the cooking and washing, while they were required to care for the babies and younger children.

While they soon co-operated and performed these tasks willingly, the girls stubbornly refused to work when the plan was first inaugurated. The staff, prohibited from using physical force, would seek the

advice of Mrs. Westman, the superintendent, when vocal persuasion failed. The superintendent, who was called the "Big Chief in High Hat" by the Doukhobor girls, after satisfying herself that entreaties were in vain, would approach each girl, commencing with the eldest and, taking the child's hands in her own, would go through the motions of doing the work. This technique, employed solely by the Superintendent, proved successful on a number of occasions. Practiced in a spirit of good humour, the girls evidenced little resentment, and after having their hands guided through the mechanics of a chore once or twice, would undertake the particular task of their own volition on subsequent occasions.

Soon after arrival the girls held a nude demonstration in their dormitories. Perplexed when the staff showed little concern - merely asking that in future they refrain from doing so - they abandoned this form of protest and immediately went on a hunger strike. After a lapse of some hours the superintendent asked them to eat. Met by a sullen refusal, she then forced each girl to take a spoonful of canned tomatoes. No physical opposition was raised at this action and all were then willing to accompany her to the dining room. On another occasion they objected to peeling potatoes and were informed that if they wished they might eat them with the skins on. For several days they followed this suggestion and then commenced to peel them of their own accord.

A temporary kitchen was provided and, supplied with a variety of domestic and imported fruits, bread, peanuts, sunflower seeds, vegetable oil, and vegetables from the institutional gardens, they were per-

mitted to plan and prepare their own meals. It should be noted that while some extremists of the Sons of Freedom sect have made a pretence of eating raw foods solely, this custom was very uncommon and rarely carried to the exclusion of all cooked vegetables. The Doukhobor parents at Piers Island were observed to eat raw fruits and vegetables at every meal, but invariably planned their meals to include a basic cooked dish such as a Russian vegetable soup Borsch, fried or boiled garden vegetables, and pies, which were made with a fruit or vegetable filler. Potatoes were eaten raw, but were generally preferred when boiled, fried, baked, or used as pie filler. It can therefore be assumed that the girls were not accustomed to the frugal fare of raw potatoes, onions, bread and oil to which they adhered on entering the school, but had adopted this diet out of a sense of martyrdom and protest. As their feeling of security strengthened, and an element of monotony entered into the meals, they began to prepare heated dishes, showing a partiality for borsch which was usually served twice a day. By October 1, 1932, a balance between raw and cooked foods had been arrived at by the girls themselves, similar to that of their parents. No meat, fish poultry or dairy products were provided for them except in isolated cases where individuals were given milk for reasons of health with the consent of the group. Without exception they all had excellent appetites, eating large quantities of peanuts and sunflower seeds between very adequate meals.

Originally dining at bare tables and eating with their fingers from common platters, it was soon found that the tables and the girls'

clothing were becoming soiled with food and oil. In the interests of hygiene, individual dishes, cutlery and table cloths were introduced with encouraging results.

Institutional regulations stipulated that all inmates of the Provincial Industrial School for Girls should wear blue uniforms. However, an exception was made in this regard. The Doukhobor girls arrived in native dress and, objecting to the uniforms, were given permission to wear their accustomed attire. When additional clothing was needed they were then encouraged to wear the regulation dress, but in recognition of Doukhobor styles, these uniforms were tailored with lengthened and fuller skirts, and each girl was permitted to enhance the appearance of her uniform with embroidery. Complimented by the staff on their smart appearance in these new dresses and the optional canvas or leather shoes issued by the school, the girls became quite conscious of their appearance, and kept their clothes clean and pressed. On her subsequent return to the Doukhobor colony one girl wrote to the superintendent, "Please may I have more of smart blue uniforms?" Her request was granted and two uniforms were forwarded.

In September these children were introduced to the class room. By that time they had made a satisfactory adjustment to the institutional routine and the staff had gained some understanding of them. Again, the initial experience was accompanied by resistance on the part of the girls who would not communicate any information relating to their past educational training. Though it was recognized that the majority had attended

public schools at some time it was impossible to grade them, and the group was arbitrarily divided into two classes on an age basis, the younger girls taking classes in the morning and the older girls in the afternoons. No exception was made for those girls over the school leaving age of 15 years; all were required to attend classes.

For the first few days it was difficult to induce them to enter the classroom. On being called to classes the entire group would congregate in one corner of the recreation room, and after those slated for attendance were segregated they reluctantly straggled into classes, refusing to line up and march in pairs. Eventually assembled at their assigned desks, the girls would then refuse to sit down, and it was necessary for the superintendent to place her hands on the shoulders of each girl and gently force her into her seat. With the use of tact and an enriched curriculum however, the teaching staff overcame the resistance of the girls to formal education and satisfactory progress was attained.

By the end of July the major difficulties had been ironed out and from then on the institutional programme functioned smoothly. Although the girls had greater confidence in the superintendent of the school, the other members of the staff also became popular with them. The staff in turn became attached to the children, and individual members frequently invited them to their homes for afternoon tea. An exhibition was attended as part of the recreational programme and sight-seeing tours were made to Stanley Park and other points of interest in Vancouver. Responding enthusiastically to these new sights and experience the girls

deluged their escorts with queries, thus gaining the nickname, "The Walking Question Marks."

Throughout the placement the Doukhobor girls devoted many of their leisure hours to the singing of long hymns in four-part harmony. To encourage them in music appreciation, they were allowed to listen to a radio, and a standing invitation was given to the Monday evening concerts presented at the school by visiting musicians from Vancouver. Assuming an air of indifference, they declined to avail themselves of these opportunities for some time, but were observed on occasion to be sitting quietly in the dormitories listening to the faint sounds of music drifting up the stairway. When this pretence diminished many evenings were spent in the main recreation room listening to the radio or attending the concerts.

Among the girls admitted to this institution there was a significant group spirit. All participated in religious services and exhibited a close comradeship in recreational activities, also on those occasions when passive resistance was resorted to. A leader appointed each day from among the older girls, played a prominent role in the religious services and acted as counsel in all the day's activities. She commanded respect from the others, and determined for the group whether certain regulations or orders were acceptable or contrary to the beliefs of the Sons of Freedom sect. So unobtrusive was this leadership that the staff was often unaware of the identity of the particular girl in authority.

Provincial Industrial School for Boys.

A total of 92 Doukhobor boys were placed with the Provincial Industrial School for Boys at Port Coquitlam, B.C., in May and June, 1932. In accepting them into care the Superintendent, Mr. D. B. Brankin, was to comply with the same regulations as those required of the Provincial Industrial School for Girls. The boys were to be provided with food and clothing, medical care, educational facilities; and the religious beliefs and practices of the Sons of Freedom were to be respected so far as these were consistent with the administration of the institution and the laws of the country. Similarly, they were to be segregated from the other inmates who had been committed by the Juvenile Court. In keeping with the latter regulation, they were provided with a separate cottage on the premises which served as a dormitory, dining hall and recreation room.

During the first day in the institution, after undergoing a medical examination, the boys were addressed by the superintendent through an interpreter. Stressing the need for co-operation, he informed them that he was in authority there, and any regulations he might make for their welfare must be complied with. This approach was not effective, for one of the older boys, expressing the sentiments of the group, replied defiantly, "Jesus Christ our boss!" Thereafter, they were given a marked degree of liberty by the staff who imposed a minimum of restrictions on them.

With the exception of cleaning the cottage, the Doukhobor boys were not required to work for the first month and, apart from the younger

boys who attended three hours of classes each day, they spent much of their time in the activities of their choice. This was possible for, unlike the Industrial School for Girls, many of the services in this institution, such as laundry and baking, were provided by outside firms. Soon however, they registered disapproval with the standard bill of fare, and asked permission to partake of foods of their own choice. On the promise of the older boys that they would be willing to prepare the meals themselves this request was granted and a separate unit of the institutional kitchen was placed at their disposal. This duty was carried out in a satisfactory manner, the boys preparing similar meals to those prepared by the girls in the other industrial school.

In July, the superintendent overcame objections and persuaded those over the compulsory school attendance age of 15 to work on the school farm, believing the exercise to be beneficial and hoping that the boys would become acquainted with modern methods of cultivation. This problem was approached in a unique fashion by Mr. Brankin:

"We have been bothered lately with birds eating our crops, so we decided to make some scarecrows and stand them out in the fields. Then I thought of a better plan. I took the bigger Doukhobor boys out on the farm, stationed them at intervals midst the foliage, with orders to stay there and shoo the birds away. I told them all they had to do was to stay exactly where they were put, and shoo the birds away; nothing more. They were not to work, nor to wander around. The weather was fine and the sunshine was good for them.

After two or three days, it chanced I was passing by when one of the boys beckoned to me to come to him, so I went over. The boy said, 'This is foolish'.

'Of course it's foolish,' I agreed. 'But you don't

TABLE V

Distribution by Age of Doukhobor Boys Admitted to the
Provincial Industrial School for Boys, 1932 - 33

<u>Age in</u> <u>Years</u>	<u>Number</u> <u>In Care</u>
7 - 8	6
8 - 9	8
9 - 10	10
10 - 11	6
11 - 12	9
12 - 13	8
13 - 14	12
14 - 15	2
15 - 16	10
16 - 17	12
17 - 18	8
18 - 19	1
Total	92

want to work, and I don't want you to work.' The boy answered that they wanted to work, so I told him I would think about it.

That afternoon I was again approached: 'When can we start work?' I asked when they wished to start: the answer was, 'At once'. I promised I would consider it further, but the next day I got some benches and told them to sit down on them, which they did - all day.

But the following day I told them I had decided they could start. They started at once, have been at it since, and work like good boys." ¹

While the older boys were being set to work on the farm chores those under fifteen years of age were compelled to attend classes, which were held throughout the summer months in addition to the regular school terms. Appearing to have a very limited command of the English language these boys were uncommunicative making it impossible for the staff to determine how much previous schooling each had had. Following the plan adopted by the teaching staff of the Industrial School for Girls a tentative division was made, dividing the group into two sections on the basis of age each section attending classes for a half day.

The class of younger boys was placed under the charge of a woman teacher. On the first day the boys assembled in the room by their desks but refused to sit down. They did not appear to understand English and her efforts to bring the class to attention had no apparent effect. At one point a boy, acting as spokesman for the others, asked her why it was necessary for them to learn English for, after all, they were many and she was only one. The next day she brought her knitting and, observing that the boys still preferred to stand by the desks, calmly

¹ Vancouver Daily Province, 25 - 9 - 32, p.3.

sat down herself and began to knit. After an hour or so, as they grew weary they sat down, one by one, of their own volition. Finally, when all were seated the spokesman asked if they might sing a hymn. Permission was granted, the teacher not realizing that the hymn in question contained 47 verses and would require nearly an hour to complete.

In view of their seeming inability to comprehend English, it was then decided that primary grade techniques would be employed with all the boys. On the third day, the teacher, after gaining some semblance of order with the assistance of an interpreter, distributed a series of cards to be coloured with crayons. The face of each card contained the outline of an apple, with the word "apple" printed in block letters below. She asked them through the interpreter, to colour the apples in red crayon; but the boys remained motionless and all entreaties were in vain. At that moment a male teacher came into the classroom and, going up to one of them, ordered him to pick up his crayon. When his command was not obeyed, the teacher led the boy out of the room by his ear amid the loud protestations of the entire class and insisted that he stand in the outer hallway. Repeating this action until four of the Doukhobor boys had been removed from the room, he informed the remainder that these four and any others who refused to pick up the crayons would be put in a cottage with the regular inmates of the school. This threat was effective for the class picked up the crayons and began to scribble on the cards. The four recalcitrants who had been removed were then permitted to return; but their classmates were so imbued by the object lesson that they called

them "the bad boys," and ignored them for the rest of the day.

By the fourth day it became apparent to the class teacher that the boys were reasonably well acquainted with the English language, especially when it was to their advantage to comprehend an instruction. She then wrote a rather complicated sentence on the blackboard in English and, through the interpreter, asked them to copy it onto their slates. When this was done she rubbed the sentence off the blackboard. Observing that several boys had removed the sentence from their slates, she rebuked one of them for having done so without permission. As she spoke this boy quickly rewrote the English sentence from memory, and the class, reviewing the situation with humour, informed her that all of them had attended school previously and had learned some English. From then on, the tension diminished and both classes co-operated with the teachers. Study courses were arranged on the basis of grade standings and satisfactory progress was made.

The boys entered the institution wearing a varied assortment of clothing. None wore leather apparel and some, for economic reasons, had gone to the extreme of using pieces of rope or string in place of belts, and of wearing crude sandals manufactured from strips of automobile tire and string in lieu of conventional shoes or boots. Having no definite mode of dress in the Doukhobor colonies these boys accepted the regulation institutional attire more readily than the older girls, even to the extent of wearing leather boots.

With no organized recreational programme, they were given a

wide measure of freedom within the regulations on the school and were frequently left to rely on their own resources. Spending the evenings indoors they listened to the radio placed at their disposal, read comic books and conversed in Russian, often on the topic of sex. Day activities included singing, usually in conjunction with their religious services; competitive games such as marbles, football and baseball; and manual pursuits such as bookbinding, in the craft shop. These boys were permitted to leave the grounds at specified times and, while none of them failed to return, many availed themselves of this opportunity to purchase cigarettes and tobacco from the nearby mental hospital. Smoking was prohibited in the school, and was contrary to the religious tenets of the Sons of Freedom. While the habit was commonly practiced by the youths, it was, nevertheless, only indulged in off the premises or in secret.

Throughout the period of placement the Doukhobor boys maintained an excellent spirit of comradeship, there being no evidence of any internal discord within the group. A leader or spokesman was appointed each day from among the older youths and his orders were willingly and promptly carried out by the others. It was observed, however, that when the policy of segregation was relaxed by the superintendent in August, 1932, to the extent of encouraging all the inmates to participate in competitive games, they tended to isolate themselves from the other charges in the school. But by the end of September some intercourse was noticeable on the playgrounds, though the Doukhobor youths seldom took the initiative.

In this placement there was not the close working relationship between the staff and children experienced in the Provincial Industrial School for Girls. With the exception of several members who took an active interest in the boys, the general practice was to fulfil the required responsibilities entailed in providing supervision without attempting a specialized approach. Though the general behaviour of the boys was satisfactory, a more personalized type of care would have enabled the staff to gain a better understanding of the Sons of Freedom, and by incorporating this into their techniques, foster a greater sense of security within the boys themselves.

CHAPTER VI

EDUCATION AND MEDICAL CARE, 1932-3

The entire group of Doukhobor children were afforded the identical medical services given to any child admitted to care under the jurisdiction of the Superintendent of Neglected Children. Each one was given a general medical examination and administered small pox vaccine and diphtheria toxoid on arrival, and provided with medical care during the period of placement, and again re-examined on discharge in the spring of 1933. All cases of illness were reported to the deputy superintendent directly, and the children's parents were informed of the nature and seriousness of the disorder. When conditions warranted, hospitalization and treatment were provided.

In general the initial examinations indicated that the children were well nourished and in good physical condition, despite the fact that few had received any medical care in the past. Of those recommended for treatment by the examining physicians the majority suffered from diseased tonsils and adenoids. Fifteen percent of the children required tonsillectomies, but less than one percent of the entire group was in need of urgent treatment. Two percent were listed for surgical care, inguinal hernia being the most common complaint. In only two instances was surgical care deemed urgent. During the period of placement there were also isolated cases of pleurisy and influenza, and minor outbreaks of whooping cough, pin worms, chicken pox, measles

and skin infection. No fatalities occurred while the children were actually in the care of the institutions or agency. The need for hospitalization seldom arose.

The parents readily gave their consent to immunization but were, with few exceptions, unwilling to have operations performed on the children, believing them to be unnecessary and dangerous. The children being cared for on a non-ward basis, parental consent was necessary before tonsillectomies or surgery were possible, and efforts were made to gain this sanction where prompt treatment was prescribed. In June and July, 1932, individual parents were visited at Oakalla Prison and interviewed in the Children's Aid Society premises in an endeavour to win their support. But the Sons of Freedom remained unconvinced for in only three cases was permission granted and then only for tonsillectomies. The attitude of many of the parents is expressed in the following letter sent to Miss Collins by a Doukhobor mother:-

Dear Madam,

I am answering your letter. I am very sorry to tell you I really don't like letting my kids to have their tonsils out so please do not make any thing without our permission cause the weather is cold and in the spring we will see them and we will let you know. I guess this will be all right please only dress them up warmer please that will be the best they will get over it. 1

Fearing that physical injury or an acute disorder might create the need for emergency surgery at any time, consultations were held

1 In the above quotation and in others following from Doukhobor writings the original spelling is used.

between the Superintendent of Neglected Children and the Attorney-General's Department to establish some legal basis for authorizing surgery when the parents would not give consent. Eventually a compromise was arrived at, for on August 8 the following letter was sent by the deputy superintendent to the manager of the Children's Aid Society of Vancouver:

Our legal advisers have informed us that the question of obtaining the consent or approval of parents with respect to surgical treatment is one of degree. They are of the opinion, for instance, that if a child broke a leg or arm, it would be a case where immediate surgical treatment would be necessary. In the case of an internal operation, or where there is a possibility of a difference of medical opinion, our instructions are not so definite. I think it is their opinion that recourse to surgical treatment without the consent of the parents should only be when the medical profession is assured that it is necessary to the life of the child concerned.

It would seem, therefore, that each case must be treated on its own merits, and where a serious emergency operation is involved, we must act on the best medical advice that can be obtained.

In theory then, emergency operations could be undertaken with the legal sanction of the Provincial Government without the parents' consent. However, it was never necessary to resort to this in practice. Nevertheless, this solution of a jurisdictional problem constituted a hardship for children who were recommended for treatment designed to remedy organic conditions which would prove detrimental to their future health and development.

Among the children there were three who suffered from chronic complaints. One boy in the Alexandra Orphanage was afflicted with a

cardiac disease which resulted from tonsillitis. With the permission of his parents a tonsillectomy was performed and special nursing care given. On discharge from care in 1933, his prognosis was favourable. Another boy found to be mentally deficient was transferred from the Industrial School for Boys soon after arrival and committed to a mental institution where he remained until his parents were released from Piers Island Penitentiary. The Children's Aid Society of Vancouver placed in a foster home a ten-year old girl afflicted with permanent paralysis arising out of acute anterior poliomyelitis, which necessitated the use of crutches. Orthopedic surgery was advised in this instance, but the parents withheld consent and no surgical treatment was given.

On May 23, 1932, the Superintendent of Neglected Children, acting on medical advice, requested that all breast-fed babies under the age of six months should remain with their mothers in prison for a maximum period of six months. However, in sympathy for the women who were loath to part with their children, this regulation was interpreted liberally by the Provincial Police, and on May 30, sixteen babies were admitted to Oakalla Prison with their mothers, followed by another eight on June 17. These infants ranged in age from two weeks to fourteen months, and many of them had been weaned previously. Among them there were three fatalities - an unavoidable tragedy which destroyed all hope of getting the Sons of Freedom to put confidence in the medical sciences.

Tired and dirty after a long train ride the babies were with one or two exceptions in a very weakened condition, many suffering from colds and diarrhoea. The environment in the women's section of Oakalla Prison, was not conducive to normal recovery for, although a matron was in attendance and additional sanitary conveniences installed, accommodations were overcrowded and the mothers, who were under a severe emotional strain, did not give the babies the same attention they would have given under more normal circumstances. On June 12 on the advice of the prison surgeon one baby was taken to the Vancouver Infants' Hospital suffering from diarrhoea and vomiting. The surgeon, alarmed at the condition of the other babies and their surroundings, reported to the Warden as follows: "Owing to congested conditions of Oakalla Prison, I would recommend the babies to be removed to more suitable quarters if it is possible". As a result on June 25 seventeen bottle-fed babies were transferred to the Children's Aid Society of Vancouver and placed in foster homes.

When representatives of the Children's Aid Society arrived at the prison to remove the babies, they met with some resistance from the Doukhobor women who failed to grasp the motives behind the action. The following account of the incident, incorporated into a written public appeal by the Sons of Freedom in Oakalla Prison on June 26, is indicative of their sense of frustration and persecution:

British Columbia has become the arena of the most cruelist and unmerciful crime that has been committed by the people over another people. Even if these people were guilty

they do not deserve such vulgar barbarous treatment...Five cars drove to the prison doors, about 10 ladies come out. We were called out to the hall and informed that the little babies were to go. Before us stood well dressed up to date cosmetics, refined and polite ladies. Suddenly we heard wailing and crying of women coming down from the fifth floor. They were harried forcibly by women-guards under the leadership of Mr. Wheeble, Deputy Warden. It was a picture that will never be forgotten. The ladies of the children Aid Society began to convince us that they would look after their babies even better than their mothers did, this and that, but the mother's voice cried out: 'Nobody has a right to these babies' - but - these women must have lost their mother's love and instincts. If they possessed it, they would never have withstood this terrible tragedy, they would have fallen on their knees before the sacredness of Motherhood. Because no human hearts can go against motherhood. He must be either a lunatic or a tool of ignorance. Some of the ladies realizing this, said: 'Yes, we should have been better stayed at home' - and then continued to blame somebody else, - it were not their faults. What absurdity and cruelty...Even the African Jungle savages would not dare to stage such a cruelty ... Once more we say: British Columbia has no civilization - no culture - nor human decency, - Herod - Nero and Pilate is on the throne.

Unknown to the jail authorities, an hour before these babies were removed the Sons of Freedom went on a hunger strike to voice their protest over the transfer of an elderly and incapacitated Doukhobor to the Vancouver General Hospital. Among the sympathizers were the mothers of the remaining seven infants who were permitted to retain their babies so that breast feeding might continue. The matron pointed out the dangerous effect this fasting would have on their ability to nurse the infants, but these efforts to persuade the mothers to take food were unsuccessful and it soon was necessary to resort to the use of cow's milk. On June 28, three days later, on the authority of the Deputy Superintendent of Neglected Children and with the parents'

consent, these babies were placed in the Vancouver Infants' Hospital. It was believed that the hospital was best equipped to treat any digestive disorders that might arise from this sudden and premature weaning of infants who were only from three to ten weeks of age. Four of them progressed sufficiently to be placed in foster homes in August, while the remaining three died of gastro-enteritis within three weeks of admission. Though this infection existed when the three babies were in Oakalla Prison, no diagnosis was made until they were examined at the Infants' Hospital. In that institution consulting pediatricians were called in and additional nursing care was provided in an endeavour to save the children's lives. The parents were permitted to visit the children when their condition became critical, and each child was given a funeral with parents and close relatives in attendance.

In the autumn of 1932 two babies were born to women at Oakalla Prison, followed by three additional births to women incarcerated at Piers Island Penitentiary. With these infants the strictest precautions were taken to ensure physical well-being. In each instance the woman spent her later period of confinement in the maternity ward of a hospital, and remained there with her baby while it was feeding from the breast. The two women from Oakalla Prison were then paroled and returned to the interior with their babies, while the other three women went back to Piers Island Penitentiary, the babies being placed in foster homes by the Children's Aid Society of Vancouver.

In connection with these babies a question of financial responsibility arose, the provincial government declaring that as these infants were born to parents who were a direct charge on the federal department of justice their maintenance should be provided for by the federal government. On October 19, 1932, the federal department of justice agreed to pay the cost of maintenance for all Doukhobor children born in the penitentiary on condition that the superintendent would assume custody and supervise the placement of those children.

Educational Programme.

Those children in the foster homes and orphanages who attended the public schools of Greater Vancouver and Victoria were credited with an excellent deportment, many of their teachers feeling that their general behaviour had a favourable influence on the other children. Academically, their reports indicated that satisfactory progress was made in spite of a language handicap. But while a good adjustment was in evidence, save in the case of a relatively small proportion of mentally retarded children, the progress reports were perhaps subject to some exaggeration on the part of the teachers. These teachers, having gleaned a biased knowledge of the Sons of Freedom from the newspapers, were agreeably surprised to find the children healthy, neat, diligent and quiet in demeanour. The net result was that the teachers soon developed a warm sympathy and a partiality which coloured their reports.

Again, faced with the impossible task of accurately grading them, the schools, in assigning the Doukhobor children to classrooms, were apt to place them in the primary grades. Consequently, many children who had attended school previously were actually repeating grades, while others attended classes with children several years their juniors. For example, three children between seven and nine years of age were enrolled in Grade I B and succeeded well in their studies. Even if this was their initial school experience, in a class of five - and six-year olds it is not surprising that they ranked first, second and fifth. A girl of eleven was placed in a beginner's class, and rapidly advanced to Grade III A. As a flexible system of promotions served to counteract this tendency to under grade, the experience was not detrimental to the children. It did, however, create in the minds of many the inaccurate impression that these children were of superior intelligence.

The youths in the Provincial Industrial School for Boys were graded with some degree of accuracy at the conclusion of the first week of classes. Notwithstanding some difficulty in English they were considered to be average students. Following the regularly prescribed courses of study, their interest lay in arithmetic, penmanship, the mechanical arts and painting.

In the Provincial Industrial School for Girls the curriculum was enriched to include a wider coverage of social studies. Believing that many of the girls would not attend school again, the staff

instructed them in the more accepted theories of civil government by devoting periods to the discussion of such practical matters as land registry, vital statistics, public health and education. At no time, however, were the beliefs of the Sons of Freedom sect criticized. These discussions proved very popular among the girls, though their special interest was in the study of geography.

CHAPTER VII

MAINTENANCE OF FAMILY TIES, 1932 - 3.

The most complex task confronting the custodians of the Sons of Freedom was that of maintaining family ties and allaying the multifarious anxieties arising out of the parents' concern for their children's welfare. The parents naturally wished to visit and correspond with the children to reassure themselves that the children were being adequately cared for, especially when their normal fears and doubts were intensified by the alarmist faction among them. This faction caused its fellow prisoners undue distress by systematically fabricating atrocity stories such as this excerpt from a document submitted to the Commissioner of the Provincial Police by a delegation of Doukhobor prisoners at the Nelson jail on October 31, 1932:

They are ill-treated, punished until lose consciousness and mutilated and beating them until poor child loses consciousness but the poor child again tries to maintain the Christ teachings for what they are punished again beaten on the elbows and knuckles which causes their veins to drain just mutilate them and using all kinds of punishment as putting them into cold cells for two or three weeks.

While there was no regulation to prevent the children and their parents visiting each other before the latter were transferred from Oakalla Prison to Piers Island Penitentiary, only the Provincial Industrial School for Girls and the Children's Aid Society of Vancouver made such visits possible. Two organized parties of Doukhobor mothers,

numbering approximately twelve on each occasion, were brought to the Children's Aid Society premises to see their children, and at odd times smaller groups were given this opportunity in conjunction with the agency's efforts to gain the parent's medical consent. In each instance these reunions took place in the agency buildings, and the foster mothers were not allowed to be present. The children were very excited on these occasions, and the mothers were relieved to find them well cared for. After visiting her children at the agency, one mother wrote as follows to Miss Collins on October 17, 1932:

I went down children Aid Society and seen my dear children and how glad I was to see them nice and happy. I thank you very very much for your care after my deer little children they are in real good health and they were telling me how nice their fost mother was to them. And I realy felt, happy to see my children in good condishion.

In July, to relieve the anxiety of the parents and to meet the constant requests of the girls, the Provincial Industrial School for Girls arranged one visit of all the Doukhobor children in its care to Oakalla Prison. Before embarking the girls were asked to avoid staging any scenes which might disturb their parents, and observers were impressed by the quiet dignity and restraint with which they conducted themselves. Arriving at the prison, the party was escorted to a visiting room where the parents were standing in a single line. The girls formed another line, each girl facing her respective parents. After a formal religious greeting they stepped forward, kissed their parents and all broke up into family groups to talk quietly for the allotted hour. At

the conclusion of the period, when the parents had been introduced to Mrs. Westman, the superintendent, the children quietly parted. Many of them were tense, but successfully contained their emotions, even on the return bus trip. Unfortunately, these visits were only arranged by the two institutions mentioned above.

Frequently friends and relatives of the children and representatives of the Community Doukhobors would request permission to visit them. Although these requests were met whenever possible, it was necessary to take certain precautions in view of the hostility harboured by many Doukhobors toward the authorities, and the possibility that these visitors might intentionally misconstrue what they saw and heard. Family friends were required to ask permission of the particular institution or agency in advance giving the names of the children they wished to see. Their credentials were then cleared with the provincial police, and the parents of the children were advised of the proposed visit. If the parents consented the visit was then made to the institution. In the case of the Children's Aid Society the children were interviewed by relatives in the agency offices rather than in the respective foster homes.

Official delegations from the Christian Community were permitted to inspect the institutional premises on authority from the Superintendent of Neglected Children or the Attorney-General after consultation with the provincial police. One delegation of two men made a tour of inspection of the industrial schools on September 1, 1932. In

this instance a police escort was provided and it was stipulated that the inspection should be brief with all verbal communications in the English language. On another occasion a Doukhobor, posing as a delegate of the Community, presented himself at the Children's Aid Society. Having no credentials and refusing to reveal his identity, it was necessary to inform him that he would not be permitted to interview any of the children. Doubting the motives behind the manager's refusal, he replied, "What have you done: murdered them all?"

With relatives the regulations applying to friends were strictly enforced for the first two months only. Although police reports were sometimes sought, permission of the parents was not solicited after it had become apparent that they did not object to the association of their children with Community and Independent relatives.

Where siblings were placed in more than one agency or institution mutual visits were arranged at intervals. This enabled the children to retain some active part of the family relationship throughout the placement. The Children's Aid Society of Vancouver and the Provincial Industrial School for Girls were particularly active in this respect.

Family Correspondence.

During the period of placement there was a voluminous flow of correspondence between the incarcerated parents and the children. For example, from September 18, 1932, to April 16, 1933, the 75 girls in the Provincial Industrial School sent a total of 1,164 letters to members of

their families and to relatives remaining in the colonies. Over the same period, they received 900 letters from their families and relatives. While this frequent correspondence was encouraged, it nevertheless placed a heavy burden on the staff members of the penitentiary and the agency and institutions. For, coupled with the many requests for information regarding both children who were unable to write and children who delayed in replying to their parents and relatives, there was the task of identifying recipients whose incorrect names or addresses were given. There was also the problem of translation and censorship of mail.

Within a fortnight of the initial transfers of the children from the interior the normal fears of their parents turned to alarm. In the absence of a definite policy of censorship many of the children had written telling of cruelties and suffering inflicted upon them. Disturbed by the resulting rumours which spread throughout the prison camps, those parents who had not heard from or of their children, had cause for greater distress, wondering if they were seriously ill, or had even died. This latter group besieged the agency and institutions with requests for information regarding the health and welfare of individual children. As a result, parents and children were asked to write regularly to each other and an agreement was arrived at whereby the institutions and the agency would send to Oakalla Prison reports of any illness and lists of all children slated for school attendance. Further, when any parent specifically requested information about a child on a matter of some importance a special report was to be forwarded to the prison to be relayed to the

parent. It was also agreed that snapshots should be taken of all the children and sold to parents and relatives at a nominal charge.

- In view of the children's tendency to fabricate stories of ill-treatment, and the resulting unrest this created among the parents, the policy of censorship followed by the prison was extended to the letters written by the children. Both adults and children were permitted to write in either Russian or English, which meant that all letters written in Russian must be translated before reaching censors. It was soon found that the interpreter employed at Oakalla Prison was unable to meet the demand for his services and the letters were frequently delayed in their transmission for days at a time.

On June 24, in an effort to ease the pressure on the interpreter, all the Doukhobors were instructed to write in the English language from then on. This order did not prove satisfactory, for the exchange of letters began to diminish appreciably. Many adults and some of the children, unable to write in English, had to delay corresponding until a friend would agree to write their messages in English, or, failing this, were unable to communicate at all.

This disruption of correspondence, coupled with the death of the three babies in the Infants' Hospital in July, 1932, created serious discord in Oakalla Prison, and on July 21, the prison officials requested that the Doukhobors be permitted to write in either language once more. Difficulties were again encountered in the process of translating into English, but these were offset by a greater frequency in correspondence and a resulting diminution in parental anxieties.

Caring for the infants and many younger children who could not write, it was necessary for the Children's Aid Society of Vancouver and the orphanages to make special arrangements to keep the parents informed regarding the welfare of their children. While the orphanages tended merely to utilize the reports requested by the prison for this purpose, the former agency adopted a more satisfactory procedure. With the aid of circular letters, the foster parents were encouraged to write to the Doukhobor parents every two months informing them of the children's health, habits and activities, and enclosing if possible a note or drawing by the children and a snapshot of them. The parents, on the other hand, were requested to write the foster parents on alternate months in English, enclosing notes for the children. They were advised not to ask for the address of the foster home, but this restriction was not enforced after February 1933. Both parents and foster parents co-operated with the Agency in this matter and many friendly associations resulted. On March 14, 1933, a Doukhobor father in Piers Island Penitentiary wrote this appreciative letter to the foster parents of his children:

Our Dearest Friends

What a pleasure moment it was, we have received your welcome letter of the last month February; It had arrived to our wives, as it was addressed on their names; We were so pleased and happy to find our sons in good health, and such a good care, and their life away from their parents. It certainly was an amazement to hear of their playing and injoying so happily, playing with their puppy which we seen them together on a photograph....Dear Friends we in suffer are always awaiting for your letter, and if we find a photo enclosed, we get so

glad, our hearts fill with mirth and we with tears
kiss their lovely faces....Dearest Friends please
write everything they do their life, behaviour and
every thing about their ways; we are very glad that
they do not use meat for food, its our religion....
Please forgive us, if something will not please you,
we wrote this letter from depths of our hearts....

The Children's Aid Society and the orphanages received many
letters from Doukhobor relatives in the colonies requesting information
about specific children and usually enclosing an order for a print of the
photograph of the child or children in question. These letters were
promptly answered whenever possible. On July 6, 1932, the grandmother
of a child in the care of the Children's Aid Society wrote to the manager
of the agency, Miss Z. Collins, as follows:

Diar Sister & children nor's

Plese i licke to now about my grand children
Mary and her helth and if you plese if you can and
dont mind about sent me plese photografi....

on July 16, after receiving a picture and the assurance that her grand-
child was in good health, this woman replied to Miss Collins:

Diar nor's

i received your letter wich mock me very happy
that Mary is geting alon fine and i shur glad to
have that snapshot that you pramest me....

In January, 1933, while the major difficulties surrounding the
matter of correspondence had been solved, it was still observed that
through some oversight parents in Piers Island Penitentiary occasionally
complained of not receiving any information about their children. To
prevent this situation from recurring, and to eliminate the details

involved in tracing such complaints, the institutions and the agency agreed to send a monthly progress report on each child in care to the penitentiary from then on, in addition to the regular letters and the reports of illness.

Allegations of Ill-treatment.

In May 1932, while the Sons of Freedom were openly inviting arrest by disrobing in public, they were also declaiming against the provincial government for putting them out of their homes and forcing them to parade in the nude with their children. As the number of arrests grew these protestations became more frequent and were accompanied by public appeals circulated across Canada and abroad. On May 18, 1932, this message was cabled by the Sons of Freedom to the "Anti-Militaristic Bureau of The Hague":

We Doukhobors - Sons of Freedom - appeal to you.
Please raise your voice in the name of trampled truth.
Seven hundred in jail. More than half already sentenced to three years imprisonment. The same conviction awaits the rest - just for appearing nude in protest against brutality. Our children forcibly taken away from their mothers. Please take this matter seriously, or you will be guilty before God and all idealists. Remember our struggle is truth. If you are brothers of the same faith you can not be silent.

As summer advanced the Sons of Freedom did gain some support, especially in the United States, Europe and eastern Canada where, distant from the scene, socially-minded people were prone to attach some credibility to the atrocity stories incorporated in the appeals. This tended to place discredit upon the welfare authorities, and eventually the matter came to the attention of the Canadian National Committee for Mental

Hygiene. On September 10, Mrs. Helen R. Y. Reid, chairman of the division of immigration of that organization, wrote to Miss L. Holland requesting information about the care of the children, and specifically mentioned these four grievances voiced by the Sons of Freedom:

1. The removal of the seventeen babies from Oakalla Prison without any warning to the mothers, and before these babies had been weaned.
2. The death of the three babies, with the suggestion that they died as a result of improper care on the part of the authorities.
3. Improper treatment of the children in the provincial Industrial School for Girls, where they were beaten, lodged in "black holes", and subjected to forced feeding after a two-day hunger strike.
4. Cruelties inflicted by the staff of the Provincial Industrial School for Boys, where the Doukhobor youths were punished by strapping and being placed in "black holes", received corporal punishment for bed-wetting, and were forced to stand for hours before the portrait of His Majesty King George V.

Following the receipt of this letter independent reports were forwarded to Mrs. Reid by the John Howard Society of Vancouver and the Children's Aid Society after thorough investigation by officials of both social agencies. In these reports the entire episode surrounding the incarceration was briefly outlined and the official planning and level of care provided for the children dealt with at some length. The specific complaints of the Sons of Freedom listed above were explained in a satisfactory manner and shown to be distortions of fact and purpose, designed to discredit the respective institutions. The "black hole" in the Provincial Industrial School for Girls, for example, was a reflection

room where individual Doukhobor girls were occasionally placed for a few hours following some misdemeanor. It was used very rarely, and then only during the period of adjustment to the institution. With this information Mrs. Reid was able to satisfy those groups which had a sympathetic interest in the Doukhobors that the children were being cared for as efficiently as possible under the circumstances surrounding their admission to the agency and institutions.

CHAPTER VIII

TERMINATION OF CUSTODIAL CARE, 1933.

In the spring of 1933 the Doukhobor children returned to the interior to live with relatives and friends until the sentences imposed upon their parents had been terminated. The decision to cancel all plans for a three-year placement was prompted by financial and political motives on the part of the provincial government. By December 1932 British Columbia was feeling the full impact of the economic depression and the provincial government had incurred financial obligations in excess of its estimates for the current fiscal year. Faced with dwindling sources of revenue and increasing appropriations for the social assistance programme, the Minister of Finance was predicting that drastic cuts in the departmental budgets would be necessary for the coming fiscal year. Consequently, in scaling down the estimates of his department, the Provincial Secretary reviewed the appropriations of \$86,000 per annum provided for the maintenance of the Doukhobor children. He wanted other arrangements to be made for their care so that this sum might be diverted to other welfare purposes.

This relatively high expenditure was embarrassing to the provincial government for political reasons. It was being claimed by many that the rates at which these children were being maintained were out of line with the scale of social assistance rates then in effect in British Columbia. As an illustration, it was shown that the Doukhobor

children were being maintained at the rate per child of \$17.50 a month - although no mention was made of non-Doukhobor children in care who were also being maintained at this rate - while the allowance for one child in a family receiving social assistance was only \$2.50 a month. These illogical comparisons, flavoured with racial prejudice, were publicized by the opposition parties who found a sympathetic audience among certain of the recipients of social assistance. The government was placed in a particularly unfavourable light by this publicity, for it came at a time when the government was pronouncing its inability to effect an increase in social assistance rates.

Thus, when a delegation of Independent and Community Doukhobors approached the deputy attorney-general, Mr. O. C. Bass, asking that they be permitted to assume responsibility for the care of the children, they were accorded a sympathetic hearing. The superintendent of neglected children readily acceded to this plan and in a letter to Mr. Bass on December 19, 1932, expressed the sentiments of the government:

The number of children which we are now caring for (355) is costing approximately \$7,000 per month, consequently it is desirable if free homes can be obtained for some of them, to do so and relieve the tax payers of the burden.

There is no doubt that these children are at present being well cared for and that a favourable impression is being made upon them, and if they were to continue for the full period of three years where they are now located it would doubtless prove of benefit in bringing them up to be good Canadian citizens, but it is doubtful if the heavy expenditure entailed is justified even with that end in view.

Between December 1932 and the transfer of the first children to the colonies in March 1933, a number of conferences were held between

officials of the departments of the Attorney-General and the Provincial Secretary to draw up a list of terms and a definite procedure to be adopted in placing the children in the Independent and Community Doukhobor homes. From the negotiations these eight conditions were arrived at:

1. That the head of each Doukhobor family wishing to accept a child should submit an application stating that he or she is willing to care for the child without cost to the provincial government.
2. That the home of the applicant be investigated by the provincial police.
3. That as the child would remain a non-ward of the Superintendent of Neglected Children until its parents were released from prison, the applicant agrees to have the child visited by a provincial representative at any time and to have the child removed from the home if that home should prove unsatisfactory.
4. That consent of the parents to the transfer be forthcoming.
5. That the child be made to attend school while in the home.
6. That the child be taught to respect the laws of Canada while in the home.
7. That the children be transferred in parties large enough to warrant adequate supervision during the trip.

8. That the applicant submit exact name, age, and sex of each child he or she wishes to accept, along with the full names of the child's parents, in order to establish positive identity of the child.

In the course of events, however, it was necessary to make some modifications in this plan. While the Doukhobors in the colonies readily agreed to undertake the obligations which it would place on them, the parents were unwilling to give their written consent to the placing of the children with Independent and Community Doukhobor families, whether these be relatives or friends. There was no forthright explanation for this refusal but it was rumoured that the Sons of Freedom were planning to leave Canada on their release from Piers Island and wanted the children to remain at the Pacific coast so that they might all embark from Vancouver without having to return to the interior. Others believed that the parents would not sanction this plan because they resented the law-abiding Community Doukhobors and also because of their non-co-operative attitude toward the provincial authorities. In any case, the children were only in non-ward care, and the superintendent recognized that he could not place them in these Doukhobor homes without parental consent and remain strictly within the terms of the Infants' Act. Seeking the advice of the attorney-general's department as he had done when the same problem had arisen before, Mr. Manson was informed that in cases where the parents were activated by mere stubbornness it would be in the best interests of the child for the

superintendent to resume control and possession and deprive the parents¹ of the common law right of control over their children. But if the parents objected to the placing of the children in a specific home, an alternative home should be found. In effect, this meant that the children could now be placed in the Doukhobor homes with the legal support of the provincial government without parental consent.

Again, while it was originally suggested that the investigation of Doukhobor homes and the problem of arranging transportation should be assigned to the provincial police, later opinion held that this responsibility should be delegated to a welfare worker who would be better equipped to undertake it. As a result, Mr. D. B. Brankin, Superintendent of the Boys' Industrial School, was appointed to the task and given the assistance of the provincial police.

When these negotiations had been completed Mr. Brankin journeyed to the interior and by March 16, 1933, sufficient applications had been certified to enable him to arrange transportation for the first party of 27 children. The institutions and foster homes were notified well in advance and were instructed to dress the children warmly in keeping with Doukhobor customs to avoid any criticism from the families who were to receive them. Each child was given a medical examination prior to departure and measures were taken to ensure its identity. Food, soap, and paper towels were provided at the expense of the provincial government.

In the light of past experience, some of the older girls

1 v. supra pp. 27-28

from the Provincial Industrial School were included in this draft and in later drafts to assist the escorting matrons in attending to the needs of the younger children. Escorts were drawn from the staffs of the institutions and the agency. Having established a good relationship with the children by this time, these escorts found them very willing to co-operate.

The children were to disembark at several railroad stations near the respective colonies to which they were going. As they travelled on a coach which was attached to the regular Kootenay passenger train it was necessary that they be quickly taken off the train during the short scheduled stops at each of the stations. To speed the process members of the provincial police force were on duty at each station to receive the children and complete the transfer.

On satisfying themselves as to the identity of the applicants, the police asked them for two signed statements before placing the children in their care. The first, an official contract listing the terms governing the transfer, was as follows:

1. I will care for each child by providing food, clothing and shelter.
2. I will send each child of school age to the government school regularly.
3. I will encourage each of them to live according to the laws of the country.
4. I agree to return each child to its parents upon their release from custody.
5. I clearly understand that the government will not pay me anything for these services.

The other statement, in the form of a receipt, acknowledged that the applicant had received the child and that it was in good health on arrival. These statements were then forwarded to Vancouver and the parents notified of the safe arrival of their children.

With the exception of four children who were afflicted with a skin eruption and detained until June 1932, the balance of the children were returned to the interior on April 5, April 29, and May 27 of that year. On each occasion a similar procedure to that employed in the first instance was followed, with a few minor changes. In the first draft it was found that the younger children experienced difficulty in using the sanitary conveniences on the train and from then on each was supplied with three changes of underclothing for the trip. The British Columbia Protestant Orphans' Home of Victoria was unable to provide its charges with this additional clothing and it was necessary for the Children's Aid Society to make up the deficiency when the children arrived in Vancouver. Similarly, the younger children were unable to manipulate the paper cups and towels provided, and it was necessary to include a cloth towel and a tin cup for each child. It was also noted on the first train that many of the children had been provided with bags of candy by the institutions and foster parents. As a number of them suffered upset stomachs from over-indulgence, it was necessary to take the candy from the children as they boarded the train and withhold it until the end of the journey.

The Independent and Community Doukhobor families who cared

for these children were either relatives or close friends of the parents, and in most cases aunts, uncles or grandparents of the children. While very little follow-up work was accomplished, the children seemed to adjust readily to the new homes. There was no evidence of mistreatment by the Doukhobor custodians nor were any changes of placement necessary.

Shortly after the children were discharged from its care the Children's Aid Society of Vancouver wrote to each of the Doukhobor families asking for a report on the health and adjustment of the children they had received from that agency. In all cases the reports were satisfactory and frequently included a note of appreciation to the agency for its services to the children. Many of the former foster mothers had been very reluctant to part with the children, and the agency encouraged them to correspond with the children and the Doukhobor families with whom they were now residing. These letters, indicative of the warm affection which existed between the children and the former foster parents, were a source of satisfaction to the adults and prevented the children from being severed from the foster home relationship too abruptly.

Parole of the Parents.

The children being maintained on a free-home basis, the question was then raised as to whether the continued incarceration of the Sons of Freedom justified the large expenditures necessary to continue operating the Piers Island penitentiary. Expenses of the institution actually amounted to \$170,000 per annum, but some critics interpreted

this as the cost of operation for one month rather than for one year. Motivated by the resulting public indignation and the anticipated reductions in the budget for the coming fiscal year, the federal department of justice formulated a plan whereby most of the Sons of Freedom would be paroled before the completion of their three-year sentences. Committees were appointed to assist in the arranging of paroles and in re-establishing the offenders after their release. The Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood Limited was of assistance in offering the Sons of Freedom the use of Community lands near Krestova. Between October, 1934, and July, 1935, all the adults were released on parole and provided with transportation to the interior, where they resumed the custody of their children and re-established the Sons of Freedom colonies.

It was soon evident that the incarceration had not curbed the religious ardour of the Sons of Freedom, nor had it materially altered their attitude toward formal education, taxation, and the registration of vital statistics. Instead, it tended to unite them more closely as a religious body and to increase their antagonism to the provincial government. While many of them had willingly sought punishment to further the purification of their souls, there soon arose the inevitable feeling of having been persecuted. The provincial government had been guilty of this oppression, proving once more that it was an evil force conspiring against the sect. It should be opposed continuously.

It is then, not surprising that in 1937 the Sons of Freedom

held nude demonstrations, and were undoubtedly responsible for the burning of many homes and schools in the Nelson area. This religious unrest has continued to manifest itself in recent years, and at the present time another crisis is developing in the stormy life of the sect. In effecting a solution to this perplexing problem the Piers Island experiment may act as a guidepost. It has at least proved that these people cannot be made to alter their religious convictions by the use of force.

CHAPTER IX

AN EVALUATION

In making an appraisal of the provincial government's placement programme, it should be borne in mind that once the authorities had decided that the children would not be placed in Doukhobor homes or in special camps, it was necessary to place them in existing child caring institutions and agencies. The orphanages, industrial schools and the Children's Aid Society recognized the need and undertook the immediate responsibility of caring for them during the period of the parents' incarceration. The institution and the agency, assuming this task in addition to their other services, were endeavoring to provide the children with the best substitute homes that their facilities could afford.

The physical care provided in 1932 - 3 was most satisfactory and in accordance with the accepted child welfare standards of the day. The children were adequately housed and clothed, and provided with a suitable vegetarian fare. They were also given the protection of full medical services--with the exception of surgical care, which was usually opposed by the parents--and encouraged to participate in active sports and games. A majority of the children returned to the colonies in at least a comparable state of health to that in which they had been when they first left their parents. In several instances, a combination of medical care and special diet resulted in a marked improvement in physical condition.

The emotional well-being of the children was maintained within the capabilities of the particular organization. Siblings were placed in the same foster home or dormitory wherever possible, recreational programmes were developed, and both parents and children were encouraged to correspond with each other regularly. The Provincial Industrial School for Girls and the Children's Aid Society of Vancouver, recognizing the importance of keeping the family relationship active, arranged several visits between the children and their parents in the summer of 1932.

The custodians respected the right of self-determination of the Sons of Freedom. While school attendance was compulsory by virtue of provincial legislation, they did recognize the moral right of their parents to determine the religious faith of their children. None of the children received any religious instruction which might conflict with the faith of their sect and the older children were allowed full freedom of religious expression. If the wearing of leather shoes was encouraged this was because it was felt to be in the best interest of the children during wet weather, and certainly none of the children were persuaded to eat meat.

In providing care for the children while their parents were in prison the programme was successful. The institutions and the agency provided substitute homes for the children. This care was so designed that on returning to the colonies and reuniting with their parents, the children could re-enter the communal way of life without creating any major adjustment problems.

The secondary purpose of the provincial government in placing the children in non-ward care was to alter those manifestations of the Sons of Freedom faith which involved a non-recognition of man-conceived government. In this it was not effective. While most of them continued to attend school, and some may have broadened in outlook from their friendly association with people of other faiths, later religious teaching and the passage of time have combined to create in the minds of many the impression that this episode in their lives had been merely another form of persecution. It is known that some of these children are actively participating in the quasi-anarchistic activities of the present day.

The government hoped that the children would gain new and beneficial lessons in citizenship from the present experience. It is believed that sympathetic treatment would show them that the outer world was not cold and hostile, and would gradually develop in them a spirit of co-operation. But the authorities did not realize that at best the placement experience could only be a partial compensation for the feelings of frustration and insecurity which the children experienced on being separated from their parents. The institutions and agency were successful in countering many of the negativistic feelings that resulted from the separation of the families, and in preventing the experience from becoming damaging to the children's emotional development. However, it was not within the scope of their activities to attempt a re-education programme, which, if successful, would have resulted only in emotional conflicts when the families were re-united. The children would have been torn between their desire to conform to the wishes and beliefs of their

parents and to their newly acquired ideologies.

If the custodial care had continued for the full three years of the incarceration the children might have been adequately instructed in the necessity of formulating laws to protect the real freedom and equality of man, and shown that civil government can derive its inspiration from God if His disciples do not permit it to be usurped by the forces of evil. But here, again, if this approach had met with a favorable response, the longer separation and the adoption of new social customs and ideologies would have caused a pronounced rift within the family unit. This would not promote the growth of emotional maturity within the children themselves.

Future Planning

The Sons of Freedom will not recognize civil control. That is the major problem which they present in Canada. Disregarding the nude parades - they are only significant to the antagonists of the Doukhobor people - their way of life incorporates many desirable features. Thus, the Sons of Freedom and the other peoples of Canada can well afford to study each other. In effecting the partial assimilation which undoubtedly will come, the other citizens of Canada must be sure that they are not encouraging the Sons of Freedom to adopt customs and conventions less desirable than those which they would give up. Any planning to further this assimilation must be undertaken with foresight and understanding.

If direct measures should again prove necessary, the provincial

government should not permit a wave of public indignation to dictate hasty militant action. Rather, the problem should be approached sympathetically and on a long term basis. In any plan of this type the Piers Island episode may serve as a reminder that children should only be separated from their parents as a last resort. There is no adequate substitute for a normal family environment. Unless specific factors warrant this action, the removal of a child from its natural parents does not assist that child to attain emotional maturity. Only the mature adult can have a full consciousness of civic responsibility and a true sense of loyalty to the country of his birth.

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