

CONSCRIPTED CITY: HALIFAX AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR

MCMMASTER UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

Halifax, Nova Scotia was arguably the most strategic Allied naval base in North America during the Second World War. This dissertation assesses the impact of wartime social change on Halifax by placing the war within the context of long term urban development. This departs from the prevailing “top-down” perspective informing much of the current historiography on Canada’s home front during the Second World War.

A housing and population survey conducted by the federal government in 1944 formed the basis for statistical reconstruction of the physical and social structure of wartime Halifax. The findings show that the most serious issue facing Halifax during this period was the shortage of adequate and affordable housing. Public sector initiatives aimed at relieving housing congestion found little political support, due to a well-entrenched *rentier* class who benefited from wartime conditions, and an unwillingness on the part of lower levels of government to undertake projects without the participation of the federal government. The housing emergency exacerbated social tensions in an urban population already fragmented along racial, socio-economic, and service-civilian lines. These tensions erupted into civil disorder on V-E Day when civilians and service personnel ransacked the central business district.

Geographically, Halifax was ill-suited to deal with rapid urban expansion, yet the war forced the city to undergo the difficult transition from small provincial city to medium-sized metropolis under conditions of extreme duress. The wartime military buildup brought rapid change to Halifax, but the underlying pattern of class relations and the pace of urbanization were only temporarily disrupted. The real transformation of

Halifax occurred several years after the war, when a more stable economy and population base stimulated sustainable urban growth. Even so, the major developmental issues challenging Halifax in the 1950s were essentially no different from those confronting the city in 1920. The Second World War defeated Hitlerism, but it did not solve the housing problem in Halifax.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BCATP	British Commonwealth Air Training Plan
CAR	Canadian Annual Review
CNR	Canadian National Railway
CMHC	Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation
COLB	Cost of Living Bonus
CPC	Civic Planning Committee
CPR	Canadian Pacific Railway
CSA	Council of Social Agencies
CSU	Canadian Seamen's Union
CWC	Cabinet War Committee
DMS	Department of Munitions and Supply
FHA	Federal Housing Authority
HCEC	Halifax Civilian Emergency Committee
HHC	Halifax Harbour Commission
HSL	Halifax Shipyards Limited
IDH	Infectious Diseases Hospital
IUMSW	International Union of Marine and Shipbuilding Workers
NA	National Archives of Canada
NCS	Naval Control Service
NHB	National Harbours Board
NSS	National Selective Service
PANS	Public Archives of Nova Scotia
RCAF	Royal Canadian Air Force
RCN	Royal Canadian Navy
SSI	Social Services Index
THCA	Toronto Harbour Commission Archives
USO	United Services Organization
WHL	Wartime Housing Limited
WPTB	Wartime Prices and Trade Board
WVS	Women's Voluntary Services

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This thesis describes the Second World War in Canada from an urban perspective by analyzing key economic and social characteristics of the city of Halifax, Nova Scotia and reconstructing the physical morphology of the built environment. It is argued that the city's predominantly non-industrial character, sharply stratified class structure, hinterland location and heavy military responsibilities prevented Halifax from fully capitalizing on the opportunities presented by wartime industrialization. Moreover, the failure of the municipality to address chronic deficiencies in infrastructure in the interwar period seriously undermined local efforts to cope with wartime conditions. This failure was felt most keenly in four areas: public health care, social services, recreation facilities, and housing. These factors attenuated the so-called "war boom" in Halifax, and prolonged the postwar recovery of the local economy.

Emphasizing continuity with prewar conditions in describing the social and economic forces at play during the Second World War departs from the standard interpretation of the war as a watershed event in Canadian history. It marked, after all, not just the end of the Great Depression but the beginnings of the postwar welfare state.¹ In the federal election of 1945, the winning party campaigned on the slogan "Vote Liberal

¹Keith G.Banting, *The Welfare State and Canadian Federalism* (Kingston and Montréal:McGill-Queen's University Press, 1982), p. 60.

for a New Social Order.”² J.L. Granatstein accords Churchillian status to Prime Minister Mackenzie King, who “remade Canadian society” by preserving national unity and producing “an astonishing military and industrial war effort.”³ According to the dominant liberal interpretation, Canadians were “unbelievably well off” during the war and “far more positive” about their wartime status than “their past or their likely future.”⁴ A country “dispirited” and “out of work” in 1939 was, by 1945, “booming, its factories working at top speed.”⁵ Borrowing British terminology, Canada’s participation in the Second World War has been characterized as a “people’s war” in which “for once the people seemed to get some of the benefits.”⁶ While not quite matching the view by some Americans that the war was “nothing short of wonderful,” Canadians believed the “rewards were far greater” than the sacrifices.⁷

Desmond Morton has written that the Second World War “brought social revolution to Canada.”⁸ The rapid wartime growth of unions marked a “major turning-point for

²Reginald Whitaker, *The Government Party: Organizing and Financing the Liberal Party of Canada, 1930-58* (Toronto, 1977), p. 159.

³J.L. Granatstein, Irving M. Abella, David J. Bercuson, R. Craig Brown and H. Blair Neatby, *Twentieth Century Canada* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1983), p. 289. See also J.L. Granatstein, *Canada's War: The Politics of the Mackenzie King Government, 1939-1945* (Toronto, 1975) and Granatstein and J.M. Hitsman, *Broken Promises: A History of Conscription in Canada*, (Toronto, 1977).

⁴Desmond Morton, *A Military History of Canada* (Edmonton, Hurtig, 1985), pp. 185-186.

⁵W.A.B. Douglas and Breerton Greenhouse, *Out of the Shadows: Canada in the Second World War*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 272.

⁶Granatstein, et al., *Twentieth Century Canada*, p. 276.

⁷Paul D. Casdorff, *Let the Good Times Roll: Life at Home in America during WWII* (New York: Paragon House, 1989); Desmond Morton with Terry Copp, *Working People: An Illustrated History of the Canadian Labour Movement* (Ottawa: Deneau Publishers, 1984), p. 187. Less sanguine views of the American home front experience may be found in John Morton Blum, *I Was for Victory* (1976), Geoffrey Perrett, *Days of Sadness: Years of Triumph* (1973), Alan Clive, *State of War: Michigan in World War II* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1979); and Studs Terkel, *“The Good War”: An Oral History of World War Two* (New York: Ballantyne, 1984).

⁸Desmond Morton, *Canada and War: A Military and Political History* (Toronto, 1981), p. 125.

Canadian labour,” national politics swung to the left, and the recruitment of women into war industry “forced society to think about the role of women in a new way.”⁹ A more guarded assessment by J.B. Bremner still concluded that “on balance,” the war was “a unifying and positive experience for most Canadians.”¹⁰

The consensus view holds that centralized control of the war economy maximized efficiency and materially improved the standard of living for most Canadians.¹¹ Wartime industrialization and urbanization are the twin pillars supporting this argument. But Canada’s war effort at the local level has not been examined with the same meticulous care as policies and issues involving federal politicians and bureaucrats.¹² Students of this period know more about the life of the Prime Minister than that of the average Canadian on the home front. Historians who have turned their attention to the wartime domestic scene have tended to focus on political dissent, ethnic minorities and special interest groups, leaving the chronicles of the ordinary Canadian to the realm of anecdotal collections or autobiographical accounts.¹³ The existing historiography of wartime

⁹Bumsted, p. 287; J.L. Finlay & D.N. Sprague, *The Structure of Canadian History* Fourth Edition (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada, 1993), pp. 383-386; R. Douglas Francis, Richard Jones and Donald B. Smith, *Destinies: Canadian History Since Confederation* Second Edition (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1992), p. 315.

¹⁰J.M. Bumsted, *The Peoples of Canada: A Post-Confederation History* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 242.

¹¹Finlay and Sprague, pp.384, 397.

¹²In addition to the above-cited survey texts, see for example Robert Bothwell and William Kilbourn, *C.D. Howe: A Biography* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979); J.L. Granatstein, *A Man of Influence: Norman A. Robertson and Canadian Statecraft, 1929-68* (Ottawa: Deneau Publishers, 1981); J.L. Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men: The Civil Service Mandarins, 1935-1957* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1982); Reginald Whitaker, *The Government Party: Organizing and Financing the Liberal Party of Canada, 1930-58* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977); and Doug Owram, *The Government Generation: Canadian Intellectuals and the Canadian State, 1900-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986).

¹³See for example, Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1986); Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was:*

Canada is not inaccurate so much as it is incomplete. We must explore – to the extent that the available evidence permits – the lives of ordinary Canadians street by street rather than statute by statute, in order to obtain a more complete picture of what the home front was actually like during the Second World War.

The scarcity of good urban case studies for the Second World War period may be attributable to the larger issues related to national mobilization which have heretofore seemed more historically relevant than the mundane affairs preoccupying municipalities. Studying urban populations is also complicated by the difficulty of structuring a meaningful analysis around the available data, which rely heavily on the 1941 Dominion census and as such give a temporally distorted view of the wartime period. Further, the unresolved question of whether urban context is uniquely site-specific or part of a complex and interchangeable urban matrix has discouraged scholarly research because no one can agree on whether urbanization follows a similar pattern irrespective of location.

There will be no attempt to settle this debate here. The present study is motivated by the simple premise that, of all the major urban centres in Canada during the Second World War, Halifax is perhaps the most interesting. No other city came to personify the home front to the same extent as Halifax did. No city turned as much of its land resources and infrastructure over to uses directly related to the war effort. Certainly no other Canadian city occupied comparable importance in Allied grand strategy. For these

A History of the Japanese Canadians (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976). Personal recollections of the war are too numerous to list here, but by far the best known and most widely quoted text is Barry Broadfoot's *Six War Years: Memories of Canadians at Home and Abroad* (Toronto, 1974).

reasons alone, the Halifax of 1939-1945 deserves the same attention that historians have accorded prior periods in the city's long history.

There is only one history of Halifax which attempts to summarize the historical development of the city in the twentieth century: Thomas H. Raddall's *Halifax, Warden of the North*.¹⁴ Intended to coincide with the city's bicentenary, the book is a romantic saga too firmly rooted in the 18th and 19th centuries. Mid to late-19th century Halifax has been the focus of solid work by Judith Fingard, David Sutherland, Peter Waite, Phyllis Blakeley, Larry McCann, Ian McKay and others. However, other than the 1917 Halifax harbour explosion and its aftermath, the historiography of modern Halifax is embarrassingly thin. This chapter will provide a brief overview of Halifax in the years leading up to and including the Second World War, in order to establish the historical context for the more detailed analysis which follows.

Halifax was founded in 1749 as a military outpost of the British empire. Situated on an 1,800 hectare, rocky peninsula within a peninsula – doubly-isolated from easy approaches by land – the city is bounded on the east and north by a large sheltered ice-free harbour. As a result, access has always been much simpler by sea than by land. This geographical reality has profoundly shaped the growth of Halifax, and placed a greater relative importance on the port than other forms of economic development. Since Halifax figured so prominently in imperial strategic planning for much of the nineteenth century, its social structure and economy reflected a strong British influence. After the American

¹⁴Thomas H. Raddall, *Halifax, Warden of the North* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1950).

Civil War, however, the cost of maintaining the Citadel – an imposing hilltop fortress – and several surrounding outforts became prohibitive. The Royal Navy continued to use the graving dock after its construction in 1889, and visited Halifax on summer manoeuvres, but the city experienced negligible growth in the closing decades of the century.¹⁵ The British finally withdrew entirely in 1905, leaving the Citadel to be garrisoned by Canadians.

The First World War temporarily renewed the British presence in Halifax, as it became the examination port for neutral shipping bound for continental Europe and an important coaling station for the Royal Navy. Although local businesses prospered during the war, ambitious improvements to harbour facilities were curtailed. Moreover, a huge munitions explosion late in 1917 devastated the northern half of the Halifax peninsula. The reconstruction that followed featured an innovative experiment in public housing, but it also highlighted the inability of civic authorities to marshal the financial resources necessary to recover from such a disaster.¹⁶ In the interwar period, cutbacks in immigration quotas and military spending raised doubts as to the economic future of the port, although resumption of the federal harbour improvements scheme raised expectations of recovery in 1928 and again in the mid-1930s.

Early in 1939, the Royal Navy requested the use of Halifax for its America and West Indies Squadron, then based on Bermuda.¹⁷ When Canada declared war on 10 September,

¹⁵Marilyn Gurney Smith, *The King's Yard* (Halifax, 1985), pp. 12-13; Civic Planning Commission, *The Master Plan for the City of Halifax* (Halifax, 1945), p. 44.

¹⁶John C. Weaver, "Reconstruction of the Richmond District in Halifax: A Canadian Episode in Public Housing and Town Planning, 1918-1921," *Plan Canada* 16 (March 1976).

¹⁷C.P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), p. 10.

Halifax essentially became a Royal Navy port. It would remain so until the British squadron withdrew in the fall of 1941, whereupon the United States Navy assumed nominal control of naval operations on the Atlantic seaboard. It was not until mid-1943 that the Royal Canadian Navy "assumed responsibility for the protection and control of shipping in the North West Atlantic."¹⁸ By then, the RCN had grown from a peacetime complement of some 1,800 officers and men to a force of more than 75,000 men and women. With this expansion came urgent requirements for training facilities, administrative offices, operational rooms, manning facilities, transportation services, barracks, messes and recreational amenities. Most of these requirements were met – at least during the first three years of the war – by using existing resources on the Halifax peninsula.

Geography is a central theme in the history of Halifax, both in terms of its peninsular situation and its location vis-à-vis other regions of Canada and Western Europe. In the late 1950s, the urban geographer James Watson brilliantly exposed the historical skeleton of Halifax in a landmark article entitled "Relict Geography in an Urban Community."¹⁹ Professor Watson argued that relict geography "concentrates on what remains from the past, that is to say, on what has resisted change, and by resisting, has influenced it." Three physical elements are seen to have shaped urban development in Halifax: the Citadel, the waterfront and the railway.

¹⁸W.G.D. Lund, "The Royal Canadian Navy's Quest for Autonomy in the North West Atlantic: 1941-43," in James A. Boutilier, ed., *RCN in Retrospect* (Vancouver and London: University of British Columbia Press, 1982), pp. 138-157.

¹⁹ James W. Watson, "Relict Geography in an Urban Community," in R. Miller and J.W. Watson, eds., *Geographical Essays in Memory of Alan. G. Ogilvie* (London, 1959), pp. 110-143.

The peninsula offers a long waterfront with excellent harbourage, but constricts the growth of the city...The Citadel, naval yards and commercial docks form the key triangle of development of the city, with the city nucleus at the centre. Two other triangles, with their bases resting on the Citadel and the docks, extend north and south, enclosing the earliest residential quarters, now known as the old suburbs. Looking down on them from the Citadel one sees a densely packed mass of houses and narrow streets with hardly a tree.²⁰

Halifax was already a century old before industrial development “pushed a threefold prong into the city” along railway lines entering the peninsula from the north [See Fig. 1-1]. Meanwhile, the presence of Citadel Hill “dominated the evolution of roads, the building of houses, the rise of institutions, the spread of the shopping districts, the distribution of population and even the development of the social structure over a wide area.”²¹ The hill “forced the early growth of Halifax into very narrow confines,” creating a “zone of ossification, which has frozen urban development...and, over most of the city’s history, brought change to a halt.”²² The area between the hill and the waterfront was thus characterized by “narrow streets and tall, tightly packed houses.”

But for this ossification the streets might have been redeveloped and housing been given more room in a broad, even, arcuate zone from the city centre outwards, or in four or five sectors, radiating to the city margin. Instead, they have been concentrated in a series of pockets or cells on the flanks of the Citadel.²³

The effect of Citadel Hill transcended topography; it also symbolized the overwhelming dominance of the military on the historical development of social structure.

²⁰ Watson, “Relict Geography,” p. 118.

²¹ Ibid., p. 125.

²² Ibid., pp. 124-125.

²³ Ibid., p. 125.

Judith Fingard noted this aspect of its influence in her study of late Victorian crime in

Halifax:

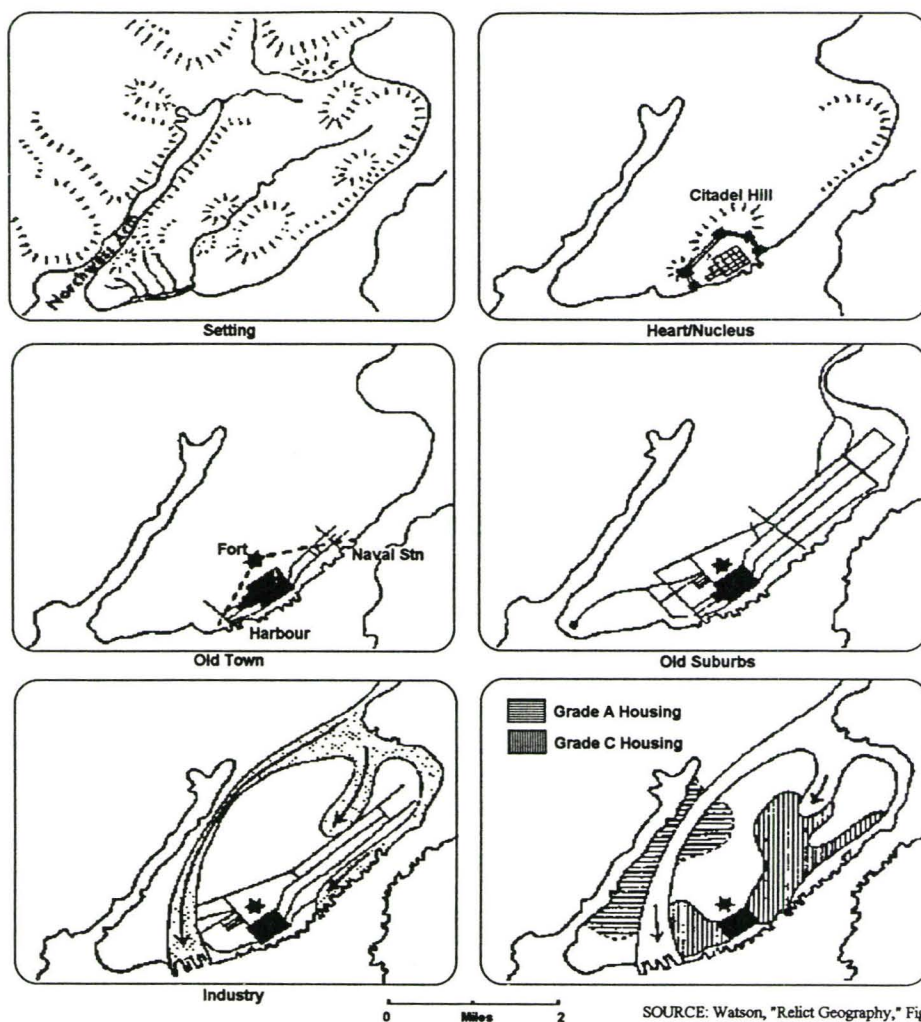
The...use of the upper streets [by military authorities] very largely determined the character of 'soldiertown,' coterminous as it was with the low-life district. It was the military authorities who chose the streets on the hill adjacent to the Citadel for the leasing of houses for married quarters in the period before sufficient barracks were provided for married soldiers. Similarly, soldiers who married without permission also settled their wives and children in the upper streets close to the North and South barracks where they could take full advantage of their passes to visit families.²⁴

The rate of decline in the residential neighbourhoods of the old city accelerated during the First World War. A period of business prosperity placed increasing pressure on the downtown core to relinquish single family residential land use, and the construction of a huge rail and dock complex in an area of high-quality housing drove affluent households to seek refuge on the western side of the peninsula.²⁵ Moreover, the explosion of a munitions ship in the harbour in December 1917 all but obliterated the city's stock of working class housing, placing greater strains on what little low-cost housing survived. The explosion destroyed 750 houses and 750 more "needed extensive repairs." It was estimated that at least 10,000 inhabitants required rehousing, but the reconstruction of the devastated area (about which more will be said later) provided shelter for only 2,000. Moreover, the new housing was expensive at "\$25.00 for a four-room flat" and "\$50.00

²⁴ Judith Fingard, *The Dark Side of Life in Victorian Halifax* (Porters Lake, NS: Pottersfield Press, 1989), pp. 21-22.

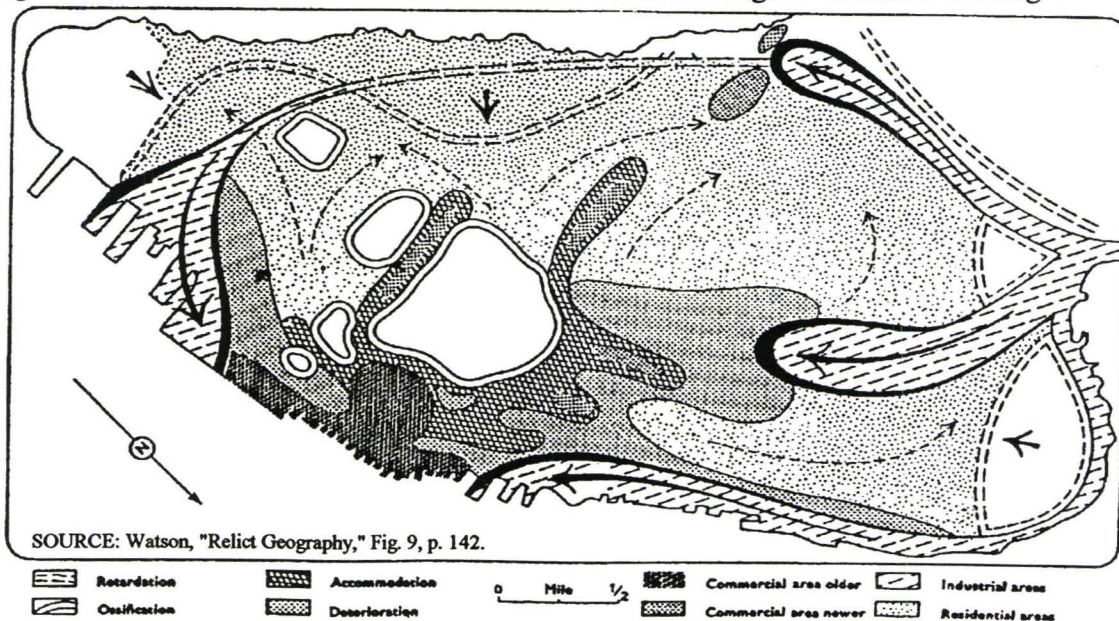
²⁵ Watson, pp. 134-135.

Fig. 1-1. "Significant patterns in the growth of Halifax, N.S."



SOURCE: Watson, "Relict Geography," Fig. 1, p. 119.

Fig. 1-2. "Functional zones of Halifax in relation to zones of change or resistance to change."



for a seven-room house.”²⁶ Those who wished to own rather than rent had to look elsewhere for accommodation.

The decade of the 1920s saw low economic activity and even lower population growth. “As a consequence the slums of the downtown area spread rapidly north and south, blighting much of the area between North St. and South St.,” according to Hugh Millward. Meanwhile, “prestige housing crept closer to the Northwest Arm, extending along Quinpool, Jubilee, Coburg and South Streets as far as the railway line, and along Young Avenue...to Point Pleasant Park.” Also by the 1930s, “small commuter settlements were growing up around the villages of Armdale, Fairview (or Dutch Village as it then was), Rockingham and Spryfield” [See Fig. 1-3].²⁷ These were the contours of residential development which existed when the Second World War began in September 1939.

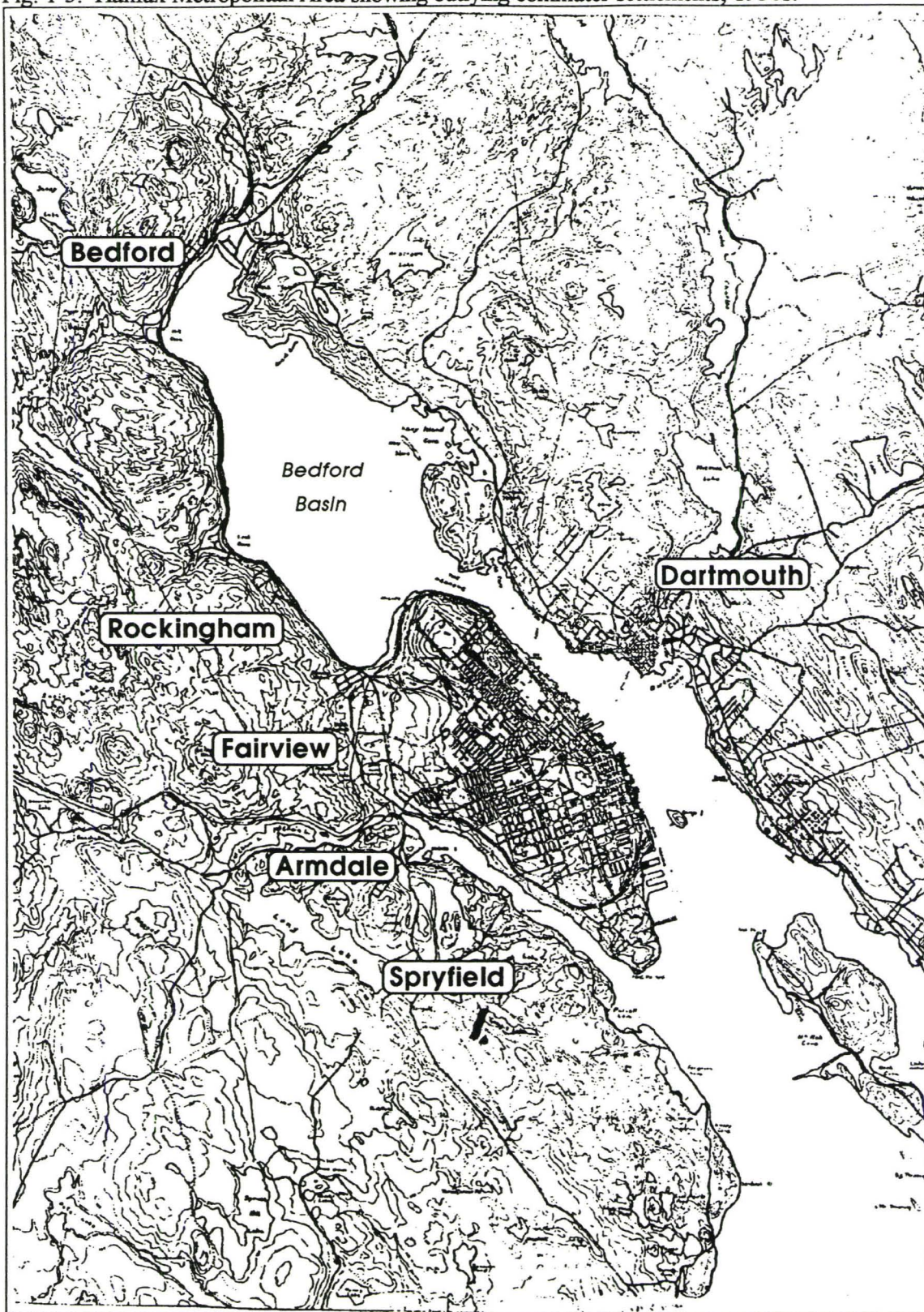
Urban growth and real estate activity were inextricably tied to the health of the local economy. Economic conditions in Halifax between the wars were characterized by “solid if slow and unspectacular progress,” chiefly as a result of federal involvement in developing harbour facilities.²⁸ Because the port development issue was of such critical importance in understanding the overall pattern of interwar urban economic growth (as a prelude to wartime conditions), it is examined in detail in the following chapter. With the return of war, Halifax’s major economic liability in peacetime – its distance from Central Canada – became its most valuable strategic asset. The close proximity to the North

²⁶ Janet F. Kitz, *Shattered City: The Halifax Explosion and the Road to Recovery* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 1989), pp. 187-190.

²⁷ Hugh Millward, *The Geography of Housing in Metropolitan Halifax, Nova Scotia* (Halifax: St. Mary's University, ca. 1985), p. 12.

²⁸ Raddall, p. 285.

Fig. 1-3. Halifax Metropolitan Area showing outlying commuter settlements, 1930s.



SOURCE: adapted from *Master Plan*, Plate No. 13, p. 140.

Atlantic sea routes made Halifax an ideal base for escorts, and the commodious harbour was well suited for assembling large numbers of merchant ships. Recently modernized rail and berthing facilities provided an ideal embarkation point for overseas-bound troops. However, the very abundance of facilities placed intolerable demands on the community. Between the fall of 1939 and the middle of 1941, more than 40,000 newcomers – or two-thirds the prewar population – crammed onto the peninsula, with the number about evenly split between service personnel and civilians.²⁹

The resident population did not include some half million Canadian service men and women who passed through Halifax on their way overseas. Nearly 150 troop convoys sailed from Halifax over the course of the war. Huge passenger liners like the *Queen Mary* (81,000 tons), *Queen Elizabeth* (85,000 tons), *Aquitania* (46,000 tons), *Ile de France* (43,000 tons), *Pasteur* (30,000 tons) made frequent visits to the quay wall at the Ocean Terminals, as well as smaller liners: *Britannic* (27,000 tons), *Andes* (26,000 tons), *Franconia* (20,000 tons), *Ascania* (14,000 tons), *Batory* (14,000 tons) and others.³⁰ Organizing massive troop movements was simplified by the rail yard and large sheds at the south end terminals, but the flow of men and materiel tended to be much heavier than peacetime civilian traffic, owing to the increased capacity of passenger liners converted for military service. One of the largest troop movements of the war occurred in November

²⁹National Archives of Canada (hereafter NA) RG 2/18 Vol. 9 file H-13 "Census Returns - Halifax, Dartmouth," 17 July 1944.

³⁰Public Archives of Nova Scotia (hereafter PANS) MG 20 Vol. 323, "1946 Annual Report of the Nova Scotia Division of the Red Cross Society," p. 107; Graham Metson, *An East Coast Port...Halifax at War 1939-1945* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1981), pp. 18, 20, 26, 102; Raddall, p. 298. Tonnages are gross registered (rounded) taken from *Lloyd's Register of Shipping 1938-39*, except *Queen Elizabeth*, which is from Raddall, p. 298.

1941 when a British force transshipped from eight British liners to six American liners (aggregate gross tonnage: ca. 300,000).³¹ The entire operation took place at the Ocean Terminals. The American ships arrived on the 5th and departed for Singapore on the 10th; the British liners arrived on the 8th and sailed on the 13th under U.S. Navy escort.³² Operations of this magnitude would have been impossible without the Ocean Terminals, but even this was relatively simple when compared with Canadian troop movements involving incoming trains.

The south end terminals had not seen this level of activity since the late 1920s. Immigrants passing through the Pier 21 immigration shed after 1930 averaged only 15,000 per year, although in the six years previous annual average totals approached ten times that number.³³ Furthermore, the flow was in the opposite direction: whereas incoming passengers usually boarded westbound trains soon after landing at Halifax, service personnel awaiting embarkation orders had to be quartered nearby for days, sometimes weeks, at a time. As a result, hotel accommodation was woefully inadequate to meet the wartime demand. "At one point the Assembly and Examination Rooms [at Pier 21] were turned into an army barracks. An entire regiment was quartered there, using [the]

³¹The British liners, *Duchess of Atholl*, *Orcades*, *Durban Castle*, *Oronay*, *Reina del Pacifico*, *Andes*, *Warwick Castle* and *Sobieski* (ex-Polish) were all listed in *Lloyd's Register of Shipping, 1938-39*. All but two of the American transports were not. The gross tonnage is therefore an estimate based on doubling the total of 155,000 gross tons for the British liners.

³²PANS MG 1 Vol. 493, H.B. Jefferson papers, "E.C.C.P." notebook, "Chronology of events in Halifax in 1941."

³³Canada. Employment and Immigration Commission, Public Affairs, Nova Scotia Region, *The Pier 21 Story, Halifax 1924-1971* (Halifax, 1978), p. 6.

downstairs as a drill area.”³⁴ Troop movements also imposed delays on waterfront loading operations, often relegating other freight traffic to railway sidings for days.³⁵

Dominion census-takers in June 1941 found a city already visibly transformed by the war. For over a year, Halifax had been overcrowded with new entries training at the naval base, foreign nationals from occupied Europe, the crews of huge Royal Navy battleships, and British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) pilots on their way overseas. The effect of this overwhelming influx was all the more severe because it occurred before the federal government began its anti-inflationary campaign. By the end of 1941, gas rationing put an end to unrestricted automobile travel and food rationing encouraged hoarding and grey market activity. Hotels, cafes, and restaurants were jammed to the rafters and the cost of renting an apartment went through the roof. In the midst of this confusion, the Royal Canadian Navy embarked on its first major expansion programme, and by the end of 1941, the number of RCN personnel training in Halifax topped 8,000.³⁶

Halifax was no stranger to international trade, but the exigencies of war both magnified and distorted this characteristic of seaport life. Dispossessed sailors and refugees poured in from Poland, Norway, Belgium, France, Denmark, the Netherlands and other nations.³⁷ In 1940, the Norwegian whaling fleet, numbering some 20 vessels, was diverted to Halifax while on its way home after spending the summer in Antarctica. The

³⁴*The Pier 21 Story*, p. 17.

³⁵Gilbert N. Tucker, *The Naval Service of Canada, Vol. II: Activities on Shore during the Second World War* (Ottawa, 1952), p. 345.

³⁶Total RCN strength up to 31 December 1941 was 28,585, (including 1,975 in the various Divisions across the country). NA RG 2 series 18 Vol. 28 file D-19-B (part 1) 1942-44, “R.C.N. Monthly Review No. 1, January 1942.”

³⁷Raddall, pp. 297-298.

whalers carried a virulent strain of diphtheria unknown in North America which was transmitted to the general population, causing an epidemic in Halifax in 1941.³⁸ British schoolchildren evacuated under the threat of invasion were landed at Halifax, and some remained with local families.³⁹ Later on, British war brides began to arrive, many with children in tow, (hundreds more would follow after the war). German prisoners of war also passed through the port on their way to internment camps inland. These events gave a cosmopolitan flavour to wartime Halifax, but long term effects on urban social structure were negligible, since few of these foreign visitors became permanent residents.

Newfoundlanders flocked to Halifax in large numbers, joining both the Royal Navy and the merchant marine. They could also be found working on the docks, and living in large barrack-style dormitories (called "staff houses") built by the federal government for war workers. American servicemen were a familiar sight on Halifax streets a full year before the United States entered the war due to the handing over of 50 U.S. Navy destroyers to Great Britain in the fall of 1940.⁴⁰ The French warship *Surcouf*, largest submarine in the world, was based on Halifax for several months before disappearing without a trace in early 1942. Russian submarines were also stationed at Halifax for a time in early 1943.⁴¹

³⁸D.B. Wilson and W.A. McIntosh, *A Survey of the Public Health Services of the City of Halifax* (Halifax, 1942), p. 27.

³⁹Metson, pp. 26-27. The son and daughter of Dame Vera Laughton Matthews, head of the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRENS), boarded with a Halifax family for over two years. Interview with Mrs. Ellen Vinci, Shediack, N.B., July 1985.

⁴⁰ Raddall, p. 295.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 300.

And, of course, there were the convoys: following a pattern established during the First World War, the orchestrated departures occurred on average every eight days. The first merchant convoy left Halifax six days after Canada declared war.⁴² As many as 150 merchant vessels crowded into Halifax harbour at one time. In terms of shipping congestion, the years 1941 and 1942 were the busiest – by 1943 the addition of American eastern seaboard ports, the greater cargo-carrying capacity of new vessels, and rationalization of the convoy system had reduced port traffic levels. Petroleum products claimed the larger share of cargo tonnage loaded at Halifax due to an oil refinery and huge storage tanks across the harbour at Imperoyal. By the end of 1944, oil stocks there would be four times larger than reserves at Montréal.⁴³ Nearly half the total cargo tonnage handled at Halifax during the last three years of war was petroleum crude and fuel.⁴⁴

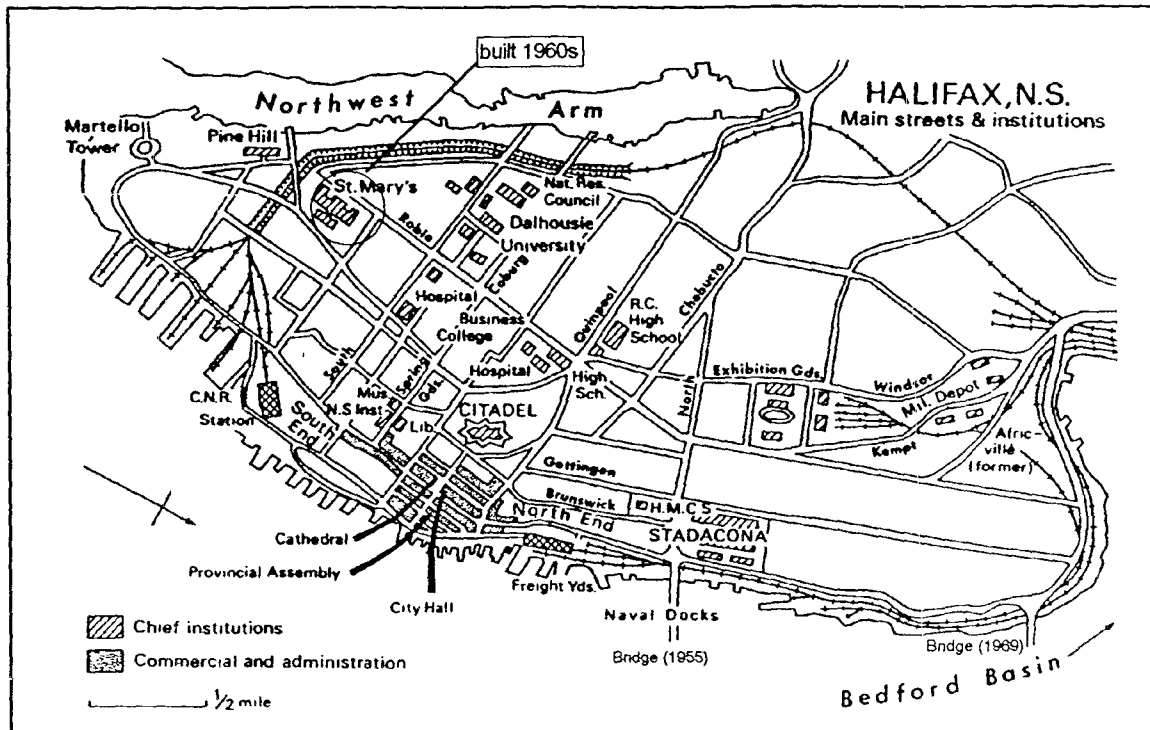
The importance of the merchant fleet notwithstanding, it was the Royal Canadian Navy which dominated the rhythm of wartime life in the city. The Navy complement in Halifax soared from a peacetime force of 500 to nearly 17,000 by 1945.⁴⁵ Naval shore establishments struggled to keep pace with manning, training, accommodation, and administrative responsibilities – all of which were initially concentrated on the Halifax peninsula. To circumvent the scarcity of building materials and skilled labour (not to mention the time needed for new construction), the RCN commandeered hotels, fairgrounds, Victorian-era army barracks, a liberal arts College, and many other buildings

⁴²Tucker, pp. 119, 370.

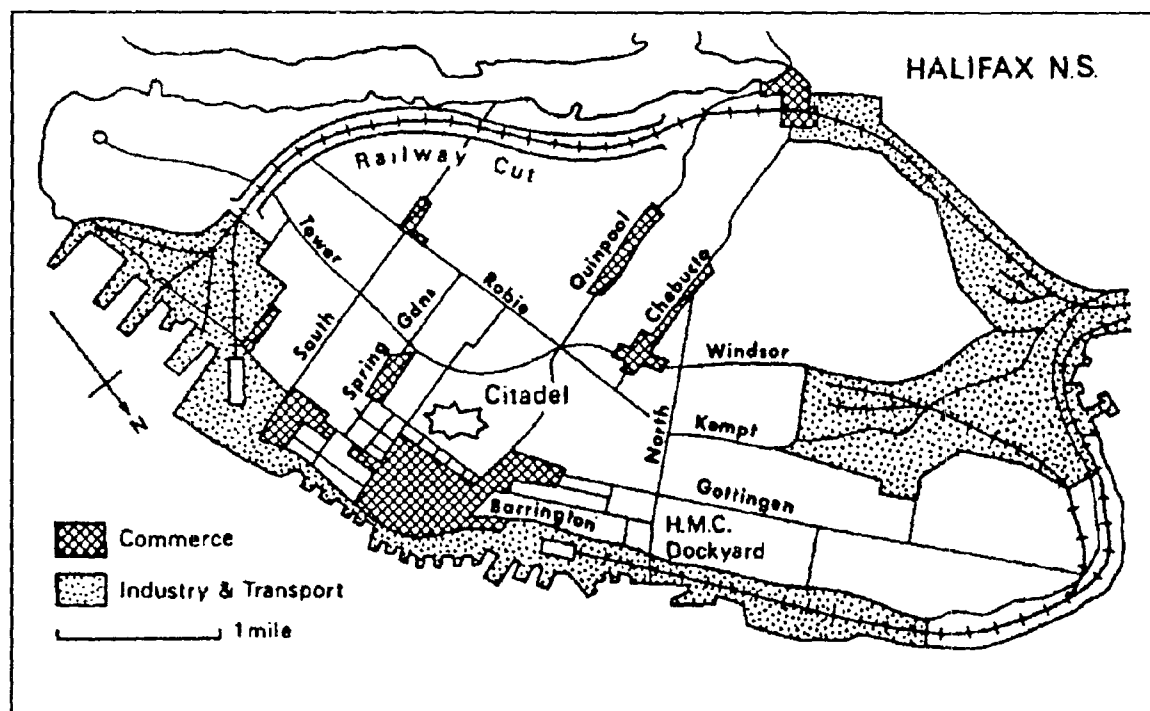
⁴³Ibid., p. 537.

⁴⁴Canada. National Harbours Board, *Annual Report 1944, 1946*.

⁴⁵Tucker, p. 531.



Figs. 1-4 (above) and 1-5 (below). An urban geographer's view of Halifax. These maps further illustrate the intense competition for land created by Halifax's peninsular location. By the 1920s, institutional land use (Fig. 1-4) and encroachments by transportation and industry in the southeast and northwest (Fig. 1-5) severely restricted the availability of land suitable for new housing. At the same time, commercial districts appeared along Quinpool and Chebucto Roads, while formerly residential streets in the downtown core and older suburbs along the waterfront increasingly gave way to business and industrial uses. J. W. Watson, "Centre and Periphery," in J. Patten, ed. *The Expanding City* (1983), pp. 391, 404.



in the city, quickly swallowing up much of the spare office and accommodation space. Until early 1944 half the naval personnel in Halifax lived outside barracks, supporting themselves on Lodging and Compensation (“Lodge & Comp”) Allowances. Servicemen and their families thus competed directly with civilians for accommodation, transportation, food, and other commodities made scarce by wartime shortages and rationing. The federal government built 1000 small bungalows in the Halifax area for civilian workers in war industry, but only a handful were allotted to service families. Federal housing policy regarded the provision of wartime dwellings to be a temporary measure, and the RCN could not predict in the middle of a war what its postwar requirements for personnel accommodation would be; consequently no comprehensive plan for relieving the serious congestion in Halifax was ever put forward. The failure to provide new construction sufficient to accommodate the majority of naval personnel in Halifax negatively affected service morale.

The Allied naval presence dominated wartime Halifax, however, the other armed services were also well represented. Pilots newly-trained in Central and Western Canada under the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan poured into the Embarkation Depot in the city’s North End. The municipal airport situated near Armdale in the northwest quadrant of the peninsula proved to be totally inadequate for warplanes.⁴⁶ Needless to say, the Air Force preferred its own superior facilities at Eastern Passage on the

⁴⁶W.A.B. Douglas, *The Creation of a National Air Force* (Official History of the Royal Canadian Air Force, Vol. II; Ottawa, 1986), pp. 379-80. Night landings at the airport, for example, were risky: automobile headlights were used to illuminate the runway. In 1936, an airplane overshot the runway and flipped over when it arrived an hour and a half behind schedule, by which time several cars had left the field. *Halifax Chronicle* 21 April 1936.

Dartmouth side of Halifax harbour. Meanwhile, Army huts appeared like mushrooms on the grassy fields of the municipal airport.

By the end of the war, Halifax “was overloaded with [military] headquarters formations” including “Atlantic Command (Army), District [No. 6] (Army), Fortress (Army), North West Atlantic (Navy), Eastern Air Command (RCAF) and Combined Operations (Navy, RCAF) as well as a British naval staff.”⁴⁷ The strategic importance of Halifax as a naval shore establishment, air station, and convoy assembly point can hardly be underestimated, however the most valuable wartime function of the port was as a repair and maintenance base for both merchant and naval vessels. Bad weather proved to be a more dangerous enemy than the U-boat – demanding constant vigilance and placing enormous demands on repair facilities at North Atlantic ports. As the war progressed, pressing needs at British and American bases and competition for labour and materials from new ship construction intensified the demands on Halifax repair facilities as vessels sought layovers there after being turned down elsewhere.⁴⁸ Some thought had been given early in the war to making Halifax a world-class repair base with a new permanent dry dock capable of servicing the largest vessels afloat, but the proposal was rejected as too costly. Instead, a 24,000-ton floating dry dock was built at the Halifax Shipyards and put into service by mid-1942.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ PANS MG 20 Vol. 323, “1946 Annual Report,” p. 107

⁴⁸ Tucker, p. 141.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 126-28. See also J.H.W. Knox, “An Engineer's Outline of RCN History: Part I” in Boutilier, pp. 96-115.

It is estimated that over 7,000 vessels underwent repairs and refits at Halifax during the Second World War.⁵⁰ The sheer numbers of ships completely saturated port capacity. In addition, shortages of skilled labour and delays in acquiring the necessary equipment hindered installation of defensive apparatus and armament so merchant ships could protect themselves against enemy attack. Deperming and degaussing procedures, installation of anti-torpedo nets, anti-acoustic torpedo decoys (CAT), paravane gear and radar, were just a few of the tasks performed.

More delays on the waterfront were caused by competition for berths from warships, the secrecy and short notice that characterized ship arrivals and departures, the additional burden on rail and docking facilities when large troop movements were undertaken. There were also routine interruptions due to security alerts, bad weather, in-harbour collisions, rescuing vessels damaged by enemy action, moving munitions ships through the crowded harbour, and so on. During the summer of 1942, U-boat activity in the Gulf of St. Lawrence resulted in the closure of Quebec and Montréal to overseas shipping, leaving the Maritime ports of Saint John, New Brunswick, and Halifax with the impossible task of assuming much of the St. Lawrence River traffic on top of their regular duties.⁵¹

Throughout the war, ships entering and leaving Halifax remained in the firm control of the British Ministry of War Transport. Responding to British complaints regarding the inefficiency of shiploading operations, the Canadian government ordered a complete

⁵⁰Raddall, p. 304. This total probably includes repeat visits for repairs and installation of defensive equipment on merchant ships.

⁵¹See Tucker, pp. 391-395.

reorganization of the waterfront labour supply. Modifications began in 1942 but extended into the following year. A central labour exchange was established, and a guaranteed weekly wage for longshoremen instituted, following on a similar system started two years before at major British ports.⁵² However the lack of coordination between the shipping authority – a foreign agency – and related activities such as ship-repair and ship construction, manning policy, the training of longshoremen, and maintenance of harbour facilities, prevented the implementation of “a supreme transport command,” such as existed in Britain.⁵³ As a result, shiploading at Halifax never operated as efficiently as it could have.

This flood of wartime activity, much of it revolving around operations of the port, completely overwhelmed municipal services and the aging physical infrastructure of the city. Two hundred years of urban settlement were visible in its cobbled thoroughfares, crumbling wharves, and unpainted tenements. Fifty-one of the 114 miles of streets in the city were unpaved.⁵⁴ Electric tramcars were small and too few in number to handle the increased ridership; extra cars were brought in from as far away as San Francisco. By March 1941, 60 “Birney” cars were operating where 22 had been sufficient before the war.⁵⁵ Not a single stop light existed to control the crush of service vehicles, taxis, and

⁵²NA RG 35 series 7, Vol. 21 file 15; RG 66 vol. 5 file Hi-5 part 1 “Regularization of Dock Labour in Britain” (n.d), 2pp. See also Angus Calder, *The People's War*, (New York: Ace Books, 1969), p. 272.

⁵³Tucker, pp. 358-59.

⁵⁴PANS Vertical File, Vol. 122, #24, “The Scope of the Housing Problem in Halifax,” Report by the Housing Committee of the Halifax Junior Board of Trade, October 1943, p. 10.

⁵⁵PANS MG 1, H.B. Jefferson papers, Vol. 489a, 16 March 1941. H. Bruce Jefferson was a native of Moncton, New Brunswick. A journalist who had worked for Halifax and Sydney newspapers before the war, he was the chief press censor in Halifax.

automobiles.⁵⁶ Expansion of the municipal sewer system was prohibitively expensive due to the geology of the peninsula, and the obsolete water supply required a complete overhaul before the war ended – chiefly to accommodate the enormous demand for fresh water from ships in harbour. In many respects the city resembled a military camp, yet authorities refused to declare Halifax a restricted area. Both civilian in-migrants and service personnel were forced to adapt to the existing urban environment, rather than vice versa. That environment was remarkably compact, due to the historical rate of urban growth and the high cost of municipal services, with a large proportion of its housing stock being substandard [Figs. 1-6 and 1-7].

Other than skilled labour related to the military and shipbuilding, the occupational profile of wartime Halifax was characterized by a plentiful supply of service sector jobs – both in government and private firms. Young men and women from smaller communities in the Maritimes flocked to Halifax seeking manual and clerical jobs, while skilled positions in war industry at the Halifax Shipyards and Dockyard were more likely to be filled by workers from other parts of Canada. The government turned to women as a convenient reserve labour pool after the armed forces or war-related industry had absorbed most able-bodied male workers by mid-1941.⁵⁷ Women – like men – who were employed in war industry earned the best wages, but most of those jobs were in Central Canada. The persistent labour shortage in certain occupations like stenographers and the

⁵⁶Ontario Archives (hereafter OA) MU 4156, John Fisher papers, file: Early scripts, 1940-41, C.H.N.S. broadcast scripts, Interview with Halifax Chief of Police Judson J. Conrod.

⁵⁷Ruth Roach Pierson, *Canadian Women and the Second World War*, Canadian Historical Association Booklet No. 37 (Ottawa, 1983), p. 8.

Fig. 1-6. Classes of Housing on the Halifax Peninsula.

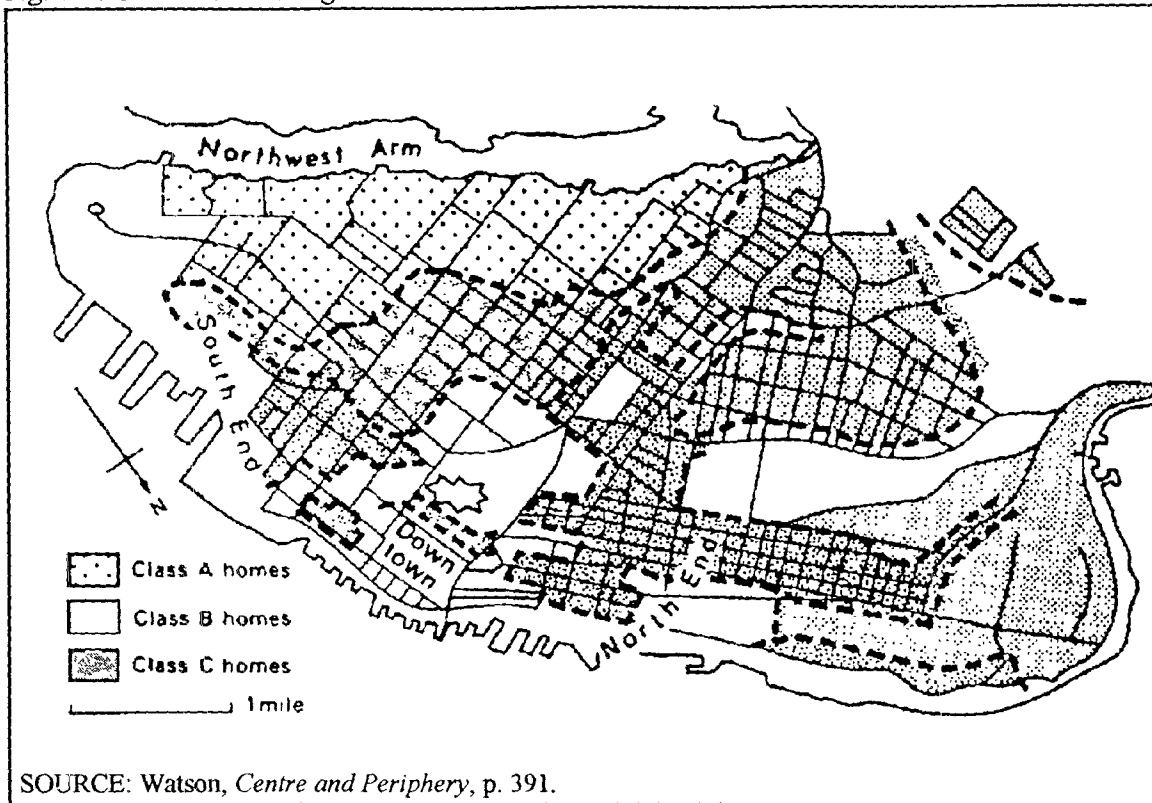
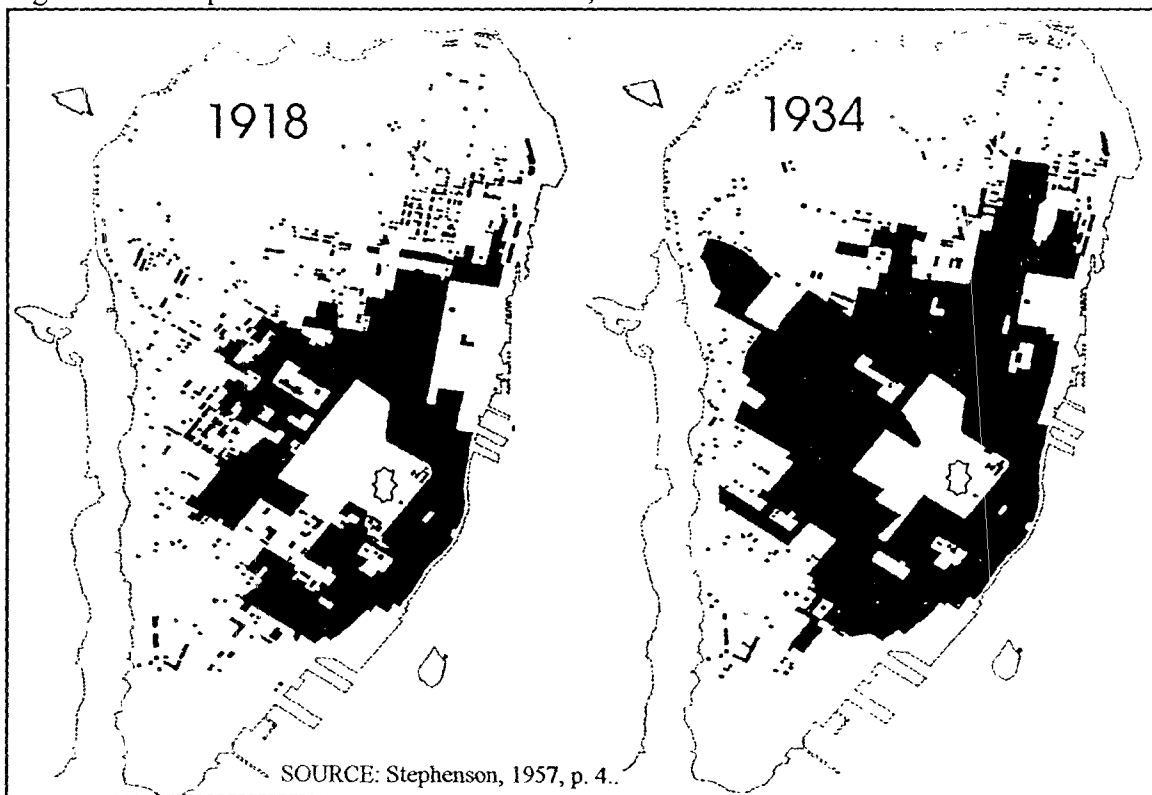


Fig. 1-7. Built-up Areas on the Halifax Peninsula, 1918 and 1934.



building trades was at least partly due to the exodus of skilled workers from the Halifax area in search of better opportunities and wages outside the Maritimes. To the extent that National Selective Service regulations would permit the mobility of skilled labour, there was a steady out-migration of workers from Halifax. Industrial workers – even those engaged in essential war work – participated in this trend: hundreds of shipyard workers obtained NSS permits to leave the city when a major strike halted production in August 1944.⁵⁸

Few factories existed in Halifax to fuel the local economy with high wages and cost-plus contracts. The war boom occurred in the hotels, restaurants, cafes, hostels, laundries, cinemas, dance halls, and retail stores that enjoyed unprecedented business.⁵⁹ Unfortunately, employees in those establishments – waitresses, maids, kitchen help, ushers, sales clerks – saw their wages eaten up the high cost of food and housing. To be sure, jobs were so plentiful that employers hired workers with little or no experience, and an unsatisfied employee could easily trade one position for another.⁶⁰ But aiding the war effort could be a mixed blessing for the working class, particularly those who were not qualified to take advantage of the high demand for clerical workers in government offices and military administration. Some local employers complained that government pay

⁵⁸Halifax *Herald*, 8, 9 August 1944.

⁵⁹Gordon Stephenson, *A Redevelopment Study of Halifax, Nova Scotia*, (Halifax: City of Halifax, 1957), p. 4.

⁶⁰Dianne J. Taylor, *There's No Wife Like It* (Victoria, 1985), p. 107.

packets were too fat – thus driving up the going rate for the same occupation at private firms.⁶¹

The immediate causes of the wartime housing crisis in Halifax were the expansion of the Royal Canadian Navy, and the large numbers of transients who poured into the city in search of war work. But it originated with the historically high construction costs on the peninsula, the stagnant local economy of the interwar period, which had a negative effect on the market for new houses, and overall condition of the housing stock, especially in the older sections near the waterfront where the wartime transient population was concentrated. One in four dwellings on the Halifax peninsula was judged to be in need of external repair in the 1941 Dominion census.⁶² Census enumerators were instructed to make a “quick visual inspection” and note “(a) sagging or rotting foundation, indicated by cracked or leaning walls; (b) faulty roof or chimney, (c) unsafe outside steps or stairways; (d) interior badly in need of repair – that is large chunks of plaster missing from walls or ceiling.”⁶³

Homeownership among the urban population had traditionally been high in Halifax, however the influx of hostilities-only residents drove up the percentage of tenant households. After two years of war, 62 per cent of the 13,500 dwellings on the peninsula were occupied by tenants. By comparing 1941 average annual incomes of wage-earner families with mean rental costs, it was discovered that the lower third of wage-earner

⁶¹Public Archives of Nova Scotia [PANS], MG2, Angus L. Macdonald papers, file F883/7. Mitchell to Macdonald, 2 July 1942

⁶²Canada Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Halifax Housing Atlas* (Ottawa, 1944), p. 1.

⁶³John R. Miron, *Housing in Postwar Canada. Demographic Change, Household Formation and Housing Demand* (Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), pp. 182-83

families were paying 50 per cent more for housing than they could afford.⁶⁴ Over 2,000 tenant households consisted of two or more families by 1941. An even more telling indication of the dimensions of the overcrowding crisis was the revelation in November 1943 that there were “five thousand homes in Halifax in which accommodation is provided for either roomers or boarders or both.”⁶⁵ This represented one-third of all the dwellings on the Halifax peninsula.

The rent controls designed to curb inflation and profiteering were poorly enforced in Halifax. Landlords and homeowners subdivided dwellings without notifying authorities – turning drafty attics and damp basements into makeshift lodgings, often with inadequate sanitation – and tenants submitted to inflated rents rather than risk losing their accommodation.⁶⁶ Worse still, ‘mercenary’ tenants sublet rooms in apartments surreptitiously, sometimes putting two or three boarders in the same room and charging the full rate to each person.⁶⁷ In some cases landlords refused rental accommodation to servicemen and their families, believing that armed forces personnel were more likely to report rent control violations.⁶⁸ The discrimination against service personnel was not confined to housing: storekeepers were known to favour one branch of the armed forces over others when setting prices and selling rationed items.⁶⁹

⁶⁴*Halifax Housing Atlas*, p. 3. This estimate was based on the assumption that 20 per cent of annual income should be the upper limit of the cost of shelter.

⁶⁵NA RG 2/18 Vol. 9 file H-13 1942-44, Cousins to Howe, 1 November 1943.

⁶⁶NA RG 24 Vol. 11,105 file 52-3-2 vol. 1, “The Housing Situation in Halifax,” 21 March 1942.

⁶⁷Wilson and McIntosh, p. 58.

⁶⁸Taylor, p. 116.

⁶⁹Kay Piersdorff, “Anybody here from the West?” *Nova Scotia Historical Review* Vol. 5 No. 1 (1985), p. 9.

Civilians searching for accommodation also quickly discovered that they were dealing in a seller's market. A housing registry operated by the YWCA was "driven almost frantic at times in trying to place families with young children." Only their "years of experience and their acquaintance [*sic*] with some of our landladies" enabled the YWCA to succeed where other agencies failed. Many families with children were reported to have moved to "rural slums," living in trailers or tourist cabins outside city limits, because of the difficulty of renting rooms or apartments. Women were also "very often not wanted" as tenants, since men were perceived as being "less trouble" and the demand from males was plentiful. Even the elderly tenants of apartment hotels found their tenure in jeopardy as the armed forces took over the buildings to house servicewomen.⁷⁰

The hardship cases described in the local press from time to time reminded everyone of how fortunate they were to have a roof – any roof – over their heads. The stories evoked sympathy from most, and callous indifference from others. In December 1941, municipal officials were shamed into finding temporary quarters for a family of eight who had been living in a tent on public land since the previous spring. According to the newspaper, the father consistently "maintained he was unable to find accommodation for his family, although he was ready and able to pay for it, because of wartime conditions."⁷¹ Another incident was reported two years later in which the Chief of Police complained that it was not "a policeman's job" to enforce eviction notices on tenants. "I had to evict another family just the other day," he said. "I don't know where they went. Perhaps they

⁷⁰PANS MG 20 Vol. 409 folder 10, Shand to Bradford, 3 June 1944.

⁷¹PANS MG 1 Vol. 498, H.B. Jefferson papers, unidentified newspaper clipping, 1 December 1941.

crawled into a hole somewhere.” The chief pleaded for understanding rather than reform: “People blame it on the policeman, when it’s not his fault. The children see this big burly policeman coming up to put them out of the house, and they’re liable to grow up with a dislike for the law.”⁷²

The intense competition for even the most basic amenities – a shower, a hot meal, and a clean bed – spawned a dozen or so exclusive service clubs for specific nationalities and branches of the armed forces, set up by patriotic organizations, war charities, and church groups. Government-approved national organizations – the YMCA, the Salvation Army, the Knights of Columbus, the Canadian Legion and the Navy League – erected recreation huts and opened hostels, facilities were often overwhelmed by the demand. The congestion in Halifax even produced territorial discrimination among the scores of cafes and restaurants catering to the transient population. Establishments were unofficially declared ‘Navy-only’ or ‘Air Force-only’ and servicemen unfamiliar with turf rules were unceremoniously evicted by military police.⁷³ This practice was indicative of the poor inter-service cooperation which existed in the city.

The situation was also complicated by the repressive legislation with regard to public drinking establishments. The waterfront pubs and alehouses of nineteenth century Halifax had been swept away on the wave of prohibition during the First World War.⁷⁴ By 1930 the provincial government controlled the sale of beverage alcohol. During the

⁷²PANS MG 1 Vol. 498, H.B. Jefferson papers, unidentified newspaper clipping, 9 December 1943.

⁷³Personal communication to the author in July 1988 from an Edmonton RCAF veteran who wished to remain anonymous.

⁷⁴Raddall, p. 260.

Second World War liquor rationing was imposed, and government liquor store hours of operation were cut back, but private civilian clubs serving alcohol to members continued to operate. With few exceptions, there were no licensed outlets for service personnel or sailors on shore leave (or “libertymen”). Outside of the wet canteens in barracks, the city was officially dry. The reality was quite the opposite. Bootleggers bought up ration books, or peddled their own vile concoctions from seedy dives along Lower Water Street, often with the assistance of prostitutes. Large shipments of liquor inbound or outbound rarely crossed the wharves without black marketeers taking their share; and the trade in pilfered narcotics like cocaine and morphine was also reportedly brisk.⁷⁵

For those forced to drink illegally – on the street, in doorways and dark alleys – the consumption of liquor took on anti-social connotations. British naval tradition sanctioned the use of alcohol to temper the rigours of shipboard life, but there was little effort by naval authorities to deal with the harmful byproducts of alcohol consumption – violence and addiction – other than a lengthy scale of punishments laid out in King’s Regulations and Admiralty Instructions. The civilian population was hopelessly divided on the question of serving “strong drink” to servicemen: temperance advocates claimed it was wasteful and damaging to the war effort; liberals saw it as a small reward for doing a difficult job. The Royal Canadian Navy was so uncomfortably snagged on the horns of this dilemma that, when a recreation centre was deemed necessary for naval ratings in Halifax, the decision was made to build a wet canteen and a dry canteen – 30 metres apart.⁷⁶

⁷⁵Raddall, p. 318.

⁷⁶See James F.E. White, “The Ajax Affair: Citizens and Sailors in Wartime Halifax, 1939-1945” unpublished M.A. thesis (Dalhousie University, 1984), pp. 90-94.

Being such a young service and having had such a minuscule complement before the war, the RCN lacked policy guidelines and the experience to plan for and execute adequate entertainment and recreational programmes for sailors on leave. Not until December 1942 did the Navy establish a separate branch to “supervise Service and civilian recreational facilities for naval personnel.”⁷⁷ This is partly explained by the priority of operational considerations in wartime, which naturally took precedence over activities ashore. The Royal Canadian Navy was beset with complex problems related to equipment supply and manning policy, hampering its effectiveness as a fighting force at sea.⁷⁸ Moreover, bureaucratic inertia and political intrigue within the highest reaches of the naval hierarchy proved equally deleterious to the efficiency of naval administration ashore.⁷⁹ The result was a service organization where the most competent officers were severely overworked, and the pressure to find immediate solutions to critical problems undermined the Navy’s response to more subtle questions about the long-term welfare of its personnel ashore. Rapid expansion produced other disciplinary and morale troubles with regard to naval personnel: some causes were the abbreviated training schedules to meet the demands of new ship construction; the informal routine aboard small ships which bred a more casual attitude among the lower ranks; and friction between ‘hostilities-only’ junior officers and their careerist superiors.⁸⁰

⁷⁷Tucker, p. 326.

⁷⁸Marc Milner, *North Atlantic Run: The Royal Canadian Navy and the Battle for the Convoys* (Toronto, 1985)

⁷⁹David Zimmerman, *The Great Naval Battle of Ottawa* (Toronto, 1989), esp. pp. 58, 117-120, 164-165.

⁸⁰PANS, MG 2 Angus L. Macdonald papers, F883/30, Connolly to C.N.S., 3 July 1944; see also Milner, p. 85.

During the collapse of military and civil authority which occurred in Halifax on the evening preceding, and afternoon of, V-E Day (8 May 1945), naval personnel participated freely in rampant vandalism and looting.⁸¹ The Naval Board of Inquiry into naval participation in the disorders concluded that “the longstanding overcrowding of the city, and the lack of adequate facilities, recreational and otherwise,” as well as “the necessity of placing large numbers of personnel on Lodging & Compensation where inadequate and unsuitable accommodation is available,” were contributory factors. The Board of Inquiry found that “inadequate stress [had] probably been placed on the behaviour of libertymen ashore” and a number of recommendations were made to correct the “lack of a coordinating authority for naval discipline in the base.” The findings also acknowledged that “an antagonistic feeling” existed between “members of the Armed Services and certain elements of the City of Halifax.”⁸² Undoubtedly, rent gouging by unscrupulous landlords and tenants, and the blatant favoritism and price discrimination practiced by some retail stores, provoked deep-seated resentment on the part of service personnel towards the civilian population.⁸³

The public investigation of the V-E Day disorders reached a slightly different conclusion. The Kellock Royal Commission Inquiry concluded that the Navy was

⁸¹See, for example, Stanley R. Redman, *Open Gangway: An Account of the Halifax Riots, 1945* (Hantsport, N.S.: Lancelot Press, 1981); William H. Pugsley, *Saints, Devils, and Ordinary Seamen* (Toronto: Collins, 1945), p. 100; idem, *Sailor Remember* (Toronto: Collins, 1948), p. 77; Raddall, p. 323; Taylor, p. 122.

⁸²NA RG 24 Vol. 11,208 “RCN Board of Inquiry to investigate the circumstances leading up to Naval participation in the recent disorders in Halifax and the extent and nature of any breaches of discipline by Naval personnel, 1945,” (May 1945).

⁸³See James M. Cameron, *Murray: The Martyred Admiral* (Hantsport, Nova Scotia, 1981), pp. 257-58, 276, 282.

primarily, if not wholly, at fault for not planning more V-E Day activities.⁸⁴ This conclusion ignored the fact that Merchant Navy, Army, and Air Force personnel – and a large number of civilians – openly joined in the looting of liquor stores, warehouses and downtown retail stores. The proportion of servicemembers to civilians among the revelers remains inconclusive; even with film documentation it is difficult to determine how many were involved. The mob numbered as many as three to four thousand in the early afternoon of May 8th. Probably not more than 500 to 1,000 engaged in vandalism, and at other times the crowd was smaller and more fragmented than later sensationalist reports indicated. The property damage, while extensive, was also selective. Symbols of authority – a few streetcars and a police paddy wagon – were singled out, as were many downtown retail businesses. But some stores were spared, ostensibly because they did not have a reputation for cheating service personnel. Liquor stocks were liberated, followed by breaking of shop windows and looting. The absence of physical violence – one suspicious death and some cases of rape were reported – suggested that the mood of the crowd was as much celebratory as vengeful.

Exactly what caused the disturbances in Halifax on 7-8 May 1945 remains a controversial question, depending on whether one accepts the Kellock Commission finding, or the opposing view that civilian authorities were primarily at fault. Either way, the immediate effects of the V-E Day disturbances brought to the surface underlying social tensions created by a highly diversified population living cheek by jowl in a city suffering

⁸⁴NA RG 33/57 vols. 1-3, (reels T1518-T1520), Royal Commission Inquiry into the Halifax Disorders, May 7 and 8, 1945.

from chronic shortcomings in infrastructure. This thesis examines the cumulative impact of six years of war on the physical and social character of Halifax, and postulates that the long term consequences of wartime conditions on the city's economic and social development owed as much to processes shaping its peacetime urban development as to factors directly associated with the war.

The Second World War presented Halifax with unprecedented challenges, but the manner in which those challenges were addressed owed as much to entrenched patterns of elite leadership, class relations and economic organization as it did to the operational demands placed on the city by external military and government authority. For Haligonians, the most significant reward from the war effort was national recognition of the "importance of Halifax as Canada's chief gateway on the east [coast]."⁸⁵

Understanding the centrality of this belief and how it shaped urban development in the interwar period is an essential prerequisite to placing the war in its proper historical context. Chapter Two examines the origins and evolution of the "gateway myth," which by 1939 had become, to many municipal and business leaders, synonymous with urban prosperity, and shows how it led to a diminution of local control over the city's primary economic asset – the port. How Halifax responded to the war depended to a large extent on the nature of its prewar infrastructure and the ability or willingness of the community to adapt itself to wartime conditions. An examination of the port development issue will

⁸⁵Raddall, p. 338.

explain why Halifax was so well-suited for some wartime tasks – such as troop embarkation – while being so ill-prepared for others.

The slow pace of industrial diversification and economic growth in the interwar period curtailed maintenance and expansion of infrastructure, and this in turn created the conditions which ultimately led to the wartime housing shortage examined in Chapter Three. A comparison of Halifax with its American counterpart, Norfolk, Virginia, provided a means of evaluating different responses to similar population and social pressures.

The accommodation crisis in Halifax eventually prodded federal authorities into conducting a detailed survey of population and housing in 1944. The survey, named in this study after the federal appointee who directed it, permits an unusually detailed reconstruction of social and physical change in Halifax during and after the Second World War, especially when combined with data collected for the Dominion censuses of 1941 and 1951.

The data analysis presented in Chapter Four reveals several hitherto unrecognized features of the wartime housing situation in Halifax. The first is the concentration of wartime residents in the oldest and most poorly housed areas of the city. The second is the variation in housing demand over the course of the war, which made it very difficult for public agencies or private enterprise to anticipate housing needs. The third is the relative scarcity of rooming houses, and the concomitant prevalence of private homes taking in roomers, particularly in the latter stages of the war. This phenomenon was significant for two reasons: it suggested that, at least in some households, overcrowding

was self-imposed, and it shows beyond doubt that the pre-fabricated bungalows erected in great profusion in Halifax by Wartime Housing Limited fell far short of meeting the housing needs of the transient population.

Chapter Five examines the waterfront labour force within the context of the convoy system. This is a more satisfactory approach to the analysis of wartime labour conditions in Halifax than focusing on specific industries or companies, and permits the inclusion of merchant seamen. Even though a significant proportion of merchant seamen were foreign nationals, and the work habits and lifestyle of sailors generally excluded them from being considered legitimate workers in war industry, they were as much a part of wartime Halifax as the Royal Canadian Navy.

Chapter Six deals with labour conditions in land-based industries and analyzes the impact of the war on occupations and wages in key sectors of the local economy. The data show that the benefits of wartime prosperity through wage increases was unevenly distributed within income and occupational groups. Chapter Seven examines public and private sector responses to increased demand for 'war services' to the armed forces, social services, health care and recreation facilities. The success of programmes and reforms in these areas varied, but more progress occurred than on the housing front, a reflection perhaps of the opportunities the war presented for consolidating prewar trends in secularization and professionalization of social welfare agencies.

Chapter Eight describes how postwar planning in Halifax was clouded by uncertainty about peacetime urban growth and a backlog of housing and infrastructure problems. Rather than develop a bold strategy for urban redevelopment, reconstruction

planners adopted a piecemeal approach. Certain geographic liabilities of the urban site were addressed, modest proposals for selective slum clearance were put forward, and undeveloped land on the peninsula was earmarked for future residential use. The lack of a framework for financing these recommendations was indicative of the fiscal crisis facing Halifax at the end of the war. The concluding chapter outlines the collapse of postwar municipal reform, and reiterates the importance of recognizing themes of continuity and adaptation when evaluating the historical and social development of urban areas.

CHAPTER TWO

“A PARTIAL VISION”: THE PORT DEVELOPMENT ISSUE

“Halifax was built to face the sunrise.”

– Dr. Samuel H. Prince, June 1932

During the nineteenth century, urban development in Halifax was closely linked to strategic policies formulated in London and the broad patterns of British Empire trade.¹ After the withdrawal of Imperial forces in 1905-06, however, the importance of the military to the local economy was greatly reduced. Manufacturing also continued its gradual decline, following a trend that began before the turn of the century.² Virtually by default, prospects for future growth and prosperity were identified with the campaign to develop Halifax as a “national” port. This campaign implied much more than merely improving harbour facilities. It also symbolized the city’s growing dependence “upon the [federal] government extension of the metropolitan economy for stimulating its urban economy.”³ The distinguished British engineer Sir Alexander Gibb wrote in 1932 that “The possession of the finest harbour in Canada is not sufficient alone to make Halifax into a great port.” Only “constant effort and enterprise” would bring about “an important

¹C.P. Stacey, “Halifax as an International Strategic Factor, 1749-1949,” Canadian Historical Association *Historical Papers* (1949), pp. 48-52; Raddall, pp. 200-202.

²Raddall, p. 229.

³L.D. McCann, “Staples and the New Industrialism in the Growth of Post-Confederation Halifax,” in G.A. Stelter and A.F.J. Artibise, eds., *Shaping the Urban Landscape* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1982), p. 114.

future.”⁴ By the end of the decade, Haligonians were disillusioned with federal control of harbour development policy and the limited prosperity that national port status had brought them.

During the interwar period, management of public harbour works became more and more centralized, diminishing local control over port development in the process. Private waterfront businesses shied away from investing in projects which would inevitably have to compete with public harbour facilities. Federally-appointed harbour administrators attempted to stimulate port traffic by expanding and upgrading facilities under their jurisdiction, but political considerations and depressed economic conditions compromised the success of their efforts. The failure to provide for local advisory councils in the National Harbours Board in 1936 implied that federal authorities were only marginally concerned with serving local interests. Instead of integrating port development policy with realistic economic objectives designed to revive an ailing industrial sector, a series of short-lived panaceas were seized upon by port managers and civic boosters – the immigrant traffic, the grain trade, Maritime Rights, “Canadian Trade through Canadian Ports,” running rights for the Canadian Pacific Railway, passenger liner traffic, Empire trade – in the hopes that one of them would help re-establish the “comfortable community of social and economic interest” that characterized the Halifax economy under Imperial aegis.⁵

⁴Canada. *National Ports Survey, 1931-32*. Report by Sir Alexander Gibb (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1932), p. 122.

⁵Robert Craig Brown, *Robert Laird Borden: A Biography, Vol. 1: 1854-1914* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1975), p. 14.

Port development monopolized public debate over prospects for urban growth in the interwar period. Other initiatives like municipal reform, “bonusing” to attract industry, town planning and eradication of slum housing did not hold public attention to the same degree.⁶ The port helped to define the community’s sense of identity; it boosted optimism in the future in prosperous times and helped to restore confidence in not-so-prosperous times. The origins of port development policy were especially relevant to the Second World War period because the use of Halifax as a primary terminus of the convoy system depended on the quality of harbour facilities and the efficiency of their administration. These attributes were firmly entrenched long before the war. The systematic erosion of local autonomy over port development in the interwar period paved the way for even tighter control of port operations exercised by federal and British authorities during the Second World War.

The withdrawal of Imperial forces in 1905-06 signalled the end of an era for Halifax. When the country slid into recession on the eve of the First World War, local businessmen began to rue the day the British had left. In the interim, the Halifax Board of Trade lobbied for “improved harbour facilities, freight rate parity with competing Atlantic ports, use of steamer subsidies to attract traffic” and running rights for the Canadian Pacific Railway on Intercolonial Railway trackage into Halifax.⁷ Few of these objectives were realized prior to the outbreak of war, but the announcement in 1912 of major new harbour

⁶On “bonusing” see D.A. Sutherland, “The Personnel and Policies of the Halifax Board of Trade, 1890-1914,” in L.R. Fischer and E.W. Sager, eds., *The Enterprising Canadians* (St. John's, 1979), p. 216.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 215.

works, as part of a massive federal public works programme, raised expectations to unprecedented heights.

A “major rehabilitation” of harbour facilities had been contemplated by federal authorities for more than ten years.⁸ The proposed Ocean Terminals, an integrated complex of piers, transit sheds and rail yards, were intended to establish Halifax as the eastern terminus of the national transcontinental railway system, and provide improved facilities for handling immigrants. Because the site chosen for the scheme was nearly two miles south of the Intercolonial Railway station, it was no small task to select the method and route by which trains would access the new terminals in the southeast quadrant of the peninsula. Engineers settled on a railway cut, blasted out of bedrock to a depth sufficient to minimize noise and smoke pollution, bringing rail lines down the western side and across the peninsula just above Point Pleasant Park. [See Fig. 2-1] Rail yards were also slated for the Richmond Terminal adjacent to the old North Street station.

Given the potential for disturbing the tranquillity of the staid south end, it is not surprising that opposition to the scheme soon developed. The surprise came when resistance dissipated almost as quickly as it appeared; the *Herald* described a public meeting called to air objections to the scheme as “a complete triumph of progress” and “a Waterloo for the reactionaries,” whose representations “became almost pitiable.”⁹ Some south end residents expressed concerns about noise and depressed land values, prompting discussion of the feasibility of using electric engines to shunt trains through the city – an

⁸Sutherland, p. 211.

⁹*Herald*, 17 June 1913.

idea later abandoned as being too costly. Besides, opposition was not universal; property owners situated along the Northwest Arm stood to benefit from the creation of a “dry moat” insulating their land holdings from urban expansion. North end residents also voiced concern about the effect that additional construction costs for the Ocean Terminals railway would have on the municipal tax rate. The north end was naturally less enthusiastic about a major project slated for another section of the city.

Critics of the Ocean Terminals were in the minority because hopes for the future were very much pinned on its completion. At one of the numerous public ceremonies hailing the plan, the president of the Board of Trade recalled the city’s motto, “*E Mari Mercēs*,” to emphasize “the dependence of Halifax on the sea, its products and commerce.”¹⁰ But those who hoped to benefit most from a revitalized local economy were more concerned with land values than port development. In the vanguard were real estate developers eager to subdivide pasture and estate lands into building lots in the western sections of the peninsula. The Carrick Real Estate Company, for example, promoted its new Oxford Park subdivision with advertisements advising prospective buyers to act quickly because “everybody” was “dead certain that Halifax is going to...grow mighty fast” once the terminals were started. “Big profits in Real Estate are made by those...shrewd enough to get in at ground floor,” urged a company advertisement.¹¹ One promotional brochure entitled “Halifax – An Old City with a Brand New Future” heralded the arrival of an “era of progressive development which will be

¹⁰*Herald*, 16 May 1913.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 7 June 1913.

marked by the day *The Dirt Begins to Fly*,” a reference to the startup date for the new right-of-way.¹² In its Barrington Street storefront, a furniture company mounted a display depicting what the “New Halifax” would look like. “The boom is coming, you can feel it in the air,” the firm advertised, “but to keep it going, we must all be optimists now, put our shoulders to the wheel, and help make the ‘New Halifax’ a reality.”¹³

Soon the whole city was enchanted with the notion that “transportation will make [Halifax]...large and progressive.”¹⁴ Anticipating “the day the dirt begins to fly,” the *Halifax Herald* informed its readers that the city was already a “flourishing...industrial centre” with more than seventy factories, and “the new terminals will...open the markets of the world to Halifax industries.” “We want men with push and brain and capital to make this town hum industrially,” the paper declared; “We have past the looking-glass stage of our existence. We are out for bigger and better and brighter days, and we are going to get them. We have abundance of faith in our own town...[and] its future...That is why we ask the capitalist to COME TO HALIFAX!”¹⁵

These hopes were dashed on the shoals of economic depression and war. On June 14, 1913, a crowd of 15,000 gathered to hear Premier Borden and the Minister of Railways and Canals, Frank Cochrane, promise that the new Halifax terminals would make the port “second to none on the continent of America.”¹⁶ On another continent two thousand miles away, financial markets were beginning to collapse. Six weeks later, the

¹²*Herald*, 4 June 1913.

¹³*Ibid.*, 6 June 1913.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 4 June 1913.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 10 June 1913.

¹⁶*Canadian Annual Review [CAR]* (1913), p. 200, quoted in Brown, p. 222.

dirt did indeed begin to fly, but the boom that was expected to follow did not materialize. The outbreak of war the following August postponed further the arrival of the “new” Halifax by once more addressing military priorities (after years of neglect), and directing manpower, money and the government’s attention towards the immediate objectives of the war effort. Then came the catastrophic explosion of December 1917, disintegration of the war-induced inflationary economy in 1921, population losses in the 1920s, and a host of other problems. By 1933, only half of the 70 or more manufacturing firms in Halifax twenty years before were still in business.¹⁷

Despite the 1913 depression and onset of war, the Ocean Terminals went ahead more or less as planned. The scale and sophistication of the project were impressive: by March, 1916, the excavation work on the six-mile railway cut was 65 per cent complete, and dredging in the harbour for new piers was similarly well advanced. An ingenious method of pier construction was employed whereby huge concrete blocks – more than 1,200 in total, each weighing 63 tons – were poured in a nearby moulding yard and moved into place with a mobile crane and flatcars [See Appendix A, Fig. A-1]. The moulding yard was equipped with electric lighting and the work “carried on continuously by day and night shifts all the year round.” In addition, 1,000 reinforced steel and concrete piles, and 605 guide and key posts were fabricated at Eastern Passage and floated across the harbour to the project site.¹⁸

¹⁷*Herald*, 10 June 1913; Nova Scotia. *A Submission on Dominion-Provincial Relations and the Fiscal Disabilities of Nova Scotia within the Canadian Federation*, (Halifax, 1934), p. 210 *passim*.

¹⁸Canada. *Sessional Papers* 1917 no. 20, “Annual Report of the Department of Railways and Canals,” pp. 218-225.

The Ocean Terminals were the premier showpiece of the federal government's massive public works campaign. More than seven million dollars was expended on the project during the war – a substantial sum for the time but a far cry from the \$35 million claimed by the Carrick Real Estate Company in its 1913 booklet.¹⁹ Total investment eventually surpassed twenty million dollars in 1932.²⁰ From April 1915 to March 1916 a workforce of nearly nine hundred men were employed in excavation, laying track, building overgrade bridges, draining and sewerage work, dredging and filling, and pier construction.²¹ The work continued apace in 1917, despite the growing difficulty in finding an adequate supply of labour. That summer, *Scientific American* informed its readers that “the largest docks in the world” were “nearing completion at Halifax” under the direction of American contractors.²² Because of its location, the complex was spared serious damage in the disastrous explosion four months later – in fact construction of sheds on Pier “A” was accelerated to replace those destroyed at Richmond Depot in the north end.²³

The Maritime Rights movement of the mid-1920s reminded the federal government of its commitment to develop Saint John and Halifax as “national” ports. The report of the Royal (Duncan) Commission on Maritime Claims noted that “development of a port is

¹⁹The booklet claimed other outlandish sums that were to be spent in Halifax, totalling 52 million dollars. These figures seem to have little factual basis, although they were widely quoted (in the *Herald*, for example, 7 June 1913) and gained further credence when Thomas Raddall reproduced them in *Warden of the North*, (p. 248).

²⁰*National Ports Survey*, p. 123.

²¹*Sessional Papers* 1917 no. 20, p. 225.

²²*Scientific American*, 11 August 1917.

²³*Sessional Papers* 1919 no. 20, p. 44.

as much a matter of...business organization and practical administration, as is the development of any extensive manufacturing or industrial enterprise,” and that such development was unlikely to materialize at either port “in present circumstances.” Accordingly, the Duncan Commission recommended the establishment of Harbour Commissions at Saint John and Halifax, “to see that the port facilities are developed on such a scale as will gradually – but by no means slowly – create channels through which trade can expand both winter and summer.”²⁴

The latter point was significant because it had become a fact of life that both Maritime ports were serving as winter adjuncts to Montréal, by far the larger Eastern port in terms of facilities and volume of traffic. This left Saint John and Halifax under-utilized for eight months of the year. Montréal had expanded its harbour facilities enormously in the 1920s –for a time it was the largest grain handling port in the world. By 1928, all previous records for total cargo tonnage handled at Montréal had been shattered.²⁵

The port of Halifax pressed vigorously for a larger share of the grain export trade after a 1.1 million bushel elevator was built – replacing a smaller, older structure – adjacent to the Ocean Terminals in 1924.²⁶ In three years, the quantity of grain shipped from Halifax increased sixfold, but even so it remained a tiny fraction of Montréal’s grain exports. Halifax shipped six million bushels of grain in 1929, thanks largely to a contract with an American firm that allowed the elevator to be used for blending Canadian and

²⁴Canada. *Report of the Royal Commission on Maritime Claims* [Duncan Commission] (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1926), p. 29.

²⁵CAR, 1924-25, p. 135; 1935-36, p. 636.

²⁶NA MG 27 III B11 Vol. 7 file “Halifax Harbour Commission,” “Submission on behalf of Messrs Peter Jack and Charles W. Ackhurst,” 24 March 1931, p. 31.

American grain, but the following year exports plummeted.²⁷ Thereafter, market conditions and poor harvests prevented Halifax from increasing its share of the grain traffic, despite the installation in 1931 of a marine tower that eliminated the laborious manual loading process, and expansion of the grain elevator to a capacity of 2.2 million bushels.

The grain trade was seen as a catalyst for port business as a whole because of its importance as ballast cargo.²⁸ In order to progress beyond the status of a port-of-call, Halifax needed a readily-available and profitable bulk commodity which would entice shipping companies into making more frequent stops there, even when their cargoes were bound for another destination. Equally desirable was the establishment of regular scheduled service, which brought more ships into port for longer turnarounds. The availability of ballast cargoes attracted shipping companies because it reduced unused capacity – the bane of profit margins in the shipping business – and grain was popular because the incidence of broken stowage with grain was “practically nil.”²⁹ Despite improvements such as the marine tower, which passed a net savings of five cents per bushel on to the shipper and brought loading rates up to 75,000 bushels per hour, the fact remained that Saint John loaded grain at double this rate, and Montréal was six times faster.³⁰ The capacity of the Halifax grain terminal exceeded fifteen million bushels, but

²⁷PANS MG I Vol. 466 no. 31, Halifax Harbour Commissioners [HHC], “Memoranda prepared for use of Sir Alexander Gibb, G.B.E., C.B., 1931,” pp. 105-106.

²⁸HHC “Memoranda,” p. 105.

²⁹Canada. Restrictive Trade Practices Commission. *Shipping Conference Arrangements and Practices* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1965), p. 22.

³⁰*Herald*, 1 January 1932; Brysson Cunningham, *Port Studies* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1929), p. 108; *Canada Year Book* [CYB] 1940, p. 678.

this maximum limit was attained only in 1940 [See Fig. 2-1]. Grain exports from Halifax during the Second World War demonstrated that facilities erected in the mid-twenties had been under-utilized for many years. The irony was that the considerable effort to capture a larger share of the grain market may have been pointless, “since grain added little to the economy of the ports through which it was shipped.”³¹

Be that as it may, the failure to maximize grain handling potential at Halifax illustrated one of the key differences between port development and other types of industrial expansion. Capital investment in primary or secondary industrial enterprises usually occurred in response to a perceived demand for the resource or product. Because of the scope of public works, however, and the length of time required to complete large projects – not to mention the political pressures brought to bear to create them – construction was often undertaken in anticipation of future demand. Granted, the erection and later expansion of a new grain elevator occurred during a period of bumper harvests and general prosperity. But as long as other Canadian and American ports improved *their* grain handling facilities, there was little that Halifax could do to sharpen its competitive position vis-à-vis grain terminals in more advantageous locations. Nevertheless, a sizable grain elevator was built – then doubled in size only six years later – because, as a “national” port, it seemed appropriate to have one there.

The Duncan Commission yielded to political pressure to give the ports of Halifax and Saint John the improvements that had long been promised, but apart from vague

³¹ E.R. Forbes, *Maritime Rights*, p. 101.

Fig. 2-1. Total Cargo Tonnage in and out of the Port of Halifax, 1935-1953.

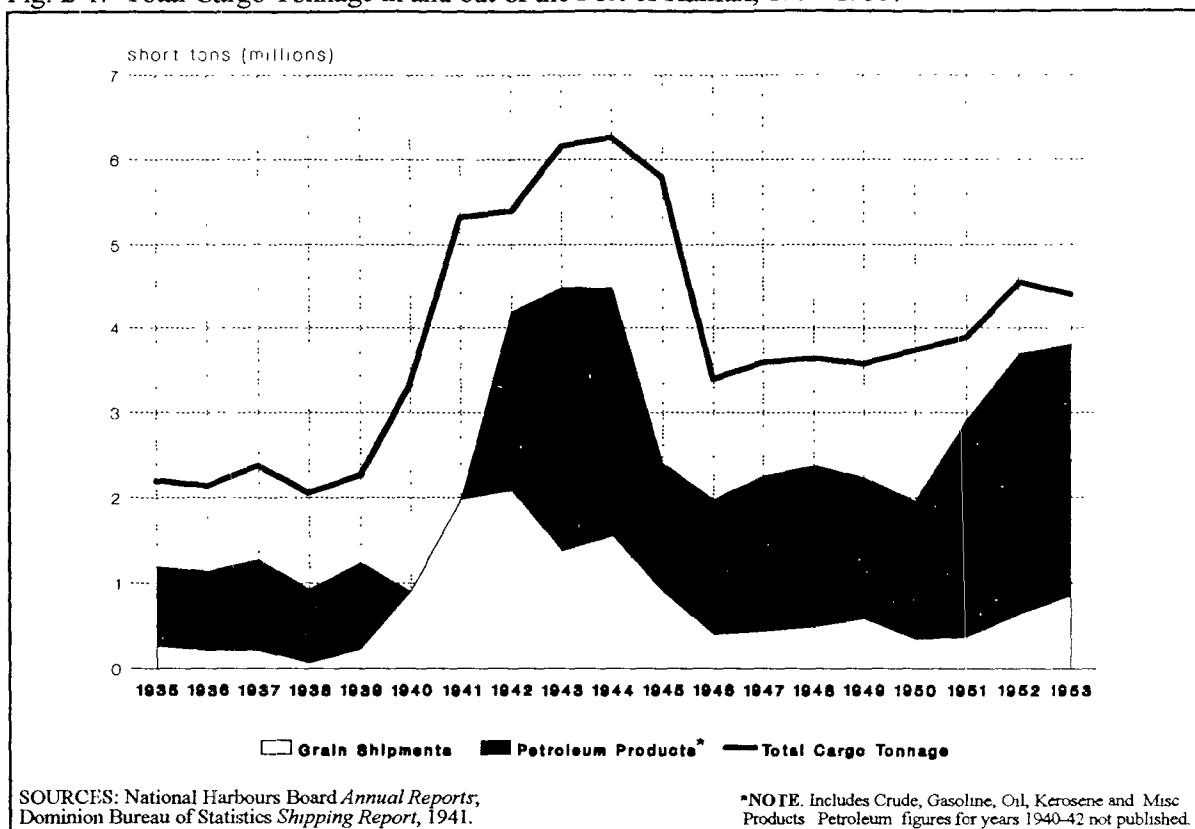
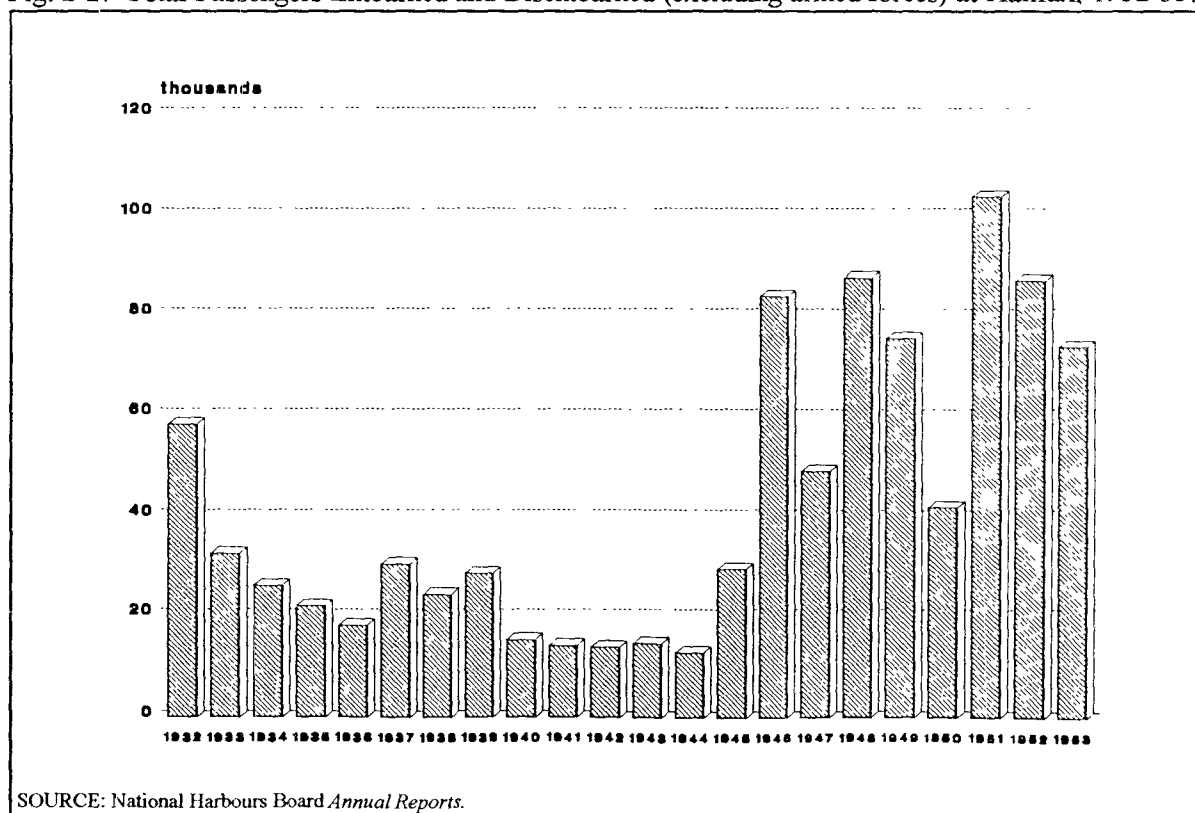


Fig. 2-2. Total Passengers Embarked and Disembarked (excluding armed forces) at Halifax, 1932-53.



generalizations about experimenting with year-round usage, no guidelines were offered for long-range port development policy and objectives. The three Harbour Commissioners appointed in January 1928 to manage the port were given unusual leeway in deciding how best to accomplish their task. In practice this freedom allowed liberties to be taken with the public purse. Within a year, Chairman Peter R. Jack would announce a major building programme costing well over five million dollars.³² The improvements were slated for the Ocean Terminals, the huge dock and railway complex initiated by the Borden government in 1913. Work on the project had lagged after the First World War, and stopped entirely in 1921. By then, the 610-metre wharf running parallel to the shoreline, known as the Quay Wall, could accommodate with ease the largest liners afloat.³³ The Quay Wall was long enough to make three normal-sized berths, nos. 20, 21 and 22. Next to the Quay Wall lay Pier “A,” forming a basin with four berths, nos. 23-26, and two more, 27-28, on the pier’s south face. No. 26 berth on Pier “A” was leased to the Dominion Coal Company for coaling purposes.

It was not until 1928 that the new immigration centre, soon to be called “Pier 21,” opened at the centre berth on the Quay Wall.³⁴ The building programme announced in

³²CAR, 1928-29, p. 227.

³³In *Warden of the North*, Thomas Raddall states that the Quay Wall “had to wait fifteen to twenty years” to be built (p. 249); he places the completion of the piers in the year 1928 (p. 279). Graham Metson also mistakenly identifies “the New Quay” as “completed in 1931.” (*East Coast Port*, p. 4). However the chief engineer on the Ocean Terminals project reported in 1919 that the Quay Wall was nearly finished. *Sessional Papers* 1919 no. 20, “Report of the Department of Railways and Canals,” p. 36, (also accompanying map). See also 1923 *Canadian Port and Harbour Directory*, p. 16, and map on p. 14. The confusion arises from the numerous delays imposed on shed construction, even though the wharf itself had been finished for some years.

³⁴Trudy Duivenvoorden Mitic and J.P. LeBlanc, *Pier 21, The Gateway that Changed Canada*, (Hantsport, N.S.: Lancelot Press, 1988), p. 13.

November of that year included much-needed transit sheds and a second (“B”) pier, bringing the total number of berths at the Ocean Terminals to fourteen.³⁵ By 1931 the rubble stone core for a projected third pier was already in place.³⁶ Construction had also begun in 1927 on a one million cubic-foot cold storage plant at the foot of Pier B, but this facility belonged to private interests.³⁷

In addition to the Ocean Terminals, two more sections of the Halifax waterfront fell under Harbour Commission jurisdiction: Richmond Terminal and the Deep Water Terminals. The original Richmond Depot, comprising one lesser and two larger piers located north of the Navy Dockyard, suffered extensive damage in the 1917 Explosion and was not rebuilt. The newly-created Halifax Shipyards Limited took over the area in 1918.³⁸ By the mid-1920s, a bulkhead pier 213 metres in length had been constructed just north of the shipyards to handle bulk cargoes, with facilities leased by the government to oil, cement and fertilizer companies. Situated nearby was a large cattle shed, with a 1,000-head capacity, operated by the Harbour Commission.³⁹ At the southern end of the Dockyard lay the Deep Water Terminals, comprising three piers, Nos. 2, 3 and 4. The upper story of the concrete shed on Pier 2, (where the old immigration centre had been located before 1928), was by 1931 being used to store potatoes.

³⁵F.W. Wallace, *Canadian Ports and Shipping Directory* (Gardenvale, P.Q.: National Business Publications, 1934), pp. 81-82.

³⁶*National Ports Survey*, p. 9.

³⁷*CAR*, 1927-28, p. 246.

³⁸*Sessional Papers* 1919 no. 20, p. 44; 1923 *Canadian Port and Harbour Directory*, p. 18.

³⁹*National Ports Survey*, p. 114; PANS MG 1 Vol. 466 no. 30, J.L. Hetherington papers, “Port of Halifax - General Information, Facilities and Charges” (Halifax Harbour Commissioners, ca. 1930), p. 7.

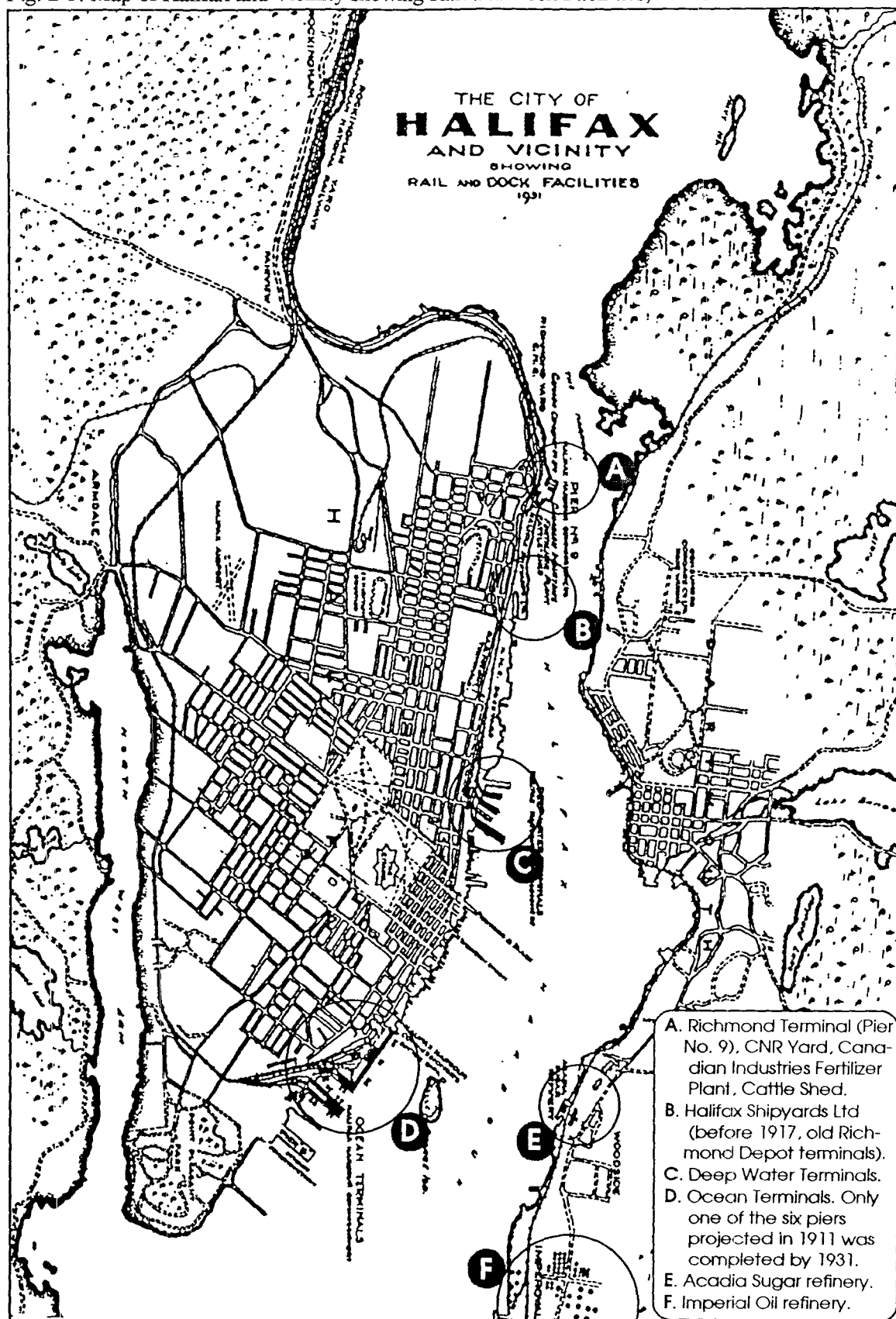
The on-hand capacity of railway yards adjoining the various docks totalled an impressive 4,900 cars: at the Ocean Terminals, 1,705 cars; at the Deep Water Terminals, 637; at the Richmond Yard, 1,284; at the Rockingham Yard on Bedford Basin, another 1,284. These facilities were pronounced “in excess of present requirements,” and “a relic of war conditions,” when surveyed in 1932, but this observation was inaccurate because much of the trackage at Rockingham and at the Ocean Terminals was not laid down until after the First World War.⁴⁰

The original Ocean Terminals plan had been influenced by overly optimistic projections of future growth. With the onset of the Depression, some of its more grandiose features were scaled down. For example, only three of the proposed six piers were actually constructed.⁴¹ The most controversial component – already begun when the Harbour Commissioners took office – was the decision to build a railway hotel. One year earlier, efforts to finance a modern hotel in Halifax having failed, a consortium of Halifax businessmen invited the Canadian National Railway to subscribe \$250,000, and the Canadian Pacific Railway \$100,000, towards the construction of a large hotel, to be named the “Lord Nelson.” Parliament twice rejected CNR participation, on the grounds that it fell “outside ordinary railway operations,” whereupon Canadian Pacific jumped in with an offer to subscribe the entire \$350,000. On the heels of this announcement, Sir Henry Thornton, the CNR’s autocratic president, revealed that the government railway

⁴⁰*National Ports Survey*, p. 115; “Port of Halifax,” p. 18.

⁴¹The dotted outlines of the phantom piers are clearly drawn on the official city maps during the First World War, as well as being visible on later versions. PANS RG 35-102 (1B) Box 21 #87, #88 and *Halifax Mail*, 11 March 1942. See 1923 *Canadian Port and Harbour Directory*, p. 14.

Fig. 2-3. Map of Halifax and Vicinity showing Rail and Dock Facilities, 1931.



was planning to build its own hotel, the Nova Scotian. By incorporating a station into the design, Thornton was able to bypass Parliamentary approval and start work immediately. When the Lord Nelson Hotel Company launched its hotel project, the race was on. The keenness of the competition was illustrated by the fact that the sod was turned for both hotels on the same day.⁴²

By the end of 1931, the CNR had invested \$2.4 million in the Nova Scotian, double the original cost estimates.⁴³ Meanwhile, the CPR complained that its involvement in the Lord Nelson project had been undertaken on the “strong recommendation” of the CNR, and that building two major hotels in Halifax was “entirely without justification.”⁴⁴ A report on the national transportation system submitted to the federal government four years later agreed that “one [hotel] would have been ample for the requirements of the public.”⁴⁵ The CNR was roundly criticized for engaging in direct competition not only with the largest private corporation in the country, but against local business interests heavily committed to the Lord Nelson project.

The Halifax Harbour Commission managed to avoid raising the hackles of the business community, but its fiscal policy proved no less extravagant, and its management strategies no less questionable. From its inception, the commission operated on the precept that port business should benefit both the party in power and local interests. Thus

⁴²CAR, pp. 204-205; Forbes, p. 228, note 31.

⁴³Canada. *Report of the Royal Commission to inquire into Railways and Transportation in Canada, 1931-2* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1932), p. 25.

⁴⁴CAR, 1927-28, p. 710, excerpt from *Forty-Seventh Annual Report of the Canadian Pacific Railway*, year ending December 31, 1927.

⁴⁵*Royal Commission into Railways and Transportation*, p. 25.

Halifax firms were favoured with plum contracts, party hacks were put on the Harbour Commission payroll, and the ranks of the labour force swelled in the months and weeks leading up to the federal election in the summer of 1930. This reign of error was capped when the Chairman himself resigned from his post to run as a Liberal candidate in the federal election. (He lost).

Four months after the election, the new Conservative government replaced the Liberal appointees on the Harbour Commission.⁴⁶ A Liberal critic later charged that the Conservatives fired “everybody working in Halifax harbour in 1930...down to the men who swept the docks.”⁴⁷ In October, 1930, the government appointed Mr. Justice John F. Orde of the Supreme Court of Ontario to conduct an inquiry into the former Harbour Commission administration. The allegations enumerated “improvident contracts” and cases of “faulty work, lax administration and partisan interference in the affairs of the late Commission.” For example, the Chief Engineer of the Harbour Commission, A.G. Tapley, testified that a contract for trackage on Pier B was signed hours prior to Chairman Jack leaving office, but before Tapley had a chance to approve it. The deal, with the J.P. Porter Co., a Montréal subsidiary of an American construction firm, allocated \$800,000 for the work when, it was alleged, “only \$518,000 should have been paid.”⁴⁸ The inquiry was unable to locate the head of the firm to get his side of the story, but an employee of the parent company produced a diary purporting to show the movements of the elusive Mr. Porter during the period in question. “I suggest to you,” government counsel C.B. Smith

⁴⁶J.S. Scott, “Our Real Concern is the Port,” *Port and Province* (December, 1935), p. 7.

⁴⁷Robert Bothwell and William Kilbourn, *C.D. Howe: A Biography* (Toronto, 1979), p. 88.

⁴⁸*Herald*, 20 November 1930.

thundered, “that every entry...was made by the same pen at the same time.” The diary, remarked the *Herald* accusingly, “looked new, showing no signs of wear.”⁴⁹

The inquiry was also told Halifax firms received “improper” rebates on rentals of government piers, and agent commissions on construction materials after the purchases were made; that contractors on Pier B “used rounded beach gravel instead of rubble stone,” potentially compromising the integrity of the cribwork; that an “unproductive contract” with a New York company prevented other grain shippers from using the elevator; and that “1372 men employed on election day were paid some \$5,000 in wages...and that few of these men did any work on that day.”⁵⁰

The defendants, speaking through their lawyer in a submission to Mr. Justice Orde, considered the inquiry to be a “fishing expedition” founded on vague and ambiguous charges.⁵¹ Reminding the judge that their actions had been guided by the Duncan Royal Commission – “the textbook of every forward thinking person” in the province – which had recommended that harbour improvements at Halifax were needed “even ahead of expansion of trade,” the Harbour Commissioners noted that the volume of cargo handled had increased by 15 per cent during their tenure, and the number of seagoing vessels had risen by 10 per cent. Their actions had been justified, the Commissioners argued, because “little or no expenditure had been made...for either capital or maintenance” before management of federally-owned waterfront properties was taken over from the Canadian

⁴⁹*Herald*, 28 January 1931.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 20 November 1930.

⁵¹NA MG 27 III B11 Vol. 7 file “Halifax Harbour Commission.” “Submission on behalf of Messrs. Peter Jack and Charles W. Ackhurst,” 24 March 1931, p. 2.

National Railway. The latter's responsibility had originally been "a temporary makeshift" until the Department of Public Works could assume responsibility for harbour facilities, but for unspecified reasons this did not happen.⁵²

The beleaguered Commissioners marshalled evidence to counter allegations of irregularities in a contract with a British company to purchase a new type of cement – known by its French name, *ciment fondu* – for the construction of Pier B. The product was relatively new and untested in North America. It had been used by the French in a number of large projects, including the largest concrete bridge in the world (at Brest), and the construction of vaults for gold bullion.⁵³

The Chairman of the Harbour Commission was unrepentant when he appeared before the Orde Commission. "I submit that unless we are splitting hairs; unless you are going to dot your i's and cross your t's, [there was] no unauthorized...work." Port administrators seemed unusually diligent in fulfilling their political obligations, however. The General Superintendent, Dennis Moriarty, earnestly confessed having "the interests of the Liberal party at heart" during the federal election campaign. This presented a dilemma when completion of harbour works "just a few days before the elections" threatened his men with wholesale layoffs.⁵⁴ The solution was to keep workers on the payroll even though there was nothing for them to do.

⁵²"Halifax Harbour Commission," pp. 3–4.

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 17. Ironically, most of the French gold reserves were destined to cross the Atlantic nine years later to be landed on the Ocean Terminal docks. See Alfred Draper, *Operation Fish* (Markham, Ont.: PaperJacks Ltd., 1980).

⁵⁴*Herald*, 5 December 1930.

The actions of the Liberals were assailed mercilessly by their political opponents. The charges certainly seemed serious enough to warrant a thorough investigation. The Conservative member for Halifax, F.P. Quinn, claimed that the Harbour Commission “had been overdrawn to the extent of over \$1,000,000,” most of which had been expended “in employing men...for election purposes.” In effect, Quinn charged, the men were “bribed with their own money.”⁵⁵ Regrettably, Mr. Justice Orde died on 1 August 1932 before submitting his report to the government.⁵⁶ New evidence concerning a certain telegram to the British company involved in the *ciment fondu* transaction came to light in the summer of 1931, necessitating another hearing in Ottawa in October.

The conclusion may be drawn from testimony given at the hearings that partisan politics did occupy a central place in the decision-making process at the Harbour Commission – even to the point of carrying over into the inquiry itself, since the government counsel, C.B. Smith, K.C., was then the president of the Nova Scotia Conservative Association.⁵⁷ The patronage problem was not confined to Halifax – there had been a similar inquiry into the operations of the Toronto Harbour Commission five years before⁵⁸ – nor would it disappear when the federal government created the National Harbours Board in 1936. As will be shown when port performance is examined in a

⁵⁵*Herald*, 26 June 1931.

⁵⁶University of Toronto Archives, Grier collection, A73-0026/352 (67); *Toronto Star*, 2 August 1932.

⁵⁷*Herald*, 26 February 1931.

⁵⁸References to this inquiry may be found in John C. Weaver, “Elitism and the Corporate Ideal: Businessmen and Boosters in Canadian Civic Reform, 1890-1920,” in A.R. McCormack and I. MacPherson, eds. *Cities in the West* (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1975), p. 73.

wartime context, inexperience and lack of managerial skills impeded efficiency as much as labour shortages or lack of adequate facilities.

The vehemence of Opposition charges of fiscal mismanagement suggested that the Bennett government would abolish the beleaguered Harbour Commissions after the 1930 election. Instead, a distinguished British civil engineer, Sir Alexander Gibb, was retained “to make a thorough survey of Canadian ports,” and recommend “an administrative policy and program” to the government.⁵⁹ The idea was warmly received by the *Herald*, which noted that Gibb was “no stranger to the Halifax port authority,” having already “been consulted on matters of port development.”⁶⁰ Gibb’s assessment of the Halifax situation was, however, discouraging. The *National Ports Survey*, published in 1932, echoed conventional wisdom regarding the obstacles to growth in Halifax: the lack of a broad, accessible hinterland, the limited industrial base of the local economy, and the distance from major Canadian markets. Finding no evidence that these realities were about to disappear, Gibb concluded that “the economic justification of Halifax is essentially as a passenger liner port.”⁶¹

There was some logic in this – the harbour was commodious enough that huge liners could come and go as they pleased, and for a time the use of tugs for berthing was optional.⁶² Halifax was ideally situated to take advantage of the popular North Atlantic route between New York and Europe, and passengers travelling by train to the American

⁵⁹*Port and Province* (December, 1935), p. 8.

⁶⁰*Herald*, 18 March 1931.

⁶¹*National Ports Survey*, p. 123.

⁶²“Port of Halifax,” p. 38.

and Canadian interiors reached their destinations sooner by disembarking at Halifax. Such facts were well-known, but Gibb does not explain why scheduled liner traffic thus far had failed to develop with all these incentives nor what means would hasten its establishment in the future. On his two visits to Halifax in the summer of 1931, the British engineer was doubtless impressed with the sight of Cunard ocean liners *Berengaria*, *Aquitania*, and *Mauretania*, which had just begun to call regularly at Halifax. But in the case of the latter two, they were visiting Halifax for the first time since serving as troopships during the First World War. Indeed, the main reason the so-called “Big Three” were stopping at Halifax on their weekend cruises out of New York was to “avoid...infringing United States coasting regulations by sailing and arriving at the same port without calling at another country”-- regulations put in place because of prohibition.⁶³

Despite Gibb’s optimistic forecast, passenger liner traffic to Halifax plummeted in the 1930s, falling off even more after the war began [Fig. 2-2]. Relaxation of immigrant quotas after 1945 reversed this trend, but the resulting traffic – due primarily to postwar population displacement in Europe – was temporary. The golden age of luxury ocean liner travel was fast drawing to a close.

The *National Ports Survey* reached three basic conclusions: that control of Canada’s major ports should be centralized; that port managers be appointed by a central board, rather than Harbour Commissions; and that local advisory councils be established to provide “adequate representation of local interests and port users.”⁶⁴ The Conservatives

⁶³*Herald*, 2 May 1931

⁶⁴*Halifax Mail*, 20 March 1936

delayed action on the Report until late in their administration. It was left to the Liberals to implement the Gibb recommendations. Accordingly, Bill 17, an Act calling for the creation of a National Harbours Board, was shepherded through Parliament by Liberal Marine and Railways Minister C.D. Howe in the spring of 1936. The Minister characterized the bill as a countermeasure designed to offset the tendency of Harbour Commissions to pressure the government into making “unwise expenditures by promoting local sentiment,” the end result of which, Howe declared, was “uneconomic construction.”⁶⁵

One might well argue that the designation of five “national” ports east of Montréal was itself uneconomic, given that only half of the total Canadian overseas export trade was being funneled through Canadian ports. Advocates of Maritime Rights protested loudly in the 1920s that the loss of trade to New England ought to be halted “on the grounds of economic nationalism.”⁶⁶ But economic nationalism within the framework of the National Harbours Board only worked in favour of national ports when federal and local interests coincided. It was clear that federal purse strings would be tightened under the NHB, but centralization also implied that, in addition to competing with American ports, the future of Halifax was now intertwined with the needs and priorities of other national ports. And contrary to Mr. Howe’s peroration, federal port administration did not signify that decisions affecting harbour development would be any less political than in the past; it simply meant that the political decisions would be made in Ottawa rather than

⁶⁵*Hansard* 1 Edward VIII 1936, Vol. II, p. 1412.

⁶⁶Forbes, p. 100.

locally. This became even more obvious when the National Harbours Board Act failed to implement the third recommendation of the Gibb report dealing with local advisory councils.⁶⁷

The Halifax Harbour Commission, newly-constituted with friends of the Bennett government after the 1930 federal election, believed they had found an ally in Sir Alexander Gibb. "We are not in favour of a central administration of Canadian ports, to the exclusion of local control," the Commissioners had written in a submission to the British engineer, and his report seemed to endorse their position.⁶⁸ Gibb emphatically denied that "centralized control can replace an efficient and active local administration, or the special knowledge and initiative of the local business community, both of which are vital to a port's prosperity." But as to the utility of Harbour Commissions, Gibb found favour with only two, Montréal and Vancouver, mainly because of "the existence of a powerful and virile commercial community" in those cities. Everywhere else, according to Gibb, the Commissions showed "a stronger political than business outlook."⁶⁹ Gibb thus was sending a mixed message to federal authorities: Harbour Commissions were unworkable because their motives were too partisan, and centralization was unsatisfactory because it was not partisan enough. He resolved the dilemma by recommending local advisory councils, believing perhaps that they would be more successful at separating

⁶⁷Halifax was still protesting this omission--to no avail--fifteen years later. See Canada. *Report of the Royal Commission on Transportation 1951* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1951), pp. 165-168. For a summary of the Halifax position with regard to the Gibb report, the abolition of Harbour Commissions and the creation of the National Harbours Board, see J.S. Scott, "This Port Administrative Question," Supplement to *Port and Province*, (September, 1937).

⁶⁸HHC "Memoranda," p. 16.

⁶⁹*National Ports Survey*, pp. 15, 31.

business from politics. The government, on the other hand, quietly buried the idea and opted for centralized authority.

No doubt sensing that their actions were under close scrutiny, the post-1930 Halifax Harbour Commission displayed all the enthusiasm of a new broom – creating a Traffic Department to monitor ship and cargo movements and international trade patterns, revamping accounting and timekeeping procedures, and transferring “car drivers, elevator clerks, store clerks, boatmen, etc. from an hourly basis of pay to a salary basis,” in an attempt to establish a more stable workforce.⁷⁰ The new commission found operations to be “considerably overmanned,” a situation they seemed anxious to correct.

The commission submitted a lengthy memorandum to Sir Alexander Gibb, touting it as a “programme for future development” far more ambitious than anything previously contemplated for the port. Among the proposals were a railway along Water Street linking the Ocean Terminals with the Deep Water Terminals; inclusion of a railway line on the proposed harbour bridge; the erection of a terminal warehouse for long-term cargo storage (to encourage the use of Halifax as an *entrepôt*); and doubling berthage capacity over the next twenty years. The Commissioners argued that the Water Street link would provide rail service to private wharves situated between the Harbour Commission properties. Their real motive was the eventual expropriation of virtually all privately-owned waterfront on the Halifax side by extending the Quay Wall northwards a distance of approximately 1,200 metres.⁷¹ Gibb conceded that the waterfront railway was a good

⁷⁰HHC “Memoranda,” p. 4.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, p. 115.

idea, not because it would assist private wharfingers, but because operations between the north and south end terminals would be better coordinated. He felt the location of the Ocean Terminals complex had been a mistake – that modernization of wharves and sheds at the Deep Water Terminals would have been the preferred course rather than building practically a whole new port in the south end.⁷² In this he was probably correct; the Ocean Terminals site had been chosen ostensibly because it was one of the few clear stretches of waterfront able to accommodate the huge scale of the original plan – but that plan had been far too grandiose from the beginning to be realized in its entirety.

The Gibb report acknowledged the value of a terminal warehouse in cultivating entrepôt business; however, it recommended that the Harbour Commission “welcome and encourage private interests if and when they appear on the scene.”⁷³ In this case “if” proved to be the operative word; the terminal warehouse proposal died a quiet death. This was regrettable, considering the success of similar facilities built at other ports like New York (Bush Terminal) and Manchester (Trafford Park).⁷⁴ Here was an instructive example of the ambivalent hand of government control: publicly-funded improvements deterred private investment in the harbour because of the competition; but government reluctance to support improvements frightened investors as well because it cast doubt on the viability of the project. Thus “national” development locked ports into a cycle of dependency on government initiatives unless private capital was confident enough to pursue an independent course.

⁷²*National Ports Survey*, pp. 124-125.

⁷³*Ibid.*, p. 128.

⁷⁴Cunningham, pp. 12-13.

Another important recommendation of the Harbour Commissioners urged that a proposed harbour bridge include a railway line, because “little or no space” existed on the Halifax peninsula for industrial development, whereas on “the Dartmouth side...there is ample space.”⁷⁵ Gibb responded coolly to this proposal. He considered Bedford Basin a better site for industrial development, and, while agreeing in principle to the construction of a bridge across the harbour, he saw no reason to build one right away.⁷⁶ This represented a serious setback to local interests, for whom a high-level bridge had been a dream ever since two abortive attempts to span the harbour forty years before.⁷⁷ R.B. Bennett had promised a bridge during the 1930 election, and a deputation of citizens from Halifax and Dartmouth travelled to Ottawa in April 1931 to press the matter.⁷⁸ Unfortunately, the timing was not right for starting major public works, and the Gibb report soured federal enthusiasm for the project.

From the perspective of urban development, the twenty-year postponement of the harbour bridge had profound implications. Had it been built in the early thirties, the town of Dartmouth would have undergone residential expansion, thus putting it in a much better position to absorb surplus population from the Halifax peninsula during the Second World War. The federal decision not to build the harbour bridge, while simultaneously pouring millions of dollars into developing the port, graphically illustrates how the long term growth of Halifax was inordinately influenced by political factors in the absence of either a

⁷⁵HHC “Memoranda,” p. 83.

⁷⁶*National Ports Survey*, pp. 125-126.

⁷⁷Raddall, p. 237.

⁷⁸PANS MG 1 Vol. 466, J.L. Hetherington papers, “Halifax Address, Hon. R.B. Bennett, Halifax, July 3, 1930”; *Herald* 30 April 1931.

comprehensive strategy for urban development or an energetic and innovative business sector. Furthermore, this dependency on federal initiatives diverted attention away from other pressing issues affecting the community, not least of which was the necessity for rebuilding an aged municipal infrastructure.

It is also somewhat ironic in light of later developments that the Harbour Commission memoranda dismissed the naval dockyard as superfluous and dispensable. The memoranda stated that “the facilities and equipment at these Dockyards are all a very ancient pattern,...[and] it may well develop that a modern Naval base to fill the Canadian requirements will be more advantageously constructed on the Dartmouth side. Such a change would leave a fine stretch of Harbour Front open for development.” The Commissioners wanted to concentrate their programme of development “insofar as the major ocean requirements are concerned,” on the Halifax side of the harbour, leaving Dartmouth to “develop largely as an industrial area with its individual private wharves...to serve the various industries.”⁷⁹

This arm’s length attitude towards industry stood in marked contrast to the confident predictions twenty years earlier that modernization of the port would foster industrial growth. Much had occurred in the interim to alter expectations regarding the local economy, not least of which was the decimation of the industrial sector. Equally significant was urban expansion, which – gradual though it had been – reduced the availability of undeveloped land on the Halifax peninsula. Single-detached houses were

⁷⁹HHC “Memoranda,” p. 117.

particularly land intensive, and the peninsula simply was not big enough to accommodate the requirements of both residential and industrial developers.

The question remains why the Harbour Commission chose to minimize the importance of private enterprise, industrial activity, and the military contribution to the waterfront economy? Its outlook was partly predicated on a contemporary reading of conditions, and the firm conviction that passenger and cargo liner traffic would far exceed previous levels once the economy recovered. Capturing a larger share of this traffic was, the Commissioners believed, the direction that port development should take over the next twenty-five years. But the development of Halifax as a national port diverted attention away from serious structural weaknesses in the local economy. By the late 1920s, when the Halifax Harbour Commission assumed responsibility for waterfront properties formerly managed by the Canadian National Railways, two-thirds of the harbour had fallen under public control – though neither civic nor provincial governments were directly involved in port administration.

Evidence of strained relations between the municipality and the Harbour Commission surfaced in 1934 when a city council resolution sought to redress “the attitude of antagonism towards port development that had been manifested by the preceding civic administration.”⁸⁰ The port of Saint John, in contrast, was operated jointly by the city and the Canadian Pacific Railway, a privately-owned corporation.⁸¹ Even apart from patronage appointments and political expediency fostering a custodial mindset

⁸⁰*Port and Province*, (March 1935), p. 37.

⁸¹Geoffrey R. McIntyre, “A Comparative Analysis of Federal Port Policy in the United States and Canada,” unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, New York University 1978, pp. 70, 72-73.

among port administrators, the fact remained that the city's chief economic asset was managed by federal appointees who refrained from competing outright with other ports such as Saint John, Montréal, and Portland.⁸² Further centralization of authority in the form of the National Harbours Board elicited protests from the Halifax business community that "remote control" was eroding local autonomy.⁸³ The appointment of a Haligonian to the position of Port Manager allayed criticism somewhat, but doubts lingered as to the usefulness of the federal agency and suspicion that other ports – particularly Montréal – were deriving greater benefit from the Harbours Board than Halifax.⁸⁴

The outlook for Halifax during the interwar period was not entirely bleak. It should be emphasized that port business in the 1930s did show some healthy signs. While losing ground in the grain trade (a lost cause in any event once Vancouver surpassed Montréal to become the nation's leading grain port), Halifax gained in other areas. Patterns of port usage that would be magnified during the coming war were already present. Across the harbour stood the Imperial Oil Company refinery, the largest in Canada; storage capacity at Imperoyal totalled 10.5 million gallons by 1930.⁸⁵ In May 1931 the *C.O. Stillman*, the world's largest oil tanker, arrived with a cargo of Caribbean crude and was immediately opened for public inspection.⁸⁶ In the decade preceding the war, the conversion of

⁸²The competition of Portland was especially strong, according to Forbes, pp. 63-64.

⁸³*Commercial News* 16 (May, 1936), p. 3. See also the persistent editorial refrain in the *Halifax Mail*, 20-27 March 1936.

⁸⁴*Halifax Mail*, 27 March 1936.

⁸⁵"Port of Halifax," p. 29.

⁸⁶*Herald*, 4 May 1931.

Fig. 2-4. "A Sail in Sight," Halifax *Herald* editorial cartoon, 11 June 1932.



commercial and naval vessels from coal-burning to oil-fired engines proceeded apace, and petroleum products would be the single most important commodity to be traded in and out of Halifax during the Second World War [Fig. 2-1].

Before the Ocean Terminals were built, Halifax possessed only half the berthing space of its arch-rival, Saint John. By 1938, the discrepancy slightly favoured Halifax.⁸⁷ In transit shed capacity, Halifax was second only to Montréal by the end of the decade. The completion of Pier B in December 1934, the granting of running rights to the CPR, and the Imperial preference in the tariff seemed to have a salutary effect, since bank clearings in 1935-36 registered levels approaching those set during the First World War [See Fig. 2-6].⁸⁸ Some small wharfage firms saw their share of port business decline as shipping companies opted for more modern facilities and better service at government piers.⁸⁹ On the other hand, private enterprises like Maritime Towing and Salvage Limited and marine supply businesses such as Wm. Stairs Son & Morrow Limited and Wm. Robertson & Son benefited directly (through government contracts), or indirectly (by increased port traffic) from public investment in the harbour.

Despite these healthy signs, Halifax continued to be a community eager to promote its own development but lacking the means to do so. Failing businesses and unrealized growth deprived the city of the “important future” it so earnestly sought. Annual figures for the value of building permits issued in Halifax between 1925 and 1953 suggest that

⁸⁷CYB 1940, p. 681.

⁸⁸PANS Micro: Halifax: Statistics, E. A. Saunders; “Upturn in Halifax Business Credited to Empire Trade,” *Ottawa Journal*, 12 April 1934; *Port and Province*, (March 1935), p. 35.

⁸⁹*National Ports Survey*, p. 125.

Fig. 2-5. Value of Building Permits Issued in the City of Halifax, 1925-1953.

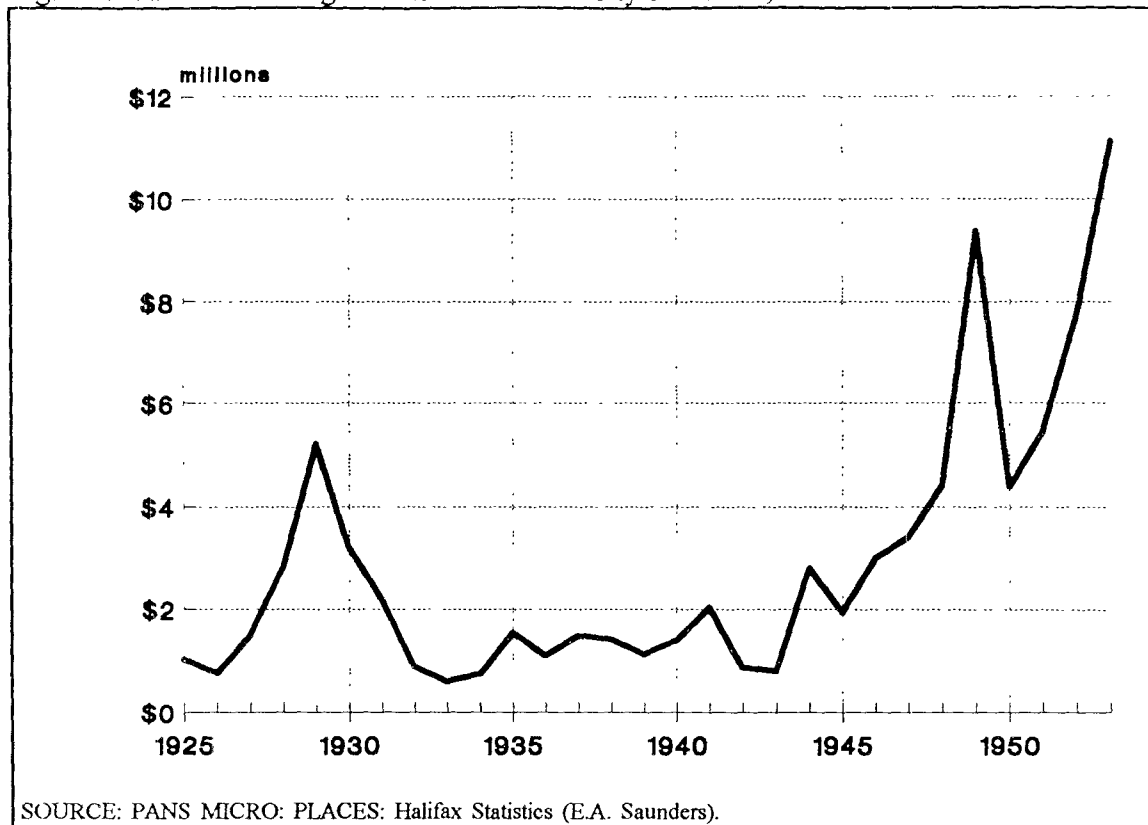
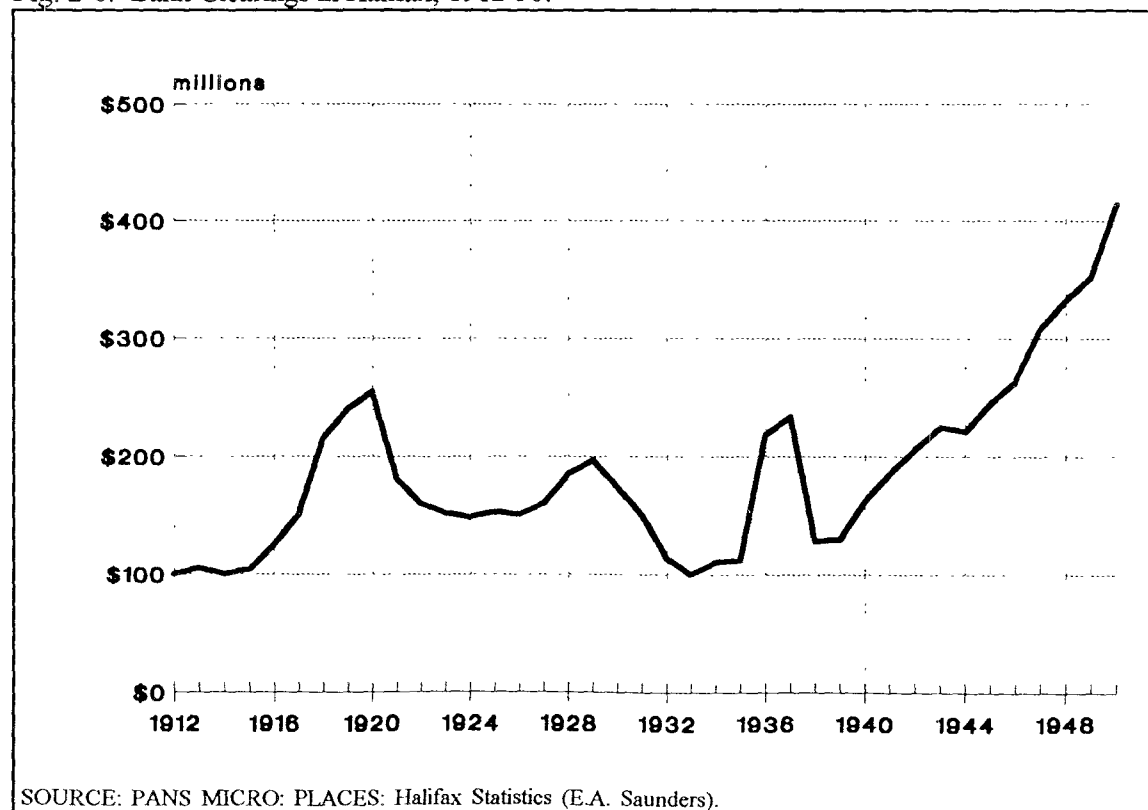


Fig. 2-6. Bank Clearings in Halifax, 1912-50.



even the impact of the Second World War on long term economic growth was modest [Fig. 2-5]. In 1913, few Haligonians doubted the idea that progress would shortly transform their city into a dynamic “New Halifax.” In 1930, someone asked rhetorically: “Who’s running this city?” The answer came: “It isn’t running at all,...it’s just walking.”⁹⁰

In the face of deepening depression, Haligonians never lost faith in port development as the cornerstone to building a prosperous local economy [Fig. 2-7]. Up until the newly-elected Conservative government decided to launch its investigation in the fall of 1930, the Harbour Commission was universally acclaimed for planning “the greatest expansion in the history of Halifax since the fleet of Cornwallis sailed into our harbour to found the city in 1749.” The *Herald*, which only weeks later would castigate the commission for its profligate ways, welcomed the announcement that nearly twenty million dollars would be spent on harbour improvements over the next six years. “The pulse of life beats strongly in Halifax,” proclaimed the newspaper, “Here is a city that is going ahead, a city to watch.”⁹¹ Such language was reminiscent of 1913; so too were the words of Dr. Samuel H. Prince, a well-respected social activist and civic booster, in 1932. “We stand upon the edge of a new age,” Dr. Prince wrote in the *Herald*. “No longer must change be held a sacrilege. The spell of the past must be broken.” He admonished Haligonians to forget “the splendour and spirit of old colonial times...The destiny of Halifax lies no longer in her Citadel but in her ocean-fronting quays.” But there would be no forgetting the political obligations of certain partners in Confederation. “Halifax must

⁹⁰Halifax *Citizen*, 31 October 1930.

⁹¹NA MG 27 III B11 Vol. 7 file “Halifax Harbour Commission.” “Submission on behalf of Messrs. Peter Jack and Charles W. Ackhurst,” p. 34.

henceforth become the entrepôt of Canada. It will be largely hers to handle the water-borne commerce of a great country. In the ocean lies her expectation and her hope of future greatness.”⁹²

At the official opening of Pier B in December 1934, Prime Minister Bennett could not resist making a bad joke while congratulating the Harbour Commissioners on a banner year: “I would hardly think it possible in a period of great depression – I read the papers occasionally – that this port could have had the greatest year in its history, and yet it is so ” The Minister of Finance (and former Nova Scotia Premier) E.N. Rhodes called on present and future port managers to “view themselves as trustees, not of a local enterprise but of a great Canadian undertaking contributing to the development of Canada; and I ask the citizenship of Halifax...to bear that thought in mind.”⁹³

Having borne such dreams for over two decades, thoughtful Haligonians concluded that they had been rooked. By the mid-thirties, expectations that state sponsorship would stimulate economic growth were no longer tenable. Since the withdrawal of Imperial forces in 1906, “there has been greater development of harbour facilities and steadier activity along the waterfront than in the days of intermittent imperial vision,” wrote D.C. Harvey in 1937. At the “opening of Pier B the importance of Halifax as a national port was strongly emphasized; but the yearnings of Haligonians for a larger and more fruitful hinterland to serve persist.” Five years before, Samuel Prince reminded naysayers that “Halifax was built to face the sunrise.”⁹⁴ Now, Harvey lamented, “the sun has set and

⁹²*Herald*, 20 June 1932.

⁹³*Port and Province*, (March 1935), p. 30.

twilight has gathered” on the “hopes and aspirations of the past.” The “ghostly projections of the future have become shrouded in darkness.” Gloomily, he concluded that “Halifax has seen the imperial vision fade to be replaced by only a partial vision of greatness as a national port.”⁹⁵

The change in attitude was mainly due to the impact of the Gibb report on federal port policy. Much of the blueprint for expansion submitted by the Harbour Commission was rejected as being too extravagant. In some respects this reaction, “inspired as it was by the Gibb philosophy of caution and pessimism,” imposed timely restraint on a building programme inappropriate for the period. But other needed improvements to urban infrastructure, notably a harbour bridge, fell victim to political expediency, and useful proposals such as a terminal warehouse failed to attract the attention they deserved. Looking back on the Gibb report and its legislative product, the National Harbours Board Act of 1936, a government study concluded in 1971 that the latter “was designed more as a measure to retrench federal port investment...than as a sophisticated instrument of national economic development as a whole.”⁹⁶

The failure of federal port policy to stimulate urban growth in Halifax between the wars was not solely attributable to the ineffectiveness of policies emanating from Ottawa. It was equally symptomatic of a larger malaise affecting the international trading system, of which Halifax was a minor if well-placed node. Between 1914 and 1939, it has been

⁹⁴See note 92.

⁹⁵D.C. Harvey, “From the Citadel,” *Port and Province* (September, 1937), p. 29.

⁹⁶W.J. Manning, et. al. *Study of Port Administration in Canada* (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1971), p. 22.

Fig. 2-7. "Built To Face The Sunrise," Halifax *Herald* editorial cartoon, 20 June 1932.



estimated that “the freight carrying capacity of the world’s shipping probably doubled” due to wartime shipbuilding and technological improvements, but the interwar period was characterized by “large fluctuations in the volume of ocean-borne cargoes.”⁹⁷ North American imports and exports “fell more drastically during the Great Depression than...other parts of the world,” more so in the case of “manufactured products than of raw materials.” This had “an adverse effect on the profitability of the shipping industry,” since it prevented balancing the volume of inbound and outbound cargoes.⁹⁸ During the worst years of the Depression, the shipping industry was plagued by “substantial unused carrying capacity on ships which were operating” and “declining revenues and financial losses.” A British report on the situation in 1932 claimed that “50 per cent or more of the cargo and passenger space is empty voyage after voyage.”⁹⁹

These developments could not help but have an effect on the status of Halifax as an entrepôt. The simplest method of demonstrating this is by examining the number of shipping lines calling at Halifax during the period in question. For comparative purposes, wartime and postwar periods to 1950 were also surveyed. The results are presented in Appendix A and summarized in Figs. 2-8 and 2-9.

Of some 130 steamship lines calling at Halifax, only three – the Donaldson Line, Cunard-White Star (Cunard & White Star merged in the 1920s), and Holland America –

⁹⁷Daniel Marx, *International Shipping Cartels: A Study of Industrial Self-Regulation by Shipping Conferences* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), pp. 32, 34.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 33, 34.

offered uninterrupted service throughout the period in question.¹⁰⁰ Donaldson Brothers, a Glasgow-based company, was the only cargo line, while the other two were primarily (though not exclusively) passenger lines.¹⁰¹ The high attrition rate of other cargo lines in the interwar period as shown in Appendix B, Table B-2 clearly reflected extreme volatility in the shipping business generally and probably influenced the conclusion of the Gibb report that Halifax should be developed primarily as a passenger liner port. The Depression also seems to have killed off a number of independent shipping agents, although others appeared to take their place. [See Appendix B, Table B-1]. The number of shipping agents in Halifax remained steady at about eleven, but the smaller agencies were dwarfed by the powerful Pickford & Black and Furness Withy firms, which together took about half of all the shipping business in Halifax.

In 1920, there were 26 shipping lines of various kinds using Halifax as a port of call. By 1930, this number had risen to 36, two-thirds of which were not present ten years before. [See Appendix B, Table B-2]. During the Second World War, the number of shipping lines calling at Halifax doubled. Wartime cargoes and postwar passenger liner business – buoyed by mass emigration from war-torn Europe – boosted port usage levels to unprecedented heights, but neither could erase the impact of federal intervention in the port and the interwar shipping crisis. In effect, Halifax had ‘missed the boat’ by pinning all its economic hopes on developing the Ocean Terminals.

¹⁰⁰*Halifax and Dartmouth City Directories*, 1920, 1930, 1939, 1942, 1945, 1950. In 1950, the directory continued to use the out-dated term “Steamship Lines,” even though diesel or oil-fired motorships had outnumbered steam-powered vessels worldwide since the late 1930s. Marx, p. 32.

¹⁰¹*Lloyd's Register of Shipping, 1938-39*, Vol. I, “List of Ship Owners and Managers,” p. 52.

Fig. 2-8. Shipping Agents in Halifax, 1920-1950.

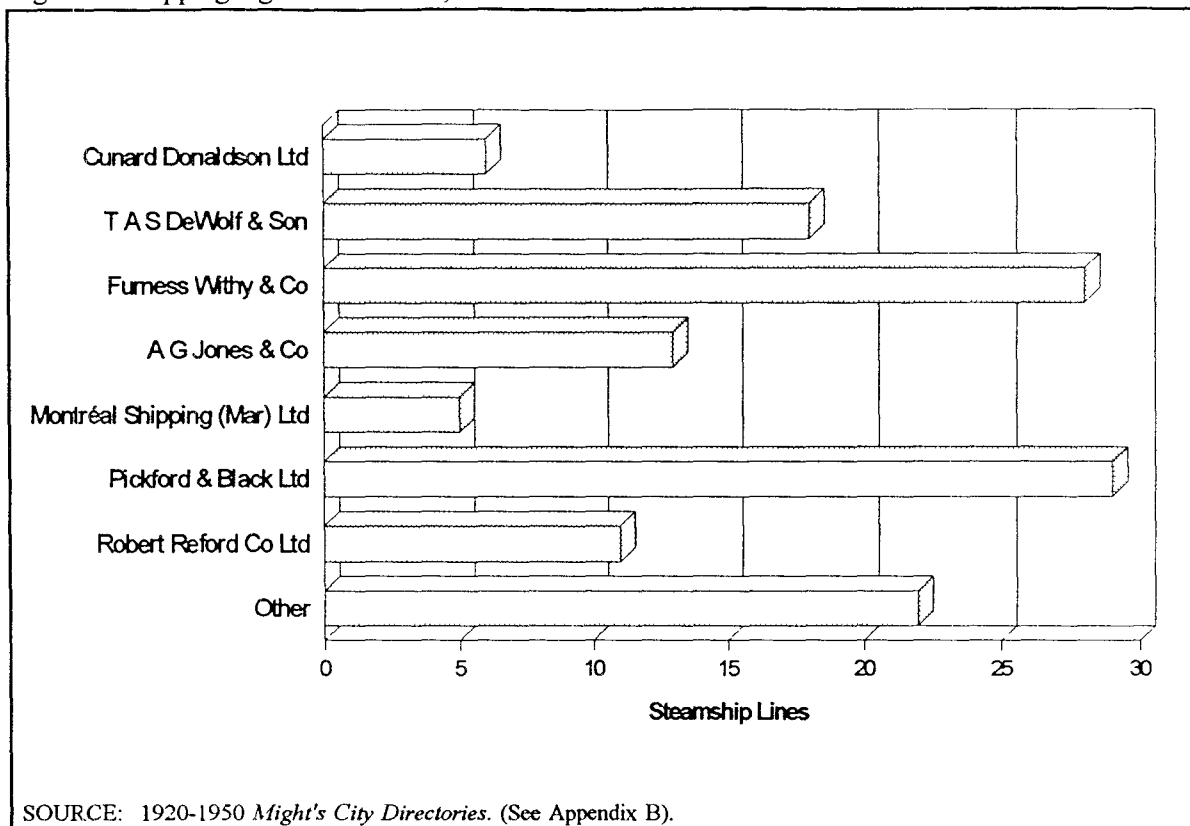
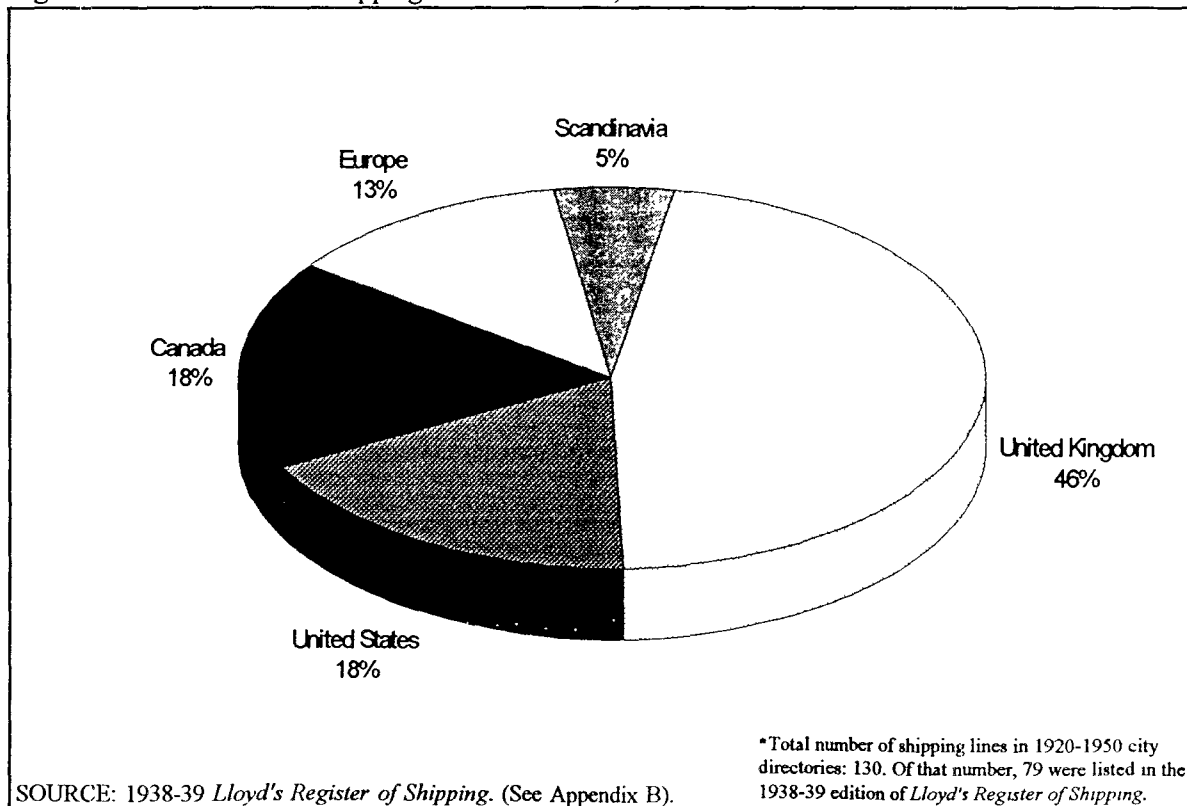


Fig. 2-9. Head Offices of Shipping Lines in Halifax, 1938.*



Some dependencies are unavoidable and it is difficult to see how Halifax could have responded more effectively as a community to factors in the shipping industry that were beyond its control. Nevertheless, business leaders remained almost obsessively wedded to the belief that commercial traffic in the port was just as important to the local economy in the 1930s as the British military presence had been a century before. The difference now was that federal bureaucrats were directing Halifax's future status as a port rather than London. In effect, Halifax had been taken out of the loop which once linked it to the centre of Empire trade. And Ottawa mandarins displayed little aptitude for charting a profitable course for the port of Halifax through the troubled waters of the international shipping industry.

Whether urban growth in Halifax would have followed a substantially different path without the nationalization of port development remains an open question. Perhaps, as Larry McCann, T.W. Acheson and others have argued, the slow growth of Halifax after 1900 was simply a case of limited access to staples production and the "tyranny of location," which placed Halifax at a competitive disadvantage.¹⁰² But staple commodities *were* produced in Nova Scotia – coal, lumber, fish, agricultural products, gypsum, for example – and it seems illogical that secondary manufacturing flourished in smaller Maritime centres while languishing at Halifax. McCann argues that a "dispersed regional pattern" of staples distribution, "their weak endowment, and their limited processing requirements" are three reasons why Halifax did not develop into "an industrialized

¹⁰²McCann, "Staples," p. 113.

entrepôt.”¹⁰³ The very accessibility of Nova Scotia resources by land and sea and the relative compactness of the peninsula fostered the notion in Halifax that the province was almost an extension of the urban economy. In addition, the incentive to locate plants in Halifax was dampened by the presence of smaller centres distributed throughout the province – Sydney, Truro, Amherst, New Glasgow, Trenton, Digby, Yarmouth, Pictou and others – which were large enough to supply the labour and infrastructure required to fill the “limited processing requirements” of the province’s “weak endowment.”

While industrially underdeveloped, Halifax continued to dominate provincial politics, the press and provincial business affairs. Its position in this regard was never challenged, not even by the Sydney Mines-Sydney-Glace Bay urban axis, an area with impressive (albeit absentee-controlled) resource and industrial assets. Halifax finance capitalists – either singly, allied with, or sometimes competing against, outside interests – promoted enterprises in every corner of Nova Scotia.¹⁰⁴ But few tangible gains in terms of urban growth accrued to Halifax as a result of this economic activity – certainly not in the same way that would have occurred had industry been concentrated there rather than scattered throughout the province. The Halifax elite benefited directly from their provincial business interests, but the city in which they resided did not.

Just prior to the onset of the Great Depression, a “municipal stocktaking” by that beacon of popular attitudes in Nova Scotia, the Halifax *Herald*, “reflected a rosy view of material progress in the provincial capital.”¹⁰⁵ Three years later, the *Herald* began

¹⁰³McCann, “Staples,” p. 114.

¹⁰⁴See, for example, Acheson, pp. 194-200.

¹⁰⁵William March, *Red Line* (Halifax, Chebucto Agencies Ltd., 1986), p. 205.

promoting the idea of an eighteen-point “program for progress and development in Nova Scotia” to rescue the province from the settling economic gloom. The only points related to Halifax were all aimed squarely at the “national port” campaign: “Canadian Trade through Canadian Ports”; “Grain rates that will force this Canadian traffic through Canadian channels”; and entry of the CPR to Nova Scotia and Halifax.¹⁰⁶ Throughout the 1930s, the city’s leading newspaper continued to view economic development in terms of the general welfare of the province, rather than addressing specific urban problems in its own back yard. It would have been bad business to present too much of “the Halifax viewpoint” to readers elsewhere in the province, as the publisher himself later admitted when the war focused attention on the city.¹⁰⁷ The port development issue was exempted from this policy because it was directly tied to federal obligations to Nova Scotia within the terms of Confederation.

The national port campaign failed to stimulate urban growth, but it would be wrong to call it entirely misguided. The likelihood was remote that improvements on the scale and quality of the Ocean Terminals, not to mention the upgrading and maintenance of other harbour facilities, could have been financed without federal assistance. It is also patently clear that such facilities proved indispensable during the Second World War – although the wisdom of funnelling hundreds of thousands of troops through a city shouldering the lion’s share of naval expansion and convoy assembly responsibilities can certainly be questioned. At the time of their construction, it would have required

¹⁰⁶*Herald*, 4 April 1931.

¹⁰⁷March, p. 330.

considerable foresight to see that the days of passenger liner travel were numbered. Nevertheless, the Harbour Commissions and later the National Harbours Board were much too preoccupied with custodial management, and not aggressive enough in marketing the port abroad, or negotiating better terms for Halifax within North Atlantic shipping conference arrangements.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, “construction of the Ocean Terminals and the inability of private capital to provide facilities for modern shipping in competition with Public Authority impaired the usefulness of much of the historic Halifax waterfront,” a civic planning body later reported.¹⁰⁹ Just when the Halifax Harbour Commissioners seemed on the verge of innovative action, they were legislated out of existence.¹¹⁰ Thomas Raddall conceded that “under a local commission the Halifax harbour facilities had been immensely improved,” but, he added, “certain features of this *carte blanche* expenditure of federal funds were definitely objectionable.”¹¹¹

Although it has been assumed that port business continued to improve after the implementation of centralized control in 1936,¹¹² questions remained as to whether NHB managers were more interested in developing the urban economy or pleasing their political masters in Ottawa. The Second World War brought such doubts to the fore when it was alleged that before 1939, the Halifax Board of Trade “artificially ran up...[port] tonnages to such a figure that the really substantial levels now achieved do not seem so very much

¹⁰⁸On shipping conferences, see Marx, pp. 85-90. See also John Stanton, *The Life & Death of a Union: the Canadian Seamen's Union, 1936-1949* (Toronto: Steel Rail Educational Publishing, 1978), Appendix C, pp. 160-162.

¹⁰⁹*Master Plan*, p. 63.

¹¹⁰HHC “Memoranda,” p. 17.

¹¹¹Raddall, pp. 285-286.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, p. 286; Millward, *Geography of Housing*, p. 12.

greater by comparison.”¹¹³ The change in policy at the National Harbours Board provoked little reaction from the conservative business elite in Halifax, who took as much pride in their political connections as their entrepreneurial acumen.

In surveying the record of federal subsidization of port development, it is important to remember that Maritimers themselves initiated and participated enthusiastically in the process. The 1926 Duncan Commission on Maritime Claims, a product of regional agitation led by – among others – Halifax business interests, resulted in the creation of the Halifax and Saint John Harbour Commissions, modeled after those already in existence in Montréal, Quebec City and Vancouver. The Halifax press played a role as well, keeping the port development issue constantly before the public. The city may indeed have been “built to face the sunrise,” but city fathers bowed in the direction of Ottawa. The Second World War consolidated this dependency – indeed, it was made compulsory.

Wartime economic activity derived largely from port operations became a surrogate for the long-awaited peacetime boom that port development failed to produce. But the war also disrupted the complex linkages between population growth, land availability, and the expansion of municipal services. The expropriation of developable land on the northern half of the peninsula by federal authorities (in order to build temporary housing for war workers and facilities for the military) hindered private residential developers from moving into the area. The land subdivision process which began before 1914 to move slowly but steadily northward, first with the large estates of the south peninsula and then

¹¹³PANS MG1 Vol. 485, H.B. Jefferson papers, 22 January 1942.

farm properties in the northwest, came to a halt in 1939. Due to the peculiarities of the domestic war economy and its transportation restrictions, market demand occurred not in new single family dwellings in outlying areas, but in centrally-located rental accommodation near major employers and military installations. The short term economic and military priorities set by the war effort imposed rapid change on a community already saddled with a moribund and misdirected development strategy.

The interwar quest for “an important future” through port development ended suddenly in the early morning hours of September 1, 1939. The day after Poland was attacked by German forces, the Halifax *Daily Star* reported that excursion boats had been taken off their runs, two Cunard White Star liners had “dropped Halifax as a port of call,” and the North German Lloyd liner *Columbus* was “proceeding directly to Germany.”¹¹⁴ From that day forward, port development acquired an entirely new meaning.

¹¹⁴*Daily Star*, 2 September 1939.

CHAPTER THREE

NATIONAL CITY

This is an old city and it is difficult to make it look good.
And it has never looked dirtier than it does today.”

– J.E. Rutledge, Liberal MLA (Halifax Centre), February 1942

The statement is often made that the Battle of the Atlantic was the only major campaign of the Second World War to start on the day hostilities were declared and last until V-E day. No Canadian city can claim as intimate a connection with that epic conflict as Halifax. Less evident is the fact that as the war unfolded, the demands on Halifax as the country's front line city fluctuated constantly. In the early months and through 1940, manning and training naval personnel was of the utmost priority, resulting in large numbers of new entries and administrative personnel pouring into the city. During 1941 and 1942, the focus shifted towards upgrading and expanding naval shore establishments. The entry of the United States into the war partially alleviated the burden on Halifax as an assembly point for eastbound North Atlantic convoys. This was to some extent offset by U-boat activity in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, which kept the pressure on Halifax as an Allied staging area. Nevertheless, the worst year in terms of congestion in the port was 1941, when Halifax was the most important Allied convoy port in North America. In that year as well, the problems associated with accommodating an enormous influx of new residents were most acute. National Harbours Board statistics clearly show this early peak of port activity, with a steep decline in 1942 and a gradual tapering off through 1945 [Fig.

3-1]. As will be seen in the following chapter, in-migration figures echoed this trend, with new households peaking in the third quarter of 1940 and the first quarter of 1942.

The strategic direction of the war had a fundamental impact on housing conditions in Halifax. Thus the general statement that the “pre-1944 housing problem centred upon war workers’ accommodation” requires qualification as far as Halifax and other Canadian cities with large military establishments were concerned.¹ From 1943 onwards, for instance, the convoy system was better organized – and much less centred on Halifax – than it had been earlier [Fig. 3-2]. RCN new entry training and the RCAF embarkation depot were moved out of the city, easing housing congestion caused by too many transients seeking temporary accommodation. Fewer alarmist press reports about conditions in Halifax appeared in the waning months of the war, aside from occasional complaints about the behaviour of off-duty naval personnel.² A mood of complacency and war-weariness was suddenly shattered by mob violence on V-E Day. Once again, the national spotlight was thrown on Halifax, reinforcing its negative image as an unfriendly city

Contemporary outside press coverage describing Halifax during this period vacillated between portrayals of a city struggling unsuccessfully to cope with the demands of war and a place awash in intrigue and romance. A story in early 1942 by Eric Hutton in the *Toronto Star Weekly*, for example, told of a city “packed to the rafters,” and “harassed

¹Jill Wade, “Wartime Housing Limited, 1941-1947: Canadian Housing Policy at the Crossroads,” *Urban History Review* XV, No. 1 (June 1986), p. 44.

²Cameron, p. 136.

Fig. 3-1. Total Arrivals and Departures excluding Naval Vessels, Port of Halifax, 1940-1946.

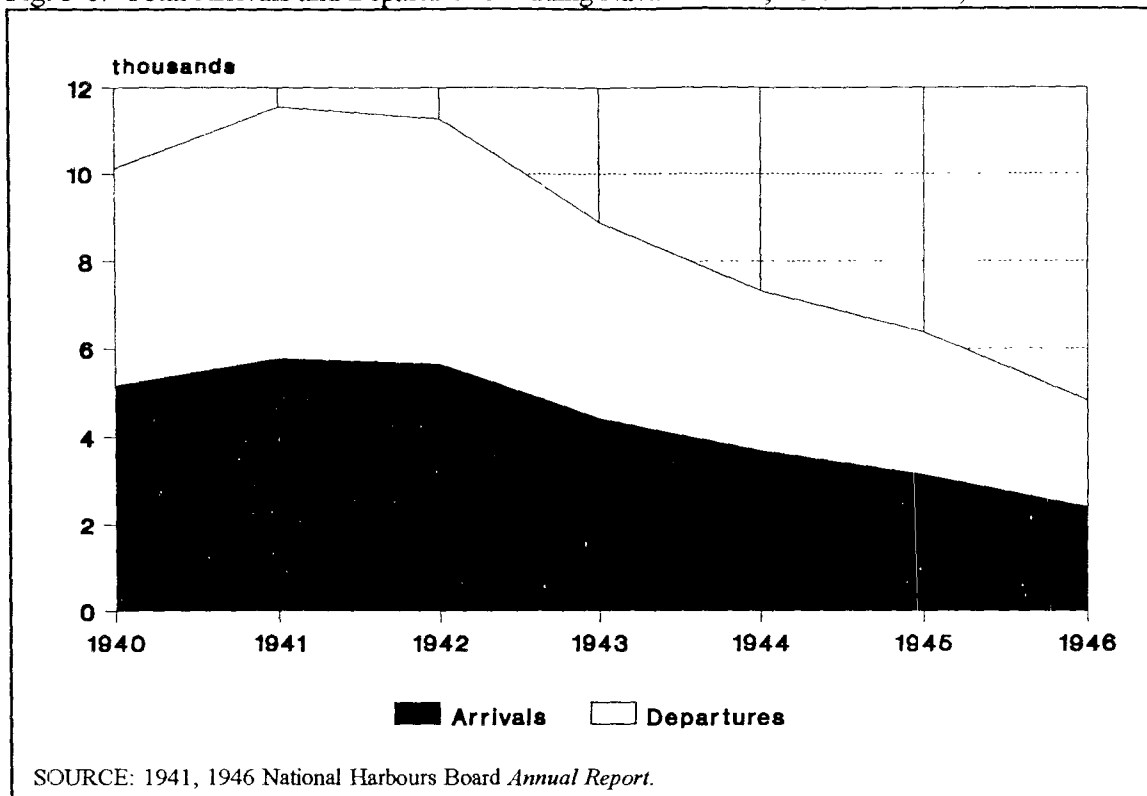
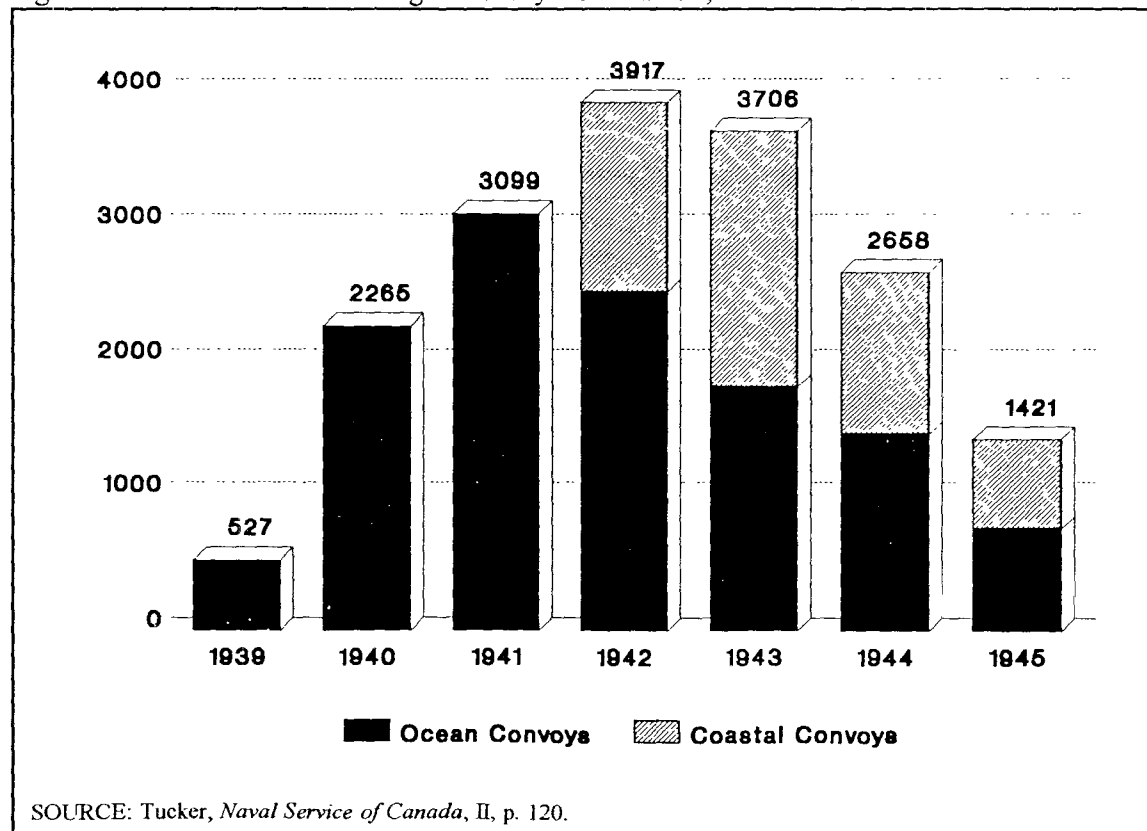


Fig. 3-2. Merchant Vessels Sailing in Convoy from Halifax, 1939-1945.



and overworked,” like some dutiful housewife entertaining relatives from out of town. The housing shortage was “a blueprint for inflation” where “rents...no longer have any bearing on value received,” and tenants and landlords colluded in order to evade rent controls.³ Soon after, the *Daily Star* reported indignantly that a Toronto resident had been quoted in that city as saying that Halifax was the “ashcan” of Canada.⁴ That was mild compared with the press criticism of Halifax a few weeks later following the closing of the Ajax Club for sailors.⁵

Such reports became commonplace and both the *Herald* and the *Chronicle* regularly “denounced journalistic attacks on conditions in wartime Halifax.”⁶ The die had been cast long before the extensive and mostly negative coverage of the Halifax V-E Day disorders in May 1945. In the wake of the disorders, the *Herald* declared a provincial Cabinet minister in Saskatchewan to be unfit for public office because he “called Halifax a ‘terrible place’ during the war.” Newspapers in British Columbia and Ontario were also chastised for “suggesting that Haligonians had failed to understand the needs of the servicemen, and had welcomed not the sailors, but the sailors’ money.”⁷ Worst of all were the bitter attacks on B.K. Sandwell, editor of *Saturday Night*, for suggesting (in an article published under a pseudonym), that Halifax authorities brought the V-E Day trouble on themselves

³PANS MG 1 Vol. 485, H.B. Jefferson papers, 25 February 1942. The story was reproduced in Metson, pp. 28-31.

⁴*Daily Star*, 6 March 1942, p.3.

⁵See Raddall, p. 321; Pugsley, *Saints, Devils*, p. 101; idem, *Sailor Remember*, p. 77 and Chapter 2 of White, “Ajax Affair,” pp. 39-86.

⁶March, p. 340.

⁷*Herald*, 18 May 1945, 29 May 1945, 8 June 1945, cited in March, p. 341.

by closing all the restaurants and liquor stores.⁸ This journalistic jousting match, erupting as it did just as the conflict in Europe was ending, seemed to evoke simmering resentment on the part of Haligonians at being taken for granted for six grueling years. William Pugsley spoke for the majority of wartime transients – and probably not a few Ottawa bureaucrats – in judging Halifax to be “proud and belligerent.” The city “complains continually that the rest of the country isn’t doing enough for it. It’s the complainingest town in the whole Dominion,” he wrote.⁹ Thomas Raddall retorted weakly that the war had been uncomfortable for permanent residents as well,¹⁰ although as this study argues, the discomfort was by no means evenly felt by everyone.

Meanwhile, a correspondent for the *Boston Post* who visited Halifax during the summer of 1942 gave a slightly different picture of Canada’s “city of high adventure.” “This is the port of farewells,” she wrote, a place filled with “heroes of the merchant navy...refugees from tragic, conquered countries...ship-wrecked captains...[and] nervous-looking nobility of Europe.” “Everywhere you turn in Halifax,” she reported breathlessly, “you bump into adventure, drama or humor.” Did it not strike the writer as incongruous that her entire story was based on a train ride into Halifax and a short stay at the Nova Scotian Hotel? Not in the slightest. After all, “this is wartime in Canada and...not the time for story-telling.”¹¹

⁸“Who’s Really to Blame for the Halifax Riot?” *Saturday Night*, 26 May 1945, p. 17. See also March, pp. 341-342, 345, note 90; Cameron, *Martyred Admiral*, pp. 254-256.

⁹Pugsley, *Sailor Remember*, p. 76.

¹⁰Raddall, p. 322.

¹¹Grace Davidson, “Halifax City of High Adventure,” *Boston Post*, 26 July 1941.

Sensationalism was a last refuge for many journalists frustrated by censorship regulations. Some of the press censorship was self-imposed. For the most part, the two major newspapers in Halifax, the *Herald* and its sister publication the *Mail*, refrained from openly criticizing the war policies of the King administration because the publisher believed that doing so would adversely affect the war effort.¹² The local press also trod lightly on the Navy, since a favorite son, former premier Angus L. Macdonald, was at the helm as Minister of Naval Services in Ottawa. Another Halifax native, George C. Jones, went to Ottawa in 1943 as Chief of Naval Staff. The provincial administration, headed by Macdonald's able understudy, A.S. MacMillan, drew even less criticism.

One familiar subject – the national port issue – continued to surface periodically as the *Herald* reminded its readers that Halifax expected something in return for its war service.¹³ From the president of the Navy League on New Year's Day, 1942 came the announcement that "the problems created in Halifax by the war are not wholly the responsibility of this Empire port but belong to the entire Dominion."¹⁴ Had it come from Prime Minister Mackenzie King, perhaps such an admission would have carried more weight. The popular feeling among native Haligonians was that the contribution the city was making to the war effort was not being adequately recognized in the rest of the country. To the local press, the negative publicity generated by the V-E Day disorders was just another example of Upper Canadian indifference. Having "found Halifax useful in wartime," Bill March wrote in retrospect, Haligonians assumed that "the national

¹²March, p. 331.

¹³ See *ibid.*, p. 345, note 102.

¹⁴*Halifax Mail*, 1 January 1942.

government would once more fail to appreciate the advantages offered by the ice-free, deep-water harbor in peace.”¹⁵ This theme was taken up in *Gateway to the World*, a 1946 promotional film made by the Nova Scotia government’s Department of Industry and Publicity, in which the record of war service was employed to promote the port of Halifax as a “world class” entrepôt. Beneath its strident patriotic tone and conspicuous omission of controversial issues like the housing problem and V-E day disturbances, *Gateway to the World* reiterated the latent fear that without port development, the city would once again slip into peacetime economic stagnation.¹⁶

Civic boosters saw the wartime levels of port usage as economic justification for the existence of its extensive port facilities. Utilizing those facilities after the war was a logical and progressive way for Canada to reward faithful service in time of national need.¹⁷ No matter that postwar civil aviation would supplant regularly scheduled transatlantic liner service, that planning for postwar industrial development in Halifax was vague, that chronic prewar problems related to an aging municipal infrastructure remained unresolved, and that the war had done nothing to alter the perception in Ottawa that Halifax was a minor node on the national transportation network. The idea that port development was the only viable course for ensuring peacetime prosperity was as firmly

¹⁵March, p. 339.

¹⁶A copy of *Gateway to the World* is held in the Film & Sound Archives of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia, along with approximately one hour of footage not included in the film. The footage, all of it taken by a single photographer, Thomas Courtenay, and all on Kodak colour stock, is a unique visual record of selected events in wartime Halifax, including the transfer of American destroyers to Britain in September 1940, brief visits by Winston Churchill, various merchant ships, troopships and warships in the harbour, schoolchildren collecting aluminum during a salvage drive, German prisoners of war debarking at the Ocean Terminals, a Victory Loan parade, and five and a half minutes of scenes on Barrington Street during the V-E Day disorders.

¹⁷March, p. 339.

fixed in the minds of Haligonians in 1946 as it had been in 1906 when the city first confronted its long term future. Since development of the port acted as a substitute for other kinds of industrial growth which stimulated urban expansion and modernization elsewhere, it was easy to see why Halifax found it so difficult to abandon this outlook.

The reasons why so many local problems were not dealt with satisfactorily during the war were complex. Partly it was due to war policy being formulated at the national and international rather than local level, so that the municipal perspective at times seemed almost trivial when compared with the broader objective of winning the war. There was also a kind of bureaucratic stasis within the naval service, created by a division of operational and administrative control, the former being directed from Halifax, and the latter from Naval Service headquarters (NSHQ) in Ottawa. This resulted in poor cohesiveness in decision-making and policy direction than would have been the case had the naval administration been centralized. Naval officials in the “‘canoe-minded’ capital” – as one Bluenose editor dubbed it¹⁸ – were ill-informed about local conditions in Halifax. Moreover, the operational demands of the convoy system drew attention away from serious personnel problems related to accommodation, discipline and service-civilian relations.¹⁹

¹⁸*Herald*, 25 March 1938, cited in March, p. 298.

¹⁹For three perspectives on operational and administrative matters, see James B. Lamb, *The Corvette Navy* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1977); Milner, *North Atlantic*; and Zimmerman, *Great Naval Battle*. On naval discipline problems and service-civilian relations, see Cameron, *Martyred Admiral*, pp. 135-140, 215-221 and White, “Ajax Affair,” pp. 94-111. See also an undated (ca. 1944) editorial in the H.B. Jefferson papers describing the “disgraceful conduct” of service personnel, including “many instances of women being accosted, insulted and exposed to ridicule.” PANS MG 1 Vol. 504, scrapbooks.

Military authorities were not alone in displaying such myopic tendencies. Nearly everyone – journalists, civic leaders, and civilians – viewed domestic issues in terms of their impact on the war effort, rather than identifying the underlying causes of tensions aggravated – but not caused – by the war. When a local radio host spoke on the innocuous subject of automobile technology, he received letters from listeners who “said I was sewing seeds of dissension and talking about post war problems when we should all be discussing ways and means of winning the war.”²⁰ In another example, the press campaign to alleviate the transportation bottleneck at the Fairview underpass focused on the dire consequences of inaction should an emergency evacuation of the city become necessary, rather than the equally persuasive argument that modernization of the urban road system was long overdue.²¹

The catch was that most civic leaders during the war viewed the resolution of such problems as a national responsibility, since Halifax was now a strategic staging area for Allied naval operations, whereas federal authorities argued that upgrading municipal services lay outside their jurisdiction. This debate predated the conditions brought on by the war, and there was simply no political will to settle the issue while “Britain’s peril overshadowed all else.”²² The accommodation crisis, where temporary measures were adopted without regard for their long term impact on the physical and social structure of the city, was the best example of how unresolved peacetime problems were compounded by wartime demands.

²⁰ OA MU 4156, John Fisher papers, file: Early Scripts, 1940-41.

²¹ *Halifax Mail*, 21 January 1942, p. 15.

²² March, p. 299.

Undeniably, Halifax stood apart from other Canadian cities in the sheer number of roles it played in the war effort. As a major Allied convoy assembly port, primary naval base for the Canadian Navy, repair centre for damaged merchant ships, strategic refueling base for Allied shipping, major embarkation point for service personnel headed overseas, the range and complexity of wartime functions performed by Halifax limits to some extent the applicability of comparative analysis with other urban centres in Canada.

But Halifax did share certain social, physical, and functional characteristics with Norfolk, Virginia, the chief Atlantic base for the U. S. Navy during the Second World War. Norfolk and Halifax had much in common because the war forced both cities to adapt their functions as an urban community to meet the demands of the military. Both were, in a sense, “conscripted” cities. Like Halifax, Norfolk had undergone considerable growth during the First World War, but by the early 1920s most vestiges of the wartime buildup were gone, and the city adopted an economic growth strategy that also mirrored its northern counterpart. Norfolk obtained a grain elevator, and “piers [were] expanded to improve shipping facilities.”²³ These developments could not compensate for the withdrawal of the United States Fleet to the west coast, which, when combined with the effects of the Great Depression, seriously hurt the local economy. By the mid-thirties, one Norfolk dwelling in five was found to be in need of “major repairs,”²⁴ corresponding precisely with the national average for urban dwellings in Canada in 1941.²⁵

²³Marvin W. Schlegel, *Conscripted City: Norfolk in World War II* (Norfolk War History Commission: Norfolk, 1951), p. 3.

²⁴Schlegel, pp. 4, 14.

²⁵Miron, Table 59, p. 183.

In 1936, Norfolk had a vacancy rate of 15 per cent. The following year, a Citizens' Committee on Crime reported that the crime rate in slum areas of Norfolk was 4½ times greater than the norm, and soon after negotiations began with the newly created United States Housing Authority (USHA) to secure federal aid for slum clearance projects. As in Halifax, however, municipal authorities could not agree on a plan of action, and a USHA proposal to build subsidized housing for low-income households in Norfolk was rejected by city council in June 1940.

With American involvement in the war looming closer, the Defense Department began planning for accommodation needs of service personnel and war workers in the Norfolk area. It was estimated that a minimum of 4,000 dwellings would be required, including 1,000 low-cost units for naval personnel. Within weeks of its formation in July 1940, the Norfolk Housing Authority (NHA) received approval for \$2 million in federal housing aid. It had requested \$4 million. By October, families were arriving in Norfolk at a rate of 300 per month, double the anticipated figure.²⁶ The peak of in-migration into Halifax had already passed by this time, although the influx remained well above 100 households per month before dropping off in the third quarter of 1942 [See Chapter Four, Fig. 4-1].

The expansion of the Navy created a mini-construction boom in Norfolk in 1941, but by the end of the year an acrimonious war of words had broken out between naval authorities and the local Real Estate Board. At issue was the danger that overbuilding

²⁶Schlegel, pp. 17, 31.

would result in a housing glut after the war, resulting in a depressed real estate market. The Navy argued that its growth was permanent, and even undertook housing construction on its own to prove the point – something that its Canadian counterpart was loathe to do. Private contractors, attracted to Norfolk because building in “non-defense” areas was being curtailed, viewed federally-financed housing projects as unfair competition; besides which, they claimed, the current rate of building by private builders was adequate to meet anticipated demand.

Housing needs were quickly revised with the declaration of war in December 1941, and soon after naval authorities and homebuilders jointly announced that 10,000 “demountable” houses would be built in Norfolk and across the Elizabeth River in Portsmouth. To allay business community fears that all this new construction would depress the local real estate market, government officials agreed to remove the houses “as soon as they were no longer needed” – a promise which Wartime Housing Limited also made in Canada.²⁷

There were three crucial differences in the American response to the war-induced housing shortage in Norfolk when compared to Halifax. First, a number of federal agencies pitched in to provide housing, including the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), the Defense Housing Coordinator, the United States Housing Authority, and the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. In Halifax, only one federal agency, Wartime Housing Limited, was involved in housing production. Second, modifications to existing

²⁷Schlegel, pp. 156-57.

federal legislation, such as FHA financing for single detached rental units, attracted large private contractors like the Long Island-based firm, Levitt and Sons, to Norfolk. Canada did not have a comparable National Housing Act permitting public funding of housing projects built by private enterprise.

Third, and most importantly, the largest employer in the area, the United States Navy, was proactive from the beginning in planning its housing needs and seeking funding in anticipation of a growing influx of service families into Norfolk during and after the war. Indeed, when the bureaucratic wheels did not turn fast enough, naval authorities took matters into their own hands and built housing units on their own. A “trial run for future housing” was undertaken by the Navy in August 1940, when 50 houses for enlisted men were erected in as many days. This was immediately followed by a huge 1,000-unit project, named after the Admiral who approved the original proposal.²⁸ The Royal Canadian Navy possessed neither the resources, the necessary administrative machinery, or a sure sense of its own postwar role to foster that kind of positive action – at least in the early stages of the war when it was needed most.

By making a strong case for permanent status, the U.S. Navy effectively countered the argument that wartime expansion of shore-based facilities need only be temporary. The same argument could not be made with regard to housing for workers in war plants, whose occupations were not expected to outlast the war. Consequently, lenders were far

²⁸Schlegel, pp. 17, 31.

more reluctant to finance the construction of temporary homes for war workers than permanent housing for service personnel.²⁹

By the end of 1943, over 14,000 homes had been built in Norfolk, or one new dwelling “for every three that had been there in 1940.”³⁰ Half were financed by the Federal Housing Authority, but unlike the houses built in Halifax by Wartime Housing Limited, they were privately-owned rather than rented.

Early in 1944, it was reported that the problem of housing war workers in Norfolk was “thoroughly solved.” But another housing shortage was just beginning. Service families were pouring into the area in “ever-increasing numbers.” The housing information centre set up by the United Services Organization (USO) reported twelve times the number of applications for accommodation in June 1944 as it had received eight months earlier. In January 1945, over 1,500 service families applied for homes, but only one-third succeeded in finding accommodation.³¹ Despite the shortfall, real estate officials continued to oppose new construction on the grounds that it would adversely affect the postwar real estate market.

The housing stock in Halifax experienced similar pressures due to rapid wartime in-migration. Unlike Norfolk, however, Halifax did not enjoy the luxury of a transition period during which military and civic authorities could prepare for the shortage of accommodation that wartime in-migration was sure to produce. By the time the United

²⁹An official of the Federal Mutual Savings and Loan Association stated in September 1940 that while loans for temporary housing intended for defence workers were too risky, “they were willing to go the limit on loans for permanent housing.” Schlegel, p. 33.

³⁰Schlegel, p. 349.

³¹Ibid., pp. 350-51.

States actually entered the war in December 1941, for example, a number of large scale housing projects were already under way in Norfolk. In Halifax, there was little opportunity for private or public sector housing initiatives before the influx of new residents began to drive housing costs upward in the fall of 1939. Since rent controls did not come into effect until more than a year later, they had the effect of freezing rentals at levels above their prewar values.

A backlog of one hundred cases greeted the Halifax Rentals Committee of the Wartime Prices and Trade Board (WPTB) when it met for the first time in early December 1940. The first complaint involved a tenant who had rented a one-room apartment for \$21.70 per month in August 1939. The rent had been increased to \$25 in April 1940 and again in June to \$27.50. The landlady claimed that “coal prices, taxes, and other charges had risen to the extent that...justified a higher rental.”³² In another case heard by the Rentals Committee, three women who shared a south end apartment for \$55.50 per month claimed that the previous tenant had only been charged \$45. A flurry of WPTB convictions against landlords was also recorded in March 1942, including the case of an apartment building owner found guilty of charging \$75 per month for premises which rented for \$60 in January 1940. The landlord confided to H.B. Jefferson that he wanted to turn the building “into a 57 room hotel.” “He thinks he will be able to get rid of his present tenants when their leases expire, but I doubt it,” Jefferson later wrote.³³

³²PANS MG 1 Vol. 504, H.B. Jefferson papers, 4 December 1940.

³³Ibid., Vol. 489a, 28 April 1942; Vol. 501, “Daily Journal 1942,” 18 March 1942.

The failure of the Royal Canadian Navy to adequately plan its housing needs spawned a lengthy series of *ad hoc* responses to meet demand. The old Wellington Barracks on Gottingen Street, a stone relic of Imperial garrison days, was re-christened Nelson Barracks and provided “spacious” accommodation for officers, complete with “elaborate messing facilities...with meals served by waiters.” Nearby, four cavernous wood and clapboard buildings (“containing nothing more than picnic tables, over which iron pipes were installed to which you slung your hammock”) were hastily erected.³⁴ Of 1,400 naval ratings training in Halifax by the spring of 1940, only a third were in barracks.³⁵ That summer, the Navy requisitioned the Exhibition Grounds and housed several hundred new entries under the grandstand and in the Agricultural Building.

Meanwhile, the arrival of 2,000 British officers and ratings to take over forty-four American destroyers on loan to Britain intensified housing demand. Most were quartered in the RCN barracks, but the Royal Navy also used Armed Merchant Cruisers in the harbour as floating hostels. There were reports that a good deal of revelry took place on board these former passenger liners, since, though converted for war duty, they were much more commodious than warships.³⁶

The imposition of rent controls in late 1940 coincided with an increase in the number of incoming service dependents who, heretofore “content to live inland in their established homes...pulled up stakes and came to live where they could be united.”

³⁴James W. Essex, *Victory in the St. Lawrence: Canada's Unknown War* (Erin, Ont.: Boston Mills Press, 1984), pp. 45-46.

³⁵G.N. Tucker, *The Naval Service of Canada* Vol. II, p. 118.

³⁶Tucker, p. 280; PANS MG 1 Vol. 489a, H.B. Jefferson papers, 12 November 1940.

Furthermore, as “men with sea service were drafted ashore they in turn sent for their families to come down.” The consequences, according to one naval official, were “exorbitant rentals, crowded housing conditions and poor and depressing environments for the wives and children of Naval personnel.”³⁷

The housing crunch continued through the winter of 1940-41. On Christmas Eve a fire destroyed a barracks block and two other buildings in the Dockyard, and delays in completing new corvettes created a bottleneck in the transfer of personnel from shore to ship. In April 1941, the *Halifax Mail* carried a front page story headlined “Disgrace to Canada,” with photographs of servicemen sleeping on the floor of the YMCA. “Hostel accommodations in Halifax are far from sufficient to meet the demands laid upon them,” the article said. The resulting overcrowding “compelled hundreds of men to walk the streets, seek shelter in doorways and on church steps, to resort to dives to escape the winter weather.” The *Mail* noted that the Sailors’ Home for merchant seamen opened by the Navy League during the First World War had been taken over by federal authorities in September 1939, but only recently had the government compensated the Navy League for the loss of the building.

A suggestion has been made in some quarters that a minimum expenditure should be made in Halifax and that the balance of the money should be allocated to various inland cities...to divert funds from this city when it is the busiest shipping centre in the world, to send to inland centres monies so urgently needed to provide for the thousands of men who visit this port would, in the opinion of the people of this city, constitute a breach of trust.³⁸

³⁷NA RG 24 Vol. 11,105 file 52-3-2 Vol. 1, Lieut. Large to CO, RCN Barracks, Halifax, 21 March 1942.

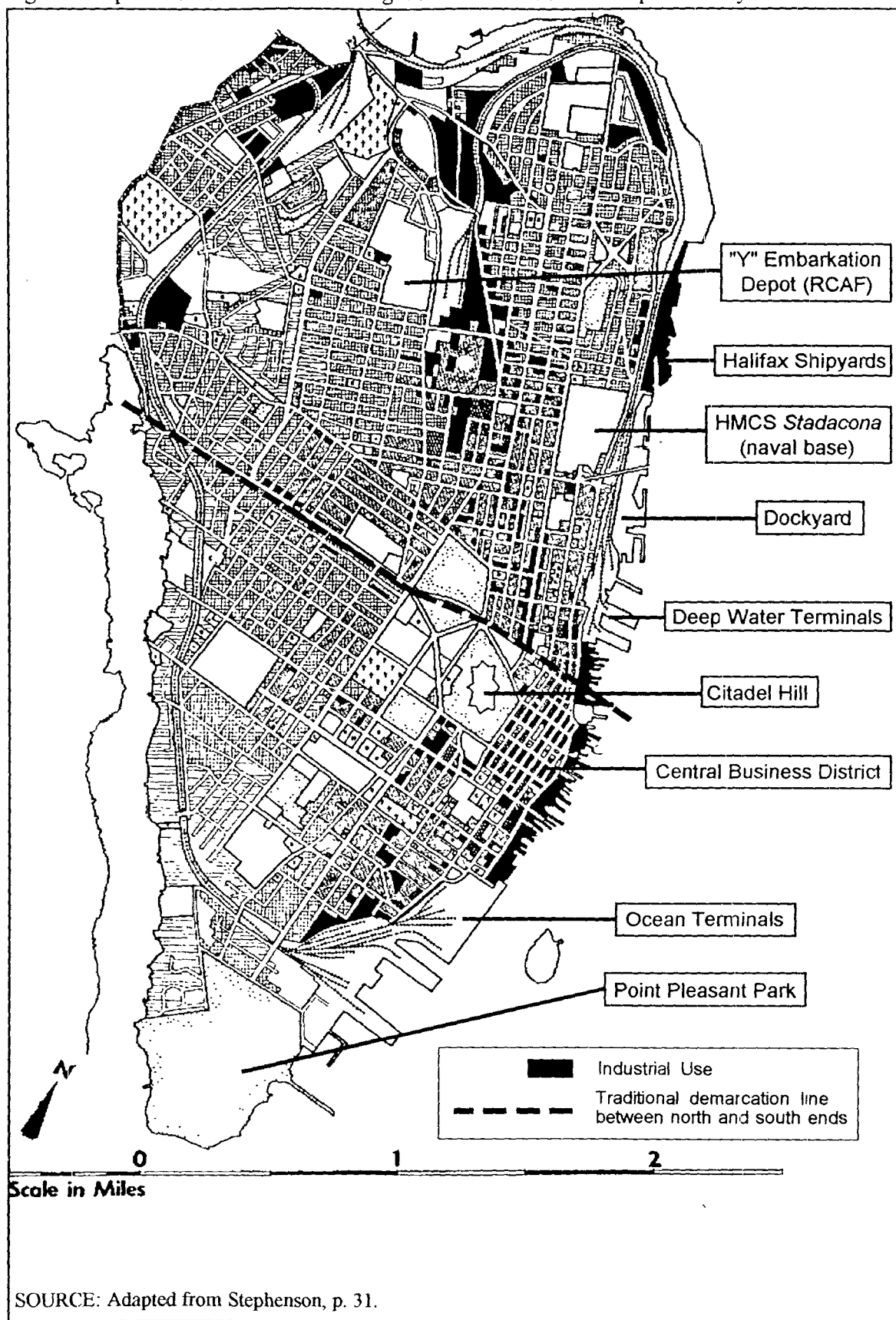
³⁸*Halifax Mail*, 4 April 1941, p. 1.

As the Navy expanded, more and more buildings in the city were commandeered, but the service accommodation crisis did not subside until the RCAF embarkation depot (known as “Y” Depot) was vacated by the Air Force in late 1943. By the end of January 1944 the RCN had moved 3,000 personnel into barracks at “Y” Depot, which now became HMCS “Peregrine.” [See Fig. 3-3].

The RCN made a convenient target for critics – service personnel were a highly visible segment of the population, and it seemed obvious that the major cause of housing congestion were the large numbers of naval personnel in the city. On the matter of there being a housing crisis in Halifax, there could be no disagreement. The dilemma was how to tackle it. Was it a federal responsibility or a municipal problem? If government intervention was the only solution, how would this affect the real estate market? If private enterprise was going to be involved, how would they secure the necessary labour and materials? What type of housing should be built? Where was the land going to come from?

One novel idea which never progressed beyond the discussion stage but nevertheless indicated the level of public awareness about the housing problem surfaced in January 1941 when the Halifax Junior Board of Trade initiated a series of public forums called Radio Round Table Discussions. The topic of the inaugural broadcast dealt with the feasibility of the city sponsoring construction of apartment buildings, given the “inability of private enterprise to adequately cope with the [housing] problem.” The panelists agreed that the scheme was not aimed at providing housing for those who could not afford it. “It

Fig. 3-3 Map of Halifax Peninsula showing Industrial Areas and Principal Military Installations.



is the scarcity of living quarters, not the quality of the dwellings that is the paramount problem,” one participant argued. Like similar debates in Norfolk, the major concern was that “property-owners must be protected against unfair rental competition” in order to avoid “competing against private landlords, or firms engaged in the real estate business.” Assuming that the units were erected on city-owned land, the operating costs of the project would be lower than privately-owned rental properties in the area. The solution, according to the panelists, was that “the rentals would be fixed so as to correspond with the rentals of taxable property in the same class.”³⁹

Having dispatched the issue of unfair competition, the panel turned to the nettlesome question of the proposed project’s long term impact. “It’s going to be pretty difficult to...predict just how we’ll be affected by the after-math of European hostilities,” one speaker observed, but “Halifax has always had the reputation of being a comparatively expensive city in which to live.”

Families who spend five or six months each year, in connection with Winterport activities, claim that housing is no less expensive here, but far inferior to that existing in other Canadian cities. In fact, in a number of cases, in an effort to avoid these conditions, the families of those transferred to Halifax in the winter months, remain in upper Canada.⁴⁰

The panel concluded by implicitly conceding that the quality of housing in Halifax was a more fundamental problem than immediate needs created by extraordinary demand.

³⁹OA MU 4156, John Fisher papers, file: Early Scripts, 1940-41. The program was broadcast by the CBC on 22 January 1941. The panelists were Gordon Clark, Montréal Life Insurance Company; Jack Kirk, Industrial Acceptance Corporation; Stewart Sims, Trans Canada Airlines and Jack Flynn of radio station CHNS. All were members of the Junior Board of Trade’s newly formed “Committee of New Ideas.” Only one still resided in Halifax in 1950, (another was living just outside the city limits), according to the *City Directory*.

⁴⁰OA MU 4156, John Fisher papers, file: Early Scripts, 1940-41.

This plan would unquestionably remedy the shortage of housing accommodation at present, and in the future when the population of Halifax returns to its normal level, the construction of apartment houses now, would be an important step towards improving the existing unsatisfactory conditions. If and when the time arrives when it is no longer necessary to house a surplus population, these vacated apartments might well be occupied by those permanent residents now living in less desirable sections in the city. These sections could, in turn, be reconstructed on a vastly improved scale, and permit the residents to enjoy decent housing conditions in a respectable neighbourhood.⁴¹

The “Committee of New Ideas,” as the panelists called themselves, had uncovered the fundamental impediment to solving the housing problem in Halifax, although they did not seem to realize it at the time. The wartime accommodation shortage was really two crises layered one on top of the other. The first was the poor state of the housing stock due to its age and the failure to revivify the local economic base following the withdrawal of the British garrison in 1905. The effect of the Ocean Terminals project on property values in the southeast quadrant, and the total destruction of a large portion of the working class housing stock in the north in 1917, merely compounded this long term problem. The origins of the second crisis were directly related to conditions created by the Second World War: military expansion, shipyard expansion, and bureaucratic expansion, causing a sudden “surplus” population to appear. There was no hope of addressing the long term housing crisis during the war because any new construction would immediately be used to house the surplus population. Older dwellings in need of replacement or repair would also be quickly occupied if vacated by families moving to better accommodation. The problem of how to provide sufficient surplus housing to

⁴¹OA MU 4156, John Fisher papers, file: Early Scripts, 1940-41.

allow the redevelopment of blighted districts in Halifax would not be solved for another fifteen years.⁴² By that time, the federal government would become much more involved in slum clearance programmes than it was during the Second World War.

While the Committee of New Ideas preoccupied itself with apartment buildings, federal authorities adopted a different strategy. The Department of Munitions and Supply had decided to tackle the wartime housing shortage head-on by forming a Crown corporation, Wartime Housing Limited (WHL), and erecting thousands of pre-fabricated (or, more accurately, “demountable”) bungalows across the country.⁴³ By early 1942, Wartime Housing Limited had nearly 1,000 houses either planned or under construction in the Halifax area, but only civilian workers in the shipyards or naval dockyard were eligible to rent WHL houses.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, municipal officials sought and received federal assistance in financing the Ardmore Park subdivision, where no such strictures would be applied, but the scheme was fraught with delay and compromise.⁴⁵ Completed months behind schedule, Ardmore Park bore little resemblance to the original proposal, which had called for a total of 400 houses on four suburban sites. This plan was almost immediately rejected owing to its distance from available transportation services, whereupon various other more central locations were considered, including the North and South Commons.⁴⁶

⁴²In his 1957 redevelopment study of Halifax, Gordon Stephenson advocated precisely the same strategy that the Committee of New Ideas had suggested in its 1941 broadcast. See discussion of the Stephenson report in Chapter 9, below.

⁴³Wade, pp. 44-47.

⁴⁴John Bacher, “From Study to Reality: The Establishment of Public Housing in Halifax, 1930-1953,” *Acadiensis* XVIII no. 1 (Autumn 1988), p. 128.

⁴⁵*Ibid.* Bacher reports that Ardmore Park was finished in 1942, however Mayor W.E. Donovan noted in April 1943 that only 81 houses had been “completed and assigned to tenants.” PANS, MICRO: Places: Halifax: City Council Minutes, Reel 26, “Mayor’s Final Message to Council, April 29th, 1943.”

⁴⁶PANS, MICRO: Places: Halifax: City Council Minutes, Reel 26, 4 June 1942, p. 41.

Military authorities vetoed the North Common site, but not before an abortive attempt by north end aldermen to shift the burden of development to the South Common. The decision to use Ardmore Park, an area bordering Connolly Street between Chebucto Road and Bayers Road in the northwest quadrant of the peninsula, necessitated trimming the number of proposed units by half. Despite vigorous opposition by neighbourhood homeowners concerned about the effect of a pre-fabricated housing project on their property values, the project finally went ahead.⁴⁷

The case of Ardmore Park illustrated the range of obstacles standing in the way of dealing effectively with housing congestion, despite general agreement that the problem had reached the critical stage. Even when willing to act decisively, municipal officials were hamstrung by limits on available land, the pre-emptive authority of the military, and opposition from citizens, not to mention the difficulties in obtaining labour and building materials. Any municipal initiatives along the lines of the Junior Board of Trade's 1941 apartment buildings proposal were virtually dead in the water by 1942 because federal and military authorities had requisitioned much of the city-owned land on the peninsula.

By May 1942, the imposition of gasoline and rubber rationing further compounded the shortage of housing on the Halifax peninsula. H.B. Jefferson wrote in his diary that "people who formerly lived in the suburbs and commuted to work in the city are now on the hunt for homes in Halifax, swelling the list of migrants lured here by war work."

The migratory instinct that every May 1 makes city apartment dwellers change their abodes...is almost only a memory in this war crowded city.

⁴⁷City Council Minutes, Reel 26, 6 July 1942; 8 July 1942, p. 92; 17 December 1942.

[Real estate agents] are nearly tearful about it all. "Every day we have people coming to us, "they say, "begging for anything from a furnished room to a house, willing to pay anything. And all we can tell them is there is nothing available. For every vacant dwelling there are a dozen families seeking accommodation. Proof of this was given a dazed house owner who inserted a modest, five-line 'flat to rent' advertisement in a local paper. He was snowed under by more than 200 replies.⁴⁸

The housing situation in Halifax at the end of 1942 led federal authorities to reconsider the Wartime Housing Limited building programme. Russel S. Smart, the Real Property Administrator for the Wartime Prices and Trade Board, declared that "no survey is needed to show that Halifax is frightfully congested and that there is no room there now for any in-migrants." The degree of congestion was "only exceeded by Quebec, Three Rivers, Hull and Sudbury."

The population of Halifax has increased from 65,000 to at least 110,000. The number of dwellings in 1941 was 12,690. If all of these were crowded to the same extent as the crowded section, about 88,000 would be accommodated, leaving a need for 3,000 dwellings, on a crowded basis, namely 7 per household. If the average of about 5 in 1941 were taken, and this average applied to the whole city, then 9,000 houses would be required. It would, of course, be fantastic to suggest building houses to anything like these figures. For a lower figure to be considered, it is only a matter of personal judgement as to how far one should go to relieve the situation.⁴⁹

Smart believed that the federal government "should not embark on any permanent housing in Halifax," but instead provide "the simplest kind of barracks for workers and shipyards and dockyards, coupled with a house conversion scheme." Before taking this action, however, he felt it would be necessary "to declare Halifax a restricted area" under

⁴⁸PANS MG 1 Vol. 501, H.B. Jefferson papers, "Daily Journal 1942," 1 May 1942.

⁴⁹NA RG 64 Vol. 699 file 25-1, part 2, Smart to Gordon, 17 December 1942.

Defence of Canada Regulations or an Order in Council, and “define the character of people who might live there.” The government ultimately rejected this drastic step, but did approve the house conversion plan, not only for Halifax but other cities as well.⁵⁰

By the summer of 1943 the situation had, if anything, worsened, according to a memorandum from another WPTB official, H.D. Fripp. He revealed that there were “no [further] houses available for conversion” because suitable housing had either been taken over “for war purposes” or was occupied by owners who were “financially able to keep them up.” Of the 776 new units erected in Halifax by private builders between 1939 and June 1943, only 47 were apartments. When these figures were “compared with an increase of approximately 60,000 in population,” Fripp wrote, they “present a picture of the disastrous state in which Halifax at present finds itself with regards to housing.” While admitting that the problem originated with the movement of large numbers of military personnel and war workers into the city, Fripp also claimed that there had been “a definite housing shortage in Halifax before the war.” More to the point, he identified the dependents of servicemen and workers as the primary cause of overcrowding, referring to many of them as “deadwood and non-essentials.”

These are made up of dependents of men who have gone overseas, wives of naval personnel and seamen who operate out of the Port of Halifax, visitors and the usual riff-raff [*sic*] and camp followers. I am informed that this last group is very large. These groups taken as a whole have caused congestion which I term dangerous.⁵¹

⁵⁰NA RG 64 Vol. 699 file 25-1, part 1, Gordon to W.C. Clark, 20 May 1943.

⁵¹NA RG 19 Vol. 715 file 203C, memorandum “Halifax, N.S.,” 19 July 1943.

Upon reading the report, the chairman of the Wartime Prices and Trade Board (WPTB), Donald Gordon, was so alarmed that he wrote a strong letter to Minister of Finance J. L. Ilesley, urging that “the matter as a whole be referred to Mr. [Angus L.] Macdonald.” The situation had gotten out of hand, Gordon believed, because there was “no single adequate authority” in charge; instead, “each of the several branches of the Department of National Defence, as well as the Department of Munitions and Supply, has been acting independently one of the other...[I]t strikes me forcibly that the Minister who should accept over-all responsibility for dealing with these congestion problems is the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services.”⁵²

Halifax Mayor John E. Lloyd disagreed. Early in September 1943, he called on the Wartime Prices and Trade Board to undertake a “complete survey of housing in Halifax...to establish basis for maintaining essential services.”⁵³ Lloyd proposed that the city conduct the survey but that the WPTB impose penalties for citizens failing to answer questionnaires or supplying false information. When the matter was brought before the federal Cabinet War Committee by the Minister of Finance on September 8, the Deputy Minister for Naval Services was asked to convene a committee comprised of representatives from the three Services, the Department of Munitions and Supply and the Department of Finance, to furnish a solution.. At the next meeting of the Committee, two weeks later, the Wartime Administrator of Canadian Atlantic Ports, Edward L. Cousins – an engineer formerly with the Toronto Harbour Commission – was instructed to conduct

⁵²NA RG 64 Vol. 699 file 25-1, part 1, Gordon to Ilesley, 4 August 1943.

⁵³PANS MG 20 Vol. 93 folder A: Commercial Club correspondence 1943-44, telegram: Lloyd to Gordon, 10 September 1943.

an own inquiry into the housing crisis, and advise the Cabinet War Committee of his recommendations.⁵⁴ In accordance with the terms and conditions of Order in Council P.C. 8832 (18 November 1943), the Cabinet War Committee empowered Cousins to make a survey of the population and housing stock of Halifax. The purpose was to determine how much rooming accommodation existed in the city, how many residents could be designated “non-essential” to the war effort, and consequently be ordered to leave.

The Halifax housing situation followed a convoluted path through Wartime Prices and Trade Board and Finance before finally reaching the highest level of government in the Cabinet War Committee. When the CWC asked E. L. Cousins to investigate, he was instructed to be directly responsible to the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services, Angus L. Macdonald. But Macdonald, while acknowledging the large naval complement in the city, was also mindful of the importance of rental accommodation to the local real estate market. Moreover, the Navy faced an uncertain future once hostilities ended, thus making it nearly impossible to determine in 1943 what RCN housing needs would be down the road. If housing was to be built, should it be temporary or permanent? Should barracks for single men be erected, or dwellings more suited to families – single-detached bungalows or semi-detached duplexes? And perhaps most

⁵⁴Edward Launcelot Cousins (1884-1961) was appointed Wartime Administrator of the Port of Halifax under Order in Council P.C. 4135 (22 May 1942) by C.D. Howe. In a letter to Cousins outlining the duties of the post, Howe wrote that the Administrator would “co-ordinate the work of the National Harbours Board with the terminal operations of the Railway, and maintain a general oversight over shipbuilding and ship repair activities, and, in general, act as referee between those directly responsible for managing civilian operations in the port.” Toronto Harbour Commission Archives (hereafter THCA) RG 3/3 Box 361 folder 18, Howe to Cousins, 9 May 1942. Under P.C. 6831 (4 August 1942) and P.C. 7769 (2 September 1942), the powers of the Wartime Administrator were extended to include “all ports and harbours” in the three Maritime provinces. *Ibid.*, folder 17, Cousins to Howe, 3 December 1943. The appointment was terminated under P.C. 7147 (29 November 1945).

importantly, where would the Navy find land upon which to build? Wartime Housing Limited had already acquired much of the vacant land on the Halifax peninsula for its pre-fabricated projects; if the Navy decided to follow suit, it would likely be forced to expropriate land from the city or private owners and demolish existing housing in order to make way for new construction. One naval medical officer who wrestled with this problem in September 1943 suggested that permanent housing for naval personnel be erected on a site “adjacent to Rockhead Hospital on Bedford Basin...in the area now known as Africville,” apparently in complete ignorance of the community already present there.⁵⁵ For these reasons, Macdonald declined to accept responsibility “for dealing with the housing congestion...since, as a remedy, pressure might be brought to bear for extensive construction of barracks for naval personnel.”⁵⁶

It thus fell to the Department of Munitions and Supply to solve the housing crunch in Halifax. E.L. Cousins wasted little time in determining what needed to be done. Following consultations with municipal and military authorities, he submitted a preliminary report to C.D. Howe just five weeks after his appointment. Cousins agreed that the situation was serious, but he was clearly more sympathetic to the local perspective:

The City of Halifax as a City and the officials charged with administration of civic affairs are in no way responsible for these existing deplorable conditions...[They] are without exception quite capable, underpaid and woefully lacking in administrative staff.

⁵⁵NA RG 24 Vol. 11,105 file 52-3-2, Vol. 1, memorandum “Halifax Housing,” 21 September 1943.

⁵⁶NA Cabinet War Committee (hereafter CWC) Minutes, Reel C-4875, 8 September, 22 September, 29 September, 10 November 1943; CWC Schedule of Decisions, Reel C-4874, 10 November 1943.

Halifax is not only a national port, but due to war conditions, is very much a national city and certainly the existing unsatisfactory conditions...[are] almost entirely attributable to the war effort.⁵⁷

Cousins placed the blame for the crisis squarely on the Navy. “For every Naval Service man moved out of Halifax, another one has moved in,” he wrote. “Naval officials have not been able to provide adequately for the housing of their officers and ratings.” As a result, the Navy had less than 4,000 personnel in barracks, as opposed to nearly 7,500 on Lodging and Compensation Allowance and living in civilian accommodation. The Army, Cousins noted, “planned and provided for reasonably adequate quarters” for “approximately fifteen thousand” men, only 340 of whom were transients not living in barracks. Air Force officials told Cousins that less than half the 2,200 RCAF personnel in Halifax (including 400 WD’s [Women’s Division]) lived outside barracks. As to the proposed removal of non-essential persons from the city, Cousins was “very doubtful whether any man or body of men should be charged with the responsibility of deciding who should and should not reside in Halifax.”⁵⁸

I know of special cases where wives and families are here and the husbands overseas, other cases where the family of an R.A.F. officer is here, they came out with him from England and when he was recalled he was unable to get passenger accommodation for the return of his family...Another case is one of an eight roomed apartment being occupied by a wife of an officer and a maid with the officer overseas and the home of the wife in question just outside Saint John, but being of independent means, she prefers to remain in Halifax. On the other hand there are many people here with husbands in the Services and are doing very excellent war work, other similar cases with the wife doing nothing...[to help] the war effort.⁵⁹

⁵⁷NA RG 2/18 Vol. 9, file H-13 1942-44, “Survey of Housing Situation and Possible Depopulation – Halifax,” Cousins to Howe, 1 November 1943, pp. 1-2.

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 2-3, 7.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 6.

Cousins noted that 855 of the 1,472 pre-fabricated bungalows built by Wartime Housing Limited in the Halifax area were made of “plywood and are inferior in many respects to the later models now being constructed. The remaining 617 houses are of sturdier construction, good for twenty to twenty-five years.” All but 220 of the WHL dwellings were occupied by war workers. The City administered the others, which were “somewhat larger and have a back porch,” but according to Cousins’ investigation, they rented “for about 20% more than the houses administered by Wartime Housing Ltd.”⁶⁰

The report ended with an unusually frank plea for extraordinary financial assistance to the municipal government as compensation for the \$30 million in federal tax-exempt land holdings in the city. It must have been prompted by his conversations with municipal officials, who doubtless sensed the opportunity to press home this familiar theme in Halifax-Ottawa relations:⁶¹

The general concensus [*sic*] of opinion here of the business interests and the thinking and analytical minds is exceedingly critical of the Federal Government in its attitude to Halifax during this war period. I have encountered it on numerous occasions in the last eighteen months and generally am in full accord with their viewpoint for the reason that every public service has been strained far beyond its capacity.⁶²

Finally, the appeal would be heard, but it was too little, too late. Within three weeks, Order in Council P.C. 8834 (18 November 1943) authorized the expenditure of

⁶⁰NA RG 2/18 Vol. 9, file H-13 1942-44, “Housing Situation,” p. 4.

⁶¹PANS RG 44 Box 14 #1, *Submission by the City of Halifax to the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations* (Halifax: City of Halifax, February 1938).

⁶²NA RG 2/18 Vol. 9, file H-13 1942-44, “Housing Situation,” p. 8.

\$200,000 for “the improvement of public services at Halifax.”⁶³ Meanwhile, Cousins reported back to the Cabinet War Committee that a national publicity campaign was needed to deter further in-migration to Halifax. Also planned was the removal of air force personnel from Halifax to Army camps at Debert and Windsor, with a lesser number transferred to another RCAF depot at Moncton. The Windsor Park embarkation depot vacated by the RCAF was promptly taken over by the Royal Canadian Navy, and 3,000 naval personnel were moved into “Y” Depot in early 1944.⁶⁴ The withdrawal of air force personnel appeared to noticeably lessen housing congestion by mid-1944, although Cousins would later credit the apparent easing of congestion to the “media blitz.”⁶⁵

Addressing the long term housing problem proved to be more problematic. C. D. Howe informed Cousins that “the Government wishes to avoid building new housing” four months before the results of the Halifax housing and population survey were tabled.⁶⁶ For all the time and trouble it took to organize, gather and compile housing and demographic data for an urban area with a population approaching 120,000 inhabitants, the final report of the Cousins survey was surprisingly curt. The report – only three pages in length – was submitted to the Cabinet War Committee in July 1944, and must be considered nothing more than a mandate for inaction. Chief among its findings was the fact that “less than

⁶³NA RG 2/18 Vol. 9, file H-13 1942-44, Heeney to Cousins, 19 November 1943.

⁶⁴The RCAF “Y” Embarkation Depot was in fact transferred to Lachine, P.Q. in December 1943, and then moved to Moncton a year later. NA CWC Schedule of Decisions, Reel C-4874, 10 November 1943; Lloyd A. Machum, *A History of Moncton* (Moncton: City of Moncton, 1965), p. 345.

⁶⁵See PANS RG 35-102 (36C.83) “Draft Memorandum in Connection with the Census and Building Survey of Halifax and Dartmouth” (undated) p. 3. The final report was a slightly revised version of the above document, dated 17 July 1944; see NA RG 2/18 Vol. 9 file H-13 “Census Returns- Halifax, Dartmouth.”

⁶⁶NA RG 2/18 Vol. 9, file H-13 1942-44, Howe to Heeney, 18 March 1944.

Fig. 3-4. "The Trouble-Shooter," *Halifax Herald* editorial cartoon, 21 February 1944.



one per thousand of the population were not employed in essential war work,” thus belying the notion that Halifax was filled with “non-essential” residents. The report also disclosed that “a considerable number of unoccupied rooms [were] available for rent in the City at the time the Survey was made, and this number has been increased during the past few months.” Cousins asserted that the national publicity campaign, which had included a National Film Board newsreel, announcements on national radio, and press releases, had had a positive effect. The real reason, however, was that 3,000 naval personnel formerly housed under civilian roofs were now in barracks at Windsor Park.

The Cousins survey report stated that the Halifax-Dartmouth area “could advantageously use a further 1000 houses, to rent from \$30.00 to \$35.00 per month.” Nothing came of this recommendation, at least not before federal authorities admitted that the country faced a critical postwar housing shortage and Wartime Housing Limited began building pre-fabricated homes for returning veterans. But this initiative came some months later, and not in response to the housing problem in a specific locality but to a national emergency. As far as Halifax was concerned, so long as wartime transients could be crammed into temporary accommodation, there was no justification for further residential construction from the federal point of view.

Although brief in terms of findings and recommendations, the Cousins survey did serve its political masters well by allowing them to postpone difficult decisions regarding further intervention in the local housing market and the imposition of unprecedented controls on the movement of civilians. The prolonged interval – nearly eleven months – between acknowledgment of the housing emergency and submission of the Cousins survey

report made plain just how seriously the government regarded the crisis. By July 1944, the housing shortage in Halifax was declared to be over. Relief had come not by improving housing conditions generally, but by reallocating existing resources. For those naval personnel occupying the former air force depot, living conditions may or may not have been an improvement over their previous quarters. But since RCN shore establishments in Halifax continued to grow, premises vacated by those moving into barracks would in all likelihood have been occupied by others. The aforementioned impediments and disincentives to maintaining and replacing a housing stock of largely 19th century vintage remained. If anything, the war delayed the resolution of Halifax's chronic housing problem by drawing attention to immediate accommodation needs rather than addressing the need for municipal planning initiatives and the lack of an overall strategy for urban development.

The Department of Munitions and Supply felt responsible for local housing needs only insofar as it related to accommodating civilian workers in war industry. As a result, federal intervention into local housing markets was never based on a systematic policy designed to influence or direct urban residential development. It was brought on solely by the immediate requirements of the war economy, a fact made abundantly clear by the rapidity with which Wartime Housing Limited was dismantled after the war.⁶⁷ To be sure, the federal government, (or, to be more precise, the Department of National Defence), was responsible for a number of housing projects built in Dartmouth in the 1950s, but

⁶⁷See Jill Wade, "Wartime Housing Limited, 1941-1947: Canadian Housing Policy at the Crossroads," *Urban History Review* 15 No. 1 (June 1986), pp. 53-56.

once again access was restricted – this time, ironically, only service families were eligible – and Halifax derived little benefit from this development, other than it helped justify construction of the long-awaited harbour bridge.⁶⁸

The old conservative argument that people lived in poor quality housing out of choice rather than necessity persisted. However, the success of the government war housing program set a precedent for publicly-funded projects that provided an attractive and affordable alternative to deplorable slum conditions. The difficulty, as the Halifax *Mail* pointed out in a January 1944 editorial, was that “pressure upon available space” forced others into substandard housing as soon as it was vacated:

There are places within the city which have been without water for weeks and months, where no doors keep out the weather, where the roof keeps out the rain only when ice happens to coat it, where windows are broken, and where plumbing - if there were water for it - intended for a family, is called upon to care for half a dozen households.

It is all very well to say that war is responsible for these conditions, but...the same state of affairs existed long before the war. Facts also...contradict the commonly-held opinion that people...living in such quarters would not be satisfied with anything better. Experience has shown that, when war brought increased income,...families moved as quickly as they could from squalid to more tolerable homes. Unfortunately,...other folk have followed them into the slums. There is no sound reason to believe that these, too would not evacuate...the day other flats, apartments or even rooms were made available to them at reasonable rents.

War has shown that people do not stay on relief because they liked it, that as soon as they could get jobs they took them. May it also awaken those in authority...who have so far failed to

⁶⁸See Hugh Conrad, “Sudden Explosion of Dartmouth City, A Rival to Halifax,” *Atlantic Advocate* 58 (January, 1968), pp. 18-22, 24.

inaugurate a reasonable housing policy...that...very few [people] live in slums because they like them.⁶⁹

Housing demand appeared to be falling by 1944, but appearances could be deceiving, as the following detailed analysis of the housing stock will show. Indeed, more than a decade would pass before the most heavily congested areas of the city would show signs of improvement. Federal intervention in the form of Wartime Housing Limited contributed little to helping solve Halifax's long term housing problem. The federal government steadfastly rejected the argument that the housing crisis in Halifax was a national, not local, issue. However, one could hardly fault authorities in Ottawa for being reluctant to address a problem which was not entirely of their own making, particularly at a time when national resources were needed so desperately elsewhere, and the whole question of Dominion-provincial and Dominion-municipal finance was at an impasse.⁷⁰

In the short term, Halifax was fortunate to have had as a federal administrator someone as sympathetic and capable as E.L. Cousins. As the housing and population survey was getting under way in February 1944, Cousins made his position with regard to housing congestion in Halifax quite clear:

Halifax, during the past four years, has become a national city as well as a national port...

In my judgment the municipal and public service officials, and the citizens as a whole, have met the situation most capably, and more so perhaps, for the reason that they were in no way responsible for the condition with which they were confronted and had of necessity to deal with.

⁶⁹*Halifax Mail*, 7 January 1944, p. 4.

⁷⁰Donald V. Smiley, ed. *The Rowell-Sirois Report, Book I* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1963), pp. 182-184.

The individual effort of the citizens to help in Canada's war effort, has been most commendable, and I do not think this fact is generally known or appreciated as it should be throughout Canada.⁷¹

Perhaps Cousins truly was a kindred spirit, or perhaps he was merely a clever exponent of good public relations. Whatever the motive, his superiors in Ottawa had all but decided that survey or no survey, further intervention in the Halifax housing crisis was inadvisable. Meanwhile, the residents of Halifax dutifully participated in what was surely the most exhaustive urban demographic study of the war. It is to this survey that our attention now turns.

⁷¹*Herald*, 19 February 1944.

Fig. 3-5. Cousins survey newspaper notice, *Halifax Herald*, 19 February 1944.

NOTICE TO

MEN—WOMEN

18 YEARS and OVER

LIVING IN HALIFAX and DARTMOUTH

**Adult Survey
To Start
Mon., Feb. 21st**

**Purpose of
Questionnaire**

**Co-operation
Is Requested**

• Immediately below is reproduced a questionnaire copies of which will be delivered to your home within the next few days and which all adult members of your family, 18 years or over will be requested to fill out.

• Members of your local Civil Defence Unit (A.R.P.) are undertaking this important task on behalf of E. L. Cousins, Wartime Administrator, Canadian Atlantic Ports. This adult survey will commence Monday, February 21st.

• Through the information thus made available, definite plans can be formulated for a solution to the congested housing situation. Civic, Public Utility and Planning Commission officials will have facts for present and post-war planning and the Civilian Defence organization a complete picture of the man and woman power available in the event of an emergency.

• Your co-operation in this survey will play a vital part in present and post-war planning for the welfare of the community. Please complete the Questionnaire promptly and fully.

Form A. HALIFAX-DARTMOUTH

ADULT QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire prepared and submitted by E. L. Cousins, Wartime Administrator Canadian Atlantic Ports under Authority of Order-in-Council, P. C. 4432, dated Nov. 18, 1943.
This Survey Conducted through the kindly cooperation of Members of Civil Defence (A.R.P.)
Please Read Carefully before Filling in any Answers to Questions

Name of Warden _____ Unit No. _____ Date _____

NOTES—This Form is to be filled in by all persons 18 years of age and over residing in Halifax-Dartmouth or vicinity. When Answer to Questions below are in form of YES or NO, if your answer is YES strike out NO. If your answer is NO strike out YES.

Full Name _____ Married _____ Single _____

Address _____

(1) Were you a Resident of Halifax, Dartmouth or vicinity on Sept. 1st, 1939? Answer—YES NO.

(2) If you were not a Resident of Halifax, Dartmouth or vicinity on Sept. 1st, 1939; please indicate in following space Approximate date of your arrival in Halifax _____

First Place of Residence _____

Address _____

(3) What is your present employment? _____

CHAPTER FOUR

THE COUSINS SURVEY

“It was a typical Halifax house...two stories and an attic, shingled, with the sloping roof agreeably broken with a three-paned dormer window that leaned out over the roof curious to see the street below. On a sixty by sixty-seven-foot lot, it was a narrow, economical house for narrow, economical circumstances.”

– P.B. Waite¹

This chapter explores in greater detail wartime conditions in Halifax by analyzing the physical and social structure, using primary statistical data from the 1944 Cousins survey and the Dominion censuses of 1941 and 1951. Housing variables related to type, cost, and quality, and demographic variables such as household size and family composition are presented. It is argued that the housing crisis, while undeniably made worse by the influx of transients, was also shaped by long-established *laissez-faire* practices in the residential housing market, the historical pattern of settlement on the peninsula, and the prewar urban economy. The avoidance of responsibility on the part of naval and federal authorities with regard to housing service personnel and their dependents contributed to overcrowding, but this was not the sole cause of the housing problem because so many other factors, mostly local in origin, were present. The inconsistencies and deficiencies in domestic war policy formulated at the federal level become much more apparent when examined from an

¹*The Man From Halifax* (Toronto, 1985), p. 10.

urban rather than national perspective, since it was at the community level that these policies often conflicted with local power bases and decision-making.

As the previous chapter has argued, the housing problem in Halifax was not simply a wartime phenomenon, although many factors related to housing supply and demand were influenced by war conditions. Housing had been the subject of debate in Halifax for many years, as it had been in many cities across the country.² But no political consensus on who should be held responsible for improving housing conditions had appeared prior to the outbreak of war in 1939. With few exceptions, all three levels of government in Canada avoided taking remedial action on the housing front because they did not want to interfere with the free market principles governing the real estate sector.

In the case of Halifax, this ideological constraint was reinforced during the war by three factors. First, the government in Ottawa downplayed the social ramifications of using Halifax and surrounding area as the primary Canadian operational, training, administrative, supply and repair base for naval forces and merchant shipping. Halifax was accorded no special status on the grounds that all urban centres were undergoing similar difficulties because of the war, and to treat one differently would create a precedent for other cities to follow. The second major factor affecting responses to the wartime housing crisis was the weakness of local support for any drastic alterations in the urban housing stock. The social structure and physical morphology of Halifax were such that the rental housing market was an important component of the local economy. "It is generally

²See Bacher, "From Study to Reality," pp. 120-121.

believed, but probably impossible to prove or disprove,” wrote one analyst some years after the war, “that real estate is favoured by many Haligonians over other types of investment.”³ The findings of the statistical report which follows leave no question as to the importance of the real estate sector to the Halifax economy during the Second World War. The war offered an irresistible opportunity for landlords to maximize income on existing properties without incurring the risks of financing new construction. But neither does evidence confirming allegations of rampant profiteering emerge from the statistics. Prewar rent levels depressed by weak demand and the age of the housing stock in older parts of the city remained low in comparison with housing costs in newer areas further west. A labourer who earned four dollars a day in 1939 could still rent a modest apartment for ten to fifteen dollars a month in 1945, even though his or her average income may have increased from 20 to 50 per cent. The same could not be said in 1950, however.

The structure of the urban housing market and the long term economic forces which had shaped its development determined the nature and dimensions of the wartime housing crisis. The wartime rental housing boom created a seller’s market, but the beneficiaries of that boom had also been landlords during the lean years before the war, when property values were falling and tight budgets forced municipalities to cut back on services. On the other hand, the *dynamics* of the housing problem, that is, the fluctuations in demand and the specific housing needs of the wartime population, were very much tied to strategic and

³John I. McVittie, *A Redevelopment Study of Halifax, Nova Scotia, Supplementary Volume* (Halifax: City of Halifax, 1957), p. 17.

political considerations which had little to do with local or long term factors. To fully understand the housing crisis in Halifax between 1939 and 1945, the circumstances which related directly to the war must be distinguished from those which were the product of evolutionary processes arising from urban growth outside the wartime period.

The third wartime factor affecting the accommodation crisis was related to the second, in that military authorities – particularly the Royal Canadian Navy – were unable or unwilling to forecast their barrack requirements. Private enterprise was also reluctant to build new housing on speculation for the same reason – wartime market demand was not expected to outlast the war. As a result, service personnel and their families were forced to compete with the civilian population for scarce housing resources. This greatly increased demand for rental accommodation, since most service personnel were not interested in purchasing homes. It also dampened the incentive to make properties more marketable, and exerted strong pressure on owners to raise rents.

The limited governmental response to the housing problem was commonly attributed to shortages of skilled labour and building materials. In hindsight, this argument is less convincing than it seemed at the time. When dwellings were needed for workers in war industry, state intervention into local housing markets was remarkably swift and efficient. Delays in the completion of Wartime Housing Limited and other projects certainly did occur, but the houses were built in record time considering the circumstances. The federal government conceived wartime home-building only as a temporary measure to provide emergency shelter, rather than as a means to address chronic replacement and repair problems in the existing housing stock. As we have

already seen in comparing the housing situation in Norfolk, Virginia with Halifax, there were strong arguments for non-intervention in local housing markets in order to avoid destabilizing postwar real estate values. Ironically, the short term response to the wartime accommodation crisis helped address Halifax's long term housing problem by adding several hundred affordable dwellings to the housing stock. But this was incidental to the original goals of Wartime Housing Limited and arose because postwar housing needs proved to be just as acute as those of the war.

Civilian in-migration to Halifax began in earnest just after the onset of hostilities, reaching a peak in the third quarter of 1940. [See Fig. 4-1] Transients tended to congregate in certain sections of the city, particularly in the area known as "Platoon Seven" to Air Raid Precautions personnel [Figs. 4-2 and 4-3]. The influx continued more or less unabated through 1941, falling off sharply in the first quarter of 1942 due to the entry of the United States into the war, which relieved some of the pressure on Halifax as a convoy assembly port. The following year brought the transfer of Royal Canadian Navy basic training from Halifax to Deep Brook, Nova Scotia. In late 1943, E.L. Cousins' national publicity campaign dissuaded individuals and families of servicemembers from coming to Halifax, but by then the wartime population had stabilized. Publication of the annual city directory in October 1944 revealed that the "headlong increase" in population "slowed...to a virtual halt during the last year," with fewer than 300 new residents being recorded.⁴

⁴PANS MG 1 Vol. 503, H.B. Jefferson papers, 11 October 1944.

Declining in-migration lowered demand for certain types of housing, but it did not result in a corresponding drop in housing congestion. In 1941, one quarter of Halifax households were overcrowded; by 1944 the percentage had risen to one-third. Despite raising hundreds of bungalows and several large dormitories, the government's housing agency, Wartime Housing Limited, afforded little relief for low-income tenant households where living conditions were poorest.

Superficially, wartime factors undoubtedly hastened this crisis: a sudden influx of service personnel, shortages of labour and building materials, and the inability to foresee what course the war would take. But the statistical evidence suggests that living conditions in several other Canadian cities were not unlike those found in Halifax; indeed, some communities appear to have been worse off. Halifax was singled out largely because of its military and strategic importance, which brought large numbers of service personnel from all regions of the country. Because the city became one of the primary symbols of Canada's war effort, conditions in Halifax were scrutinized more closely than other communities. For example, Moncton, New Brunswick – situated 300 kilometers north of Halifax – hosted an RAF Personnel Depot, a British Commonwealth Air Training Plan flying school, a repair depot and transport squadron of the RCAF, and a top-secret RAF radar unit during the war.⁵ A smaller community than Halifax but no less crowded, Moncton received far less national attention. Even so, an article describing conditions in

⁵Lloyd A. Machum, *A History of Moncton, 1865-1965* (Moncton: City of Moncton, 1965), pp. 341-347.

Fig. 4-1. Civilian In-migration to Halifax to First Quarter 1944.

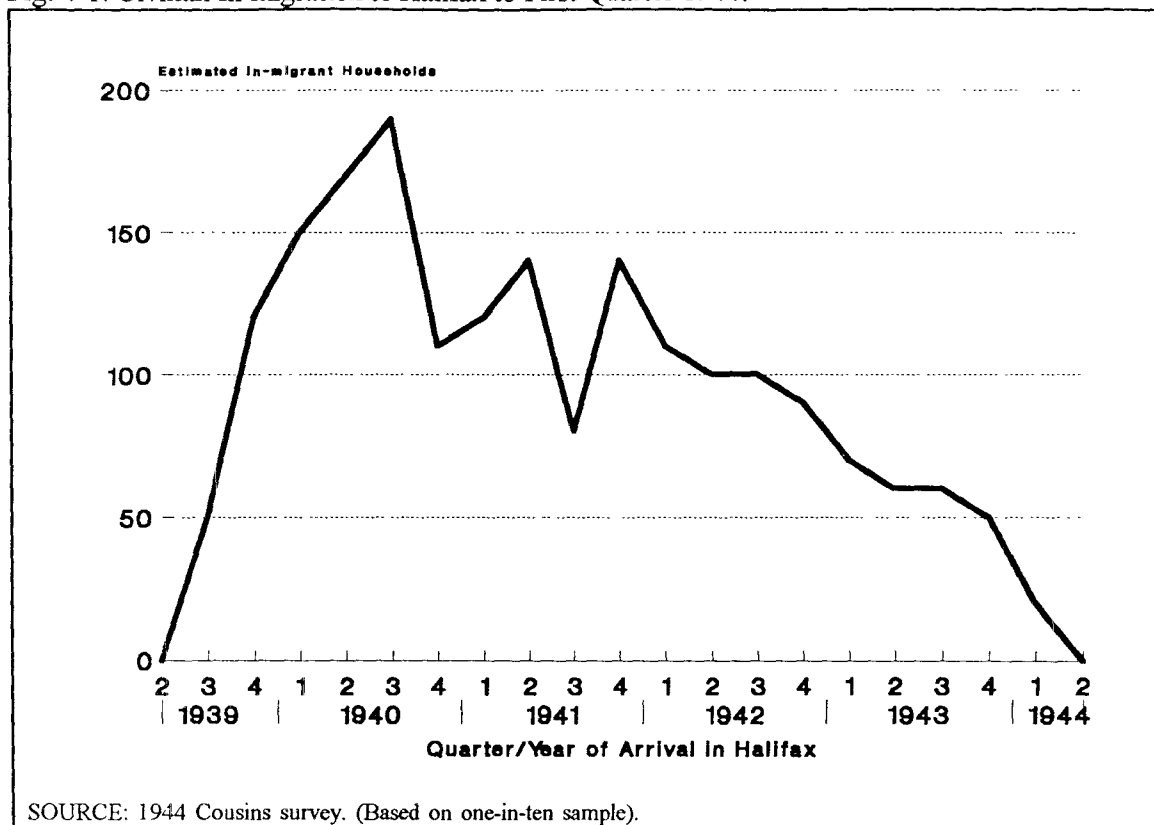
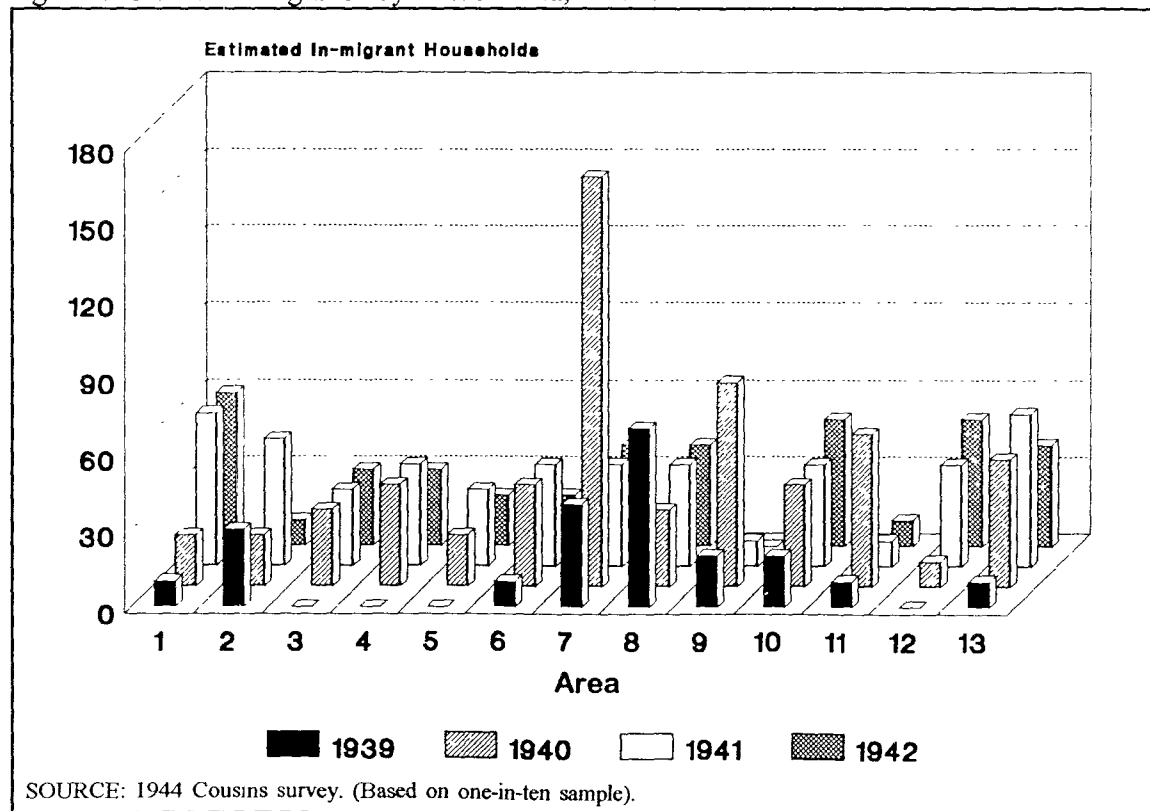


Fig. 4-2. Civilian In-migration by Platoon Area, 1939-42.



Moncton in July 1941 gave such a distorted view of conditions there that the press censor in Halifax insisted on drastic revisions before clearing it for publication.⁶

The Dominion censuses were consulted for comparative data on other Canadian cities in 1941 and 1951. The Dominion Bureau of Statistics produced housing atlases of several Canadian cities, including Halifax, based on 1941 census data, and special housing surveys were conducted in the Ontario cities of Windsor and Kingston in 1941, but the Cousins survey is believed to be unique in its scope and timing.⁷ Despite its unquestionable value, the 1941 Dominion census occurred too early to reflect longer term economic and social changes brought on by the war. The opposite limitation applied to the 1951 census, conducted six years after the war ended. Halifax was unique in having a detailed profile of late wartime social conditions thanks to the Cousins population and housing survey conducted in 1944.⁸

As previously stated, the purpose of the survey was to determine whether the ongoing housing crisis in Halifax warranted further government action. The three-year interval between the 1941 census and this survey provided a means of detecting changes in the urban social structure over the wartime period. Similarly, comparing wartime data with the 1951 census formed the basis for identifying what factors related to housing,

⁶PANS MG 1 Vol. 485, H.B. Jefferson papers, #1134.1.

⁷NA RG 64 Vol. 699, file 25-1, Part 2, Russel Smart to Donald Gordon, 17 December 1942.

⁸An interesting technical aspect of the survey was the preparation of punchcards by the International Business Machines company for use on equipment borrowed from the provincial government. "The use of this card system will save a great deal of labour from the viewpoint of tabulation of results," Cousins wrote. THCA RG 3/3 Box 361 folder 18, Howe to Cousins, 3 December 1943.

household formation, family composition, and labour force characteristics persisted into the postwar era.

The Cousins survey was conducted in late February and early March 1944 by members of the Halifax Civil (a.k.a. Civilian) Emergency Committee (HCEC). Consisting of approximately 6,000 citizens, the committee was formed early in the war to prepare against enemy attack and other potential emergencies. With memories of the 1917 Explosion still fresh, most took their duties quite seriously. “In the old days, an emergency was a far different affair to [*sic*] what might happen today,” Colonel William Borrett, a well-known radio personality, later wrote. The civil defence organization in Halifax included:

Over forty-five hundred men and over fifteen hundred women made up of wardens, control staff, telephonists, industrial wardens, fire watchers, auxiliary police and firemen, doctors, nurses, first aid workers, rescue squads, decontamination squads, demolition and clearance crews, telephone, gas, electric, public utilities, drivers, messengers, telephone, cable and radio communications groups and the Red Cross...organization.⁹

Fortunately, other than periodic drills, the HCEC was never called upon to put its level of preparedness to the test. Arguably its most significant wartime task turned out to be one for which it was well-suited but completely unprepared – that of census-taker. Federal officials decided that since the canvassers were mostly civilian, should be paid for their efforts in order to ensure their diligence in acquiring accurate information.¹⁰ The

⁹PANS MG 20 Vol. 1377 # 2, “Tales Told Under the Old Town Clock” Historic Halifax Edition, 1948, draft chapter manuscript entitled “Halifax in Wartime,”p. 11.

¹⁰NA CWC Minutes, Reel C-4875, 17 November 1943. This decision is indicative, perhaps, of the skeptical view that Ottawa held regarding the efficiency and value of local voluntary organizations.

sum of \$40,000 was set aside to finance the survey. Each and every house, tenement, hotel, rooming house, and staff house in both Halifax and Dartmouth was canvassed. Military barracks and University residences were not included, but these exceptions aside, the Cousins survey was probably the most comprehensive study of housing conditions and demographic patterns ever conducted on the Halifax peninsula.¹¹

The survey instrument was composed of two parts: "Form A," otherwise known as the Adult Questionnaire, and "Form B," comprised of "Building Census Returns" for every dwelling in Halifax and Dartmouth. All persons over the age of eighteen and residing in Halifax, Dartmouth or Vicinity were required to complete Form A; respondents were given a minimum of three days to fill in the questionnaire before the A.R.P. Warden or his representative returned to pick it up. On Form "A," the subject was required to state his or her occupation, the name of his/her employer, and whether one was on active service. The questionnaire also inquired as to the whereabouts of servicemen's wives, and also where a serviceman was stationed if his wife filled out the form.¹² The line of questioning implied that the government was attempting to uncover cases where wives were living in Halifax simply to be nearer their husbands on active duty. This, of course, had been a problem for over four years of naval expansion. The survey also asked whether the respondent was a resident of Halifax on September 1, 1939; if not, when and from whence the person arrived in the city.

¹¹Data tabulated for the 1941 Census was based on a one-in-ten sample of occupied dwellings; in 1951 the sampling rate was one-in-five. See *Halifax Housing Atlas*, p. 1, and *Ninth Census of Canada (1951)* "Population and housing characteristics by census tracts," Dominion Bureau of Statistics Bulletin CT-1, (Ottawa, 1953), TABLE 2.

¹²PANS RG 35-102 Series 36 Section A.

Finally, a series of questions was included in the survey on behalf of civic officials in the midst of preparing a master plan for Halifax. The Postwar Planning Committee came into being in November 1943 to oversee “an orderly transition from wartime to peacetime conditions.”¹³ The Committee later became the “Halifax Rehabilitation Committee,” and finally the “Civic Planning Commission.” Its November 1945 report is considered in greater detail in Chapter Eight. The Civic Planning Commission credited the Cousins survey with providing “invaluable” information as to who intended to remain in the area after the war; whether and where respondents were interested in purchasing their own home; and whether they desired to make monthly payments on a new home.¹⁴

The Building Census Returns, or “Form B,” comprised the second part of the survey, and collected data on the type, size and general condition of virtually every residential and commercial property in the city. Buildings were listed by street within each “platoon” – as the survey districts were called – whereas occupants in the “Form A” listings were listed alphabetically. It was therefore necessary to perform a manual cross-tabulation between the two parts of the survey, so that information on the occupants could be correlated with the building in which they were living. Once this was accomplished, each street address/household could be treated as a discrete case, which included not just occupational status or housing quality, but the landlord’s name, the number of rooms in the dwelling, the number of children under 16, the amount of rent paid, how long the family had been living in Halifax (permanent residents were spared this question), whether

¹³*Master Plan*, p. 1.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 6, 10.

roomers were present, and so on. The names of landlords would prove especially useful in plotting the socio-economic profile of property owners in Halifax. The 1950 city directory was used to trace long term ownership of rental properties and group landlords by occupational category.¹⁵

Data from other sources permitted some analysis of long term housing conditions to be carried out. Assessment Field Cards (AFC) kept by the municipal tax assessor's office proved useful for evaluating assessed values of land and improvements from 1921 through 1944, providing the cubic volume of dwellings and the square footage of lots, and corroborating ratings of housing quality recorded in the Cousins survey. It was not always possible to locate an assessment field card for cases listed in the Cousins survey, although the majority of buildings did appear in both databases. Occasionally a correlation was not possible because street numbers had changed, or an owner/landlord given on the 1944 survey was missing from the assessment field card files. Some buildings on the outskirts, or even in the middle of town, could for some unknown reason escape assessment.

Of lesser significance but an indicator nonetheless of general housing quality over the interwar period were building and repair permits issued by the city. By tabulating the frequency, type, and estimated cost of repair jobs on the structures sampled, some light may be shed on how well the problems of maintenance, modification and replacement of the existing housing stock was being handled in Halifax. This was a matter of some

¹⁵On the strengths and weaknesses of city directories as an historical source, see Richard Harris, "The Flexible House: The Housing Backlog and the Persistence of Lodging, 1891-1951," *Social Science History* 18 No. 1 (Spring 1994).

relevance to the wartime housing crisis, since so much of the outcry about housing conditions was concentrated in areas where the quality of housing was poorest. In their own small way, the building and repair permits add to the evidence of wide variation in housing standards and the economic class of property owners revealed across the Halifax peninsula by the Cousins survey

Detailed, case-by-case information as to housing costs and characteristics, family composition and occupational patterns is not readily available other than in the Dominion census. Because of its timing, the Cousins survey thus provides a singular glimpse into social conditions in a Canadian city during the Second World War. When analyzed in conjunction with census data for 1941 and 1951, one is able to form a fairly accurate picture of the dynamics of urban development and social change in Halifax during this period

The coding and initial analysis was performed on a VM/CMS mainframe system at McMaster University, using SPSSx statistical software. The database was subsequently converted for use with SPSS-PC+, a version of the same software written for the IBM PC. Cross-tabulations, frequencies, and breakdowns by platoon area were calculated on fifty variables recording various housing and demographic characteristics across the entire Halifax peninsula. One area on the northwestern outskirts of the city was dropped from the analysis due to only eleven cases occurring in the sample

Since the Cousins survey included (or at least, attempted to include) every dwelling in Halifax, a ten per cent sample was tabulated from consolidated listings compiled at the time of the survey and now held by the Public Archives of Nova Scotia. The Cousins

survey universe comprised more than 15,000 dwellings within the city limits of Halifax, which was roughly coterminous with the peninsula.¹⁶ A total of 1,524 records were extracted from the consolidated listings. The number of cases per platoon area [hereafter *PA*] and their geographic position on the Halifax peninsula is presented in Fig. 4-3. The area numbered Thirteen in Fig. 4-3 is actually marked Fourteen on the original survey, it encompassed the sparsely populated northernmost region of the Halifax peninsula. The original area Thirteen, because of its semi-rural character and small number of households, was omitted from the sample.

The peninsula was divided into districts of roughly equal area, rather than following the Dominion census approach, which based the size of census tracts on population density. Comparing 1941 and 1951 data at the census tract level with the 1944 Cousins survey thus presented some difficulties. An attempt was made to correlate the incidence of overcrowding in 1944 platoon areas with corresponding census tracts in 1951, however the results can only be considered approximate. Comparing census data with Cousins survey findings for the city as a whole was more straightforward. Figure 4-3 shows that platoon area numbers progressed in east-west pairs from north to south, with the exception of area Thirteen, which spanned the northern tip of the peninsula bordering on Bedford Basin. *PAs* One and Two included much of the traditionally affluent south end. The eastern half of *PA* One also contained some lower quality housing due to its proximity to the waterfront and rail yards. Middle to upper-middle class housing also

¹⁶The town of Dartmouth, also surveyed in February-March 1944, was excluded from the present study because its urban development, although linked economically to Halifax, was still geographically and historically distinct during this period.

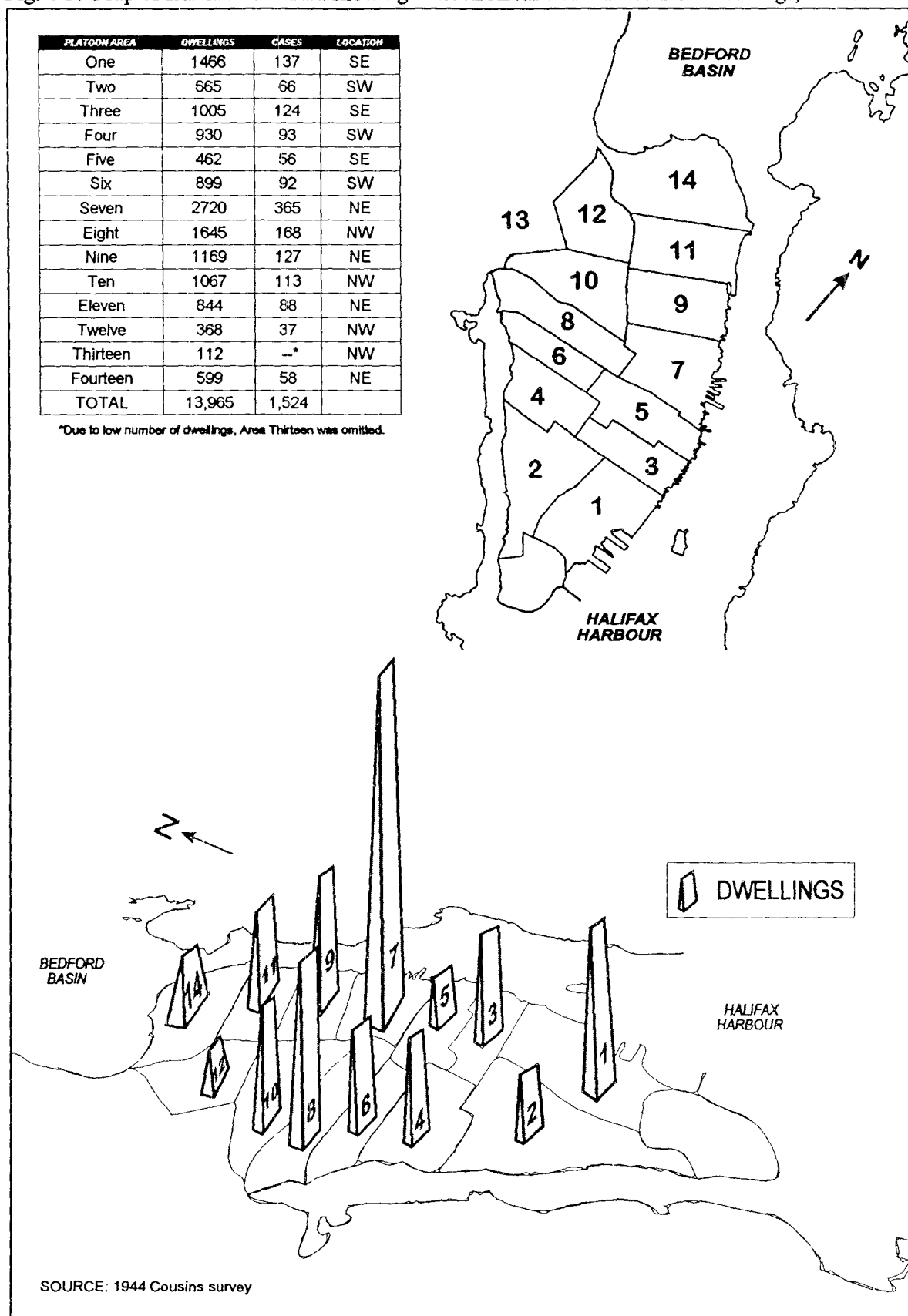
typified *PA*s Four and Six, which extended from the commons just west of Citadel Hill to the Northwest Arm. Dwellings in these districts tended to be smaller and newer than affluent areas further south. On the harbour side of Citadel Hill, *PA*s Three and Five hugged its southern and eastern slopes, respectively. The Cousins survey found nearly 500 households in *PA* Five, even though it was an area comprised mainly of large commercial buildings.

Moving northward along the waterfront, *PA*s Seven, Nine, Eleven and Fourteen extended west as far as Windsor Street and up to Bedford Basin. Population density fell markedly as one moved from south to north – *PA* Seven, by far the most congested neighbourhood in the city, contained more than four times as many dwellings as *PA* Fourteen. While approximately equal in size, *PA*s Eight, Ten, Twelve and Thirteen, encompassing the northwestern quadrant of the peninsula, contained, in sum, 40 per cent fewer dwellings than their counterparts on the harbour side. Indeed, the outlying *PA* Thirteen possessed only 112 dwellings.

As mentioned earlier, making a direct correlation between the Cousins survey and census data is difficult because the platoon areas utilized in the former have no significance beyond the wartime Civil Defence activities for which they were created. In addition, the Cousins survey did not gather information considered essential by census-takers, such as the age of respondents, or religious affiliation. For these and other wartime demographic indicators, one must rely on census data gathered in 1941.

Two key variables in determining urban morphology are the type and spatial distribution of buildings. Halifax in 1944 possessed some striking characteristics with

Fig. 4-3. Map of Halifax Peninsula showing Platoon Areas and Numbers of Dwellings, 1944.



regard to housing types and their distribution across the peninsula. The city was overwhelmingly dominated by two structural types, the single detached dwelling and multiple family units. The latter included apartments, up-and-down duplexes (or “flats”) and row housing. Together, these two structural types comprised over 85 per cent of the housing stock. [Fig. 4-4]

Without question, the most prominent statistic is the extraordinary number of dwellings in *PA Seven*, which contained a very large number of both multiple and single family units. [Fig. 4-5] A mainly working class neighbourhood adjacent to the Dockyard, naval base and shipyards, *PA Seven* included heavily congested row housing on Maynard, Creighton and Agricola Streets. Total dwellings in this district outnumbered its closest rival by 1,100 units. *PA Eight*, the next most congested district, ran westward from Citadel Hill to the Northwest Arm. It differed greatly from *PA Seven* both in form and social structure. A prototype of postwar suburban residential development, *PA Eight* had been the focal point for much of the building activity in Halifax in the 1930s.

The third most crowded section of the city, *PA One*, bordered the stretch of waterfront where the Ocean Terminals and railway station were situated. The total number of dwellings contained in this area outnumbered those of its western neighbour (*PA Two*) by a factor of two-to-one. Just as in other areas on the eastern, (or harbour), side of the peninsula, proximity to the waterfront seemed to exacerbate housing congestion. At the other end of the spectrum stood *PAs Twelve and Fourteen*, where residential construction undertaken by Wartime Housing Limited transformed

Fig. 4-4. Structural Types on the Halifax Peninsula, 1944.

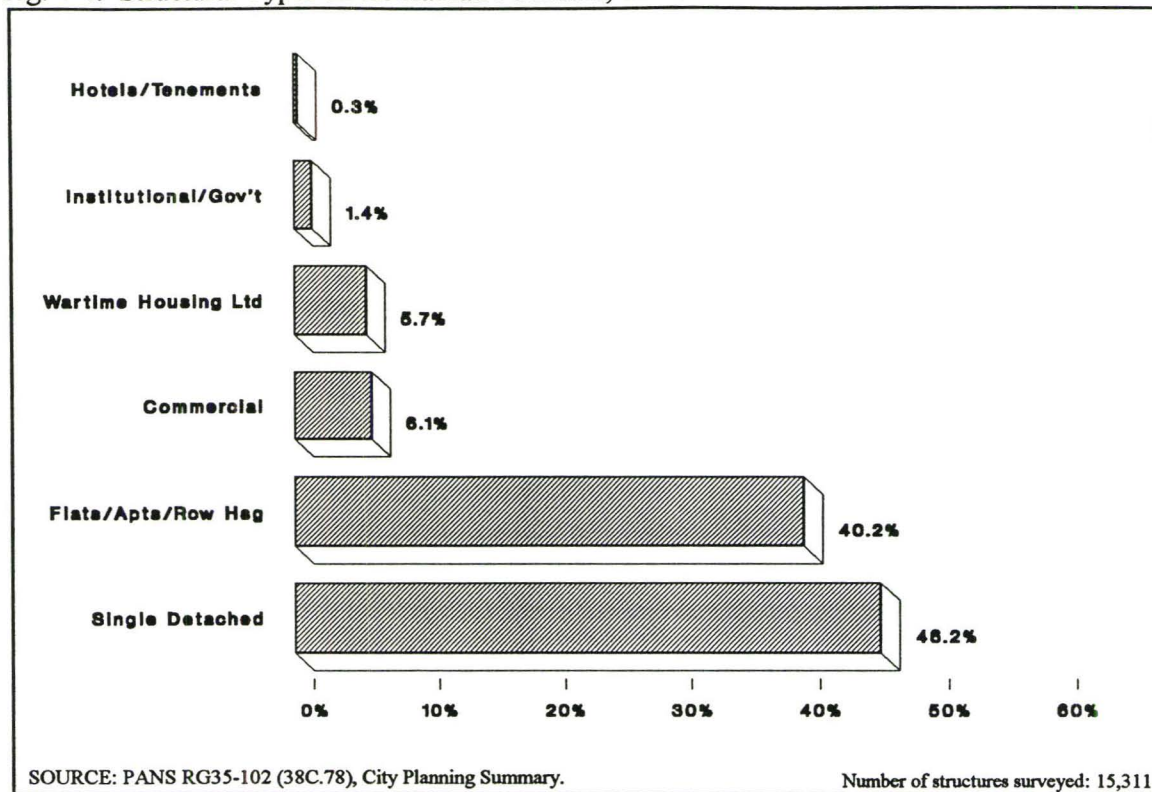
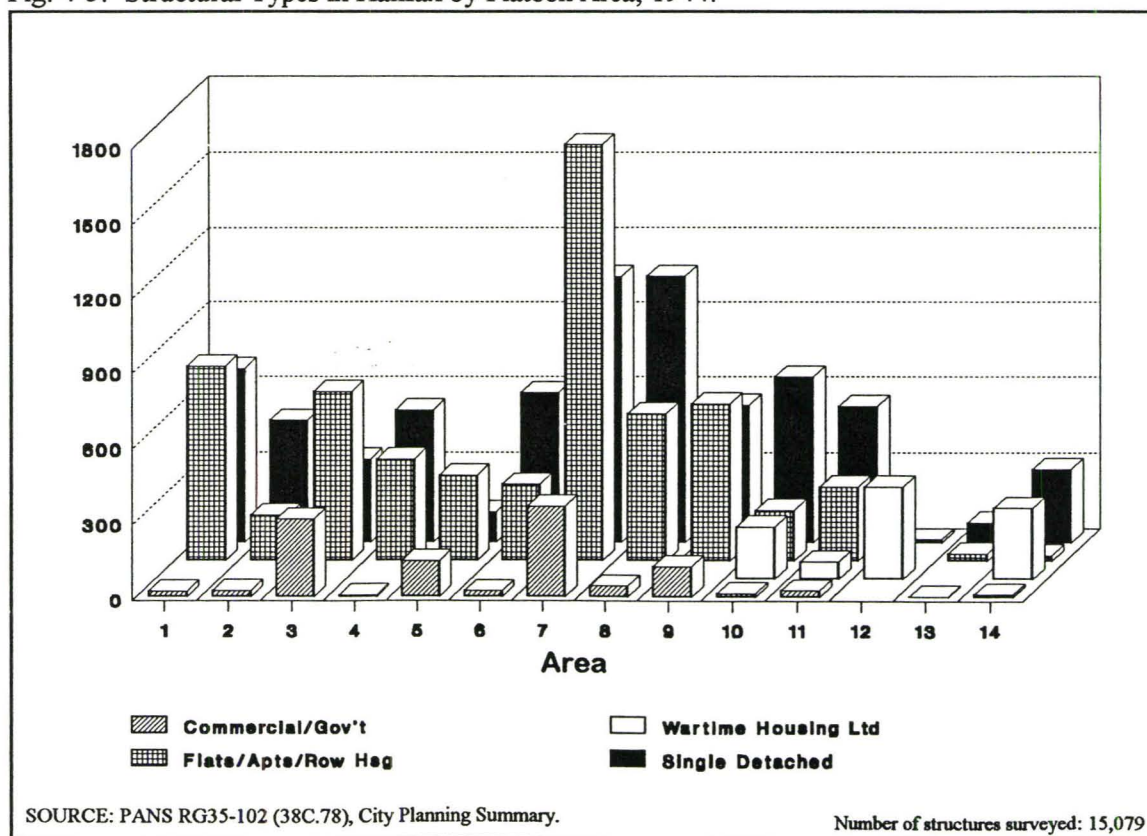


Fig. 4-5. Structural Types in Halifax by Platoon Area, 1944.



undeveloped tracts of land into subdivisions of four or six-room bungalows.¹⁷ Here, housing density was low compared with older sections further south [Figs. 4-5 and 4-6].

The remaining platoon areas fell somewhere between these two extremes. *PA Five*, which included the central business district, was the most unique due to the predominance of commercial buildings, but *PA Three* also contained a mixture of residential, institutional and commercial land uses. Not surprisingly, districts adjacent to one another tended to share certain physical and social characteristics. *PAs Nine and Eleven* were somewhat less congested than *PA Seven*, but resembled it and other districts on the harbour side of the peninsula in the diversity of dwelling types and relatively low housing costs [See Figs. 4-6 and 4-7].

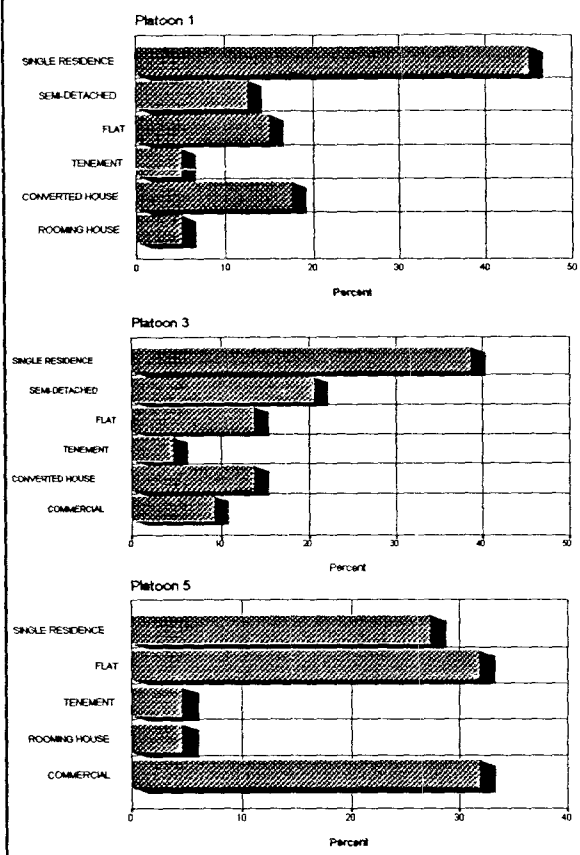
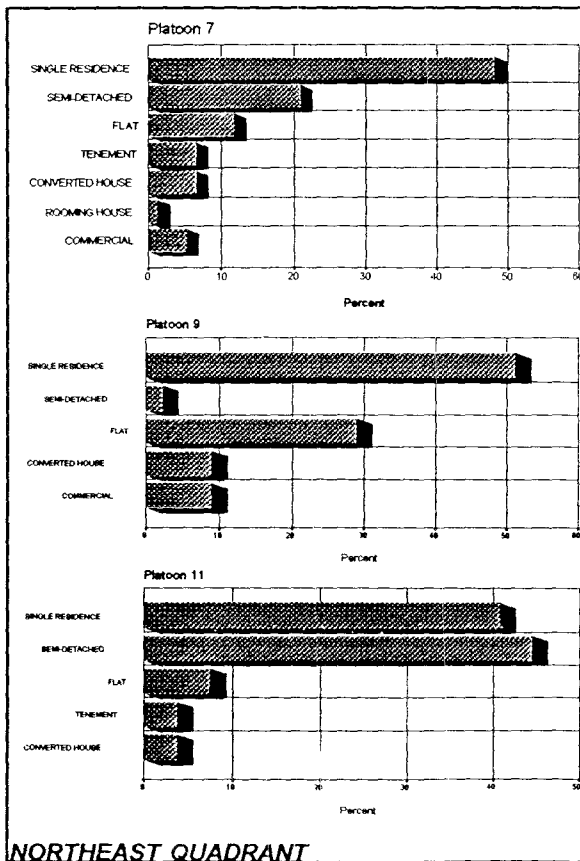
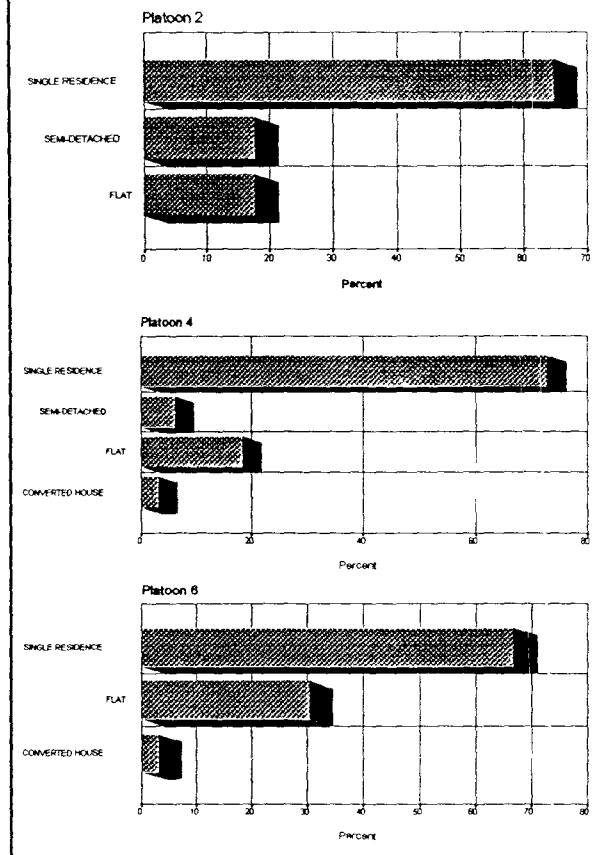
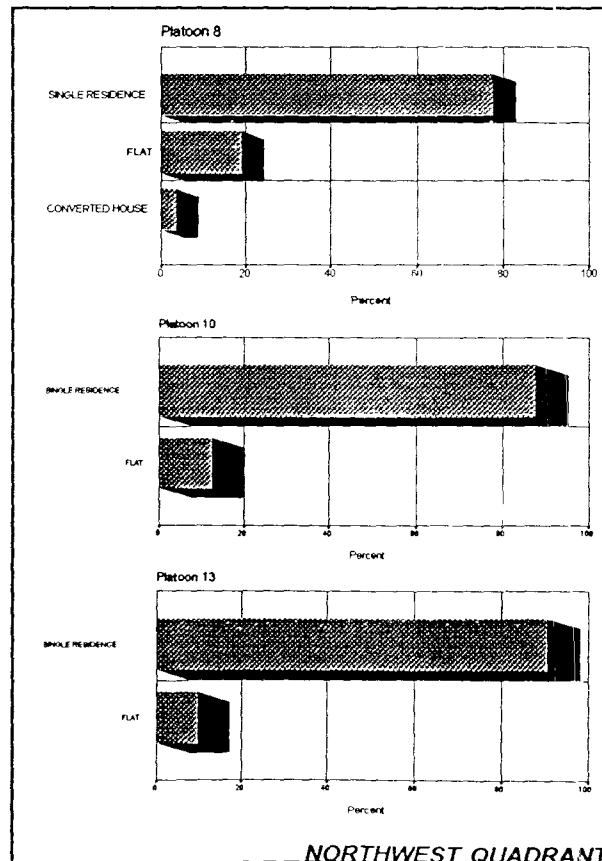
It was generally accepted among experts of the day that a ratio of more than one person per room constituted an overcrowded household.¹⁸ The Cousins survey revealed that, on average, only half the platoon areas on the Halifax peninsula could be described as being overcrowded. *PAs Five and Seven* were by far the most densely populated, followed closely by *Three and Nine*. These four districts were all adjacent to one another and bordered the waterfront. The overcrowding was mainly due to the high demand for accommodation near places of work or the naval base, and the absence of affordable rental accommodation elsewhere.

A dwelling as defined by the Cousins survey constituted any self-contained household, whether one person was living in a one-room apartment or a dozen people in a

¹⁷Platoon Fourteen is shown in Figs. 4-3 and 4-5. Henceforth it will be referred to as Platoon 13.

¹⁸*Halifax Housing Atlas*, p. 7. See also John C. Weaver and Michael Doucet, *Housing the North American City* (Kingston and Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), Chapter 10, p. 423.

Fig. 4-6. Dwelling Types in Halifax by Platoon Area, 1944. (SOURCE: 1944 Cousins survey).

SOUTHEAST QUADRANT**SOUTHWEST QUADRANT****NORTHEAST QUADRANT****NORTHWEST QUADRANT**

Wartime Housing bungalow. It may be noted, for example, that the average size of a household was the same in *PA Twelve* as in *PA Seven*, but virtually all dwellings in the former were either four or six-room single detached units built by Wartime Housing Limited. *PA Seven*, on the other hand, was a much older residential district, characterized by large houses subdivided into apartments and rooming houses. The mean number of rooms in tenant-occupied households in *PA Seven* was 4.3, while in owner-occupied dwellings typical of *PA Twelve*, the average was 7.3 rooms. Although not widely used as a measure of dwelling size, the cubic volume of a structure, whether a tenement, duplex, or single-detached house, provided a useful indicator of probable age and type of housing. The cubic size of dwellings was recorded by city assessors on assessment field cards. Mean dwelling volume in *PA Eight* – the relatively new residential district west of Citadel Hill – seemed low until the trend towards smaller families after 1900 is taken into account. The average size of Canadian households fell from 5.3 persons in 1881 to 4.3 by 1941.¹⁹ Lower ceilings and smaller room sizes also became more common in response to rising costs for land, labour and materials. The spatial contrast between larger, older dwellings and newer, smaller ones was more evident in calculations of cubic volume than square footage. Ironically, the findings suggest that occupants of recently-built homes may have felt more cramped in their bungalows than occupants of apartments, particularly if the homeowner decided to take in boarders – as many did.

¹⁹Miron, p. 91.

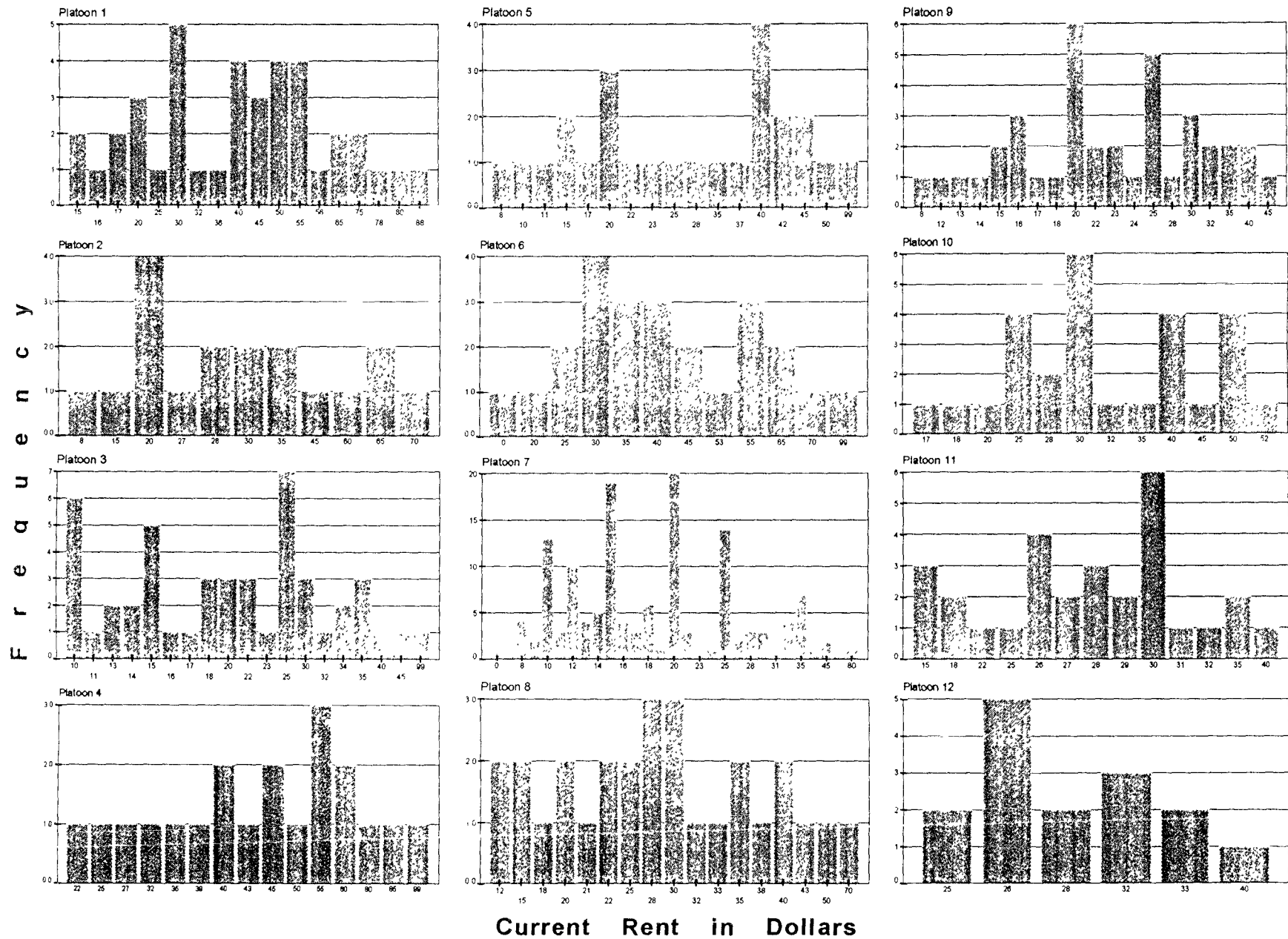


Fig. 4-7. Frequency Distribution of Rents by Platoon Area, 1944. (SOURCE: Cousins survey).

Cubic measurement explains why the average dwelling size in *PA* Seven was higher than in *PA* Eight, despite there being a much greater degree of overcrowding in the former area [Fig. 4-8]. *PA* Seven had a much larger proportion of older homes, thereby raising the mean cubic volume of dwellings. Larger, Victorian homes were predominant in the older residential neighbourhoods on the southern half of the peninsula. Average living space was about one third greater in *PA* One than in Seven or Eight. The relative cost-effectiveness of converting older homes into three or more apartments probably delayed the appearance of modern apartment buildings in Halifax, since they were not at all common until after the Second World War.

Despite the utility of cubic volume in measuring variations in the amount of “living space” available to the average household, calculations of overcrowding were based not on volume but on the number of rooms per dwelling. The average sizes of dwellings and households in Halifax by area for 1944 is presented in Fig. 4-9. Average physical size tended to fall off in newer areas of the city [Fig. 4-8], whereas the average number of rooms per dwelling remained fairly constant. The same could not be said of household size (i.e., number of persons living in dwelling), which varied considerably by neighbourhood. The typical household in *PA* Five, (a predominantly non-residential area), was far more crowded than a household in *PA* Four, even though the mean number of rooms did not differ markedly. Figures 4-10 and 4-11 emphasize the disparity in housing conditions between areas on the east side of the peninsula and those on the west.

Dwellings on the eastern or harbour side tended to have both larger households (i.e. number of occupants) and fewer rooms per person than dwellings in the western half of

Fig. 4-8. Mean Dwelling Volume by Area, 1944.

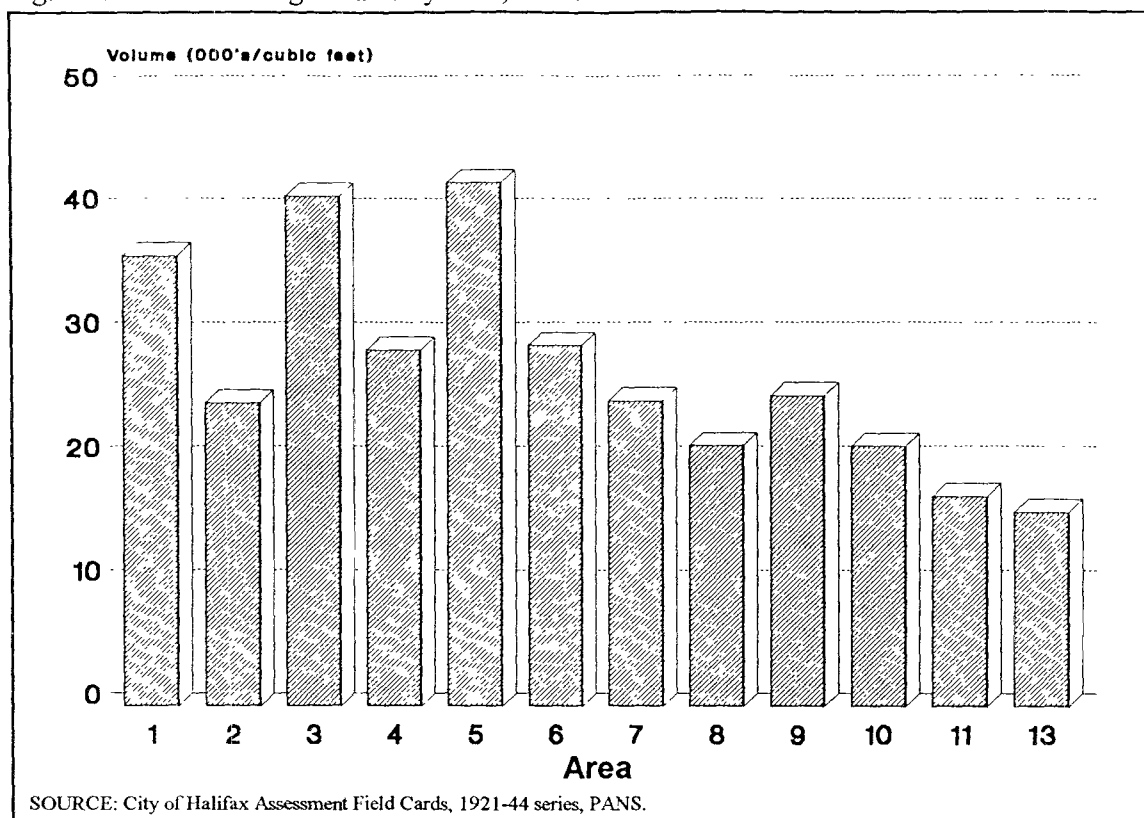
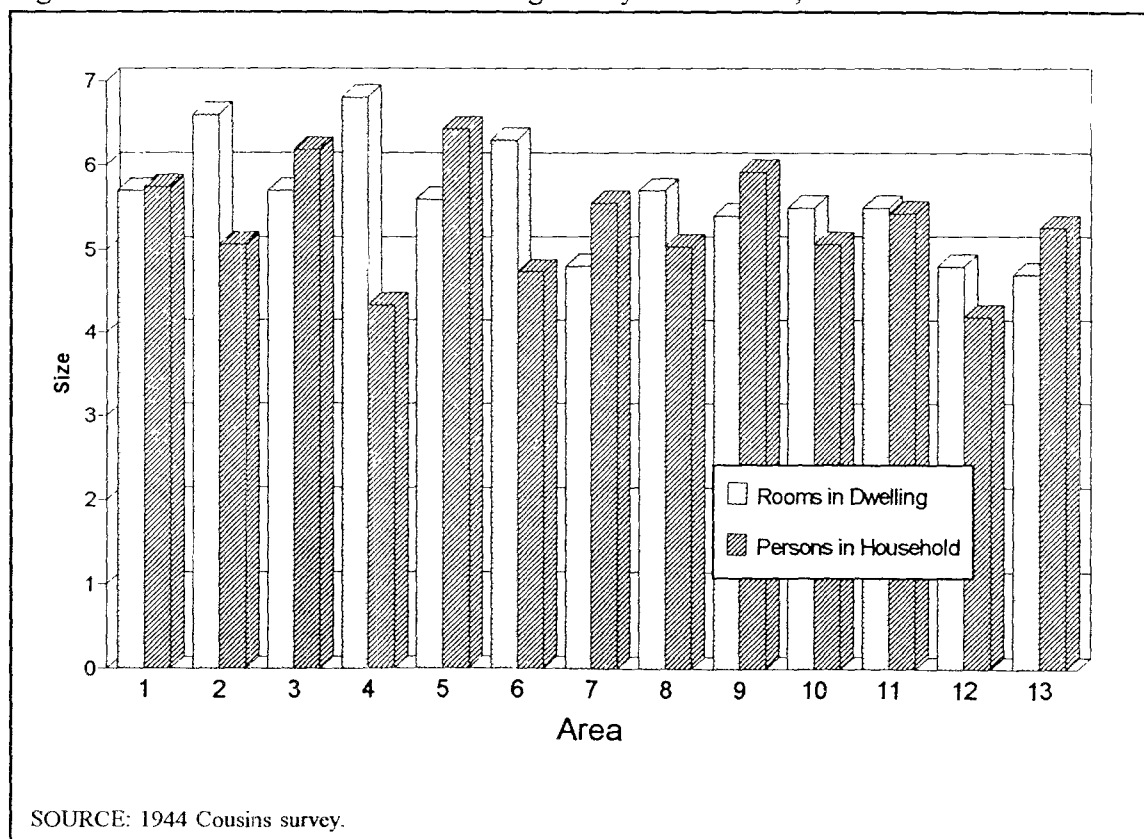


Fig. 4-9. Mean Household Size and Dwelling Size by Platoon Area, 1944.



the peninsula. The gap between east and west in terms of housing attributes was more pronounced during the war than the traditional socio-economic division of Halifax into north and south ends. This is evident in Figs. 4-12 and 4-13, in which mean household and dwelling sizes are compared in northern and southern halves of the peninsula. While smaller dwellings prevail in the north end, the social and physical structure as reflected in the housing stock is much more consistent than in the south. The contrast between east and west was particularly striking in the latter area, illustrating the unequal spatial distribution of wartime overcrowding. The western half of the south end contained a larger surplus of unused housing capacity than its northern equivalent, but the relative absence of rental properties in this quadrant placed extreme pressure on the southeast – the oldest part of the city – to accommodate the wartime influx.

The 1941 Dominion census revealed that 26 percent of households in Halifax were overcrowded, which was only one percentage point above the national average.²⁰ [See Fig. 4-14]. Two cities – Quebec City and Hull – possessed significantly greater overcrowding than Halifax. By all accounts, housing conditions in Hull were the worst in Canada. In 1945, for example, an inspection of 75 Hull dwellings occupied by 123 families found one habitable building in twelve. Just thirteen of those dwellings had indoor toilets; 38 had outdoor privies, and 24 had no toilet facilities whatsoever. The “squalor of Hull,” commented one journalist, had “to be seen to be believed.”²¹ Neither was overcrowded housing just a wartime phenomenon. The number of crowded households in

²⁰Lotta Dempsey, “Housing Headache,” *Maclean's*, 1 June 1943, p. 32.

²¹*Maclean's*, 15 October 1945.

Fig. 4-10. Mean Number of Occupants, East-West Split, Halifax Peninsula, 1944.

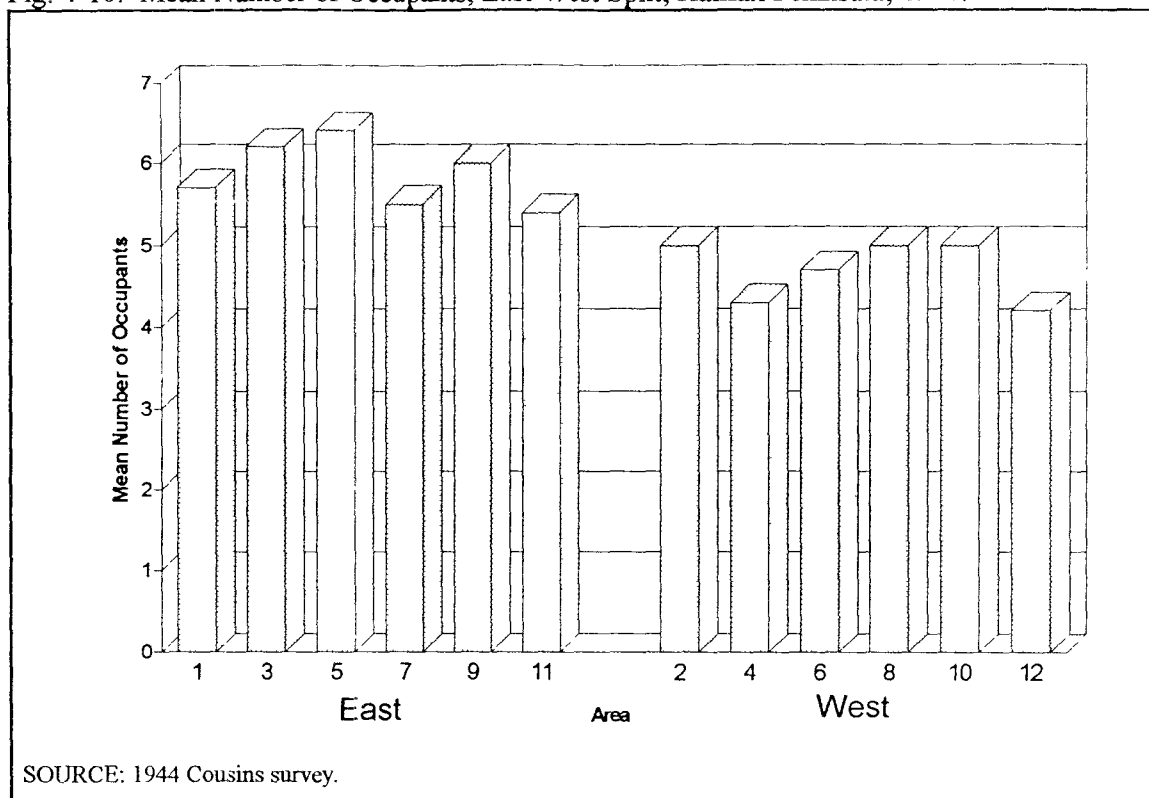


Fig. 4-11. Mean Rooms per Person, East-West Split, Halifax Peninsula, 1944.

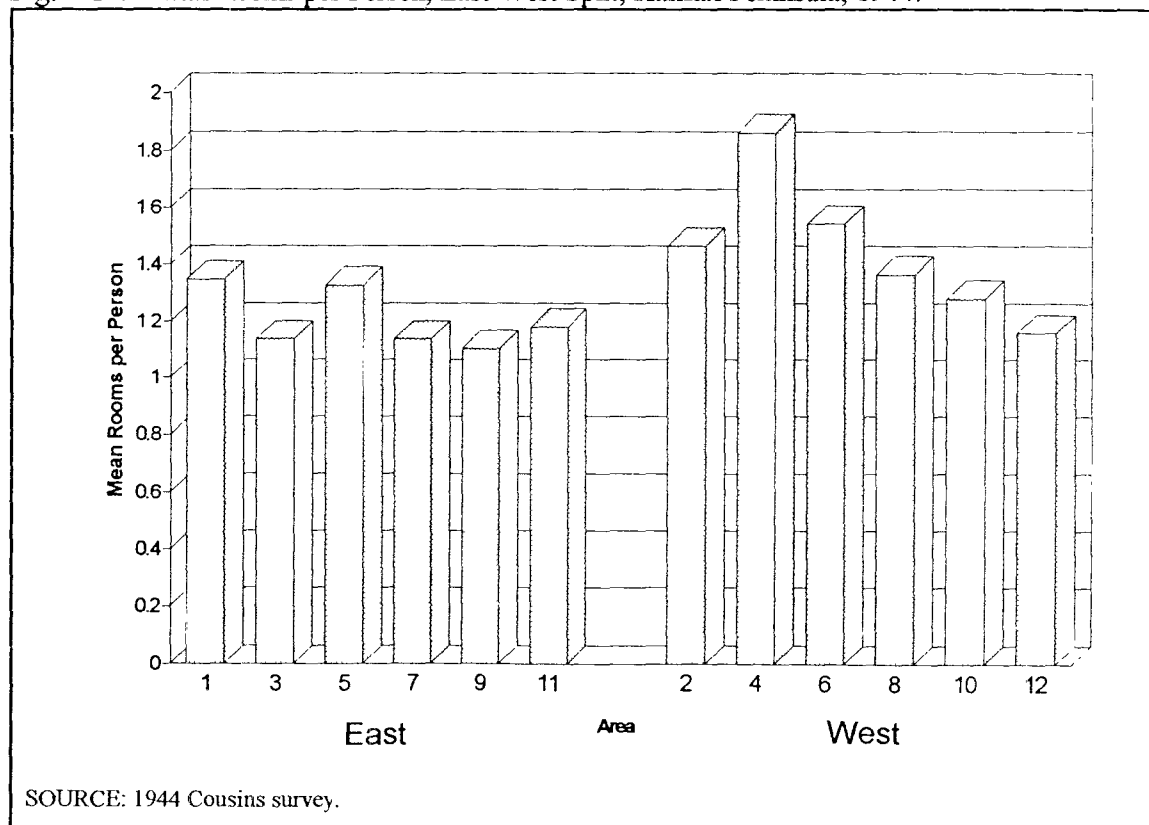


Fig. 4-12. Mean Number of Occupants, North-South Split, Halifax Peninsula, 1944.

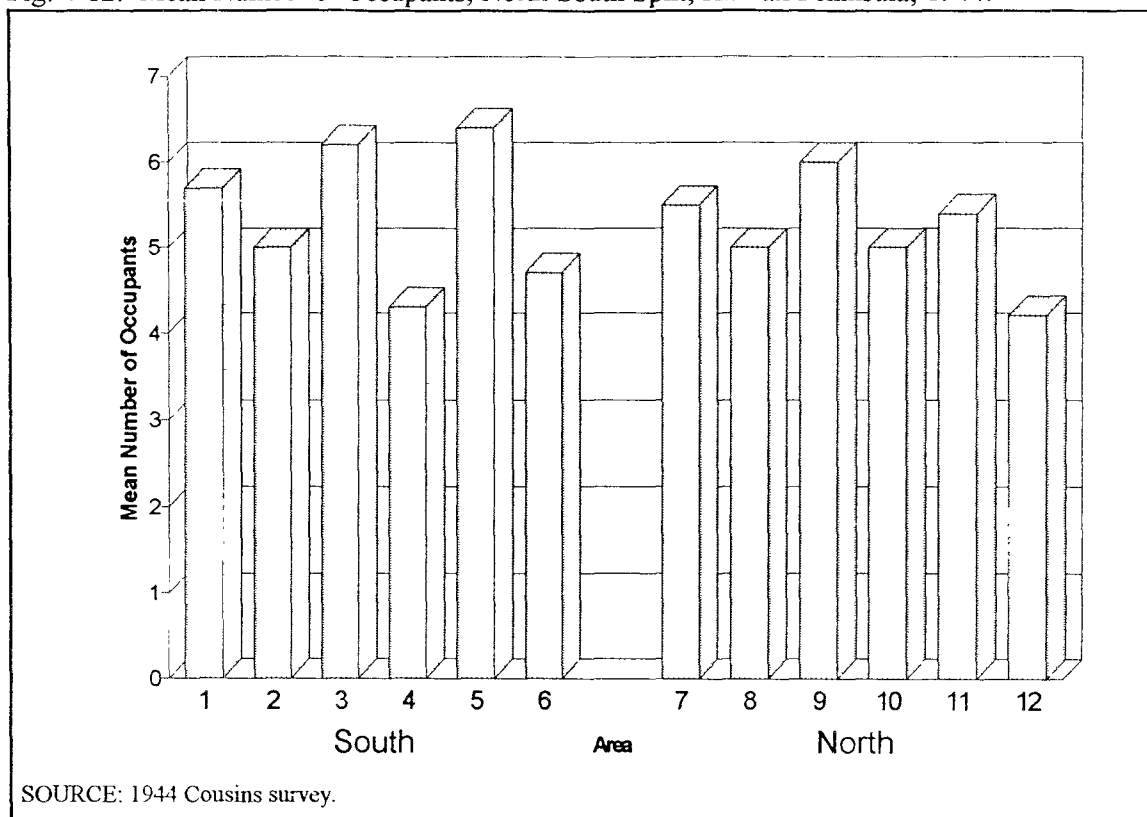
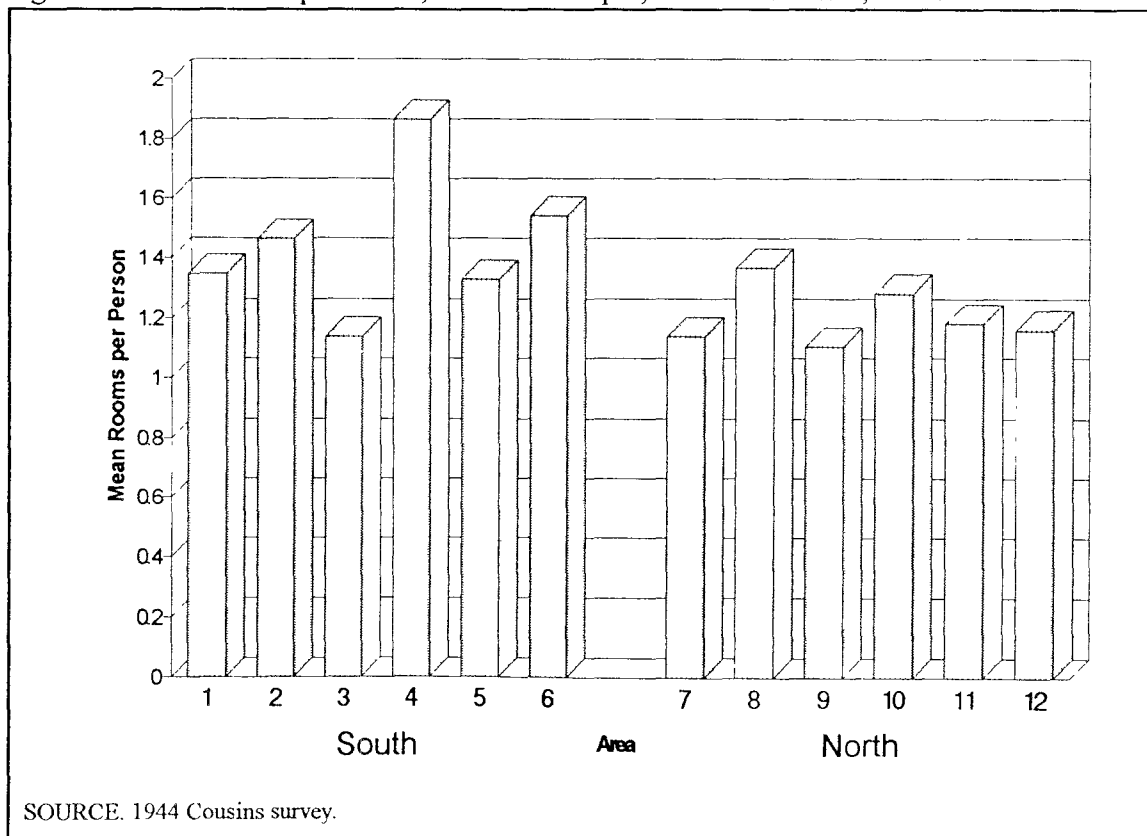


Fig. 4-13. Mean Rooms per Person, North-South Split, Halifax Peninsula, 1944.



Halifax was 30 per cent higher in 1951 than 1941, (but of course the housing stock had also grown). Indeed, the 1951 census shows that overcrowded housing continued to be a national problem well into the postwar period, with only two major cities – Saint John and Winnipeg – recording lower levels of overcrowding in 1951 than 1941 [Fig. 4-15].

Some inferences regarding housing conditions in Halifax as compared to other Canadian cities may be drawn from the 1941 census information on the mean period of occupancy of households. Naturally, families living in crowded quarters tended to move more frequently than those occupying uncrowded dwellings. One might expect average length of tenure to be short in Halifax because of its sizable seasonal workforce, as against cities with a large industrial or manufacturing base. In fact the 1941 figures do not reflect this, even though the presence of wartime transient families in Halifax may well have skewed the figures in the direction of greater mobility. As Fig. 4-16 shows, household mobility was much higher in cities like Saint John, Montréal, and Edmonton. Crowded Halifax households moved less frequently than in any other major city in Canada, at least in 1941. The explanation lies in the short supply of available housing. Families occupied crowded lodgings not just because they could not afford to move elsewhere, but because the low vacancy rate in Halifax made it impossible for them to move. There was simply nowhere else to go.

An important factor in considering the overcrowding phenomenon was the prevalence of roomers. By comparing the distribution of roomers across the Halifax peninsula in 1944 with the distribution of dwelling types [Fig. 4-6], we can see more clearly how the wartime transient population was accommodated within the existing

Fig. 4-14. Percentage of Crowded Households in Selected Cities, 1941 and 1951.

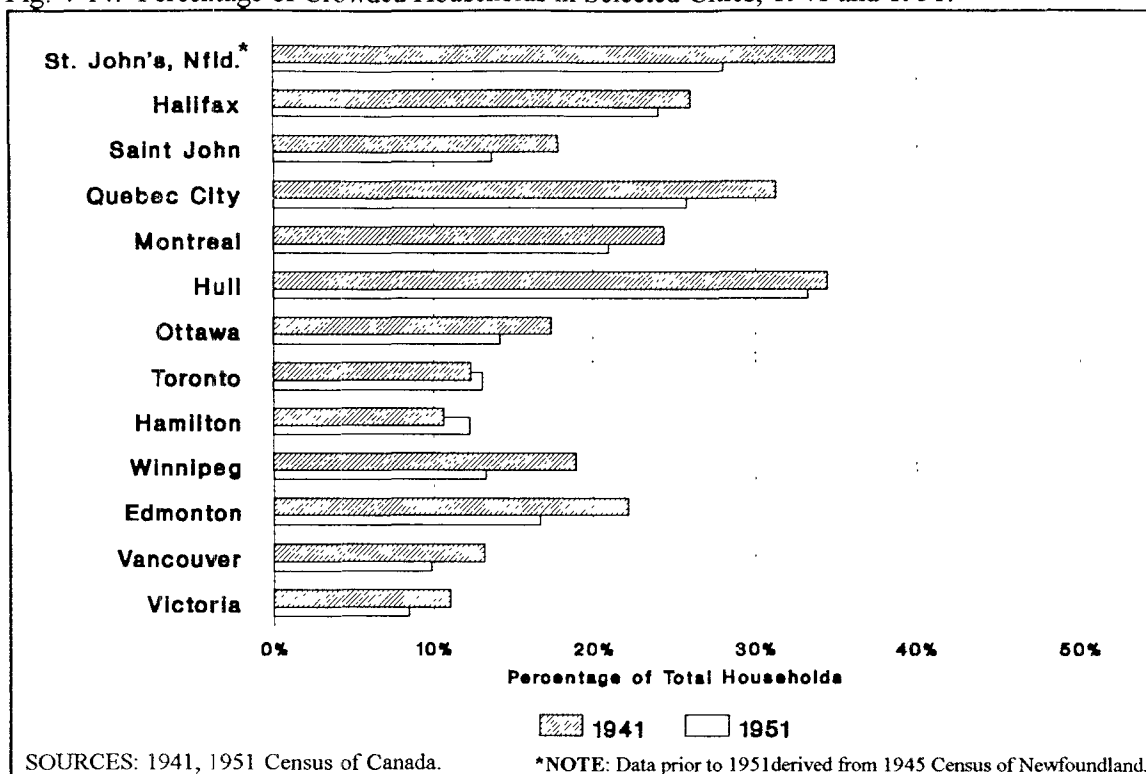
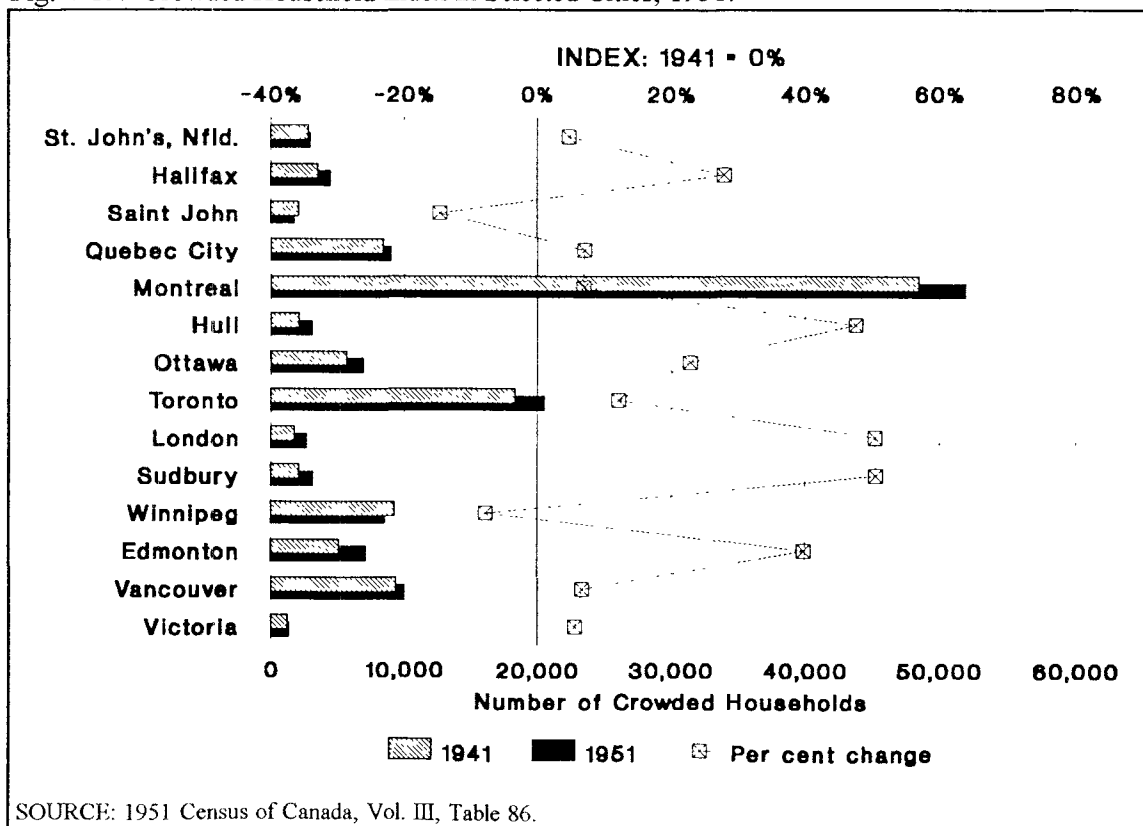


Fig. 4-15. Crowded Household Index in Selected Cities, 1951.



housing stock. Figure 4-17 highlights the concentration of roomers in *PAs* One, Three and Seven, where the housing stock was oldest and most congested. *PAs* Eight and Nine possessed large numbers of roomers as well. One can only speculate on the number of roomers in Halifax in 1941, since this data was not reported in the census.²² However, the presence of more than 13,000 roomers – on average, nearly one roomer for every dwelling on the peninsula – late in the war suggests even higher numbers prevailed in 1941.

Taking in roomers was the simplest and most direct method of coping with wartime population growth in the absence of new construction. However, the anti-inflationary impact of rent controls had negligible effect on overcrowding or the quality of accommodation since there was “little control over the number of roomers allowed in one house, or even one room, or in the facilities provided for the amounts charged.”²³ Amendments to rent control legislation were introduced in April 1942, extending the regulations to cover “houses, rooms, tourist accommodation and hotel rooms.” Hotel room rates were frozen, and other measures “designed to reinforce security of tenure for tenants in all types of living accommodation” were taken. Landlords were instructed to give monthly tenants “a minimum of three months’ notice...to vacate where occupancy is for one month or longer under written or oral lease.”²⁴

²²Richard Harris consulted city directories as a means of tracking the incidence of roomers in Hamilton, Ontario during the Second World War. See his “The Flexible House.”

²³PANS MG 20 Vol. 409 folder 10, Welfare-Council of Halifax-Dartmouth, Shand to Bradford, 3 June 1944.

²⁴PANS MG 1 Vol. 501, H.B. Jefferson papers, “Daily Journal 1942,” 24 April 1942

Fig. 4-16. Occupancy Period of Crowded Households in Selected Canadian Cities, June 1941.

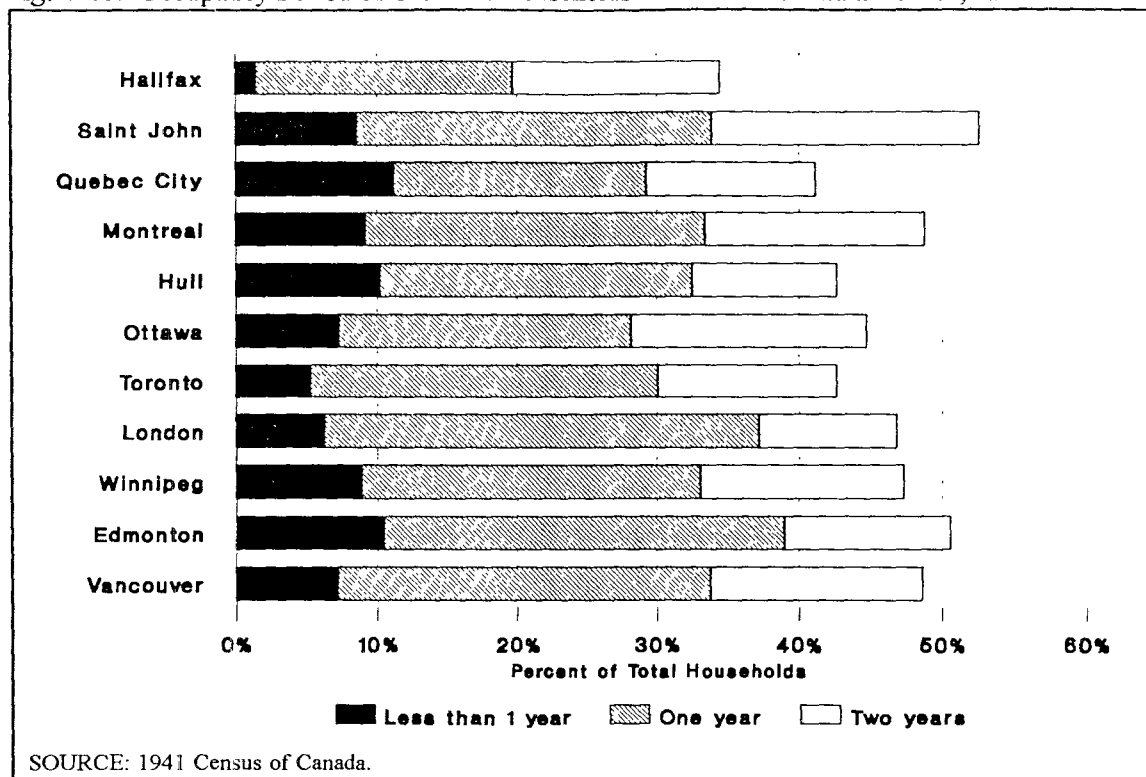
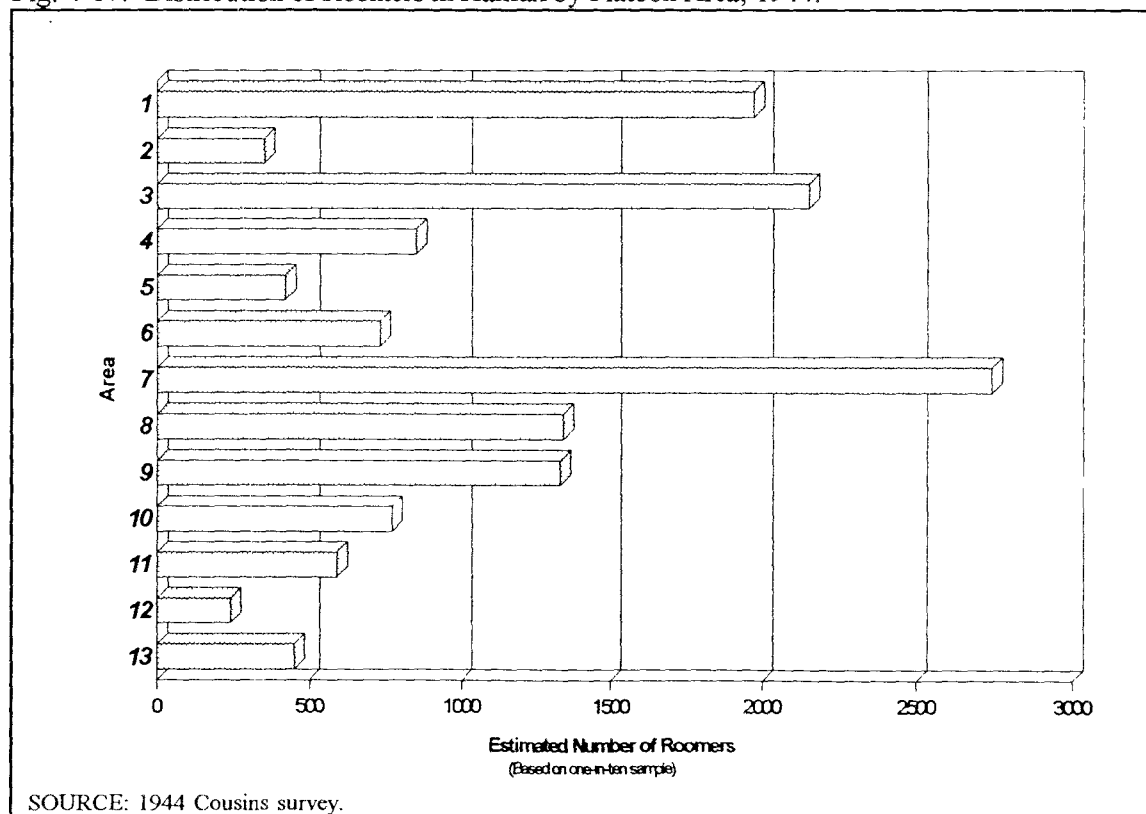


Fig. 4-17. Distribution of Roomers in Halifax by Platoon Area, 1944.



Being a seaport, Halifax possessed its fair share of rooming houses, however there were not nearly enough to accommodate the influx after 1939. They were clustered in three platoon areas – One Three and Seven – adjacent to the waterfront, but even in these districts rooming houses comprised less than five per cent of the housing stock. Although *PA* Seven dominated in sheer numbers, the presence of roomers on a per capita basis was highest in *PAs* One, Three and Five. Per capita distribution of roomers shows that the majority were accommodated in private homes scattered across the Halifax peninsula, but once again the extremely congested central business district and area adjacent to the Dockyard carried a disproportionate share of the burden [Figs. 4-18 and 4-19]. On the other hand, there were some areas of the city where residents wanted to take in roomers but were prevented from doing so by restrictive covenants. Responding to a request from the Board of Trade to rescind “as a war measure” regulations prohibiting “roomers, boarders, or...apartments” in a west end residential neighbourhood, city solicitor Carl P Bethune declared that he was powerless to act because it “was done by provincial statute.”²⁵

The proliferation of households with roomers gives some idea of the severity of the wartime housing shortage, however the evidence does not suggest that Halifax was lacking in other types of rental accommodation. Figures 4-20 and 4-21 compare the distribution of tenant and owner-occupied households in Halifax with figures reported by John Miron for Canada as a whole. In Halifax, there is a notable preponderance of

²⁵PANS MG 1, Vol. 491, H.B. Jefferson papers, unidentified newspaper clipping, 22 October 1942.

Fig. 4-18. Mean Number of Roomers, East-West Split, Halifax Peninsula, 1944.

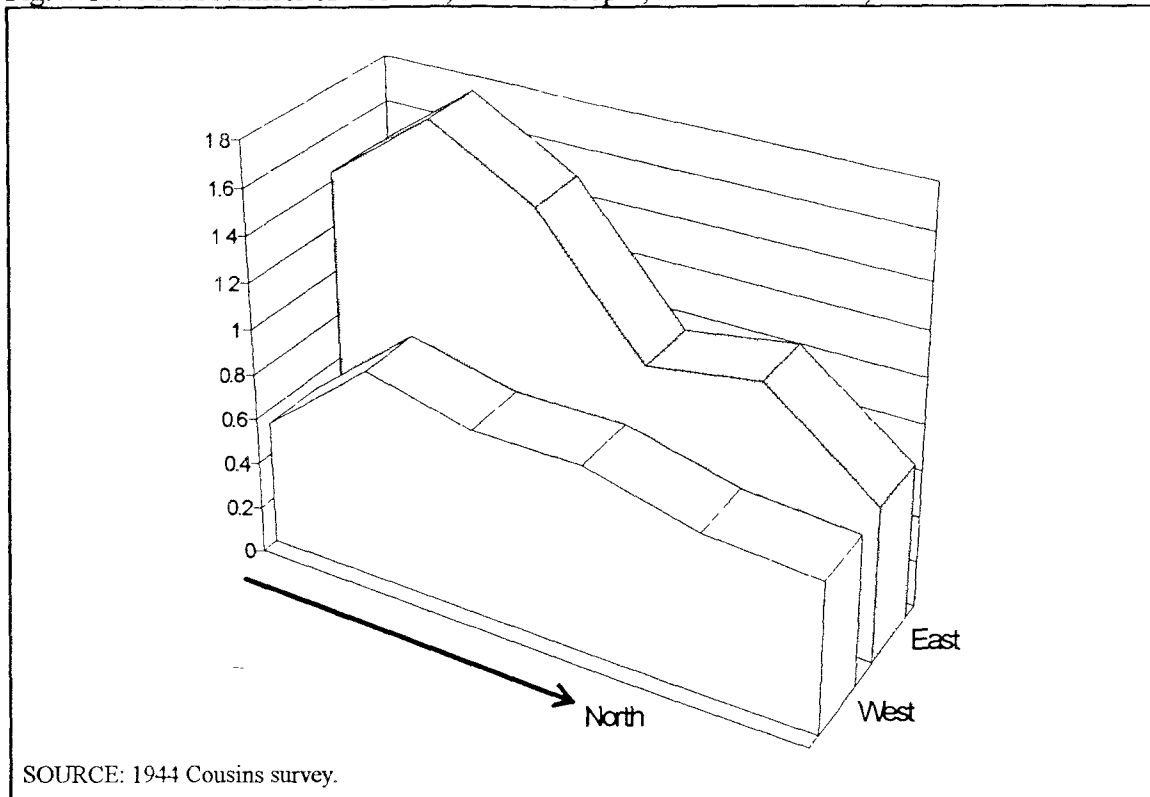
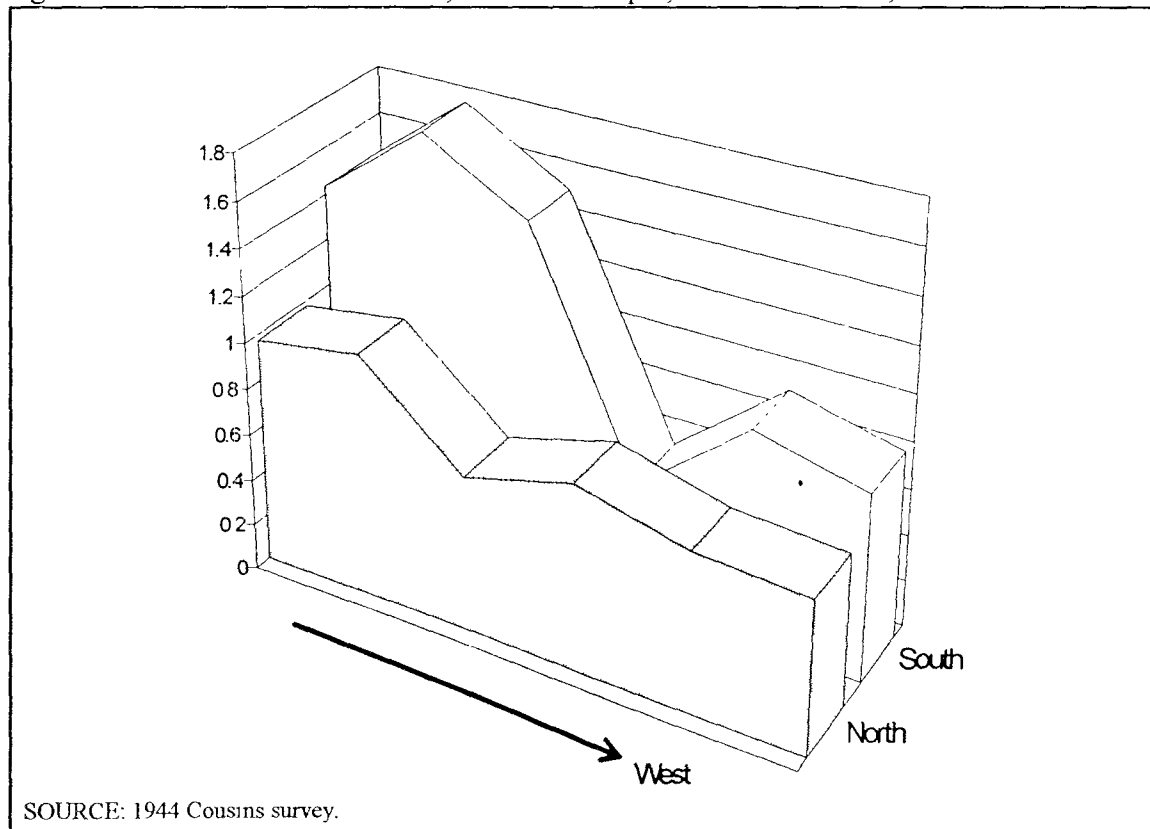


Fig. 4-19. Mean Number of Roomers, North-South Split, Halifax Peninsula, 1944.



households renting flats and apartments, and an equally striking scarcity of owner-occupied dwellings as compared to the national average. According to Miron, owner-occupied dwellings in 1941 consistently averaged 40 percent or more of the housing stock, regardless of family size. According to the 1944 Cousins survey, homeownership rates in Halifax fell short of the national average in every category except four-person households. Indeed, the incidence of households smaller than four persons living in apartments or flats in Halifax was almost double the national average. These figures show that demand for this type of dwelling far exceeded any other configuration.

Figures 4-22 and 4-23 further illustrate the dynamic relationship between the composition of the housing stock, household size, and overcrowding. The breakdown of number of occupants versus dwelling size confirms the high incidence of one, two and three-room dwellings (i.e., apartments) on the Halifax peninsula in 1941, [Fig. 4-22]. While some apartment dwellers were living in overcrowded quarters, a significant number of three and four-person households were occupying premises which could readily accommodate more people.

The larger the dwelling, the more likely that it contained additional living space which for whatever reason was not made available to those seeking accommodation. For example, the number of six-room dwellings occupied by one or two persons equalled households numbering eight or more people in the same housing category. The 1941 data tends to weaken the argument that housing congestion was primarily caused by a shortage of manpower and building materials. Figure 4-22 confirms the existence of excess housing capacity in the form of small families in large dwellings, even though a large segment of

Fig. 4-20. Distribution in Canadian Households by Tenure, Family Size and Dwelling Type, 1941.

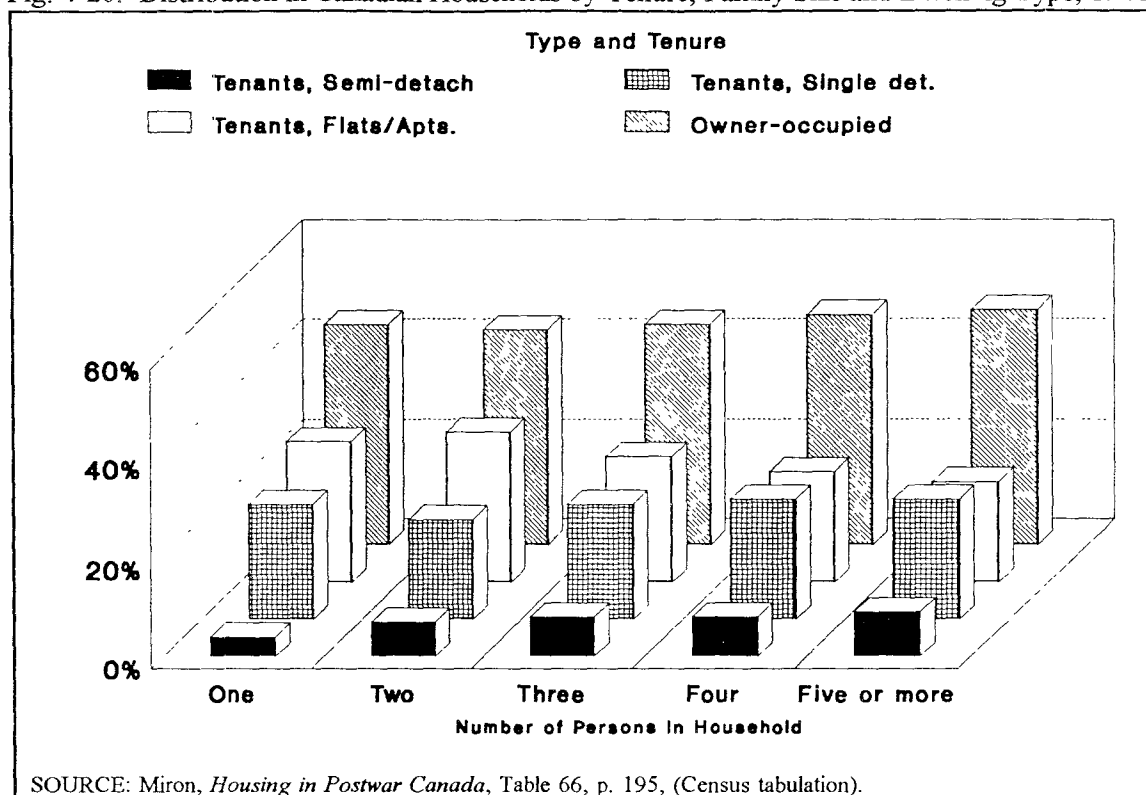
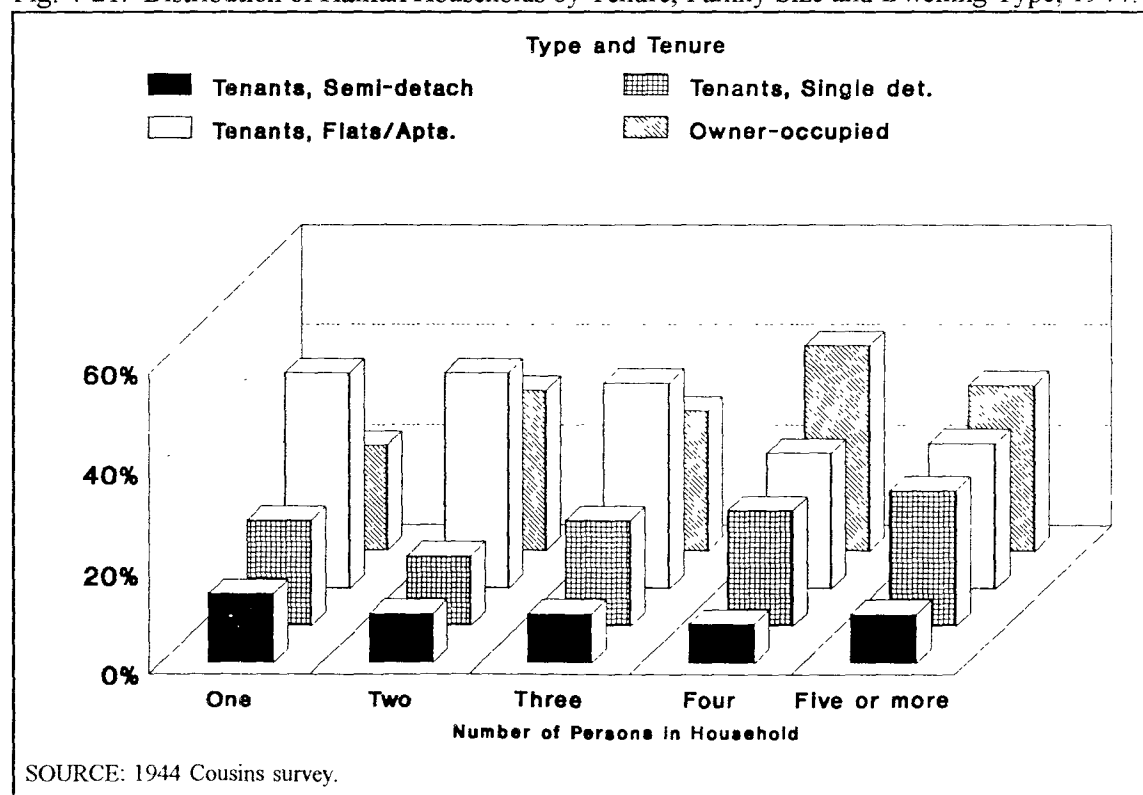


Fig. 4-21. Distribution of Halifax Households by Tenure, Family Size and Dwelling Type, 1944.



the urban population continued to experience overcrowding. Compulsory billeting would have gone far towards alleviating the housing crisis in Halifax, but such a measure was never seriously considered.

A breakdown of dwelling size versus household size using 1944 data reveals that a dramatic shift occurred between 1941 and 1944 in the distribution of households [Fig 4-23]. The number of two-person households dropped far below 1941 figures, while there has been a corresponding increase in households numbering six or more persons. This suggests that the wartime population had stabilized, but that overcrowding was just as severe as it had been in 1941, except that now the practice of “doubled-up” families was more prevalent. The Cousins survey findings reported that the Halifax area enjoyed a healthy surplus of rooms available for rent, but mistook this as evidence that housing congestion was declining. In fact, small households were now sharing larger quarters with another family rather than opting for privacy in substandard accommodations. The lower incidence of one and two-person households in 1944 also pointed to the combined effects of moving new entry training to Deep Brook, Nova Scotia and transferring 4,000 naval personnel into the recently-vacated RCAF embarkation depot at Windsor Park. Both events resulted in fewer single or married servicemen living in Halifax outside barracks.

The low incidence of small households in 1944 emphasizes the suddenness with which housing needs could change, even in a climate of intense consumer demand and state control. For example, a comparison of two-person households in four and five-room dwellings in 1941 and 1944 shows almost no change in total numbers, even though occupancy of smaller dwellings fell sharply. The drop in one to three-room dwellings

Fig. 4-22. Dwelling Size vs. Household Size, Halifax, 1941.

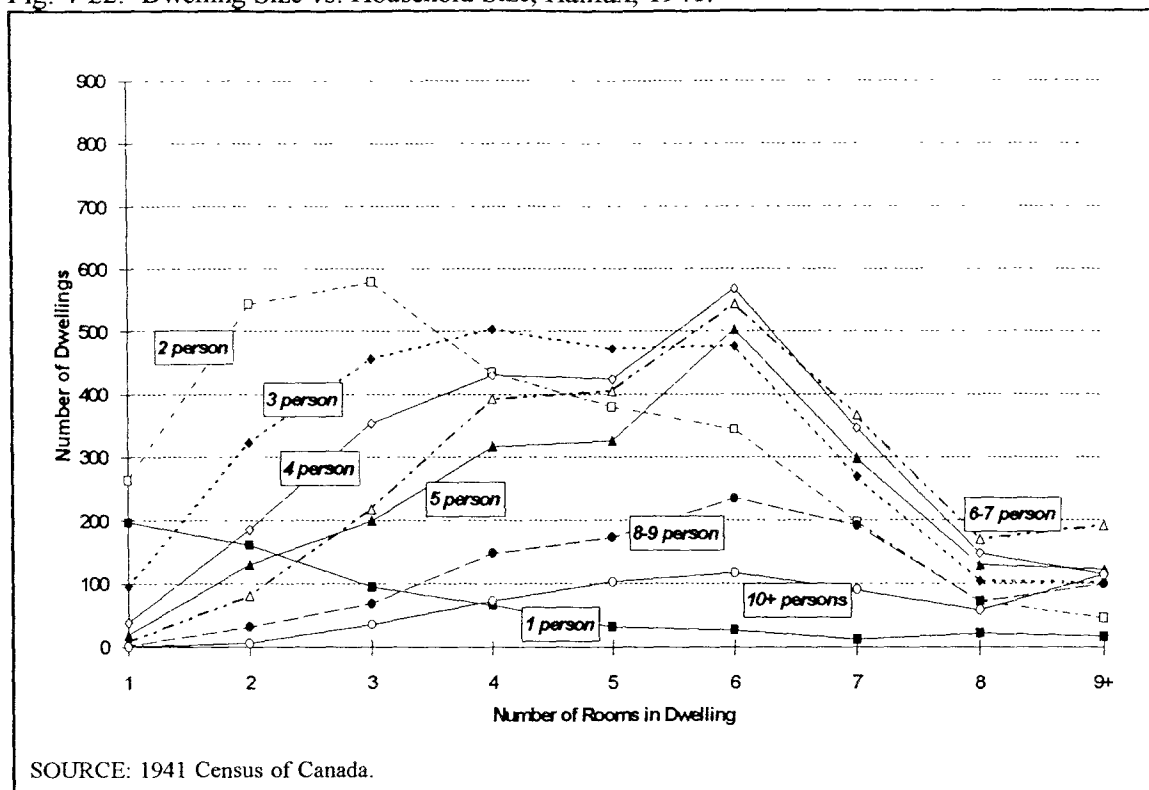
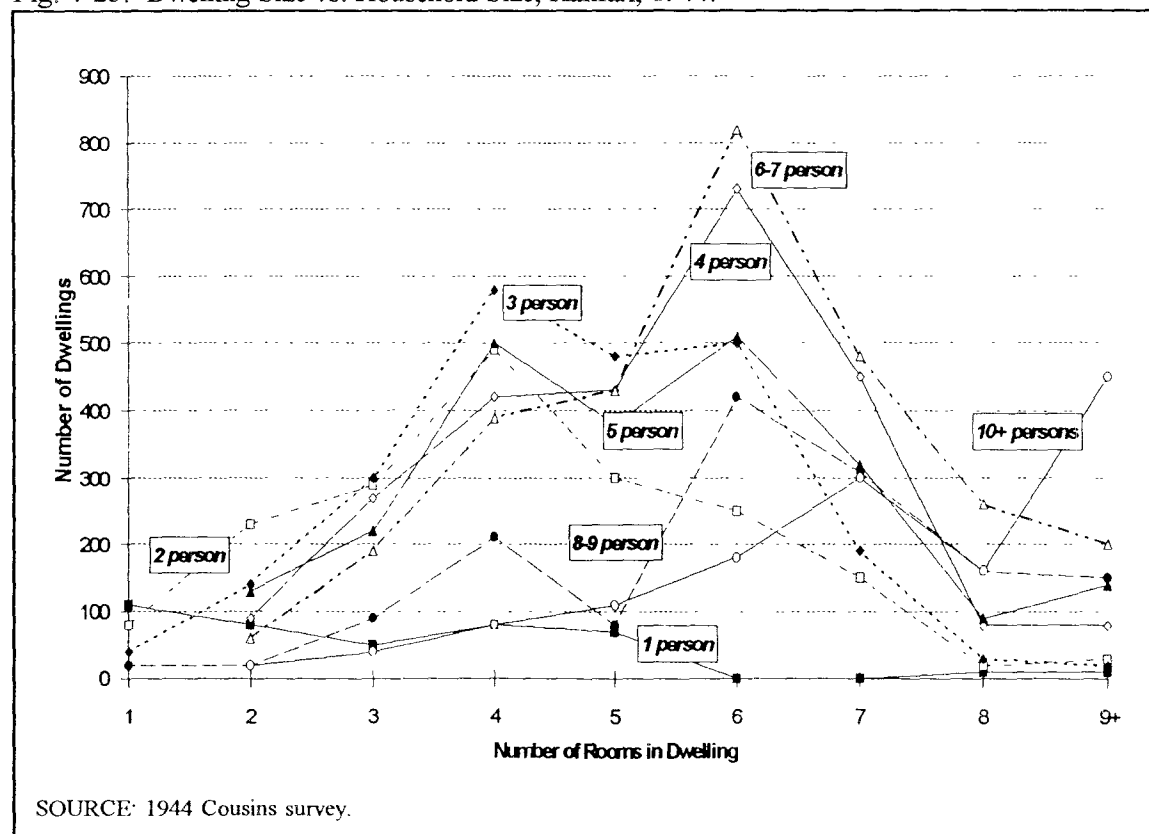


Fig. 4-23. Dwelling Size vs. Household Size, Halifax, 1944.



demonstrates the anomalous housing situation in 1941 due to the influx of service and civilian transients during the previous twelve months. The frantic subdivision of larger dwellings into multiple-housing units appears to have been a phenomenon confined largely to the 1940-41 period. By 1944, another anomaly – doubled-up families – had appeared. This would explain the high incidence of larger households occupying dwellings with six or more rooms in 1944. Whereas in 1941 there were approximately 1,300 six or seven room dwellings occupied by six to nine-person households, by 1944 this number had risen to well over 2,000. The addition of several hundred Wartime Housing Limited bungalows to the housing stock undoubtedly influenced this trend. Figures 4-22 and 4-23 clearly show that overcrowding was just as prevalent in larger dwellings in 1944 as it had been among smaller households earlier in the war.

Despite the unusual contours and sudden shifts in housing demand, the typical Halifax residence in 1944 continued to house three to seven people in a six-room, single detached dwelling. But the war greatly increased the potential for overcrowding by adding roomers or even another family to the household. Undeniably, overcrowding could have negative side effects in terms of public health risks and social problems, but there was also an economic incentive to tolerate overcrowding if it meant extra income for the resident family. Although roomers only made up about twelve percent of the peninsular population, their cumulative impact on the local economy was enormous. Assuming that

they paid rental costs similar to long term renters, roomers added as much as five million dollars per year to the income derived from the real estate sector in Halifax.²⁶

The issue of rental costs was controversial because of recurrent allegations that Halifax landlords were gouging tenants. While some exploitation undoubtedly did occur, there is no evidence to suggest that it was practiced systematically or that rents in Halifax were excessive when compared with prevailing rates in other areas. Census data gathered after rent controls were introduced show that housing costs in Halifax were in line with other Canadian cities [Fig. 4-24]. It is at the neighbourhood level, however, that rental disparities become most apparent. The Cousins survey findings revealed wide variations in average rents across the Halifax peninsula [Fig. 4-25].

The fact that average rental costs on the peninsula were actually lower or equal to prevailing rents in suburban areas (except for the \$40 and over range) suggests that other factors, such as the quality and type of accommodation available, exerted a countervailing effect on housing costs, despite heightened wartime demand. This argument is supported by comparing average size and quality of rental housing with the average rent charged in each area, [Fig. 4-26]. In this graph, it is clear that rental properties in areas where acceptable housing quality was the norm commanded higher prices on average than those located where housing quality was low. Even in neighbourhoods where dwelling sizes (in cubic feet) were relatively small, (*PAs* Seven through Thirteen), a good quality rating tended to push up the cost of rental housing.

²⁶Calculations based on a total roomer population of 13,000 multiplied by five (\$3.38 million) to seven (\$4.73 million) dollars rent per week.

Fig. 4-24. Mean Rental Costs in Selected Canadian Cities, 1941.

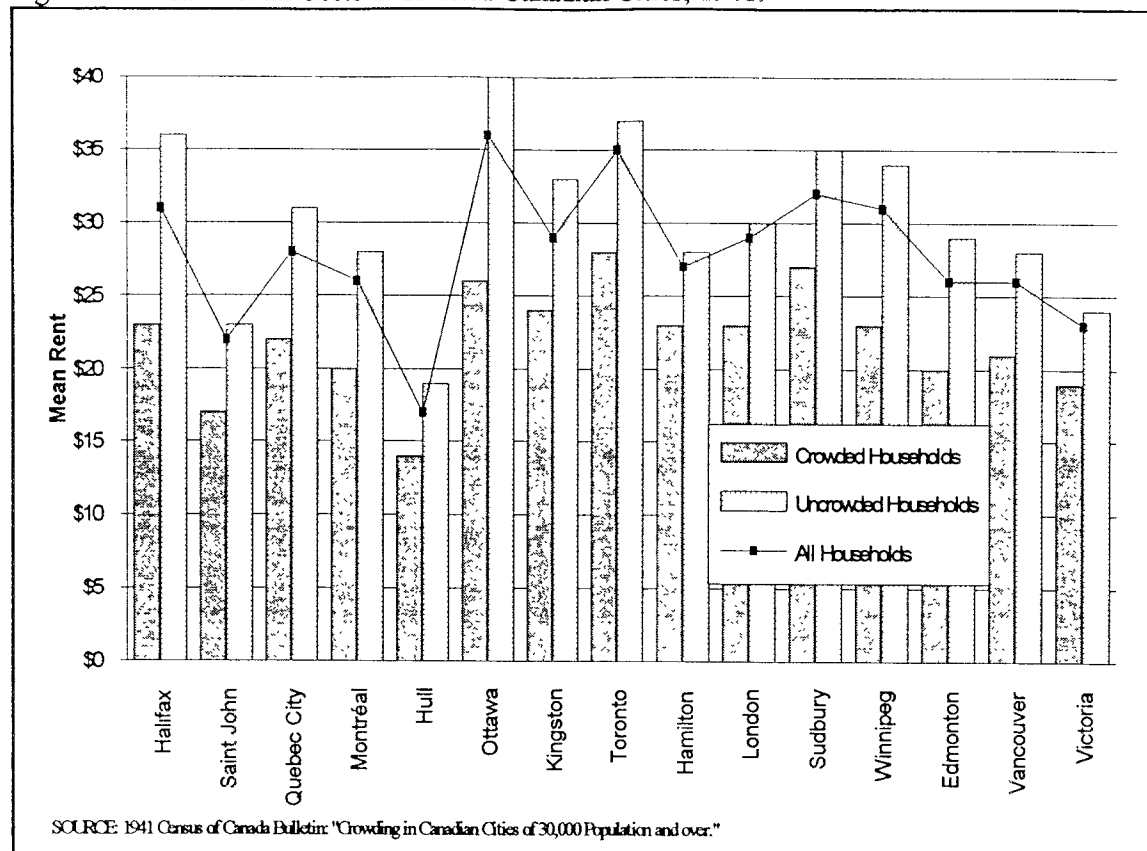
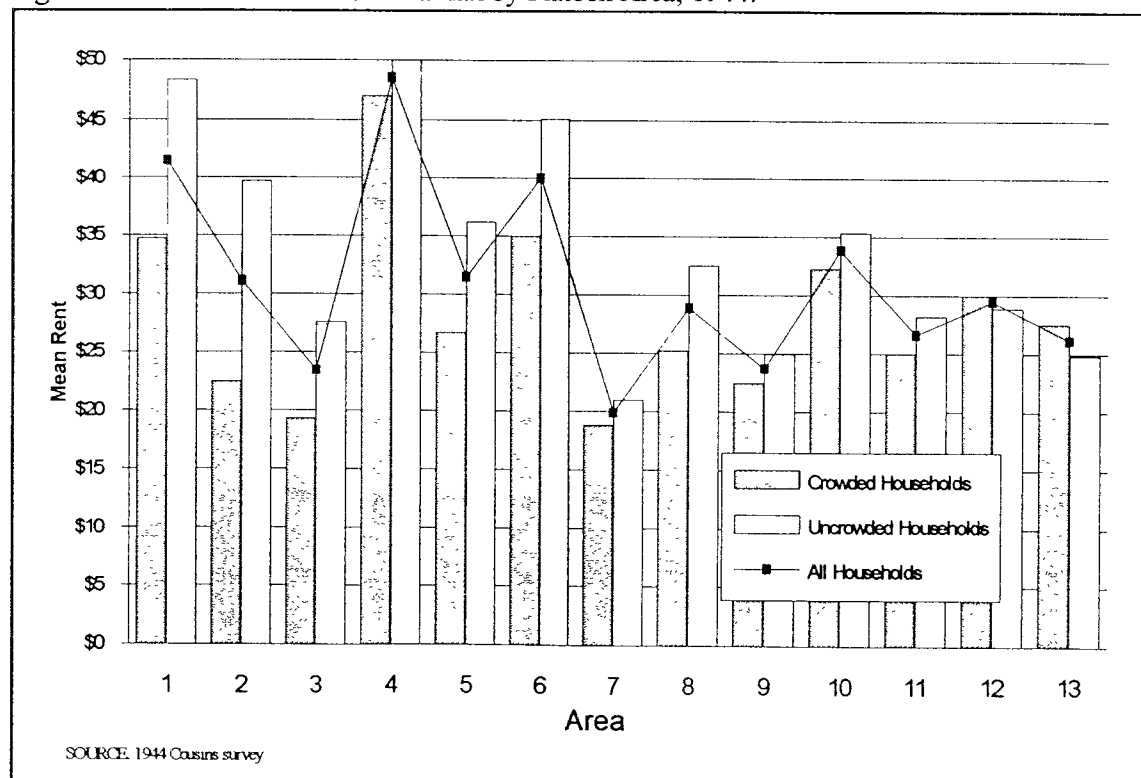


Fig. 4-25. Mean Rental Costs in Halifax by Platoon Area, 1944.



The influence of size was more difficult to detect in *PAs* One, Three and Five, where large homes (many of which had been converted into apartments), and commercial buildings (with second story apartments), were lumped in with other dwellings. Nevertheless, size did play a role in setting rent levels – especially in *PA* Seven, where a combination of poor quality and low average size produced the lowest rents on the Halifax peninsula, and this in an area where demand for accommodation was supposedly highest. The lower overall quality of housing in the most heavily congested areas of the city also underlies the variation in rent cost increases recorded between 1944 and 1951, as depicted in Fig. 4-27. Neighbourhoods with high rental costs tend to be located away from the waterfront. Those areas that endured the worst of the wartime accommodation crisis are also those that – in spite of postwar inflation – experienced only modest price increases. The notable exception was *PA* Three, a mixed residential neighbourhood in the south end. Reporting statistical averages does not tell the whole story regarding rental costs. The frequency distribution of rental costs both within neighbourhoods and across the peninsula is also instructive. Figure 4-7 depicted a random sample of rents reported by Cousins survey respondents in each platoon area in March 1944. Not all respondents were willing to disclose their current rental costs, so the sample may be too small to be statistically reliable. However, the diversity of rents paid underscores the marked differences in type and quality of dwellings encountered by tenants. In *PA* Seven, for example, some tenants paid rents in the \$8 to \$15 per month range – well below the average for this area – and some occupants reported paying no rent at all. In *PA* One, the mean rent hovered around

Fig. 4-26. Size, Cost and Quality of Rental Housing in Halifax by Platoon Area, 1944.

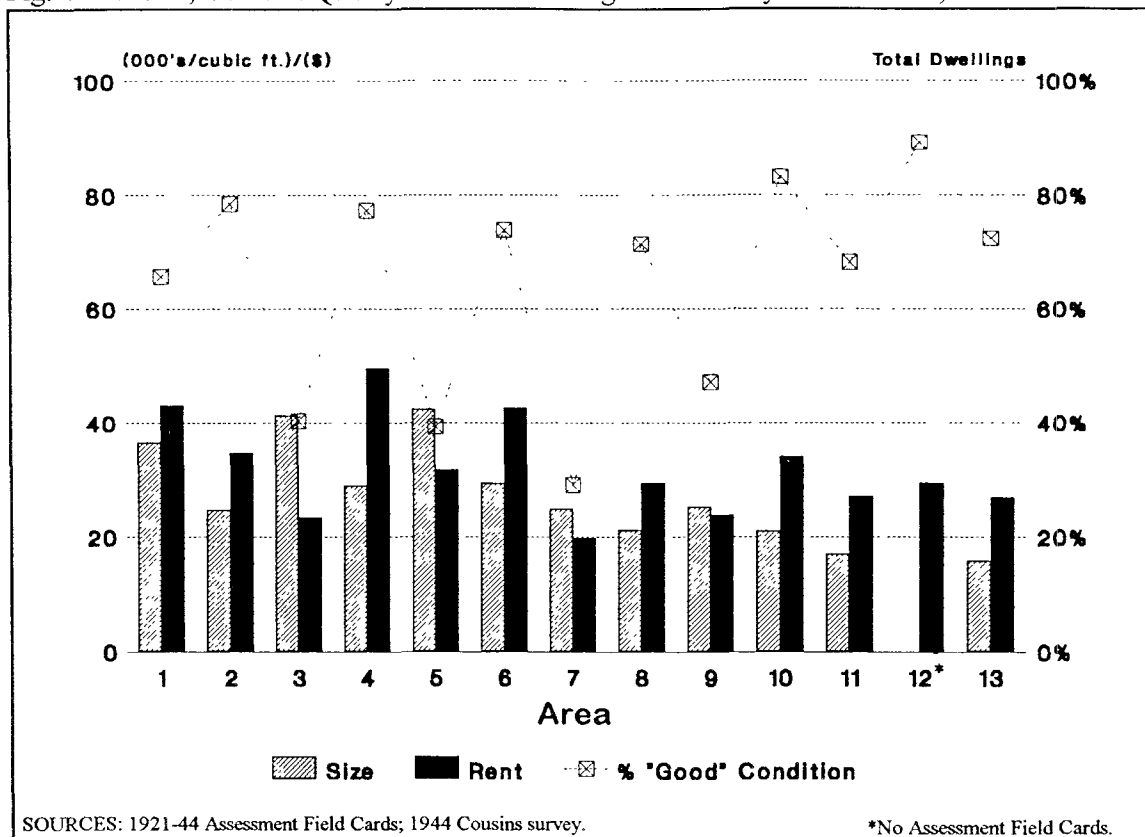
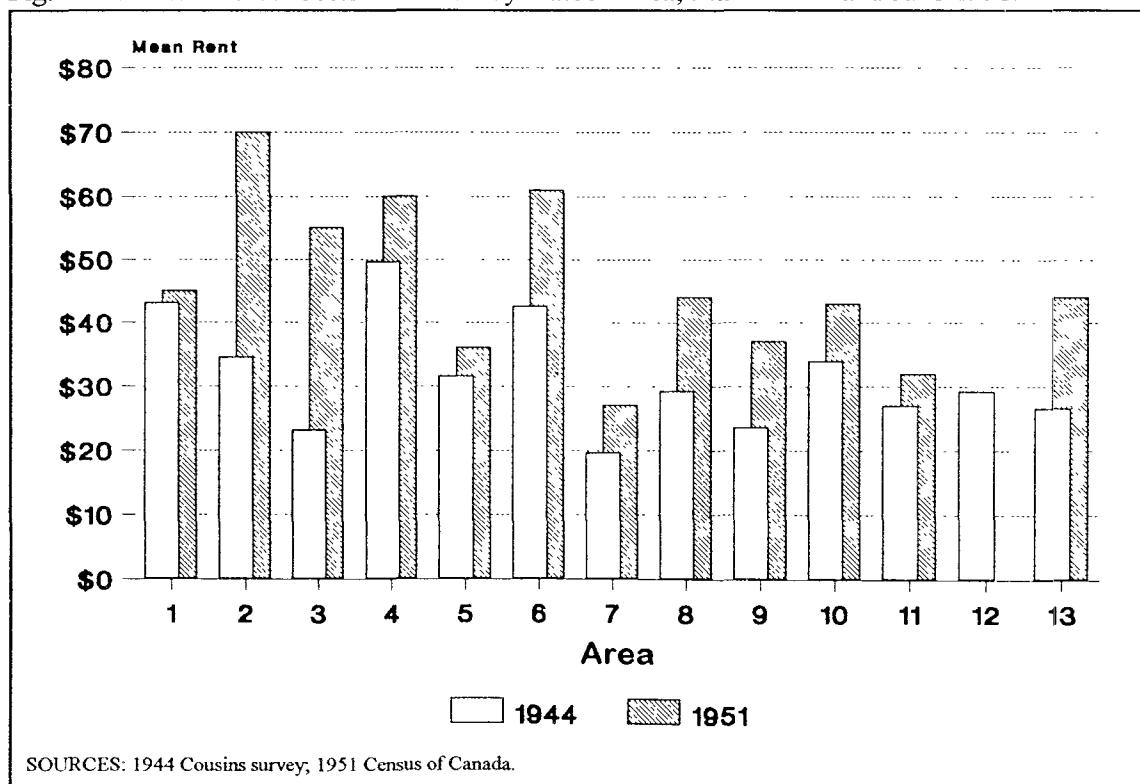


Fig. 4-27. Mean Rental Costs in Halifax by Platoon Area, March 1944 and June 1951.

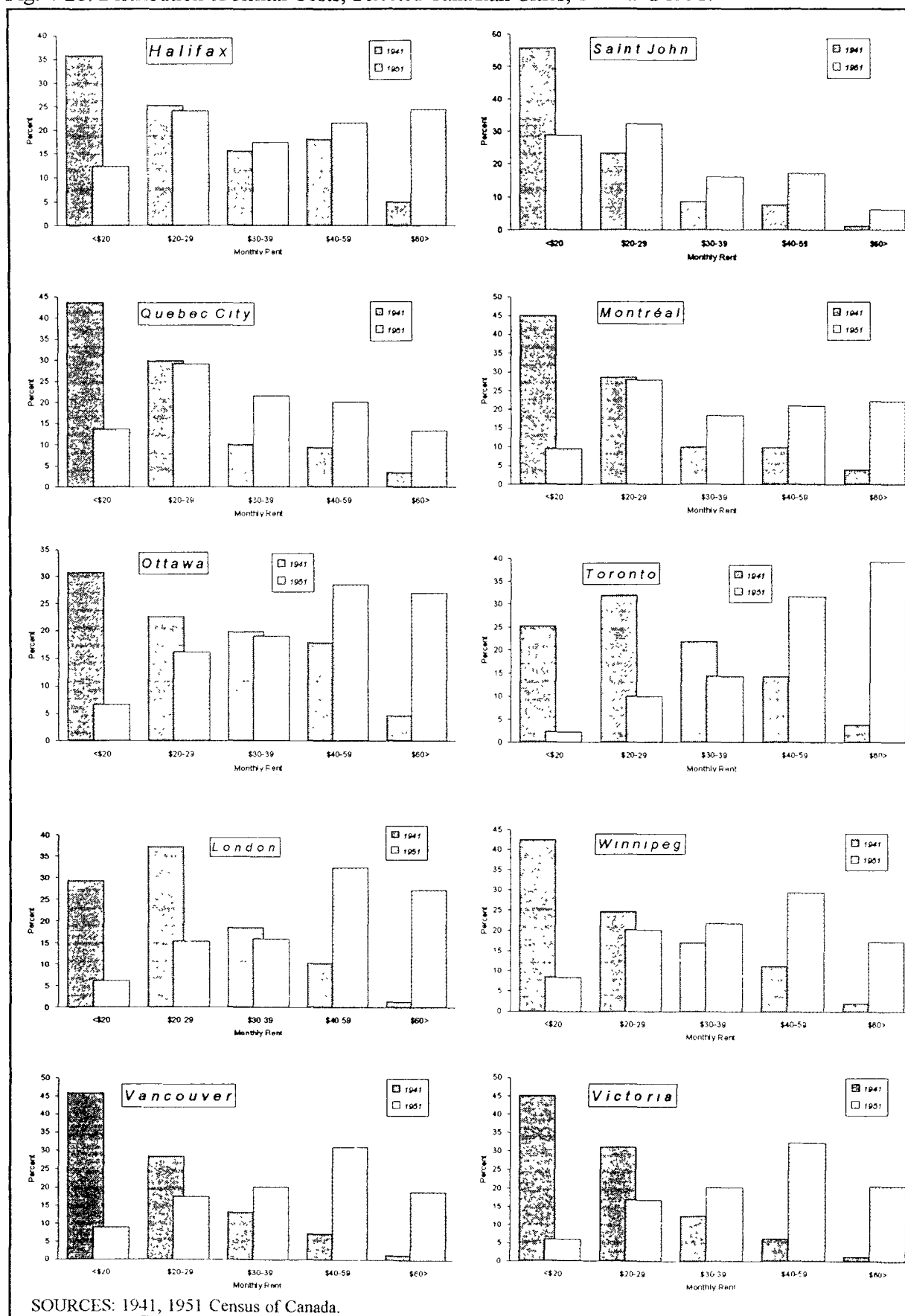


\$30, but there were significant numbers paying \$40 to \$55 per month as well. The pattern which emerges from a breakdown of rental costs by area was that neighbourhoods of mixed housing produced equally variegated rate structures. In more homogeneous districts, the range of rents was much narrower. The range of rental housing costs was broadest in those areas where commercial or industrial encroachment had destabilized residential property values. This was especially true of *PA One*, which had been a predominantly affluent residential neighbourhood before the appearance of the Ocean Terminals rail and dock complex.

Fig. 4-28 shows that, as compared with other cities, Halifax was not at all unusual with respect to distribution of rental costs. Among the major Canadian cities, the rental cost structure of Halifax most resembled Ottawa in 1941. Both cities possessed large public sectors, were primarily non-industrial, and were similar in size, age, architecture, and social structure. By 1951, however, rents above \$40 per month had risen much more dramatically in Ottawa than Halifax. Across the board, the most notable change in rental cost distribution during this period was the drastic reduction in the availability of accommodation costing less than \$20 per month. Halifax was as much a victim of this inflationary trend as other cities.

If Halifax landlords had responded in a systematic way to wartime housing demand by charging rents according to what the market would bear, one would have expected prices to rise in the most congested areas. Apparently this did not occur; in fact, tenants may have actually been attracted to areas like *PA Seven* because of the availability of cheap accommodation, rather than being driven out by high rental costs. Equally

Fig. 4-28. Distribution of Rental Costs, Selected Canadian Cities, 1941 and 1951.



surprising, given the frequent allegations of rent gouging in Halifax, was the apparent decline of rental costs in the \$40 and over range between 1941 and 1944. [See Fig. 4-29] Granted, there were also corresponding increases in the \$20 to 29 and \$30 to 39 ranges, but the overall effect was a moderation of average rental costs, rather than a dramatic rise across the board in response to wartime housing demand.

The foregoing discussion does not suggest that rental costs did not escalate during the war, or that no tenants were exploited by landlords eager to capitalize on the sudden upturn in housing demand. Black marketeering and informal arrangements between lessors and lessees, and lessees and sub-letters, were common – and, for the tenant, expensive. Overall, however, the percentage distribution of rental costs between 1941 and 1944 remained remarkably stable for all rental units except single-detached dwellings, as shown in Fig. 4-30. The upward trend in rental costs for single-detached units was largely due to the addition of several hundred Wartime Housing Limited bungalows renting at \$25 to \$32 per month. Rental cost increases for apartments and flats occurred mostly in the \$20 to \$29 range, and the overall trend for semi-detached and row housing was downward rather than upward, no doubt a consequence of further deterioration of the city's slum districts.

In addition to high costs, the quality of housing in Halifax during the war elicited frequent negative commentary – particularly from outsiders. By definition, quantitative data alone cannot accurately convey what may have been quite subjective opinions about quality. The Cousins survey does confirm, however, that housing in Halifax was in a poor state of repair, with only 56 per cent of dwellings earning a “Good” rating in 1944. [See

Fig. 4-29. Percent Change in Rental Cost Distribution, Halifax, 1941 and 1944.

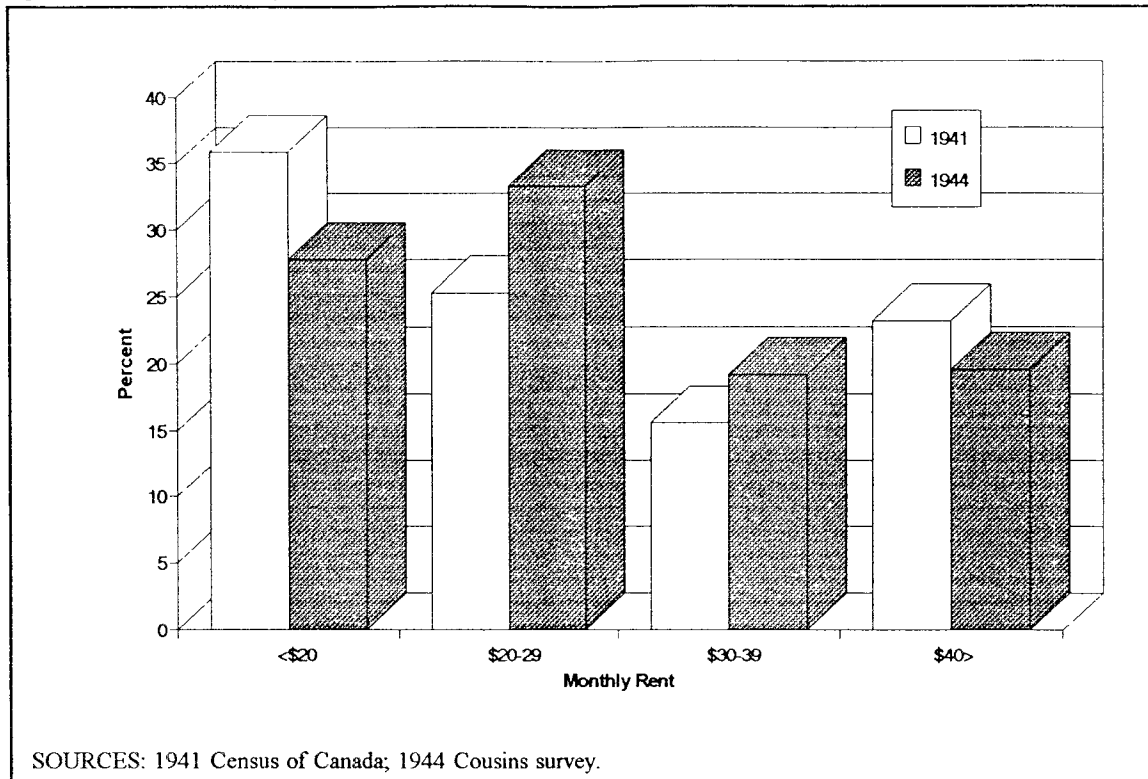


Fig. 4-30. Percent Change in Rental Cost Distribution by Dwelling Type in Halifax, 1941 and 1944.

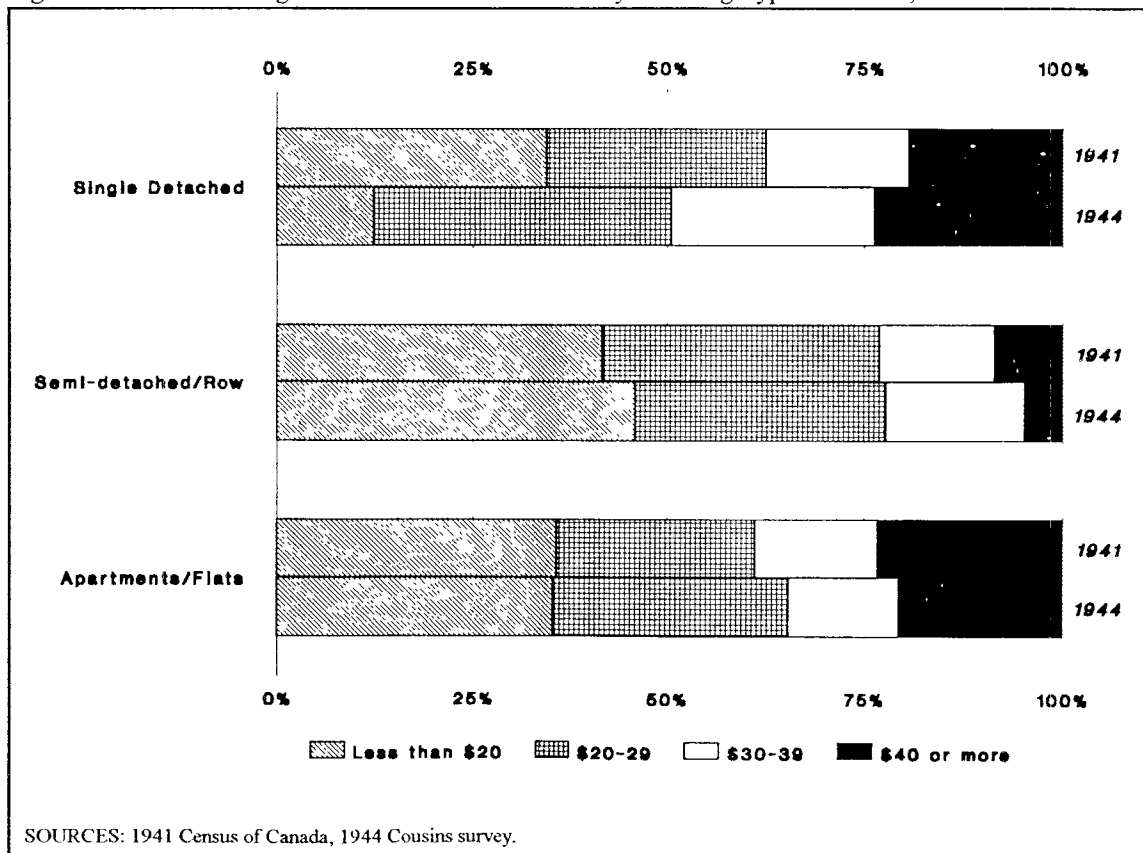


Fig 4-31] However, the survey also showed that housing quality varied a great deal across the Halifax peninsula [Fig. 4-32], and the areas with the worst record in terms of housing quality were those neighbourhoods where most of the wartime influx was concentrated [Figs 4-33 and 4-34]. Notwithstanding these factors, census data from 1941 demonstrated that overall, the housing stock in Halifax was comparable in quality to that of other major cities in Canada [Fig 4-35]

As with other social and physical characteristics of wartime Halifax, platoon area Seven stands out from the rest of the peninsula. With one dwelling in four either poor or very poor quality, the situation is far worse here than elsewhere on the peninsula. Not surprisingly, the runner-up for poorest housing conditions, *PA* Nine, was close by, even though the degree of deterioration was much lower. The general trend among the remaining platoon areas was one of improved housing quality as the distance from the waterfront increased. More significant than spatial distribution was the difference in average quality between crowded and uncrowded dwellings. As shown in Fig 4-36, crowded dwellings were much more likely to require external repairs. While some improvement in overall housing quality was evident between 1941 and 1951, the disparity between crowded and uncrowded dwellings remained more or less constant.

Another revealing statistic in measuring standards of housing among neighbourhoods was mean lot size. Building lot sizes varied tremendously, with older sections of the city demonstrating highly irregular settlement patterns when compared with newer areas [Fig 4-37]. Rather striking discrepancies are apparent, particularly among the three most congested platoon areas: One, Seven and Eight. Of the 343 lots surveyed in *PA* Seven,

Fig. 4-31. Housing Condition in Halifax, 1944.

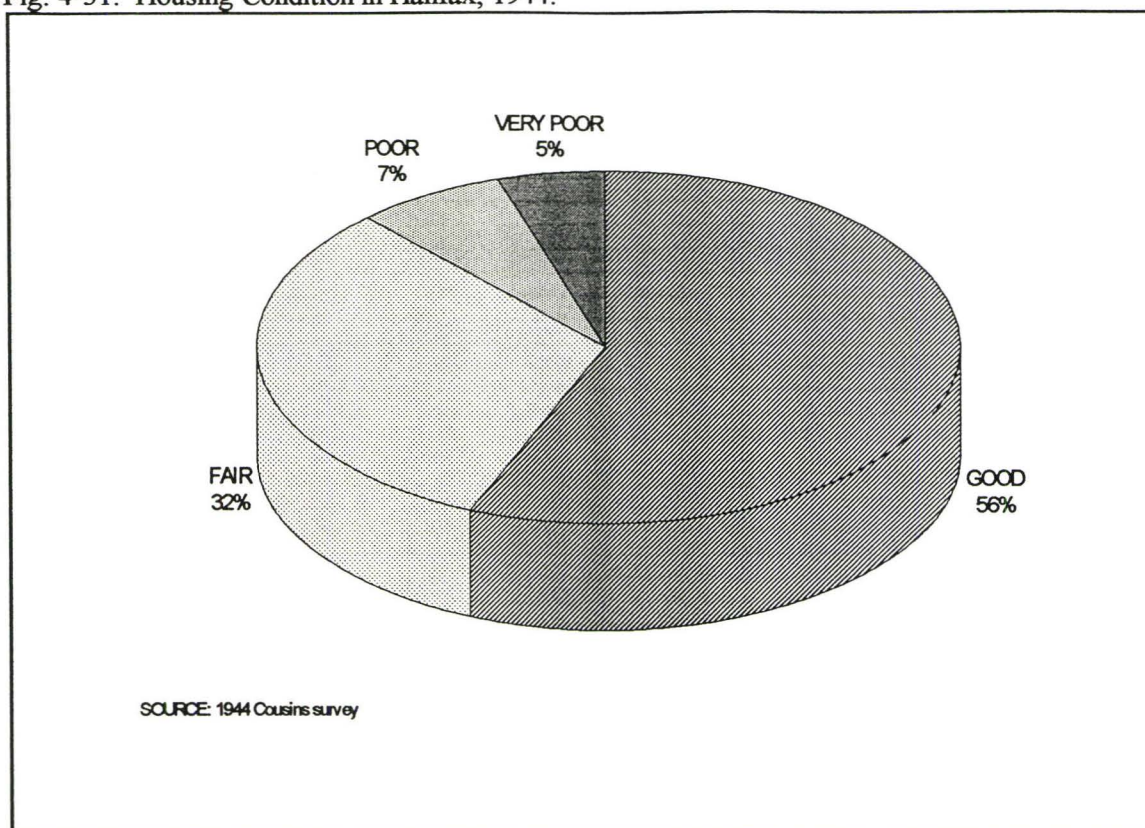


Fig. 4-32. Housing Condition in Halifax by Platoon Area, 1944.

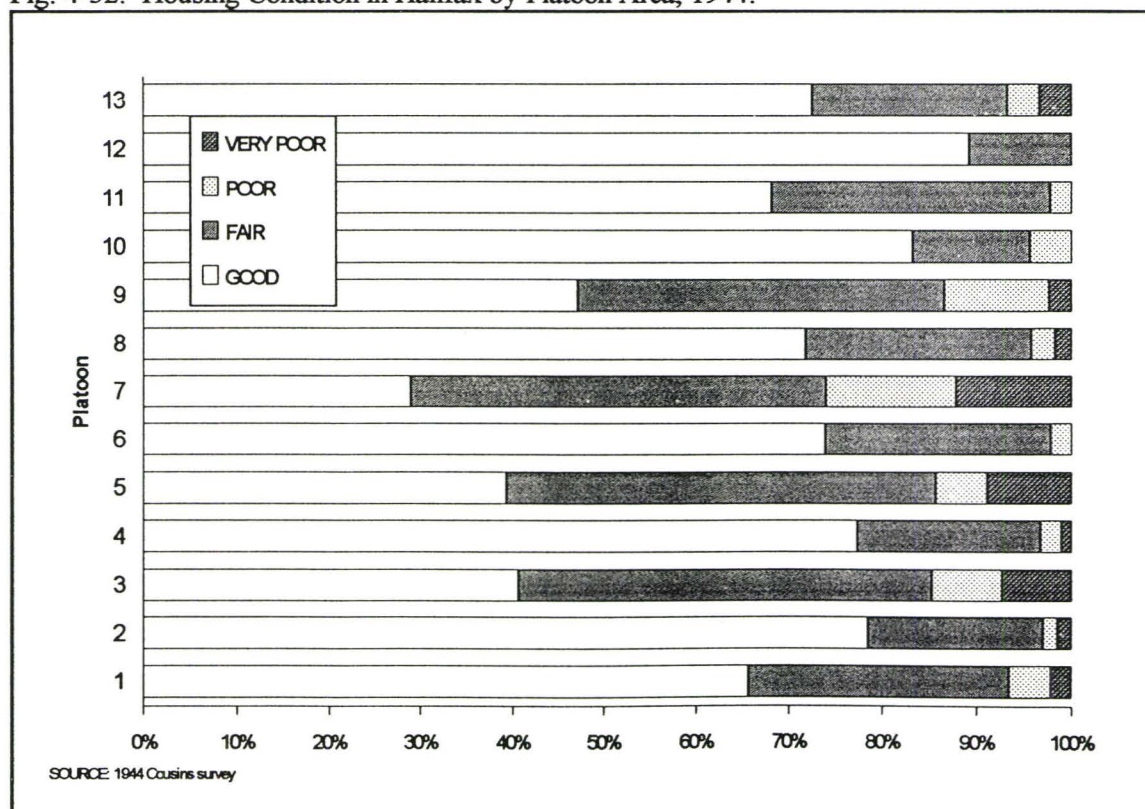
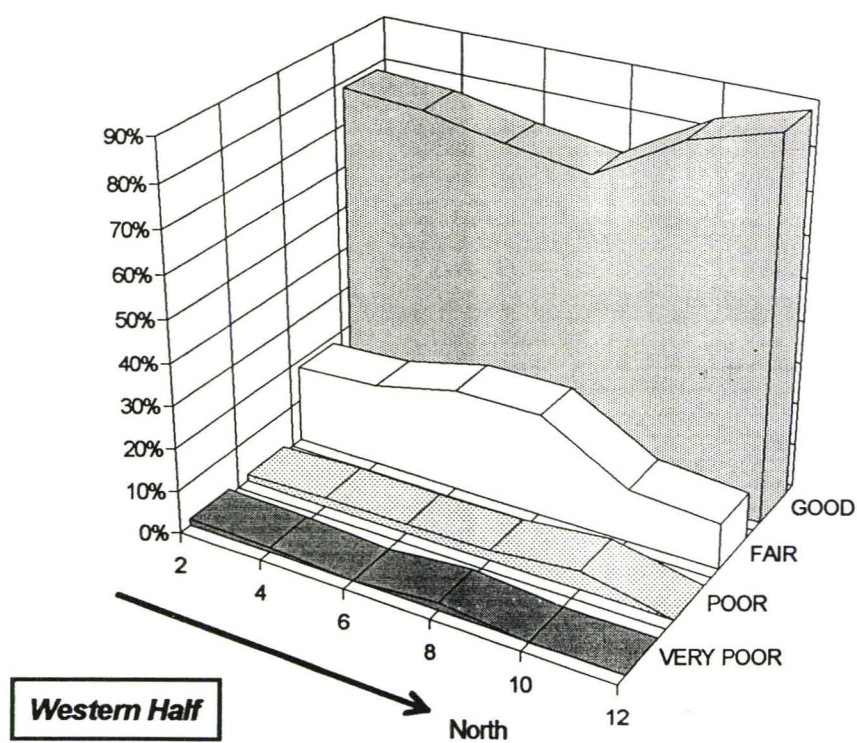
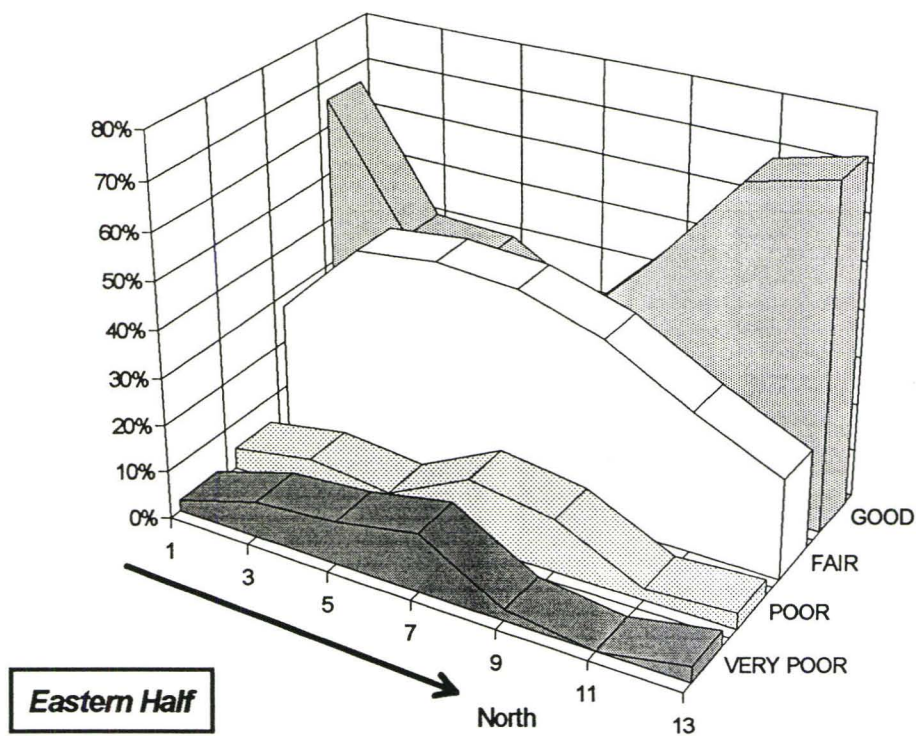


Fig. 4-33. Housing Condition, East-West Split, Halifax Peninsula, 1944.



SOURCE: 1944 Cousins survey.

Fig. 4-35. Dwellings in Need of External Repairs in Selected Canadian Cities, 1941.

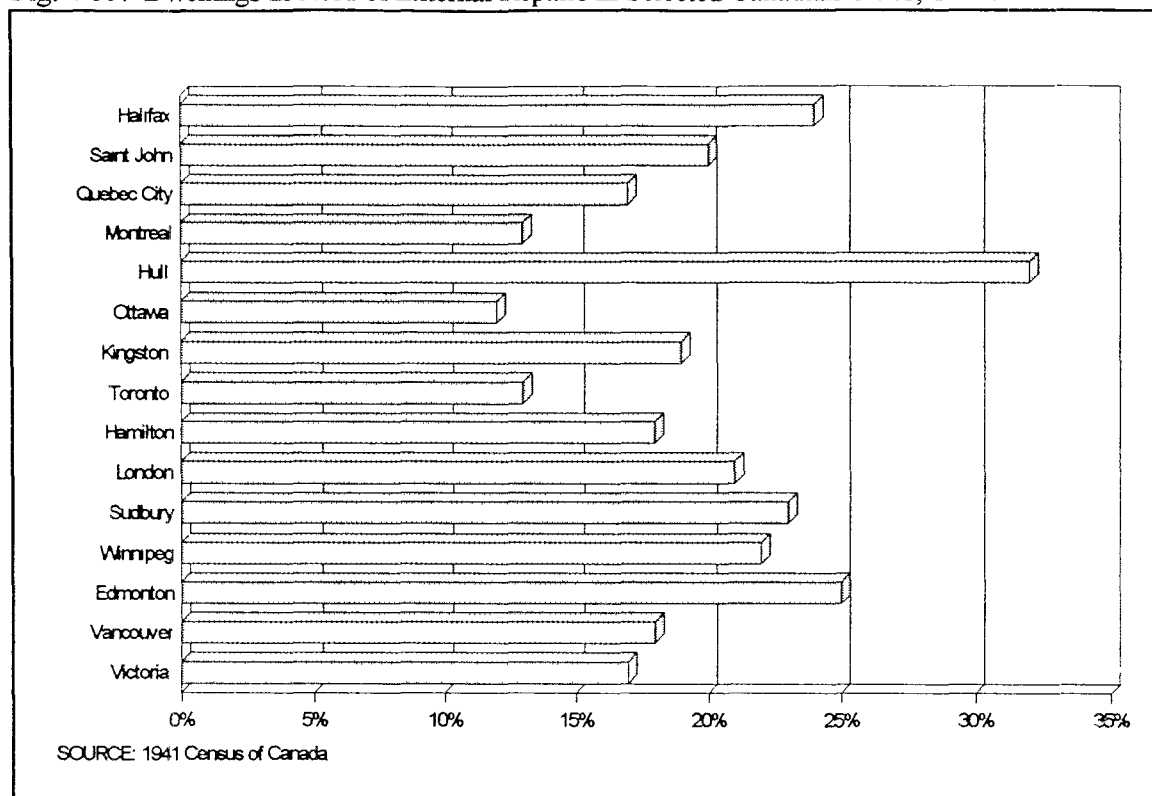


Fig. 4-36. Dwellings in Halifax in Need of External Repairs, 1944 and 1951.

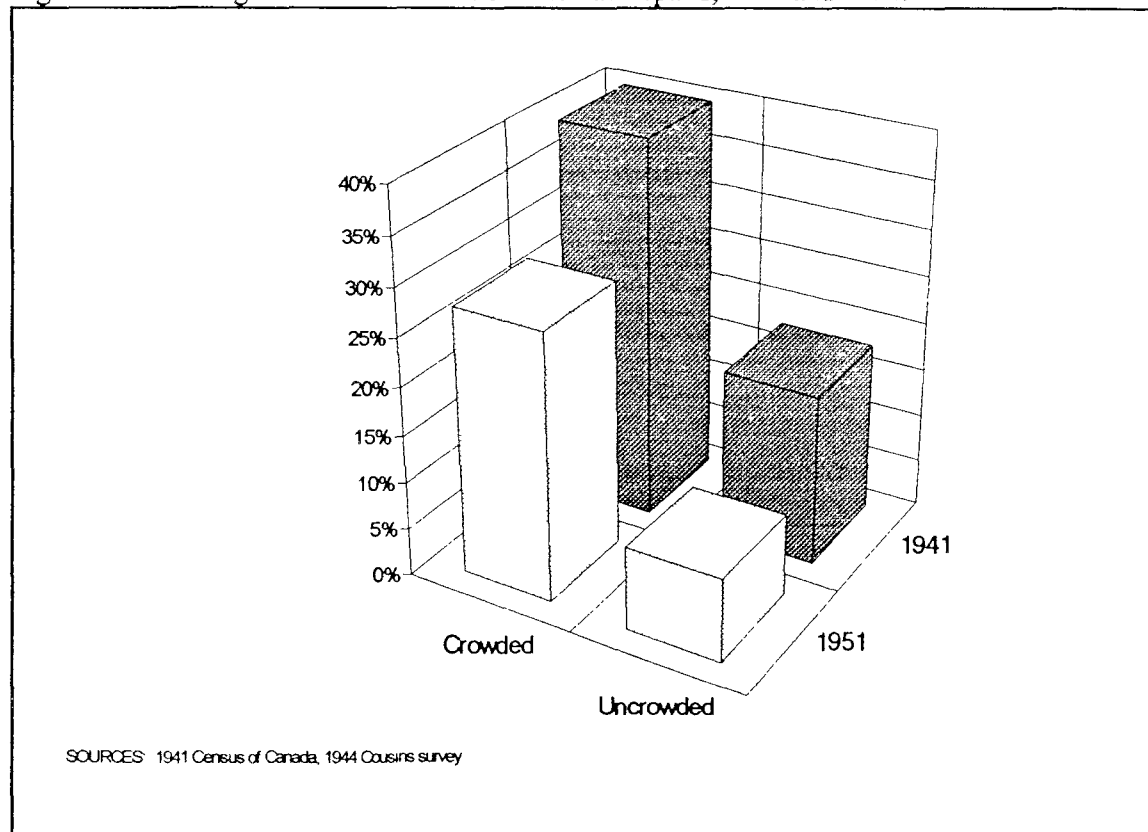
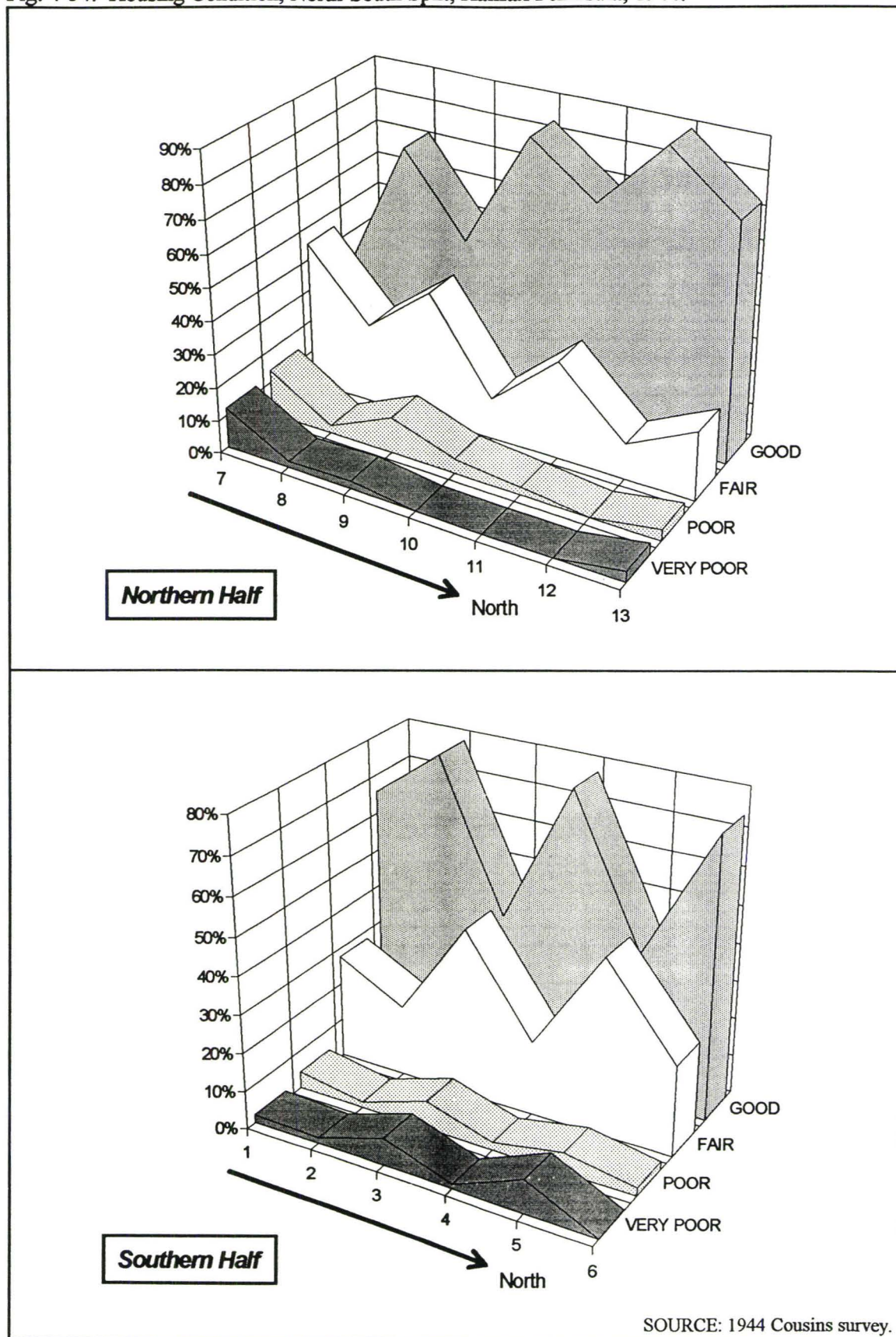


Fig. 4-34. Housing Condition, North-South Split, Halifax Peninsula, 1944.



one in five was smaller than 1,500 square feet. *PA One*, by contrast, possessed only one lot in 122 which was smaller than 3,000 square feet, and every sixth lot in that district was larger than 7500 square feet. The contrast between *PAs Seven and Eight* was less dramatic, but population density was much higher in *PA Seven* than its middle class, semi-suburban neighbour to the west. The small size of lots was one of the main reasons why *PA Seven* contained such a high number of dwellings even though its geographical area was similar to others. The extreme variations in residential lot size across the peninsula was indicative of the city's eighteenth-century origins. It also typified haphazard residential development, and implied a corresponding absence of uniformly applied building standards. Every neighbourhood on the eastern side of the peninsula was afflicted to varying degrees with substandard housing situated on undersized lots.

Municipal tax assessment records provide further evidence of long term deterioration in certain parts of the city. The available data for the period 1921 to 1944 reveal conflicting trends in real estate values in different areas of the city. On the west side of the peninsula, the price of land remained fairly constant, rebounding from Depression lows to exceed 1921 levels by 1944. On the harbour side, however, land values are generally lower in 1944 than in 1921 [See Fig. 4-38]. In neighbourhoods north of Citadel Hill and east of Robie Street, the assessed value of "improvements" – the term used by assessors to denote any structure erected on a particular lot – also fell between 1921 and 1944. The average assessment for a house and lot in *PA Seven* fell by fifteen per cent, for example. Notwithstanding that land values were likely inflated due to the economic legacy of the First World War, the fact that assessments changed so little over

Fig. 4-37. Mean Residential Building Lot Sizes by Platoon Area, 1944.

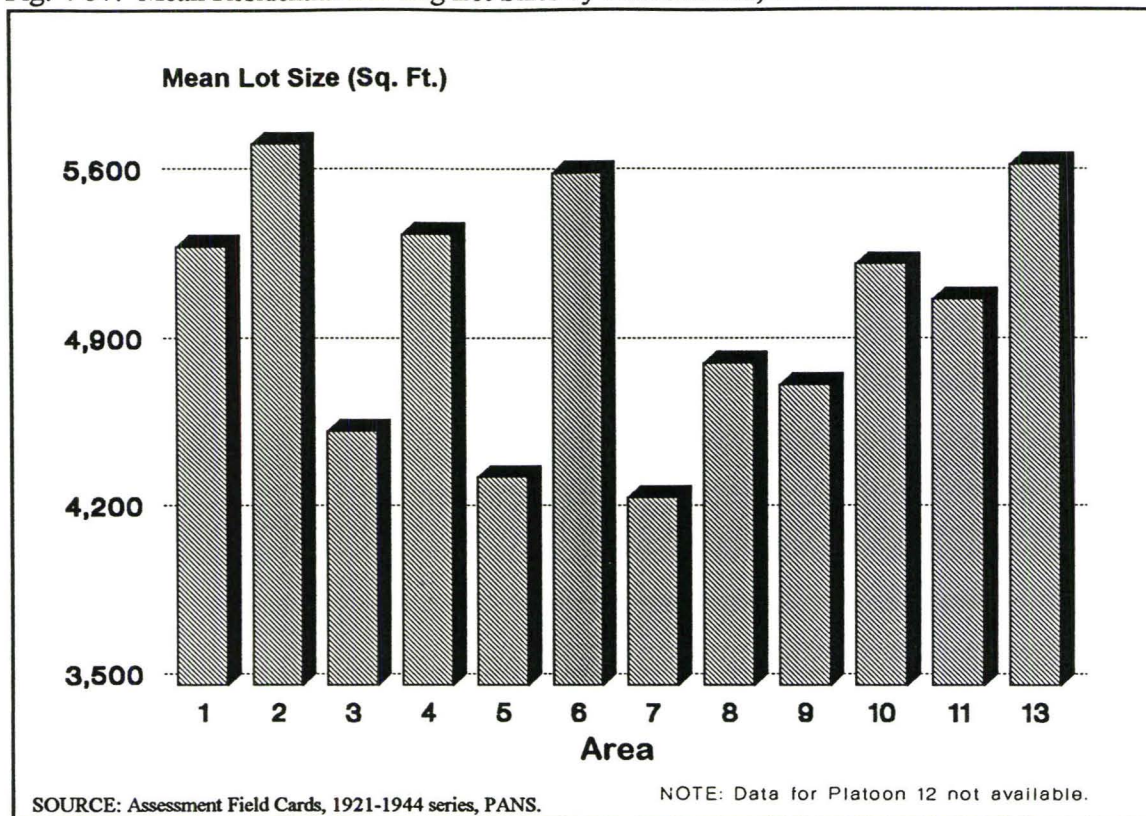
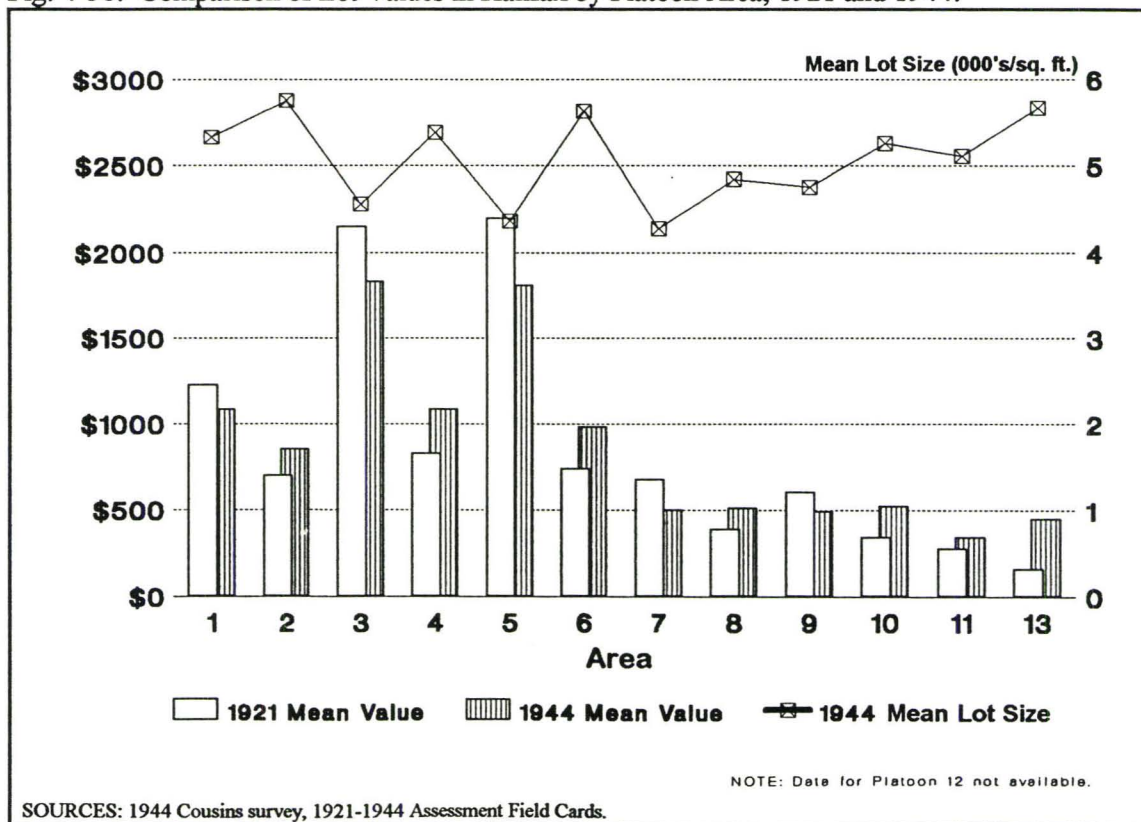


Fig. 4-38. Comparison of Lot Values in Halifax by Platoon Area, 1921 and 1944.



two decades – especially once housing demand skyrocketed in 1940 – indicated that revision of municipal property taxation was long overdue.

According to assessment records, real estate market activity occurred mainly in middle class neighbourhoods where consumer demand and new construction remained brisk [Fig. 4-39]. Land values in *PA Eight* clearly reflect this trend, along with a healthy 30 per cent increase in per capita assessment for dwellings in this district. Meanwhile, falling assessments in older areas along the waterfront indicated an inexorable decline ending with the spread of slums. Repair and replacement activity in declining neighbourhoods was influenced by the high percentage of rental properties. Low assessments meant lower taxes, so landlords were seldom disposed to undertake improvements on rented properties – particularly when the depressed housing market would not bear increased rental costs. When the wartime influx began to arrive, there was little time, no workers and insufficient materials to enable property owners to undertake long overdue maintenance. The focus of federal housing programmes on new construction on undeveloped land in urban fringe areas was inappropriate in the case of Halifax, where energies would have been much more profitably applied in rehabilitating the existing housing stock.

Analysis of real estate market activity before, during and after the Second World War suggests that the wartime period was characterized by a rise in property transactions in those areas most affected by the housing shortage. The data was compiled from information supplied by assessment field cards. Transactions were divided into three main groups: 1) properties that changed hands one or more times between 1921 and

Fig. 4-39. Residential Construction in Halifax by Platoon Area, 1921-1948.

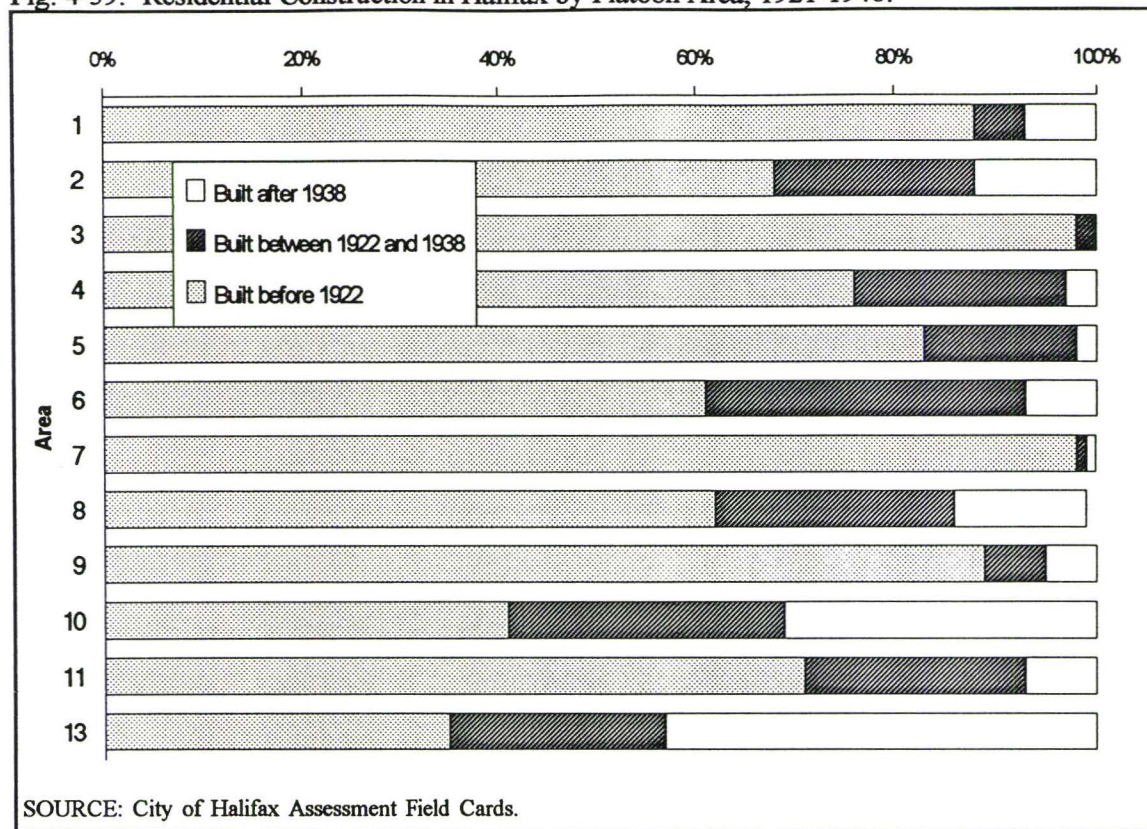
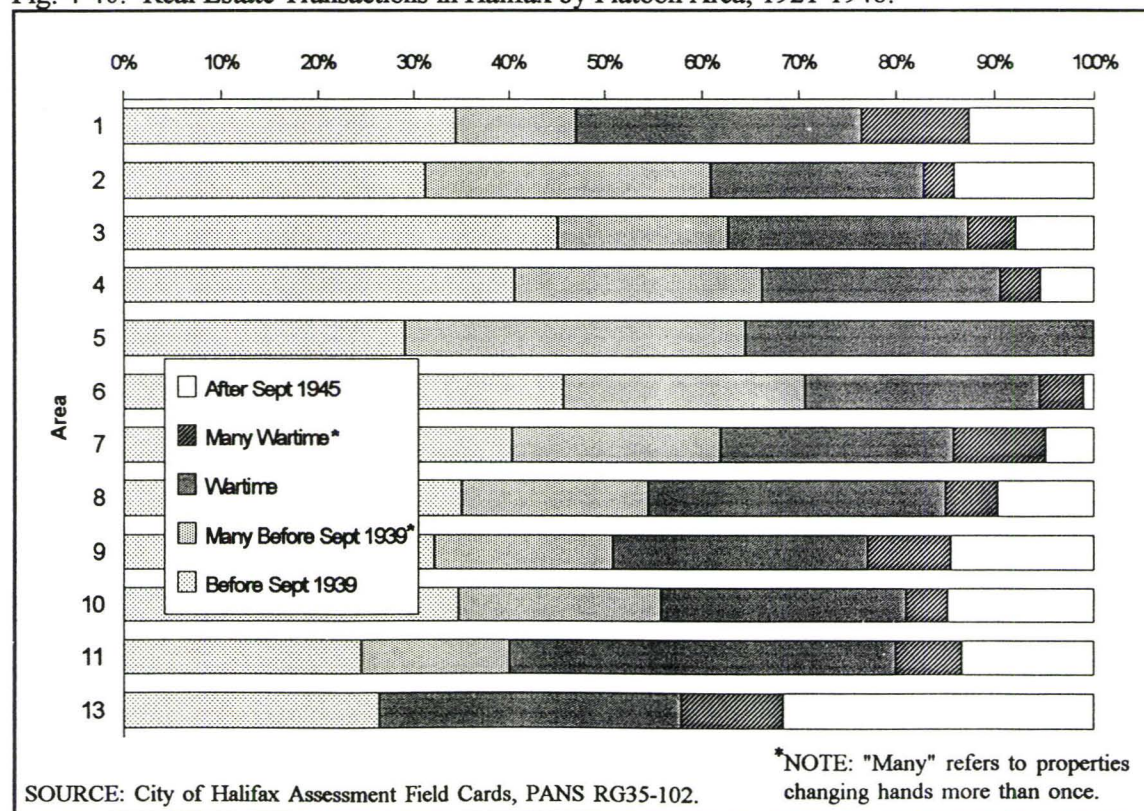


Fig. 4-40. Real Estate Transactions in Halifax by Platoon Area, 1921-1948.



September 1939; 2) properties that changed hands one or more times during the war; and 3) properties that changed hands between September 1945 to December 1948. [Fig. 4-40] Market activity remained brisk throughout the wartime period. *PA*s One, Seven, Nine and Thirteen show proportionately greater numbers of multiple transactions during the war, in contrast to the interwar period when the affluent western suburbs (*PA*s Four and Six) were most active. In *PA* Eight, where 56 per cent of the dwellings were owner-occupied (versus only 17 per cent in *PA* Seven), the number of properties changing hands declines only slightly during the war. One would expect the figures to be higher in this middle class neighbourhood, as persons with sufficient income to purchase homes were transferred in and out of Halifax. Fig. 4-40 illustrates that, while no area overshadowed others in terms of real estate activity, during the war areas with a high percentage of rental properties showed increased levels of real estate activity. Of particular interest were the high number of properties changing hands "many" times (that is, more than once). In a city with traditionally high housing costs, a finite supply of land, and a well-entrenched, conservative financial elite, it would appear that the war stimulated speculation in a market which promised sizable returns for the careful investor. After the war, the real estate market resumed its prewar focus on the newer and more affluent suburbs located well away from the waterfront.

Throughout the interwar, wartime and postwar periods, all districts possessed a relatively stable core percentage of properties which did not change hands at all between 1921 and 1948. In the three major congested areas, the figures stood at about 36 per cent for *PA* One, 40 per cent in *PA* Seven, and 32 per cent in *PA* Eight. It seems odd that *PA*

Seven should possess the highest rate of single-owner properties, but this once again gives evidence of the rather unique character of this district. Part of the explanation probably rests with the lower frequency of outward mobility of homeowners in *PA* Seven, owing to racial and economic barriers. They were unlikely to be able to afford to move to another part of the city, much less feel welcome there even if they could. Neither would they experience much success in selling their homes in an area where black residents congregated, and where row housing and other rental accommodation had traditionally been as common as single family dwellings. Research by C. R. Brookbank just after the war revealed that black households in Halifax were experiencing some difficulty in maintaining a comfortable standard of living once characterized by high homeownership rates, employment in a wide variety of skilled and semi-skilled occupations, and respectability within the community.²⁷ Nevertheless, it was reported in 1969 that a high ratio of homeowners remained in the predominantly black Maynard and Creighton Streets area.²⁸ Achieving home ownership was an extremely important objective for those seeking some measure of security in the face of limited employment opportunities.

There seems little doubt that rental properties located in the north end, an area with consistently high demand for rental accommodation – particularly after the destruction of so much working class housing in December, 1917 – provided a crucial source of income for many Halifax landowners. Landladies who appear to derive their main income from managing rental property were abundant in 1944. Six years later, widows made up fully

²⁷Brookbank, "Afro-Canadian Communities in Halifax County," p. 44.

²⁸Malcolm R. M. McFarlane, "The Political Attitudes of Negroes in Halifax City," unpublished M. A. thesis, Dalhousie University, 1969, p. 68.

one-fifth of the private landlords traceable from the Cousins survey [See Fig. 4-41]. It may be noted that Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, another community with large numbers of tenant-occupied households, also appears to have had a correspondingly high percentage of widow-headed households.²⁹ In 1951, Halifax and Yarmouth were the only incorporated communities in the province “where the number of tenant occupied housing units exceeded the number of owner-occupied.”³⁰

There is a clear relationship between low income female-headed tenant households and housing affordability, but in Halifax another dynamic seems to be at work since so many widows were property owners rather than renters. Widows acquired rental properties, either through real estate investments by their late husbands or on their own, because the seasonal nature of the waterfront economy and the scarcity of affordable low density housing in the urban core created a steady demand for short term accommodation. Judith Fingard also discovered a small trend in housing preferences among university women in Halifax around the time of the First World War. In three separate instances, widowed mothers “moved to Halifax to open a boarding house where the daughters could live while the mother supported the family by taking in other college students as boarders.”³¹ Many widows would have entered the boarding house trade as a logical extension of their domestic role in familial settings, but the Cousins survey showed that

²⁹D.A. Muise, “Iron Men?: Yarmouth's Seagoing Workforce in Transition, 1871-1921,” in Colin Howell and Richard Twomey, eds. *Jack Tar in History* (Fredericton:Acadiensis Press, 1991), p. 266, note 44.

³⁰McVittie, p. 17. McVittie omitted communities with less than 2,500 population from his calculations.

³¹Judith Fingard, “University Women of the Great War Generation,” *Collections of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society* 43 (1991), p. 8.

Fig. 4-41. Landlord Socio-economic Groups, 1950.

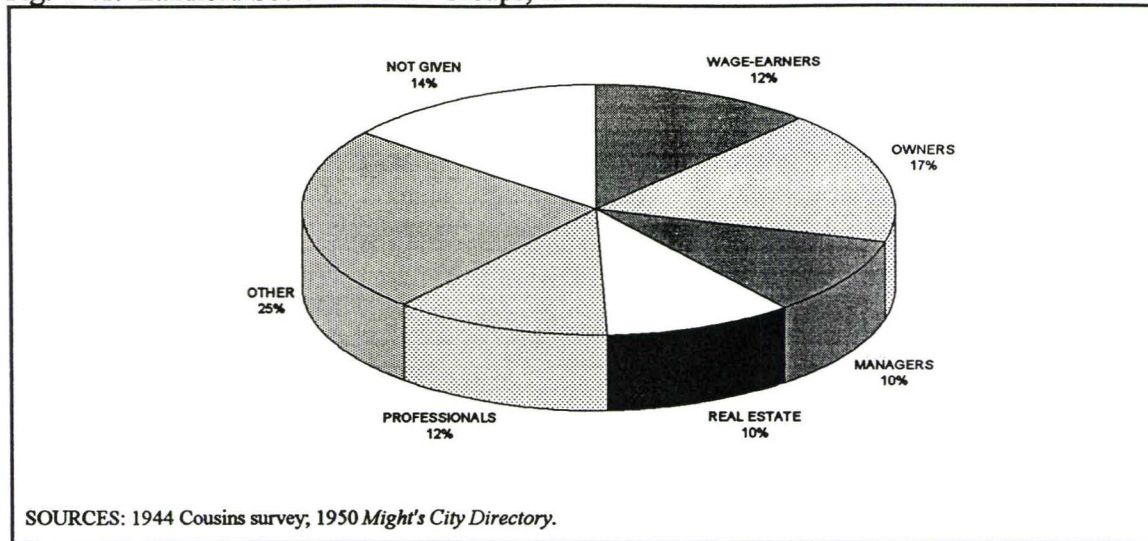
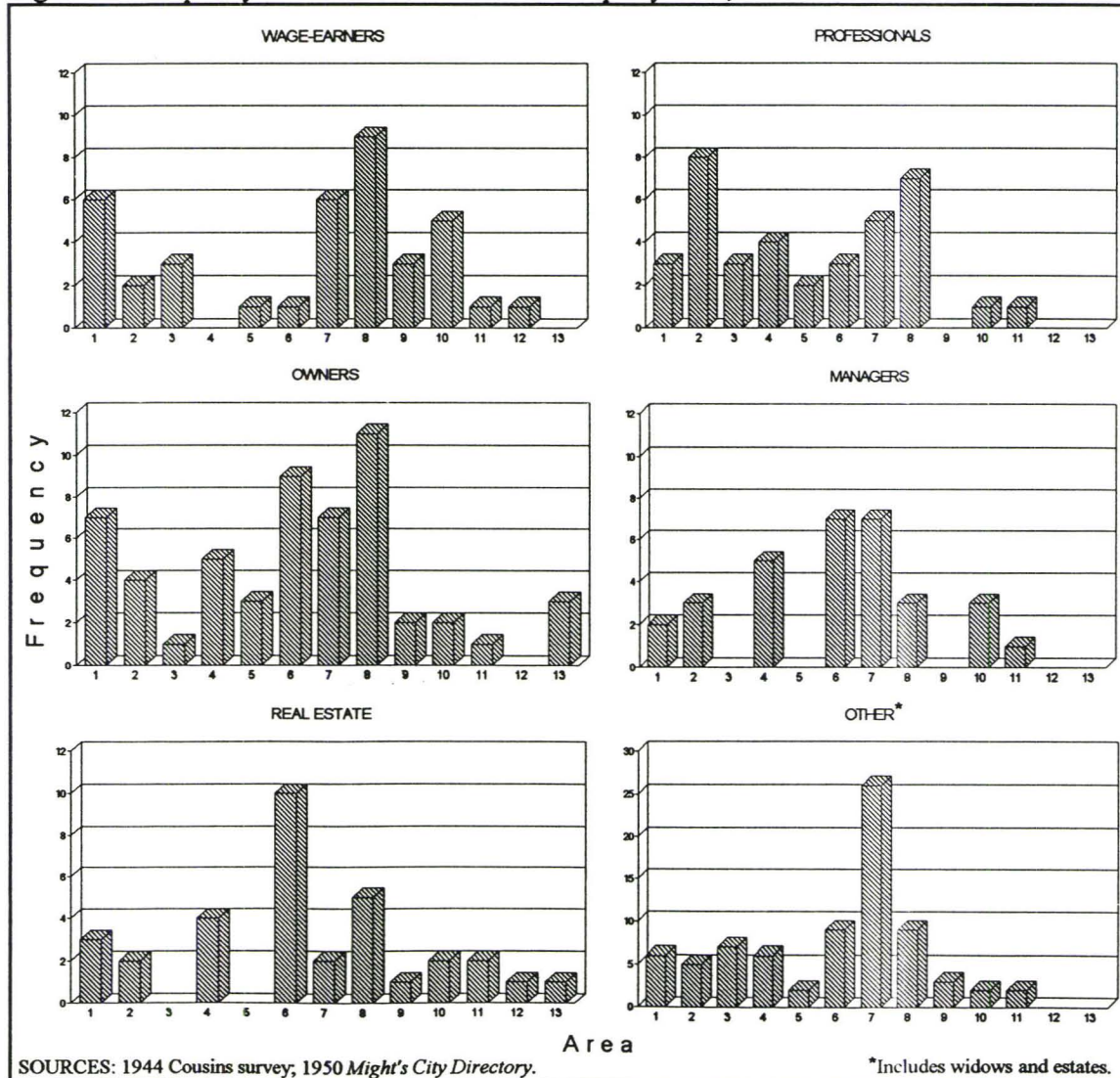


Fig. 4-42. Frequency Distribution of Landlord Groups by Area, 1950.



demand for this type of accommodation was declining by the Second World War. At that time, the majority of widows were managers of rental properties containing apartments and flats rather than operators of rooming or boarding houses.

The influence of the waterfront economy on housing demand and delineation of urban social structure were clearly evident in the spatial distribution of rental properties and landlord households on the Halifax peninsula. Figures 4-41 and 4-42 contrast the distribution pattern of rental properties with the residential address of rental property owners.³² In general, landlords tended to reside in the western suburbs while their rental properties were located downtown. The concentration of landlords in only five of thirteen platoon areas highlights the unequal distribution of control over housing resources within the community, but it does not appear to have been solely based on economic class. The occupational profile of landlords suggests that lower and middle income households were just as active in the rental market as the Halifax elite.

The classification of landlords into socio-economic groups reveals that, for many, ownership of rental properties was ancillary to their primary occupation. Small business owners, wage-earners, professionals and managers not directly connected with the real estate sector together comprised over half the total number of Halifax landlords in 1944 [Fig. 4-43]. Among those whose livelihood relied on the real estate sector, the number of widows outnumbered real estate professionals. While residency in the south end was more common than in the north, the strongest landlord representation occurred in platoon

³²The information on landlords was derived from Cousins survey data based on persons who could be identified in the 1950 *Halifax and Dartmouth City Directory*.

Fig. 4-43. Frequency Distribution of Rental Properties by Area, 1944 and 1950.

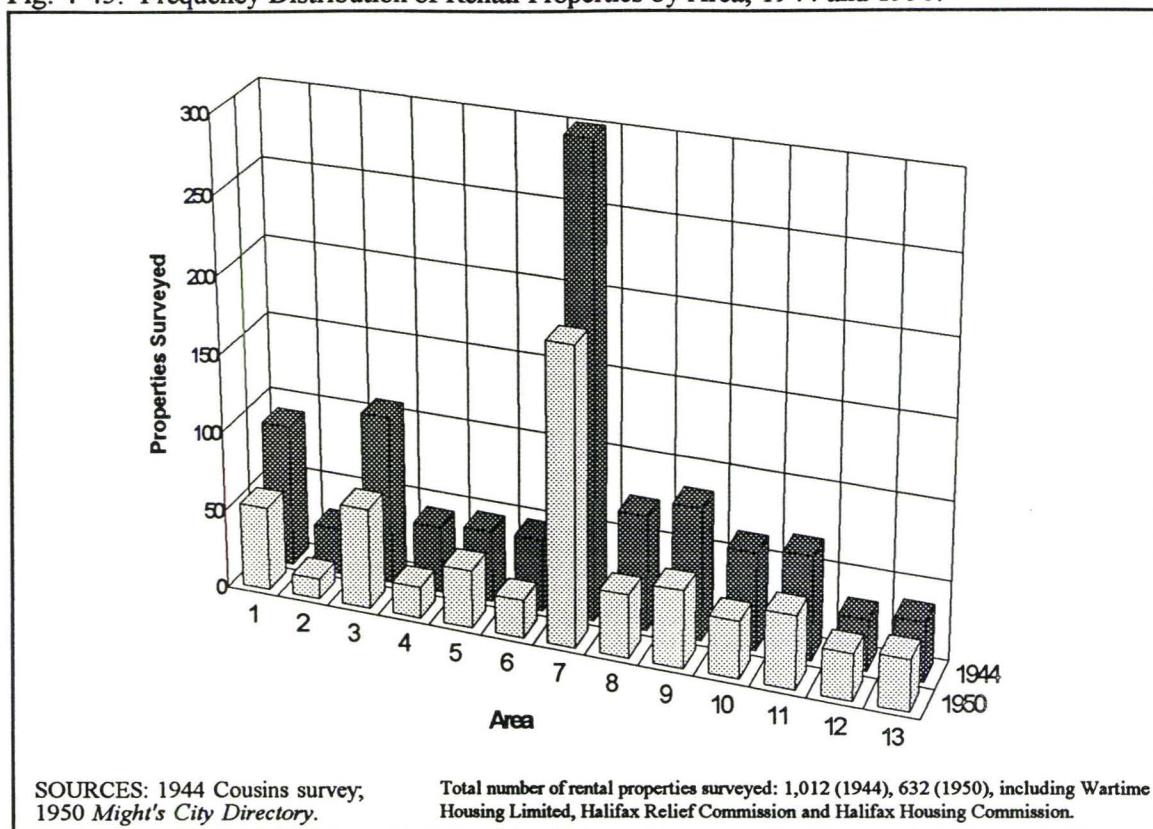
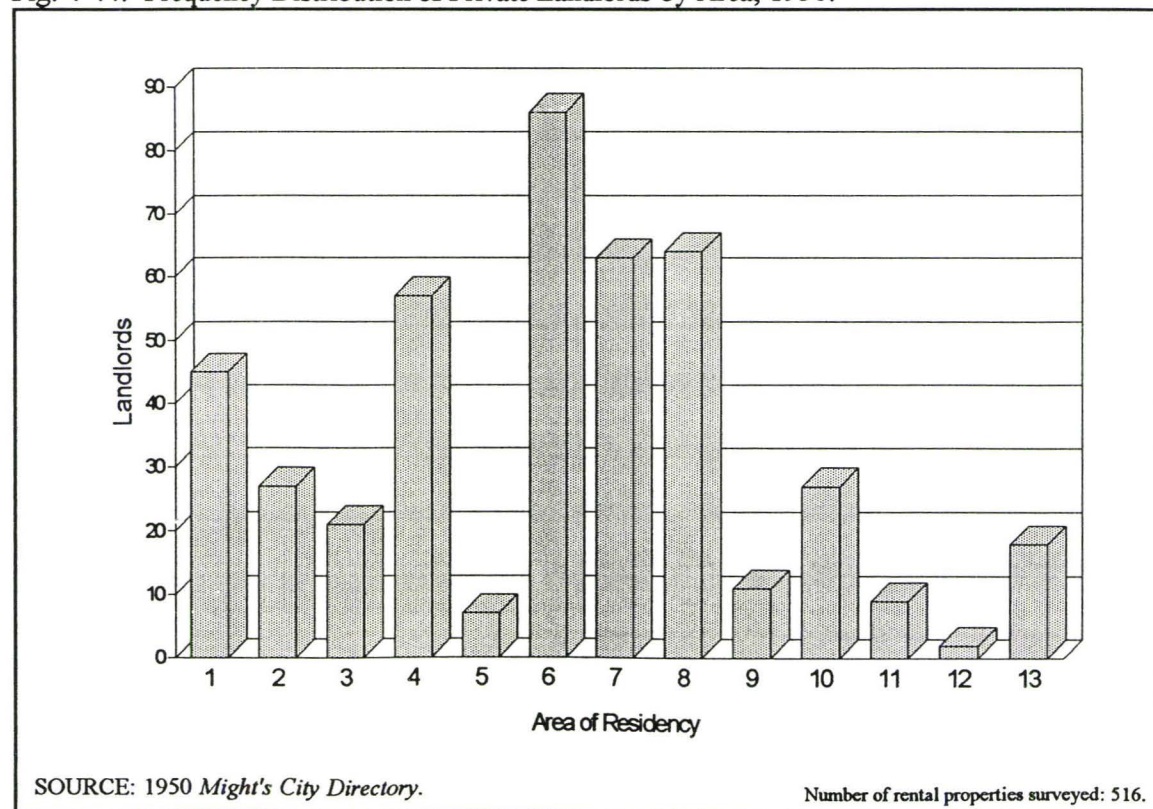


Fig. 4-44. Frequency Distribution of Private Landlords by Area, 1950.



areas Six, Seven and Eight, two of which were north end neighbourhoods. This anomaly further illustrated the predominance of small business owners and widows who resided in high rental areas as opposed to absentee landlords [Fig. 4-44].

These findings suggest that the local rental housing market served a variety of purposes. For some, it was an outlet for discretionary investment capital. Halifax certainly had its share of slum landlords. Widows and retail business owners, on the other hand, were more dependent on rental properties as a vital source of income and a means of weathering lean economic times. For still others, including the largest corporate landholder on the peninsula, ownership of rental housing was a byproduct of the sluggish interwar economy, which left many real estate foreclosures and bankruptcies in its wake. The Eastern Trust Company specialized in mortgage lending, not managing rental properties, yet in the Cousins survey some 35 tenants reported their landlord to be Eastern Trust. By 1949, company assets under administration topped \$4.2 million with branch offices in Montréal, Saint John, Moncton, Charlottetown, St. John's, Toronto, and other localities in Nova Scotia.³³ Company president F.B. McCurdy also owned the Halifax *Chronicle*, which steadily lost ground to its arch-rival, the *Herald*, throughout the wartime period.³⁴ He once occupied the Gorsebrook estate prior to its being turned into a golf club, though by the Second World War he had moved to "Fernwood," an opulent mansion on the Northwest Arm [See Appendix A, Figs. A-25, A-26]. To his political enemies, McCurdy was a man without principle, having committed the unpardonable sin of

³³MG 20 Vol. 567, Hx Ladies' Musical Club, File #1: Programme, 45th Anniversary, Feb. 15th, 1949: Advertisement for Eastern Trust Co., undated.

³⁴March, pp. 332, Appendix VI, 398.

forsaking party allegiance during the maritime rights agitation of the 1920s.³⁵ Sir Robert Borden described McCurdy as someone “whose mental equipment, beyond a keen aptitude for money-making, is of the scantiest, whose service to public life would hardly be called respectable and whose chief characteristic is vindictive spite.”³⁶ The slings and arrows of political enemies aside, McCurdy was the quintessential scion of the old south end Halifax financial elite. He was a banker, not an entrepreneur. Halifax was too small an arena to contain his interests, which “ranged as far afield as Mexico and the West Indies.”³⁷ He belonged to more clubs in Montréal, Ottawa and London, England than in his own home town. By the time of the Second World War, the richest man in Halifax – McCurdy’s estate was valued at \$6 million in 1952³⁸ – had largely retired from active life.³⁹

For major and minor players alike in the Halifax housing market, the Second World War was a period of retrenchment rather than redevelopment. But the failure to meet increased demand through new construction was by no means unique to Halifax. Housing congestion in Edmonton, Alberta was so severe by mid-1943, for example, that American authorities ordered the dependents of U.S. servicemen to leave the city. The Edmonton Chamber of Commerce “succeeded in having the order cancelled by arguing that such a withdrawal would damage the city’s economy.”⁴⁰ Halifax landlords and landladies were

³⁵March, pp. 184-185, 225.

³⁶Ibid., p. 245.

³⁷Ralph Bell, “Hon. F.B. McCurdy, P.C.,” *Atlantic Advocate* 48 No. 6, (February 1958), p. 63.

³⁸March, note 15, p. 198.

³⁹*Mail-Star*, 29 August 1952, p. 6.

⁴⁰Donald G. Wetherell and Irene R.A. Kmet, *Homes in Alberta: Building, Trends, and Design 1870-1967* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1991), p. 179.

roundly criticized for charging exorbitant rents, but in reality housing costs rose in every urban centre that attracted workers in search of war work from smaller communities. Charges of profiteering were also levelled against landlords in other Canadian communities.⁴¹ An article in *Maclean's* magazine in June 1943 reported that "Halifax and Ottawa have had more publicity than other centres" with regard to overcrowding, but conditions were equally serious in cities like Sydney, Moncton, Kingston, Brockville, St. Catharines, Hamilton, Windsor, Brandon, Edmonton, Prince Rupert, Trail, Vancouver, and Victoria.⁴² Moreover, according to the 1945 Census of Newfoundland, overcrowding in St. John's far exceeded that of any major Canadian city.⁴³ Nevertheless, housing conditions in the blighted districts of Halifax were undoubtedly as bad as those found anywhere in Canada. The degree of wartime congestion is graphically portrayed by comparing the person-per-room ratio in 1944 with corresponding areas of the city in 1951 [Fig. 4-45].

Halifax was less able to accommodate a large influx of workers than cities with a stronger industrial and manufacturing base, since the presence of the latter tended to stimulate housing construction. Under normal conditions, a revived local economy would soon have spilled over into the building trades, and the housing stock would have expanded to meet the increased demand. This did not happen in Halifax because military priorities affected the availability of labour and materials for residential construction, and the majority of wartime transients were not industrial workers, therefore the government

⁴¹Wetherell and Kmet, p. 180.

⁴²Dempsey, p. 17.

⁴³Data reported in the 1951 Dominion census.

made scant provisions for housing them. Of equal significance, however, was the history of residential development in the city, which had been centred on low density subdivisions in the western half of the peninsula since about 1900. Meanwhile, the older neighbourhoods along the waterfront – with the notable exception of the Richmond Heights district (a.k.a. the “Hydrostone”) rebuilt after the 1917 Explosion – were characterized by falling property values and an absence of redevelopment.

The failure to expand the housing stock during the war therefore exacerbated an already chronic shortage of affordable, good quality accommodation caused by several years of economic stagnation. Before the war, high unemployment and comparatively low incomes for many wage-earners meant that many potential renters and homeowners could not afford to move out on their own. For instance, many units in Richmond Heights, built by the Halifax Relief Commission to replace working class dwellings obliterated in the Explosion, remained vacant for months on end because the rents were so high.⁴⁴ In her detailed study of the area in the 1920s, Suzanne Morton notes that “only the well-paid and households that had a number of wage earners could afford the Richmond Heights rents which were slightly higher than other working-class Halifax neighbourhoods.”⁴⁵ Low income wage-earners – young adults, seasonal workers in primary resource industries, and domestic servants – survived the depression by staying at home longer, working short-term positions while living in rooming houses, taking cheaper accommodation outside the city and commuting, and returning to smaller communities – where the cost of living was

⁴⁴McVittie, p. 1.

⁴⁵Suzanne Morton, “Men and Women in a Halifax Working-Class Neighbourhood in the 1920s,” unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dalhousie University, 1990, p. 17.

Fig. 4-45. Crowded Households in Halifax by Area (1944) and Census Tract (1951).*

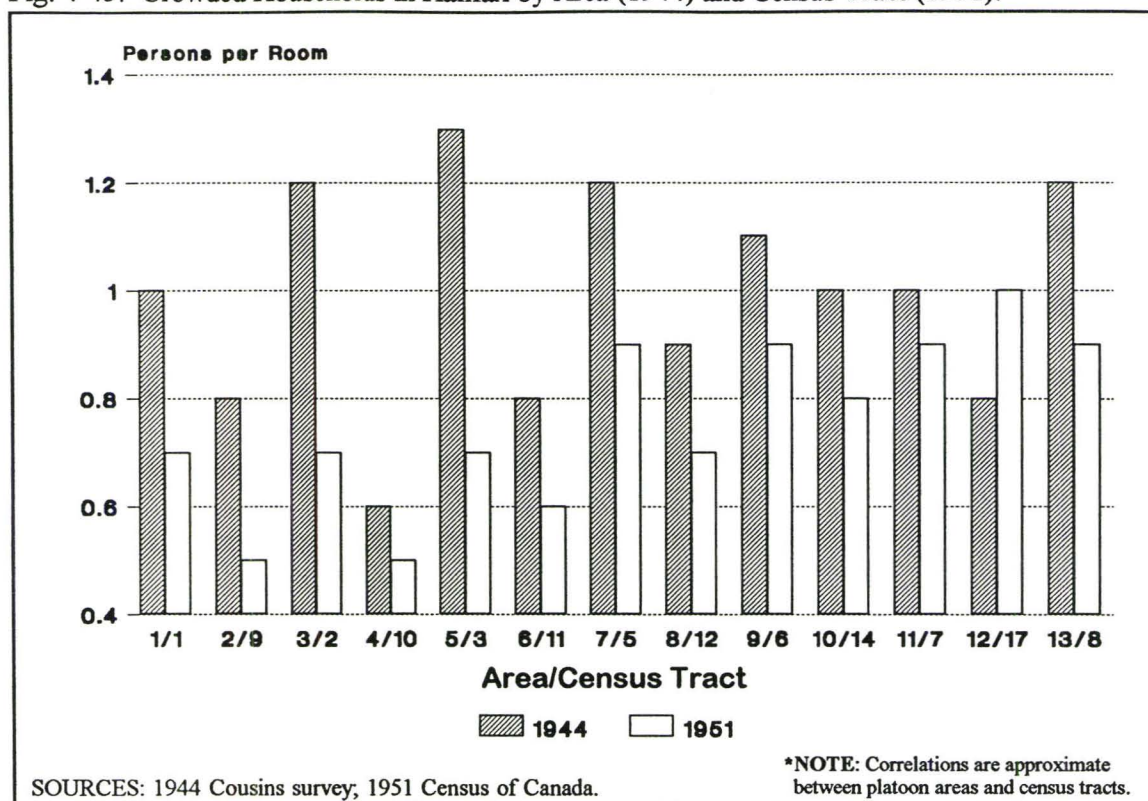
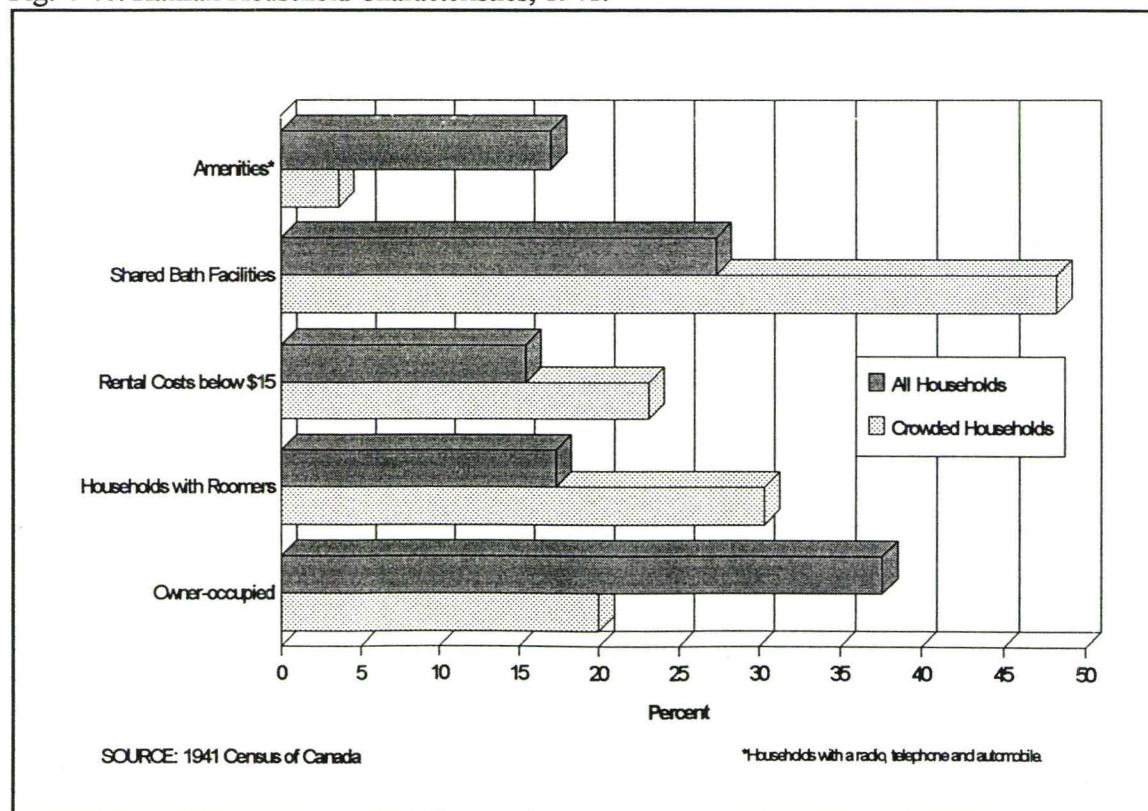


Fig. 4-46. Halifax Household Characteristics, 1941.



lower – during the off-season and between jobs. This had a negative impact on demand for affordable housing in the interwar period, when new residential construction in Halifax was confined to the middle class neighbourhoods west of Windsor Street and north of Quinpool Road.⁴⁶ The general conclusion reached by Wetherell and Kmet with regard to Alberta, “that housing conditions for the urban poor were substandard by 1929 and became worse during the Depression,” was no less applicable to Halifax.⁴⁷

In older sections of the city, conversions of large Victorian homes into apartments, and upgrading of coal-fired furnaces to oil, were far more common improvements than outright replacement of dwellings. The advent of modern, multi-unit apartment buildings in Halifax was largely a postwar phenomenon. Part of the explanation lies with the seasonal, transient nature of the labour force. Waterfront workers who came to Halifax during the busy winter period but sought employment elsewhere in the summer were more likely to seek out temporary accommodation in a rooming house than look for an apartment. On the other hand, those with families who did require an apartment were more likely to settle for cramped or dilapidated quarters if the landlord would agree to occupancy on a month to month basis. Perhaps it was easier psychologically to accept living in squalid conditions in the short term. With a tenant base made up of low-wage, seasonal workers rather than permanent residents, the prudent Halifax real estate developer was unlikely to invest in new construction where housing deterioration was so advanced that it was having a negative effect on property values. Neither was it

⁴⁶Millward, *Geography of Housing*, pp. 11-12.

⁴⁷Wetherell and Kmet, p. 176.

economically sound to build housing in areas where the commercial land use was expanding. There were no zoning by-laws in place to help protect the integrity of residential districts in the downtown core and older suburbs. For all these reasons, the quality and quantity of housing – but especially the right *type* of housing – to accommodate the wartime influx into Halifax was completely inadequate. The legacy of interwar economic stagnation and wartime congestion both contributed to a continuation of the housing emergency well into the 1950s.

It is interesting to speculate to what degree housing conditions may have contributed to the breakdown of civil order which occurred in Halifax when the war ended. The Cousins survey showed that variation in housing quality across the peninsula was so extreme that social tensions were bound to exist between housing “haves” and “have-nots.” Those who lived in overcrowded conditions were much less likely to possess basic amenities such as a radio, telephone and automobile [See Fig. 4-46]. Among such households, nearly half lacked adequate sanitary facilities, and only one in five owned their own home (as opposed to two in five for the population as a whole). Congested households paid lower average rental costs, but, paradoxically, they were also much more likely to be taking in roomers. Most, no doubt, did so out of economic necessity. Resentment would have been particularly acute among those who could afford decent housing but could not get it, or those who were accustomed to residing in better quality accommodation. No one would argue that everyone who came to Halifax during the Second World War was forced to live in substandard housing, yet it is difficult to deny that the effects of the fierce wartime demand for rental accommodation prevented many

from acquiring the type of housing they felt they deserved. Perhaps it was not entirely coincidental that retail business owners, who made up such a large percentage of Halifax landlords, were specifically targeted by looters and vandals on V-E Day.

In summary, the Cousins survey and census data revealed a highly diversified housing stock in which type, size, and quality of dwelling produced wide variations in housing costs. Overcrowding was an ongoing problem in Halifax throughout the war, but its characteristics changed as the early surge of small households began to decline, and more families took in roomers or, in some cases, shared premises with other families. Despite allegations of rent-gouging by unscrupulous landlords, the evidence shows that market forces were tempered somewhat by the physical state of the housing stock, and that rental costs in Halifax were roughly comparable to cities elsewhere in Canada. There were far more complaints about the quality of housing in Halifax than the cost. This suggested that inadequate supply rather than high prices was at the root of the wartime housing problem. Thus tenants who could afford to move to more expensive lodgings were prevented from doing so. On the other hand, the severe congestion in neighbourhoods adjacent to the waterfront was probably exacerbated by prevailing rents, which were generally much lower there than in other areas.

The federal government and municipal authorities were criticized for not doing more to alleviate the housing shortage, but there was no public consensus during the war on an appropriate course of action. Fears of a postwar economic downturn were very real, and too much residential construction might have serious repercussions on the subsequent real estate market. As the example of Edmonton showed, the economic benefits to the

business community tended to outweigh the inconveniences caused by severe housing congestion. Temporary housing seemed to be the best solution, but Wartime Housing Limited built only single-detached bungalows or dormitory-style “staff houses.” Even if access to WHL housing had been unrestricted, neither type of building was ideally suited to meet the demand created by wartime in-migration. Halifax simply did not have the large numbers of modest, affordable apartments in relatively modern buildings that the majority of transients wanted. Adaptation of the existing housing stock was the only available option, resulting in moderate to severe overcrowding in older neighbourhoods where the transient population was highest.

The dependence of many property owners in Halifax on rental income was another powerful inducement to maintain the status quo. Low demand and a stagnant economy in the 1930s discouraged many landlords from undertaking necessary repairs and improvements on their rental properties. Furthermore, the construction of modern apartment buildings in Halifax did not begin in earnest until after the Second World War, since the conversion of Victorian-era homes into apartments required less capital investment. Halifax had had a long history of war booms, high housing costs and accommodating transients or seasonal workers, all of which influenced the community’s response to the influx of 1940-41.

The Cousins survey offered a uniquely detailed benchmark of the complex relationship between social structure and urban landscape. When combined with census data from 1941 and 1951, the dynamics of social change and urban development in Halifax during the war years emerges. Above all, it shows that the war caused no great upheaval

in the sharply defined class divisions that shaped the historical development of the city.

The two most disruptive events in terms of altering the urban landscape of Halifax – the harbour explosion and the construction of the Ocean Terminals – occurred in the 1910s, not the 1940s. Their impact would be more far-reaching than changes wrought by the Second World War. In 1945, the neighbourhoods of Halifax remained as distinctive and isolated from each other as they had been a hundred years before. It would take much more than a world war to change that.

CHAPTER FIVE

WATERFRONT LABOUR

The effect of the war on the supply and demand of labour was most keenly felt in the area of shiploading operations on the Halifax waterfront. This chapter examines the complex negotiations which took place between government, management and labour as all parties sought to resolve the issues affecting the efficiency of shiploading operations. It also describes working conditions and social characteristics of perhaps the most misunderstood labour force in Halifax – merchant seamen. The common theme binding these two disparate groups together parallels the central argument of this study: that far from being a unifying force bringing direction and purpose to an erstwhile moribund waterfront economy, the war created new difficulties which merely compounded or held in abeyance the resolution of old problems. The chapter ends with a brief overview of shipyard workers, who, despite being the chief beneficiaries of the war economy and the federal wartime home-building programme in Halifax, were destined for bitter disappointment even before the war ended.

The most salient feature of the wartime economy in Halifax was clearly its overriding dedication to shipping. Naval and air force operations focused on the protection of convoys. All available harbour facilities were pressed into service for ship repair, maintenance, installation of various anti-submarine devices, and training of personnel. The main naval shore establishments, H.M.C.S. "Stadacona" and the Dockyard, combined with the largest civilian employer in the city, Halifax Shipyards

Limited, dominated the local economy. The changeover to wartime status produced a dramatic transformation on the Halifax waterfront. In July 1939, the major labour organization in the city – the Halifax Trades and Labor Council – reported that employment activity was uniformly “dull” in many local trades, including bricklayers, carpenters, merchant seamen, longshoremen, steamship checkers, express clerks, teamsters, coal handlers and labourers. The outlook for machinists, plumbers, boilermakers, and marine engineers was only “fair.” Telephone workers were the lone occupation listed as “good.”¹ Waterfront employment prospects were poor right up to the outbreak of war, and the tremendous volume of wartime traffic was completely unexpected. Fortunately, the natural assets of the harbour and the interwar upgrading of new piers and railway lines compensated somewhat for the shortage of experienced labour, at least in the early months of the war.

As we have seen in Chapter Two, the harbour proper boasted seven large piers and wharves, with an aggregate berthing frontage exceeding three miles. Thirteen transit sheds accommodated 1.1 million square feet of floor area; a refrigerated facility adjoining the Ocean Terminals added 1,655,350 cubic feet of storage, and a nearby grain elevator held a maximum 2.2 million bushels.² These facilities compared favourably with those at Saint John, but Halifax was a few hundred miles nearer the shipping lanes, and Bedford Basin provided a well-protected holding area for ships cueing for loading or waiting for a convoy to be assembled. Despite these advantages, serious deficiencies in shiploading

¹PANS MG 3 Vol. 550 (1) Halifax Trades and Labor Council minutes 1930-40, p. 555.

²John de N. Kennedy, *History of the Department of Munitions and Supply: Canada in the Second World War* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1950), p. 289.

operations – nearly all of them labour-related – arose at Halifax, and it was the British who first sounded the alarm, not local or federal authorities.

The orchestration of Allied ship movements during the war was an ever-changing process subject to a great deal of fine-tuning. Gradually, the federal government was drawn into assuming the role of arbiter between agencies such as the British Ministry of War Transport, overseer of 85 per cent of merchant ship traffic in and out of Halifax, and the United States War Shipping Administration, whose representatives arrived in 1942. The government also had to contend with organized dock labour, who grudgingly accepted the growing intrusiveness of state controls over the workplace. In an inspired move all too rare in this period of centralized authority, someone familiar with local conditions was chosen to resolve misunderstandings and promote expeditious use of harbour resources. Vincent McDonald, Dean of Law at Dalhousie University, carried out his duties with such skill that he was soon summoned to Ottawa, but the organization he left behind functioned smoothly for the rest of the war. The speed with which shiploading operations in Halifax were overhauled demonstrated how quickly action could be taken when the need arose. It spoke to the overriding strategic importance of the convoy system to the Allied war effort.

Workers on the Halifax waterfront kept close watch over their own self-interest while doing their best to satisfy new masters. Before 1939, the hiring of dock labour was controlled by the shipping and stevedoring companies. The largest firms on the Halifax waterfront when the war began were Canadian National Steamships, Cunard White Star Ltd., Pickford & Black Ltd., Furness Withy & Co. Ltd., A.G. Jones & Company, T.A.S.

DeWolf & Sons, Ltd., I.H. Mathers & Son, Scotia Stevedoring Co. Ltd., F.K. Warren and Newfoundland-Canada Steamships Ltd.³ The larger private firms like Pickford & Black and Furness Withy were located mainly along the central waterfront area bounded by the Deep Water Terminals on the north and the Dartmouth Ferry slip on the south. Men were hired by these companies at the dock gates every morning, and let go when the job was finished. Dockworkers usually did not know from one day to the next whether they would be employed, and few could make a living wage strictly from stevedoring.

This uncertainty was compounded by the usage of Halifax's ice-free harbour as a winter alternative to Montréal, leaving the port facilities under-utilized and under-staffed at other times of the year. Thus farmers and fishermen were attracted to longshoring during the off-season, and waterfront work acquired the reputation for being a casual, secondary occupation. This had not always been the case – shiploading and unloading in Halifax in the late nineteenth century was characterized by “a higher proportion of general cargo, which provided longshoremen ...[with] lighter, more-individualized and diversified work throughout the year.”⁴ The cyclical nature of winter port trade after 1910 helped shape the socio-economic character of the community. In the age of sail, private philanthropy often subsidized the under-employed or unemployed during the winter months to keep surplus labourers from leaving Halifax.⁵ Wise merchants supported

³NA RG 66 Vol. 5 file Hi-5 part 1, Memorandum of Agreement dated 4 March 1941.

⁴Robert Babcock, “Saint John Longshoremen During the Rise of Canada's Winter Port, 1895-1922,” *Labour/Le Travail* 25 (Spring 1990), p. 23. See also Ian McKay, “Class Struggle and Merchant Capital: Craftsmen and Labourers on the Halifax Waterfront, 1850-1902,” in Bryan Palmer, ed., *The Character of Class Struggle* (Toronto, 1986), pp. 17-36.

⁵Judith Fingard, “The Winter's Tale: The Seasonal Contours of Pre-industrial Poverty in British North America, 1815-1860,” *Canadian Historical Association Historical Papers* (Ottawa, 1974), p. 78.

charitable work since it ensured that an adequate reserve of labour was available when the busy summer season returned. Such paternalistic practices had all but disappeared by the 1930s. The uncertainty of year-round employment in the interwar period lessened the demand for a standing pool of dock labour.

At the outbreak of war the only union representing dock workers in Halifax – Local 269 of the International Longshoremen's Association – comprised a small nucleus of permanent longshore labour who were assured of first crack at whatever work was available. The Halifax Longshoremen's Association [HLA] sanctioned this arrangement through a prewar collective agreement with the shipping companies. During the fall of 1940, the tempo of harbour traffic quickened to such an extent that delays in ship loading and unloading increased, and the scheduling of convoys was disrupted due to the inefficient management of dock labour under the peacetime system. In January 1941, the HLA (Local 269) agreed to admit about 200 "temporary" card-carrying union members – sufficient to handle the heavy winter traffic – provided that these temporary workers would have no right to union benefits, and that they would be discharged in April. An Order-in-Council (P.C. 744, 21 January 1941) to this effect was in force for only one month when it became apparent that round-the-clock operations were going to be necessary. Accordingly, another Order-in-Council (P.C. 1706, 10 March 1941) allowed for hiring as many temporary "card-men" as would be required to handle the extra shifts,

and appointed a Port Arbitrator, the aforementioned Vincent C. MacDonald, Dean of Dalhousie University Law School, to administer the terms of the Orders-in-Council.⁶

As if to underscore the growing difficulties at Halifax, Montréal was being lauded in the spring of 1941 as the most efficient port in the nation and its longshoremen “the best in the world.”⁷ General cargo handled by Montréal gangs averaged about 15 tons per hour, while it was reported that Halifax dock workers could only manage 8.5 tons. Even the Port Manager in Halifax admitted that his longshoremen were not providing “the amount, and particularly the quality, of work that is given by those in Montréal.” Blaming the union, he added: “the impression is widely held in Halifax that the...Department of Labour...is afraid of the Longshoremen’s Union and hesitates...to bring sufficient pressure to bear upon it.”⁸ But it was not just dockworkers who posed problems for shiploading administrators – of equally crucial importance was the maintenance of a ready supply of railway freight handlers, and here too, the provisions at Halifax were termed “entirely inadequate.”⁹

Even though the volume of harbour traffic in Halifax fell off that summer – repeating a seasonal cycle predating war conditions – shiploading operations continued to be hampered by frequent delays. The British Ministry of War Transport, which oversaw 85 per cent of the ship movements in and out of Halifax, anticipated a doubling of tonnage using the port in 1942-43, and expressed concern about whether Halifax could

⁶NA RG 35 series 7 Vol. 21 file 15 “Control of Loading Operations at the Port of Halifax” (n.d.), pp. 1-2.

⁷Montréal *Star*, 22 May 1941.

⁸NA RG 66 Vol. 5 file Hi-5 part 1, Hendry to National Harbours Board, 27 May 1941.

⁹de N. Kennedy, p. 291.

accommodate such an increase.¹⁰ The ministry controlled what cargoes would be handled and when the job would begin, how many hours or shifts each operation would require, and when the job would be completed.¹¹ This was necessary in order to coordinate and schedule the movement of ships in convoy. The British were well aware of the complexity of coordinating ship movements in congested harbours, having grappled with this problem for more than a year.¹² Moreover, during the First World War “unprecedented integration and regulation of seaborne transportation along the east coast” had been instigated by the British Admiralty, setting a precedent for external control over Canadian ports in times of international crisis.¹³

In January 1942 the Minister of Munitions & Supply, C.D. Howe, suggested that the labour shortage in Halifax be alleviated by sending in dock workers from Montréal. This prompted the Department of Labour to call upon the Port Arbitrator to investigate the situation in Halifax and make recommendations. MacDonald met with representatives from the various shipping companies, the longshoremen’s union, officials of the National Harbours Board, the Ministry of War Transport and the Department of Labour. His comprehensive report in February 1942 concluded that “much of the inefficiency of this port proceeds from the...defects of the present system of daily hiring of individual workers at the site of the work.”¹⁴ He recommended that a central hiring agency oversee the

¹⁰NA RG 35 series 7, Vol. 21 file 15, p. 2.

¹¹NA RG 66 Vol. 5 file Hi-5 part 1 “Report of Ship Loading Operations in the Port of Halifax” by Vincent C. MacDonald, K.C. [henceforth MacDonald report], 12 February 1942, p. 3.

¹²For a concise account of labour difficulties in British ports, see C.B.A. Behrens, *Merchant Shipping and the Demands of War* (H.M.S.O.: London, 1955), pp. 126-46.

¹³Babcock, pp. 15-46.

¹⁴MacDonald report, p. 15.

allocation of dock labour, and that workers be organized into team-oriented gangs with permanent gang bosses.

Like the port manager, MacDonald was critical of union dominance over allocation of shiploading manpower. A union member could, for example, replace a non-union longshoreman after the latter had worked a half-day. Unionized workers had the option of taking higher-paying evening or weekend jobs and not bother to report for regular daytime shifts. Others declined “after hours” work entirely. Even though such discretionary power was designed to protect union members when work was scarce, the MacDonald report noted that there was little incentive to increase productivity in a system where “no non-Union man can compete with the Union man.”¹⁵ Assembling gangs from a three-tiered hierarchy – union men, temporary cardmen, and non-union casual labourers – complicated the selection process and delayed job assignments. Union men tended to gravitate towards certain types of cargo, leaving less attractive jobs for casuals. On the other hand, nothing short of fatigue prevented union longshoremen from working double, triple or even quadruple shifts if they so wished, with resultant loss in efficiency. Another wasteful practice known as “have a look” affected all dock workers – men were expected to appear and remain on call without pay at a location where they might or might not be signed on.

In light of these handicaps, the Port Arbitrator dismissed C.D. Howe’s assertion that merely increasing the number of hands on the waterfront would eradicate any further

¹⁵MacDonald report, p. 8.

labour problems. Stevedoring operations, MacDonald wrote, “constitute a process carried out by the combined activities of railways, Port Officials, stevedoring companies, and longshoremen. This process is efficient only to the extent that each of these agencies acts efficiently in its own share of the process and all together cooperate with one another.” The loading of ships required meshing together an array of “agencies, methods and conditions,” all of which had to be taken into account before labour efficiency could be achieved.¹⁶ No general improvement of shiploading operations was possible, MacDonald argued, without examining the total work process. In this way, MacDonald deflected criticism by carefully balancing the interests of the various labour and management organizations involved against the urgent need for fundamental restructuring of port operations.

Reorganizing port operations was accomplished relatively quickly under wartime conditions because local politics and bureaucratic inertia – factors prevalent in peacetime – were less influential. The major obstacles to achieving increased efficiency in 1941 were more logistical in nature than political. A case in point were the wild fluctuations in cargo tonnages loaded at Halifax from month to month and even week to week. Even if the labour supply had been adequate to meet average workloads, shortages of manpower would have persisted during periods of peak activity. For example, the average for loaded cargo during 1941 was 220,000 tons per month, but the monthly totals ranged between 110,000 to 352,000 tons. For the 6-month winter season from November 1940 to April

¹⁶MacDonald report, p. 2.

1941, the monthly average was 268,000 tons; the median figure from May to October was about 162,000 tons. Broken down by the week, these fluctuations became even more pronounced. During one three-month period in 1941, the weekly low stood at 23,000 tons of cargo loaded while the high reached 86,000.¹⁷

Guaranteeing availability of manpower in the face of drastic variations in demand was complicated further by factors related to wartime harbour congestion. There was competition for berths from warships, coasters, lighters, tenders, and other types of vessels. Secrecy and short notice typified ship arrivals and departures, and periodic embarkation of troops placed additional burdens on rail and docking facilities. Interruptions due to security alerts, bad weather, in-harbour collisions, moving munitions ships through the crowded harbour, and rescuing vessels damaged by enemy action were routine. These daily occurrences impinged to varying degrees on the performance of shiploading, irrespective of the labour supply.

The unprecedented volume of port traffic in 1941 created a serious manpower shortage on the docks. By the end of the year, 2700 stevedores manned the derricks on the waterfront. One-third were unionists; 650 were temporary unionists (or “card-men”); and the rest were non-union casual labourers.¹⁸ The MacDonald report vacillated on the need for additional men, stating at one point that levels were adequate, but recommending later on that both permanent and temporary numbers be increased by 20 per cent.¹⁹ MacDonald favoured importation of experienced foremen, winchmen and hatchmen, but

¹⁷MacDonald report, p. 3.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 5, 10.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 10, 13.

reiterated again and again that regulation rather than expansion of the labour supply was the best solution to the shiploading problem.

The MacDonald report confirmed what had long been accepted by port administrators and what the war had merely accentuated: local control of shiploading operations was practically non-existent. The British Ministry of War Transport determined the flow of virtually all harbour traffic in and out of the port according to their strategic needs. Halifax shipping and stevedoring firms were thus incapable of planning effective hiring strategies or anticipating when and where their services would be required. Far from expressing resentment towards this absentee direction, MacDonald termed British control a “happy circumstance,” probably because the Ministry had the power to offset seasonal and periodic fluctuations in “work-demand” by diverting ships to and from Halifax.²⁰

Thus the possibility existed, at least theoretically, that the port would receive only the volume of traffic it was equipped to handle at any given time. Unfortunately, the tremendous complexities of the convoy system, where ship movements in one port could have a ripple effect on similar activities thousands of miles away, militated against such efficient usage. Some 20,000 vessels in scheduled convoys sailed in and out of Halifax during the war, but this number excludes the many merchantmen forced into port by mechanical breakdowns, inclement weather, or enemy action.²¹ These independent ship movements were just as common as those grouped into convoys, but they were much

²⁰MacDonald report, p. 10.

²¹de N. Kennedy, p. 290.

more difficult to predict and track. Single vessels sometimes arrived from or departed for convoys already at sea, and whole convoys could fall suddenly into disarray – and many head straight for Halifax – if they were unlucky enough to encounter U-boats or heavy North Atlantic weather.

The federal government responded to the MacDonald report with sweeping changes in the organization of shiploading. Following consultation with the shipping companies and the Halifax Longshoremen's Association, the Minister of Labour submitted a plan in April 1942 for the establishment of a Central Dispatching Agency – soon to be known as the "Manning Pool" – which would "decasualize" dock labour in much the same way as had already been done for merchant seamen.²² A site was selected on Hollis Street, north of Bishop. Built by Wartime Housing Limited, the Manning Pool opened on March 1, 1943. Under its aegis, longshoremen could no longer apply for work individually and on a job-by-job basis. Instead, they joined a permanent gang and the gang boss received advance notice of whether his men were required on a certain day. A worker risked losing his dock permit if he did not report when called by his gang boss. Gangs were apportioned work on a rotation system, and also alternated between day and night shifts. The new hiring system did not undermine the authority of the union; indeed, half the manning pool staff were nominees of the HLA and every worker registered was either a permanent or temporary union member. But the government reorganization plan appointed Vincent MacDonald as controller of loading operations, and he was given the authority to

²²Order-in-Council P.C. 3511 (30 April 1942) put the reorganization plan into effect; Order-in-Council P.C. 3512 of the same date created the position of Controller of Loading Operations. NA RG 35 series 7 Vol. 21 file 15 "Loading Operations," p. 3.

coordinate all aspects of shiploading at the port. The controller directed when, where and in what number longshoremen were needed – he decided when night and holiday shifts were necessary, and could order the Longshoremen's Association to take in additional numbers of temporary cardmen. The controller could overrule the terms (excepting wage rates) of the union contract with the shipping and stevedoring firms, although an amendment later revoked this power.²³

The new hiring system streamlined the process of allocating manpower, but it did not eliminate labour shortages during peak periods, particularly when larger numbers of ships were preparing to sail in convoy. Furthermore, when convoys began originating from American Atlantic ports in 1942, there was additional pressure on dock gangs to complete shiploadings quickly. Under the expanded system, ships from Halifax joined up with larger convoys outbound from New York as they sailed by Nova Scotia. Thus any delay in scheduled departure times became even more problematic.

Through the winter of 1942-43, the difficulty in finding sufficient numbers of workers persisted. One major impediment was that, unlike most manufacturing or clerical occupations, longshoring positions held little appeal for most women, due to the physical requirements of the job and the predominantly male waterfront culture. Of greater import was the tendency for the armed forces and other higher-paying jobs in war industry to siphon off eligible workers. In the spring as well, the annual return to seasonal occupations like farming and fishing depleted the ranks of dock labour. The appalling

²³Order-in-Council P.C. 4270 (21 May 1942) stipulated that the terms of any existing contract would remain in force unless they conflicted with P.C. 3511. See *ibid.*, p. 4.

housing congestion in areas near the docks and the overburdened transportation system both – within Halifax and between the city and its outlying areas – also discouraged eligible workers from seeking work on the docks.

In June 1943, the Department of Labour called for even stricter controls on the waterfront labour supply. New National Selective Service (NSS) regulations froze longshoremen in their present jobs, took steps to bring longshore labour back from other occupations, and to direct conscientious objectors and anyone deemed unfit for military service to employment as longshoremen. In an unusual step, the Stabilization of Longshore Labour (Halifax) Order-in-Council (P.C. 5161, 25 June 1943) decreed a guaranteed weekly wage for registered longshoremen so that an adequate labour force would be standing by at all times. Stevedoring was given the highest priority rating by the NSS, and a Longshoremen's Reserve Pool was created to supplement the operations of the Manning Pool during peak periods. Reserve Pool members were usually required to report to the dispatching agency on a daily basis, but during slack periods they could be redirected by an NSS officer to any other type of work in the city, or to stevedoring at any other port in the Maritime Provinces.²⁴

These measures were passed on 1 August 1943, but the Reserve Pool and Guaranteed Weekly Wage did not come into effect until September. They were inspired by a two-year-old British model, the Essential Work (Dock Labour) Order. Under this scheme, the National Dock Labour Corporation (NDLC) comprising three employer and

²⁴"Loading Operations," pp. 6-7.

three worker representatives, and chaired by Ernest Bevin, the Minister of Labour, used funds contributed by employers and the government to pay dock workers 5 shillings "attendance money" each half day they did not work. NDLC workers also formed a reserve pool and were subject to transfer to other ports or other types of work. More than twenty British ports managed their dock labour in this way. Originally, agreements negotiated by Regional Port Directors at Merseyside and Clydeside led the way in compulsory employment in 1940, but were not extended to other British ports until March 1941, when the Ministry of Labour, the shipping companies and the Transport and General Workers' Union agreed to give longshoremen a guaranteed minimum weekly wage.²⁵ Similar regulations prevailed with regard to merchant seamen.²⁶

The purpose of the Canadian version of a guaranteed weekly wage for longshoremen was threefold: first, it "would stabilize the labour supply," second, "provide a means of effective Government control not otherwise possible," and finally, aid in "bringing about economic contentment among the men."²⁷ The guidelines for a minimum wage – set initially at \$45 per week – were based on a 48 hour week plus a war bonus and cost of living bonus. To offset the cost to the government of subsidizing the wages of Halifax longshoremen, the Minister of Labour had the option of imposing an extra tax on shipping companies. It is not known whether this was done, but in any event the largesse of the Department of Labour did not last long. Less than eight months after it was

²⁵"Loading Operations," p. 6; NA RG 66 Vol. 5 file Hi-5 part 1 "Regularization of Dock Labour in Britain" (n.d), 2pp. See also Angus Calder, *The People's War*, (New York, 1969), p. 272.

²⁶Behrens, pp. 170-71.

²⁷"Loading Operations," p. 7.

introduced, the guaranteed wage was cut back to \$30.40, and the system was modified so that each time a worker reported for a shift and was not dispatched, a credit was applied towards the weekly total.²⁸ Until this revision, workers had been eligible for three hours' pay each time they were not assigned a shift.

Government control of waterfront labour reached its apogee in March 1944 with the formation of the Halifax Port Company. Numbering 350 soldiers and administered by the Department of National Defence, the Port Company provided a standing labour supply to handle shiploading emergencies. Some soldier-workers were former longshoremen, and others were trained for the job. They were employed in a wide variety of tasks besides shiploading, including freight handling, truck driving, and clerical duties. Most of their work, however, entailed shiploading at night – an indication, perhaps, of the continued resistance to overnight work by regular longshoremen – and discharging troopships and transports. Billeted in a wing of the Reserve Labour Pool, the Port Company “helped materially to ease the longshore labour situation” in Halifax, and on occasion serviced smaller outports when there was a labour shortage elsewhere in Nova Scotia. It was disbanded in November 1945.²⁹

Security was a major consideration for government and military authorities on the waterfront, and regulations requiring that permits be issued to dock workers came into effect in July 1942.³⁰ Throughout the war, rumours and periodic alerts heightened fears of

²⁸ “Loading Operations,” p. 8; P.C. 3370, 8 May 1944; P.C. 6300, 11 August 1944. The credit amounted to \$2.52 for a day shift and \$5.04 at night. Reserve Pool members received a \$1.68 credit.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 9-10.

³⁰P.C. 6004, 13 July 1942. “Control of Loading Operations,” p. 9a.

sabotage on the docks, however cargoes were more susceptible to the depredations of light-fingered longshoremen. Rampant pilfering – particularly of liquor shipments – was an ongoing problem.³¹ H.B. Jefferson was informed in March 1941 that “great quantities of goods are being stolen...Apparently some of the stevedores carry off anything that is not nailed down...Liquor in transit appears to be the most sought after commodity.” The port manager later told Jefferson that it was “inadvisable to pursue the stevedores too far as they were well organized and any official seriously interfering with their operations would find his tires continuously flat and be subjected to other reprisals.”³² Easy to conceal and difficult to trace, liquor was much in demand and fetched a high black market price. Huge quantities flowed across the Halifax docks in both directions – outgoing to troops overseas and, as a valuable source of foreign exchange, imported from Britain. At one point in June 1943, “a large force” of Royal Canadian Mounted Police was despatched to the docks “to guard liquor being unloaded.”³³ In March 1944, the *Daily Star* carried reports of widespread thefts by stevedores on the waterfront.³⁴

Notwithstanding the aforementioned problems, shiploading operations at Halifax functioned reasonably well, considering the complexity of expeditious berthing, loading and unloading of vessels, whether or not they were destined for convoys. Longshoring was only one component of this multifaceted process. No less important in defining labour conditions on the Halifax waterfront was the shipbuilding and repair industry,

³¹Private communication to the author by a former CNR police constable, now deceased. See also *Daily Star*, 11 March 1944.

³²PANS MG 1 Vol. 489a, H.B. Jefferson papers, 8 March 1941, 4 May 1941.

³³*Ibid.*, Vol. 484, Police and Court Rulings, 29 June 1943.

³⁴PANS MG 1 Vol. 484, H.B. Jefferson papers, Police & Court Rulings, 11 March 1944.

which was perhaps the most important function of the port next to convoy organization. As the war progressed, more vessels sought layovers and repair time at Halifax after being turned away from British and American bases.³⁵ Enemy action produced a steady stream of damaged vessels limping back to Halifax for repairs, but by far the mariner's worst foe was the notorious North Atlantic. Of the 150-odd vessels lost through various mishaps in Canadian waters during the Second World War, only one in five was due to enemy action.³⁶ The winters of 1941 and 1943 were two of the most severe on record, while warm weather convoys still had to contend with the ubiquitous fog. Human and mechanical endurance were tested to their utmost limits. Halifax saw many ships patched together in the shipyards, while survivors recuperated in area hospitals and rest homes.

In addition to emergency repairs, the installation of defensive equipment and armament was an urgent task made more difficult by ongoing shortages of labour and delays in acquiring the necessary equipment. Deperming and degaussing procedures, installation of anti-torpedo nets, anti-acoustic torpedo decoys (CAT), paravane gear and radar, were just a few of the tasks so affected. Navy vessels were no less preoccupied with repairs and alterations; the first official naval historian noted that "the refit and repair of warships continued to be the major problem faced by east-coast bases until the end of

³⁵Gilbert N. Tucker, *The Naval Service of Canada, Vol. II: Activities on Shore during the Second World War*. (Ottawa, 1952), p. 141.

³⁶PANS MG 100 Vol. 228 #1b, "Shipping casualties in St. Lawrence River & Gulf and on Atlantic Coast from 1896, updated to 1963," typescript. Despite the title, several vessels sunk in other parts of the world are also listed; however, wartime losses in Canadian waters number approximately 150. For those caused by enemy action, see James W. Essex, *Victory in the St. Lawrence: Canada's Unknown War* (Erin, Ont.: Boston Mills Press, 1984) and Michael Hadley, *U-boats against Canada: German Submarines in Canadian Waters* (Kingston and Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985).

the war.”³⁷ Even as merchant vessels badly in need of repair were clogging berths in Halifax harbour, corvettes were being diverted to other ports in North America or Great Britain to receive urgent servicing.

Halifax was not the only port along the eastern seaboard to play an important role in Canada’s naval operations, but because it had been involved in convoy operations from the onset of hostilities, no other Canadian port became such a haven for mariners dispossessed by German occupation of their home countries in 1939 and 1940 – including Poles, Greeks, Belgians, Norwegians, and Free French. The convoy system produced a variety of day-to-day emergencies – such as vessels limping into port with damages caused by storms at sea, collisions, mechanical breakdowns or enemy action. As a consequence, there was temporary accommodation and recreation to provide, hospital care for injured seamen, hulls to repair on the marine slips, new equipment to install, cargo to salvage and reload. Berthing and servicing British, American, Free French, and Russian warships also diverted resources away from the merchant fleet. It seems hardly surprising, therefore, that harbour facilities and available manpower in Halifax were overburdened.

Merchant seamen were one group of workers unjustly overlooked in most discussions of the war economy. They were an integral if loosely organized segment of the waterfront labour force. The commonalty of seamen was based not on the company employing them or a particular skill or trade so much as the unique nature of the workplace and the hierarchy and discipline inherent in a shipboard environment. Seafaring

³⁷Tucker, p. 145.

was a way of life rather than a vocation, and an occupation associated in the popular imagination with romance and adventure.

The war shattered these idyllic notions, but it did so in selective and peculiar ways. The reality of low wages and sometimes appalling working conditions began to surface through reports of “crew trouble” (about which more will be said later) on board merchant vessels assembling for convoy. Many of these vessels were operated by foreign shipowners and manned by non-European crews. This certainly was evident in the ethnic makeup of clientele at the Allied Merchant Seamen’s Club when it opened in January 1942.³⁸ There was friction between British officers and their “colonial” crews, between Europeans and Asians over cultural differences, and misunderstandings caused by the language barrier. These were features uncharacteristic of most land-based industries, and were indicative of a workplace where shipboard hierarchy exerted a stronger influence than identification with principles of industrial unionism. Despite claims to the contrary, the success of organized labour in the shipping industry during the war was modest.³⁹

The single most important wartime reform from the point of view of merchant seamen was the introduction of universal hiring halls, known as manning pools. The Canadian Seamen’s Union wanted to operate the halls, but the government “decided to go it alone” and the first Merchant Seamen’s Manning Pool in Canada opened in Halifax in

³⁸See Appendix A, Figs. A-35, A-36 and A-37.

³⁹See Jim Green, *Against the Tide: The Story of the Canadian Seamen's Union* (Toronto: Progress Books, 1986) and John Stanton, *Life and Death of a Union: the Canadian Seamen's Union, 1936-1949* (Toronto: Steel Rail Educational Publishing, 1978).

the fall of 1941.⁴⁰ When completed, the manning pool accommodated 450 seamen. Three months later, Montréal received a similar facility and eventually so did Vancouver and Saint John. The manning pools gave seafarers some measure of wage and employment security by eliminating “favouritism and blacklisting in hiring practices,”⁴¹ but it did not usher in a new era of improved labour relations in the shipping industry, as events after the war would show.

Ironically, the nationalistic Canadian Seamen’s Union would find itself under attack by “Liberal government policy, which particularly from 1947 on, provided whatever help the employers needed to smash the union, and to hell with the law.”⁴² These were harsh words from a partisan source; nevertheless, the actions of shipowners after 1948 spoke for themselves as they sought to “impose a \$20 to \$30 a month wage cut and abolish the hiring hall.”⁴³ By the early 1950s, the manning pool in Halifax would be shut down, and so would the Canadian Seamen’s Union. Due to wage rollbacks, the daily labour cost for operating one of the cargo vessels built by the Canadian government during the war was 15 per cent lower than it had been three years before.⁴⁴ Given these developments and the generally “sordid history”⁴⁵ of the CSU, it is hard to see how the war produced long term

⁴⁰Green, p. 96. See Appendix A., Fig. A-33. Green states that the manning pool opened in September, however a Halifax newspaper clipping dated 27 November 1941 indicates the building was still under construction two months later. PANS MG 1 Vol. 498, H.B. Jefferson papers, unidentified newspaper clipping.

⁴¹Stanton, p. 121.

⁴²Ibid., p. 152.

⁴³Charles Lipton, *The Trade Union Movement of Canada, 1827-1959* Third edition. (Toronto: N.C. Press, 1973), p. 280, cited in *ibid.*, p. 121.

⁴⁴Stanton, p. 150.

⁴⁵Bryan D. Palmer, *Working Class Experience: Rethinking the History of Canadian Labour, 1800-1991* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1992), p. 438.

benefits for merchant seamen in the same way that it obviously did for workers in other industries through union recognition and free collective bargaining.

The standard accounts of Canadian merchant seamen during this period have focused on union triumphs and defeats leading inexorably to the violent confrontations of 1949. But this nationalistic perspective ignored the international character of the seafaring labour force in Halifax during the war, and gave a distorted reflection of shipboard life for the majority of those participating in the convoy system. John Stanton estimates that “a large majority” of Canadian merchant seamen – about 8,000 – were CSU members in 1945.⁴⁶ Since the size of Canada’s deep-sea fleet more than quintupled during the war, union growth was to be expected. However, if the figure of 6,000 members cited by Bryan Palmer for 1939 is accurate, then wartime gains appear less impressive.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the numbers of Canadian seafarers in Halifax were small when compared with British, American and foreign seamen. It was the latter who bore the brunt of the U-boat offensive, which was most effective during the first half of the war. By 1944, most of the merchant seamen in Halifax were American.⁴⁸ They were better paid than their Canadian or foreign counterparts, more unionized, and their chances of survival at sea were better. The ethnic and economic variegation in the seafaring labour force did not seem to register with authorities on shore, who were late in providing facilities for merchant seamen and treated them as a single, homogeneous group. One worthy exception was the excellent medical care afforded survivors of sinkings at the Halifax

⁴⁶Stanton, p. 26.

⁴⁷Palmer, p. 296.

⁴⁸ *Halifax Mail*, 7 January 1944, p. 8.

Infirmary, which earned wide recognition for innovative treatment of hypothermia and frostbite.⁴⁹

Seamen of all nationalities enjoyed few legal rights. Job tenure was practically non-existent and subject to the whims and prejudices of masters who rated each sailor's performance at the end of a voyage. In the case of Canadian merchant seaman serving on Canadian vessels, the Nautical Division of the Department of Transport issued "Statements of Sea Service" containing information supplied by ship masters. The forms included a "Report of Character" divided into sections for "ability" and "general conduct." Ratings were the same in both categories: "Very Good," "Good," "Decline to Report," or "Not Stated." A sailor with too many "Decline to Report" citations faced wage penalties and an uphill battle when attempting to sign on to new vessels.⁵⁰

The war did not change the fact that union organization among seamen was vigorously opposed by shipping companies citing increased operating costs as a likely outcome of higher wages and improved working conditions.⁵¹ In the late 1930s, the Canadian Seamen's Union attempted without success to secure the eight-hour day. When war broke out the standard routine for an ordinary seaman remained four hours on, four hours off, twenty-four hours a day – seven days a week. With the extra vigilance and duties required while sailing in war zones, the old schedule was eventually replaced by

⁴⁹See Chapter 7, note 76.

⁵⁰Stanton, pp. 76-77; Statement of Sea Service in possession of former merchant seaman Mel LeBlanc, Mount Hope, Ontario.

⁵¹William Kaplan, *Everything That Floats: Pat Sullivan, Hal Banks, and the Seamen's Unions of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p. 18.

four hours on, eight hours off, twice a day, but the twelve-hour day was still in use on many vessels long after the war ended.⁵²

It is often stated that the crews of merchant vessels were the unheralded heroes of the Battle of Atlantic. Perhaps this is so. Certainly they were not treated like heroes at the time. While there have been several studies of British and American merchant fleets during this period, all devote more attention to ship construction and the convoy system than merchant seamen.⁵³ A notable exception in the Canadian literature is Commander F.B. Watt's history of the Naval Control Service [NCS], organized early in the war to monitor fifth column activity aboard merchant vessels in Halifax. While flawed in some respects, his first-hand account provides a frank and revealing glimpse into shipboard social organization and working conditions. It is essential reading for any student of wartime labour in the shipping industry, and offers a less ideological counterpoint to the above-cited works by Jim Green and William Kaplan.

When it is considered that the presence of one hundred or more vessels was not an unusual sight in Halifax Harbour, each vessel carrying, on average, forty or fifty officers

⁵²Interview with retired merchant seaman Mel LeBlanc, Mount Hope, Ontario, 23 March 1990.

⁵³American historiography on merchant shipping during the Second World War includes Felix Riesenbergh, Jr., *Sea War: The Story of the U.S. Merchant Marine in World War II* (New York: Rinehart & Co., 1956); Robert G. Albion and Jennie Barnes Pope, *Sea Lanes in Wartime; The American Experience, 1775-1945* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1968); Report of the War Shipping Administrator to the President, *The United States Merchant Marine at War* (Washington, 15 January 1946); Emory S. Land, *Winning the War with Ships: Land, Sea and Air—Mostly Land* (New York: Robert M. McBride Co., 1958); and Daniel Levine and Sara Ann Platt, "The Contribution of U.S. Shipbuilding and the Merchant Marine to the Second World War," in Robert A. Kilmarx, ed., *America's Maritime Legacy: A History of the U.S. Merchant Marine and Shipbuilding Industry Since Colonial Times* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1979), pp. 175-214. For the British side, the standard official histories are S.W. Roskill, *A Merchant Fleet in War—1939-1945* (London: Alfred Hold & Co., 1962); and C.B.A. Behrens, *Merchant Shipping and the Demands of War* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1955).

and crew, the merchant fleet comprised one of the largest occupational groups in the city. This fact was not taken into account by the Department of Munitions and Supply in its provisions for housing war workers in Halifax. The job of providing accommodation for merchant seamen was eventually taken up by the Navy League, which financed the construction of a 350-bed hostel on Hollis Street. Completion of the building was delayed by several months, but it finally opened in December 1941. H.B. Jefferson was given a grand tour of the building in April 1942:

Quite a number of drunks were rambling around and T [Clifford Taylor, manager] says they have a dormitory set aside where they put these fellows at night so they won't interfere with anybody but themselves. I was all through the kitchen, cafeteria, dormitories, writing rooms, reading rooms, etc. and also the bar room, in the basement floor where at least 400 men were gathered in a room as big as an average High School assembly hall...The bar itself is only about ten feet long and completely enclosed, with a steel grating which can be let down quickly over the serving counter. There are no waiters or waitresses, but there are 4 bar tenders... They sell all kinds [of beer]...but Labatte's [*sic*] appears to be the most popular...Most of the sailors sitting around the beer room today seem to be quiet, honest fellows, but T says the looks of some of them are highly deceptive and...they are all better than average fighters. The Norwegians are the worst. Although they do not seem to be much good as fighters at sea, as soon as they strike land they get tough.⁵⁴

Attendance at the regular Sunday evening concerts staged at the Allied Merchant Seamen's Club averaged about 700 seamen "of almost every nationality," even though the seating capacity was supposed to be 500.⁵⁵ Renamed the Seagull Club after the war, it

⁵⁴PANS MG 1 Vol. 489a, H.B. Jefferson papers, 28 April 1942.

⁵⁵OA, MU 4156, John Fisher papers, file: East Coast Reporter, 1942.

survived well into the 1950s, despite the stipulation that the building be removed within six months of the cessation of hostilities.⁵⁶

John Fisher discovered a veritable global melting pot when he spent an evening at the club a few weeks after Jefferson's visit:

I sat down in the lounge next to a group of men. In their group was a French Canadian, a Cockney, a Belgian, a Swiss and an Irishman married to a Belgian woman. They were all from the same ship and good pals. Fine fellows too. We had a long chat and I said I wanted to meet different personalities. Well said the French Canadian – that policeman at the door is an Egyptian who had his face slashed by a Greek seaman. In the kitchen we have a Dane, a Chinaman and a French speaking Canadian. Sitting a short distance from us was a stocky little man. I said I'll bet that man is a Phillipino [*sic*]. The Irishman said I'll bet you a package of cigarettes he's from India while the Belgian wagered he was part Chinese. So we delegated the French Canadian to go ask him. He brought him back and proved us all wrong. He was a Panamanian Indian – one of the aborigines of Central America. We had a long talk with him. He was sailing on a Greek ship, yet he didnt [*sic*] understand a word of Greek. I asked him why he chose that ship: "Me like cose Greek ships have chicken twice week, whiskey every day and beer three times week." And besides the pay on Greek ships was very good, he said.⁵⁷

The international composition of merchant vessel crews increased the probability of violence and misunderstandings even more during the time they spent ashore, away from the heavy hand of shipboard discipline. The manager of the Allied Merchant Seamen's Club, Clifford Taylor, who before the war operated a day shelter for the unemployed in Montréal, admitted that "tempers run pretty high sometimes" but that "only about five per cent of...seamen need watching." Although he claimed that there was "practically no

⁵⁶James F.E. White, "The Ajax Affair: Citizens and Sailors in Wartime Halifax, 1939-1945," Unpublished M.A. thesis, (Dalhousie University, 1984), pp. 21-22.

⁵⁷OA, MU 4156, John Fisher papers, file: East Coast Reporter, 1942, Broadcast script, 21 May 1942.

friction between the different nationalities,” the evidence suggested otherwise. He described the fights which broke out when foreign sailors failed to stand during the playing of “God Save the King.” Taylor told H.B. Jefferson in April 1942 that “the amount of battling in the home and around the streets is increasing but shows no signs of developing to riot proportions.”⁵⁸ The Navy League hired eleven policemen to keep order on the premises, working around the clock in three shifts.

Officials at the club also fielded protests from Russian and Chinese sailors because their flags were not hanging in the club along with those of other Allies. A contribution from the local Chinese community promptly restored good Sino-Haligonian relations. However, as the club manager later explained, “we couldn’t buy the hammer and sickle.” Eventually, “some Americans off an American ship presented us with one.”⁵⁹ On another occasion, a group of Greek sailors brandishing knives went looking for a German family who had been rescued from a ship torpedoed off the Nova Scotia coast. The Germans were quickly removed from the club, but the Greeks “kept a rigorous vigil...for hours afterward.”⁶⁰

Naval authorities were much more sensitive to the security risks posed by subversive elements among merchant crews than their violent behaviour. Ironically, it was because of this concern that the Naval Control Service was created, and the concerns and grievances of seamen began to receive a sympathetic ear. As a naval officer charged with

⁵⁸PANS MG 1 Vol. 489a, H.B. Jefferson papers, 28 April 1942.

⁵⁹OA, MU 4156, John Fisher papers, file: East Coast Reporter, 1942, Broadcast script, 11 June 1942.

⁶⁰Ibid., Broadcast script, 21 May 1942.

enforcing discipline and ensuring that convoy ships sailed on time, Commander Watt's observations are coloured by a sense of duty and the correctness of his cause. For example, an incident is described in which the departure from Halifax of four Great Lakes tankers chartered by the Ministry of War Transport was delayed because the British crews "declared that the ships had been misrepresented to them by the English authorities, and that they had no intention of risking their lives on such unseaworthy tubs." "In a burst of sentimental concern for abused merchant seamen," Watt observed, "the Halifax press took up the cause of the [strikers, and]...the Mayor of Halifax complicated matters by deciding he should be publicly recognized as a champion of the foc's'le underdog." The possibility that crew grievances were based on legitimate fears for their own safety is not raised. When a handful of hold-outs were prosecuted under provisions of the Merchant Seamen Order (P.C. 2385, 2 April 1941), Watt observed that "no sympathy was wasted on them."⁶¹

The aforementioned Merchant Seamen Order reflected the prevailing view that merchant seamen were unpredictable and unreliable. The federal government was highly suspicious of the Canadian Seamen's Union, which had instigated strikes in the Great Lakes fleet in 1939 and 1940, and believed it to be controlled by Communists.⁶² Earlier legislation allowed miscreants to escape incarceration by simply volunteering to serve on another ship. P.C. 2385 imposed far harsher penalties on seamen convicted of causing "delaying action." Jail terms were now compulsory and open-ended, meaning that

⁶¹Commander F.B. Watt, *In All Respects Ready: The Merchant Navy and the Battle of the Atlantic, 1940-1945* (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1985), p. 216.

⁶²Kaplan, p. 33.

sentences could be extended indefinitely. Commander Watt concluded that the effectiveness of the Order was shown by the “limited number of times we were forced to [use it],” however the opposite may also be true – that fears about fifth column activity among merchant seamen were exaggerated, and that the new Order was not often applied because it was not often needed. In fact, P.C. 2385 was considered by some to be so draconian that it was challenged repeatedly, both in the courts and Parliament.⁶³

The Naval Control Service performed a useful role as an instrument of social control, mediating disputes between masters and crews, dispelling idle gossip and defusing potentially mutinous situations. One of the reasons the NCS took the form it did was the absence of shore-based accommodation for seamen. Prior to the Allied Merchant Seamen’s Club opening its doors in late 1941, the only facilities for merchant seamen were the Sailor’s Home, operated by the Navy League, and Missions to Seamen, located next to the YWCA on Barrington Street. The 60-bed capacity of the Sailor’s Home proved to be inadequate to handle wartime traffic, but even before this became apparent the Home was forced to move from Barrington to Hollis Street when the Navy League turned over its building to the Navy early in the war.⁶⁴ To add insult to injury, there were no public drinking establishments in Halifax where sailors could congregate. Sending boarding parties to ships anchored or berthed in the harbour was thus the most convenient way for

⁶³Kaplan, pp. 123-24, 130, 207. The author of P.C. 2385 was Judge Advocate-General Reginald J. Orde, son of Judge John F. Orde, who presided at the Royal Commission Inquiry into the Halifax Harbour Commission ten years before. [See Chapter 2].

⁶⁴*Halifax Mail*, 7 September 1940, p. 9.

naval authorities to effectively monitor shipboard morale on large numbers of merchant vessels.⁶⁵

Fears of subversion and radical tendencies among seamen notwithstanding, the need for a mechanism to monitor conditions on board ships in Halifax harbour reflected the lack of strong union organization among deep-sea sailors. In the 1930s, the Canadian Seamen's Union battled recalcitrant shipowners to secure collective bargaining rights in the Great Lakes region, but it did not turn its attention to Halifax until much later.⁶⁶ Just before the war, the CSU managed to sign up crews of the Canadian National Steamships "Lady Boats," six passenger and general cargo vessels operating a scheduled service between Halifax and the West Indies, and opened a small second-story hiring office on Birmingham Street.⁶⁷ The CSU then moved on to enlist fishermen on Nova Scotia's south shore. This strategy was aimed at tapping the coastal trade, which employed large numbers of fishermen, and held greater potential for membership than the much smaller Canadian deep-sea fleet. The CSU also encountered resistance among black crew members on the Lady boats, who belonged to unions based at their home ports in the West Indies. Despite CSU assurances that the union did not discriminate on the basis of "race, creed, color or national origin," racial segregation continued on the Lady boats. Deck jobs were reserved "exclusively for Canadian nationals," while positions for black seamen "were restricted to the 'black gang' or the stewards' department."⁶⁸

⁶⁵See Appendix A, Fig. A-31.

⁶⁶Green, pp. 31-43.

⁶⁷Ibid., pp. 57, 59.

⁶⁸Ibid. The 'black gang' was a term commonly applied to stokers and firemen.

The colour barrier was only one of many obstacles to improving conditions for merchant seamen during the war. In contrast to gains made by workers in other sectors of the war economy, merchant seamen remained, on the whole, a divided and underpaid workforce. Later in the war, the CSU would be recognized as the sole bargaining agent for the government-owned Park Steamship line, but this was an exceptional case.⁶⁹ The convoy system brought thousands of foreign seamen to Halifax, and the vast majority were not privy to negotiated wage agreements or democratic rights. Merchant seamen were a diverse, "many-flagged mob," fragmented by national, racial, and ethnic differences, not to mention the plethora of wages, terms and conditions in effect on various lines and in various countries.⁷⁰

The boarding parties of the Naval Control Service witnessed the tensions created by these differences first-hand. Commander Watt furnishes ample evidence that working and living conditions on board ship were the root cause of many incidents reported as "crew trouble." One example in the summer of 1941 involved a British vessel, the SS *Empire Defiance*:

Class distinction, bad boilers, poor discipline and bad quarters seem to be the trouble...Chief engineer curses the black gang and [he is] generally under the influence of spirits according to the Mohammedans who are, to all reports, honest firemen. Fo'c's'le alive with roaches and other vermin. Leaks in deckhead and, in bad weather, floor covered with a foot of water. Very poor crew accommodation forward and firemen's food not so good. It is reported that former crews were Lascars and officers could handle them as they pleased,...but this crew resents that attitude towards them.⁷¹

⁶⁹Green, p. 97.

⁷⁰Watt, p. xii.

⁷¹Ibid., pp. 148-49.

On another vessel boarded by Watt in the fall of 1940, the Free French crew related “a tale of dirt, decay and demoralization.” Naval authorities in Ottawa were notified that the ship was unseaworthy and required urgent repairs, but the “vessel’s operators declined...to hold her in Halifax and were able to make it stand up in those places where delicate political decisions were juggled.” Soon after, the vessel was lost with all hands in a hurricane on her way to Martinique.⁷²

Incidents first thought to be subversive in nature sometimes turned out to be the result of occupational hazards in the workplace. In one notable case, suspicions of foul play were raised when British gunners on a vessel manned primarily by Lascars and Goanese began succumbing to food poisoning. Later it was discovered that the gunners’ messdeck was located in an area of the ship where a cargo of sheep dip had been stowed on a previous voyage. The gunners had been eating food contaminated with traces of the insecticide, which contained “a high arsenic content.” One man died as a result.⁷³

The Naval Control Service began as means to muffle dissent, detect subversive activities, and impose quasi-military discipline on a labour force perceived to be “cocky and restless.”⁷⁴ But even the boarding parties soon realized that “while physical sabotage remained a danger to be guarded against, sabotage of the seamen’s spirit” was “the greater peril.”⁷⁵ It was shortsighted of both government authorities and union activists to leave the morale of seamen to the navy and its subsidiary civilian arm, the Navy League. The

⁷²Watt, pp. 95-96.

⁷³Ibid., pp. 90-92.

⁷⁴Craig Heron, “Communists, Gangsters, and Canadian Sailors,” *Labour/Le Travail* 24 (Autumn 1989), p. 232.

⁷⁵Watt, p. 86.

former did so because it failed to acknowledge that merchant seamen were legitimate workers in war industry. The latter did so because it failed to overcome its nationalistic origins and tackle the ethnic and cultural differences that stood in the way of achieving a truly international union.

Its accomplishments notwithstanding, the Naval Control Service was equally significant for what it was unable to do to improve conditions on merchant vessels. As the case of the hapless Free French merchantman demonstrated, members of the NCS possessed less authority with their superiors than with the sailors whose behaviour they monitored. Union recognition and collective bargaining rights may have been anathema to shipowners, but at least they would have formalized labour-management relations in an industry plagued with misunderstandings, desertions, and unpredictable confrontations. When sailors found themselves “on the beach,” their often obstreperous behaviour – much of it motivated by simmering grievances, personal grudges, and national rivalries – reinforced the negative image of seamen as faceless, anti-social outsiders.

Early in the war, the notion that Communists were conspiring to undermine the war effort through seamen’s unions was a common if exaggerated fear.⁷⁶ But the complaints of merchant seamen were seldom politically motivated. Crew members protested inadequate defensive or life-saving equipment, abusive treatment by masters and mates, and appalling shipboard living conditions, particularly on foreign vessels.⁷⁷ Moreover, according to Commander Watt, half the incidents dealt with by the Naval Control Service

⁷⁶Watt, pp. 63, 213-14. William Kaplan adopts a similar tone.

⁷⁷Green, pp. 102-104.

were related to drinking.⁷⁸ The social and economic motivations underlying so-called subversive behaviour were downplayed if not completely ignored. The most telling clause in the draconian Merchant Seamen Order (P.C. 2385) was that it applied to seamen of any nationality. By this order, it was made clear that the logistical demands of the convoy system far outweighed the civil rights of the men and women who made it work.

The official response to dissent among merchant seamen seems ironic considering that the Merchant Navy was frequently lauded in the wartime press for its courage in the face of the enemy. It underscored how little labour practices in the shipping industry had changed since the days when "middle-class social agencies viewed sailing ships as alternatives to reformatories."⁷⁹ In this light, Communist inroads into the ranks of Canadian seafarers succeeded not because the latter were predisposed to radicalism, but because Communists were the only labour organizers committed enough to do it. Creating solidarity in an industry which was fragmented into hundreds of self-contained "shops," each with its own distinctive hierarchy and working conditions, and each one operating independently within a far-flung international trading system, seemed an impossible task, particularly in an industry tightly controlled by monopolistic interests.⁸⁰ In two investigations conducted by the Canadian government in 1913 and 1924, it was acknowledged that cartels based in Britain were "endeavouring to control all the shipping

⁷⁸Watt, pp. 91, 121.

⁷⁹Margaret S. Creighton, "American Mariners and the Rites of Manhood," in Colin Howell and Richard Twomey, eds., *Jack Tar in History: Essays in the History of Maritime Life and Labour* (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1991), p. 147. See also Judith Fingard, *Jack in Port: Sailortowns of Eastern Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), p. 19.

⁸⁰Heron, p. 232. See also Daniel Marx, *International Shipping Cartels: A Study of Industrial Self-Regulation by Shipping Conferences* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953).

interests of the world,” including the United States, Canada, and other members of the British Empire.⁸¹ It is small wonder that, by the 1930s, seamen were ready to listen to anyone who promised them “the opportunity to participate in the government of their industrial lives.”⁸²

No other occupational group elicited both condemnation and praise to the same degree. Commander Watt observed that “competent seamen with a mature attitude towards their profession were not as readily produced as ships were,” hence the need to keep them “in all respects ready” through coercion and discipline.⁸³ But the public also perceived them as heroes risking “death without glory” on the high seas.⁸⁴ The persistence of these contrasting stereotypes cannot be explained unless one understands the social, cultural and historical contexts informing official and public attitudes towards seamen. Such biases fill the secondary literature on Canadian merchant seamen during this period.⁸⁵

For the purposes of this study, it is important to recognize that the treatment and experiences of seamen within the convoy system, and how they were perceived by the civilian population, influenced their behaviour on shore. Social interaction between seamen and civilians was carefully orchestrated in public, and usually occurred during

⁸¹*Searchlight*, 8 September 1945, p. 3, cited in Stanton, Appendix C, pp. 160-162.

⁸²Kaplan, p. 19.

⁸³*Ibid.*, p. 213.

⁸⁴Green, p. 105. Latter quotation from “Introduction” by Gerald A. Morgan, M.N.I., in Watt, p.

xv.

⁸⁵Kaplan, Green and Watt all suffer from this impediment. By comparison, research on nineteenth century merchant seamen seems relatively free of excessive subjectivity. For example, see Judith Fingard, *Jack in Port*, Rosemary Ommer, ed., *Working Men Who Got Wet*, and Eric Sager, *Seafaring Labour*.

staged events, such as the Sunday evening concerts at the Allied Merchant Seamen's Club. Otherwise their contacts with civilians were confined to other marginalized groups – brothelkeepers, bootleggers, and prostitutes. Aside from the inescapable fact that seamen often engaged in activities that were frowned upon by many Haligonians, overburdened war service organizations in Halifax could spare little time to cater to their needs with so many service personnel in the city.

From the desperate shortage of vessels that permitted shipowners to ignore safety and seaworthiness factors, to the dependence on volunteers to provide enough clothing to keep seamen from freezing in winter, to exploitation in the unsavory dives of Lower Water Street, merchant seamen paid a heavy price for their patriotism and work ethic. Here was yet another occupational class for whom the benefits of the war boom could be questioned. There were economic incentives, to be sure, such as the case reported by H.B. Jefferson of a shipping company “offering \$600 to England and \$600 back as a bonus for explosive [*sic*] ships, but you have to make the round trip to collect the money.”⁸⁶ In light of the risks involved, even this generous sum seemed inadequate.

The international scope of the shipping industry makes a full accounting of the social and economic characteristics of the seafaring labour force extremely challenging. The historical record is scattered and primary sources are largely anecdotal. It is difficult to track wage differences across numerous shipping lines, and compare working conditions which varied from ship to ship. Ethnic and racial tensions were present in some vessels

⁸⁶PANS MG 1 Vol. 489a, H.B. Jefferson papers, 4 May 1941.

and not in others. For Canadian merchant seamen during this period, the casualty list of 1,100 seamen who lost their lives due to enemy action during the war provided a rare glimpse into the social and demographic composition of this labour group, although it tells us nothing about their economic status. It revealed, for example, that the vast majority of Canadian merchant seamen came from small towns and villages in rural Canada – notably Quebec and Nova Scotia [Fig. 5-1]. Such origins hardly suggest fertile territory for labour radicalism or criminal proclivity. What they did suggest is economic need coupled with an employment outlet to the outside world for young men with limited formal education. The picture drawn by Jim Green of a pro-union merchant marine made up of a “well-informed rank-and-file democracy” does not gibe with the social profile implied in the documentary evidence.⁸⁷ The high proportional representation of French-Canadian and British seamen in the Canadian merchant marine also set them apart from other categories of labour in Halifax [Fig. 5-2].

Of particular interest was the regional breakdown of next-of-kin addresses [See Fig. 5-1]. The casualty list gave both birthplace and address of next of kin. Usually these addresses were not the same. Hence, while 12.4 per cent of all sailors were listed as Nova Scotia-born and six per cent were born in Quebec, the home address figures were about equal for both provinces. Nearly a third of the Nova Scotians gave Halifax as their home address, but less than half that number reported having been born there. There were more native Newfoundlanders in the Canadian merchant marine than Haligonians, and almost as

⁸⁷Heron, p. 232.

Fig. 5-1. Origins of Canadian Merchant Seamen Lost at Sea due to Enemy Action, 1939-1945.

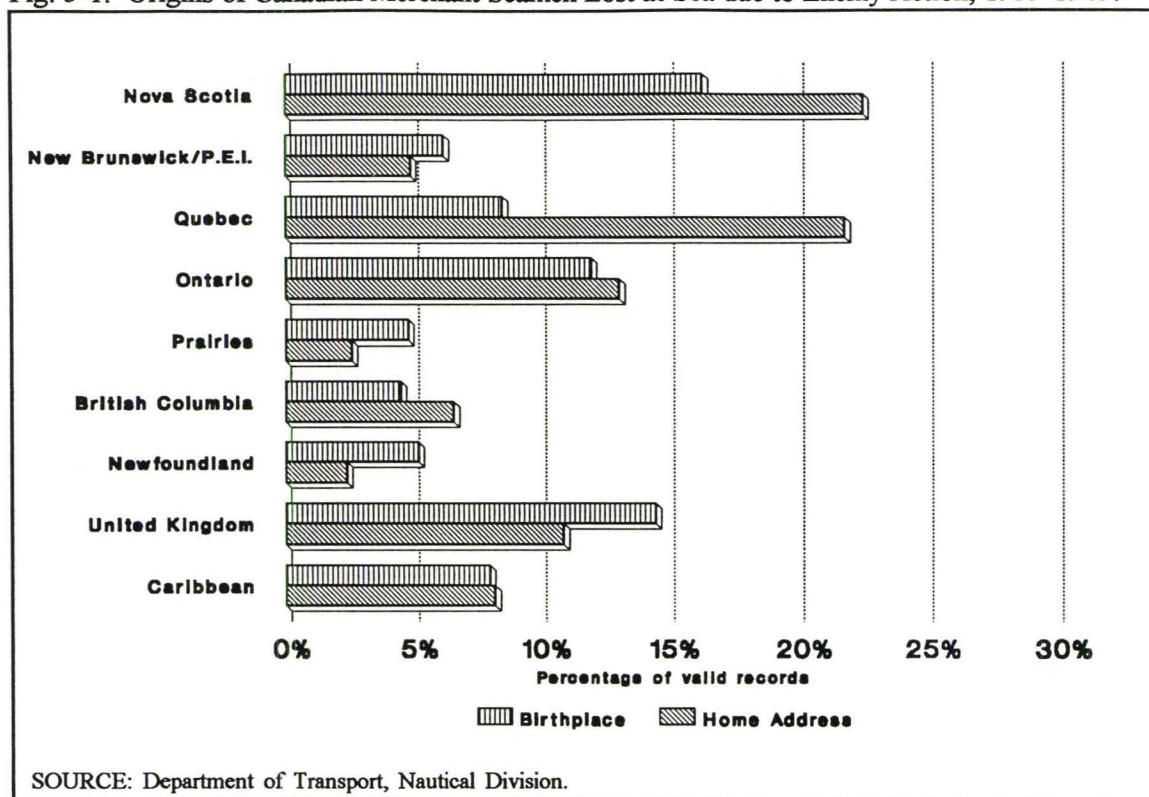
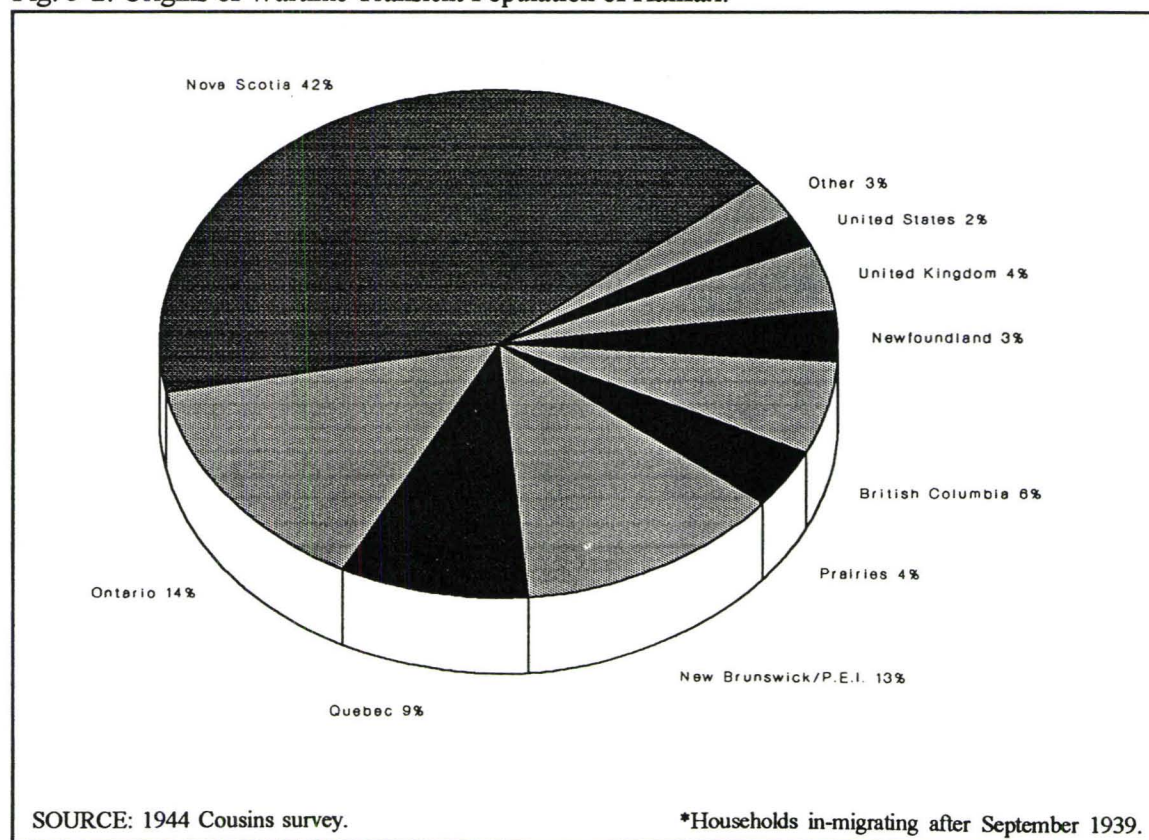


Fig. 5-2. Origins of Wartime Transient Population of Halifax.*



many British sailors as Newfoundlanders and Haligonians put together. The overall pattern suggested a labour force drawn largely from rural, economically depressed areas in Eastern Canada, Newfoundland, Quebec, and the British Empire – with a clear emphasis on regions touched by well-travelled sea routes. Many seamen, for example, originated from the British West Indies and British Guiana. West Indians were over-represented in the casualty list due to the loss of converted liners which in peacetime had plied the Caribbean trade.

The regional breakdown of Canadian-born merchant seamen differed from that of naval personnel, whose origins were more evenly distributed across the country. The Royal Canadian Navy showed higher participation rates for Ontario and the Prairies than was evident among merchant seamen. Because of the attention that the Navy and Halifax received in the national press, the impression was given that a large proportion of the city's population were from central Canada and other places outside the region. This was a misconception [Fig. 5-2]. Although one in-migrant in four did come from either Ontario, the Prairies or British Columbia, the majority of those who moved to Halifax after September 1939 were Maritimers. Participation rates among merchant seamen followed a similar pattern, despite the additional representation of foreign-born workers.

A breakdown of job assignments in merchant crews also reflected regional and national biases. It is no surprise that engine room occupations, or the so-called "black gang," suffered a disproportionate number of casualties – nearly 40 per cent, including engineers, firemen, trimmers and coal passers. The deck crew made up 27 per cent of casualties, followed by the catering crew – cooks, stewards, mess boys and galley boys, –

at 21 per cent. Included among the stewards were two women, one of whom was the first Canadian fatality of the war when the *Athenia* was lost on 3 September 1939. Finally, deck and bridge officers comprise 11.8 per cent of casualties – if engineers were added, the losses among officers would rise to 24 per cent. Because experienced senior personnel in the Canadian merchant marine were in short supply when the war began, many masters and officers were British. Canadians were thus statistically more likely to perish in a mishap at sea, and French Canadians and non-British foreign nationals had an even lower survival rate.

Gender distribution among seafarers was so overwhelmingly male that the small number of women who worked on merchant vessels was usually overlooked. One night in early 1942, the manager of the Allied Merchant Seamen's Club in Halifax walked into the cafeteria and noticed a woman sitting at a table "talking to the men":

She was wearing a big raccoon coat and looked pretty sophisticated. I figured that she had no business in the building as we do not allow any women here unless they are volunteer workers. So I went over and said: "I beg your pardon, but...are you waiting for someone...you know we dont [*sic*] allow ladies in here." She... looked me up and down and then said "I'll have you know I am a seaman, have been going to sea for 15 years and consider it my right to be here." She turned out to be a Canadian too.⁸⁸

In December 1943, another Canadian woman became the "first Nova Scotian girl to pass the government examinations and receive her ticket as a land or marine radio operator." It was reported that she had departed the previous week "on a merchant ship

⁸⁸OA MU 4156, John Fisher papers, file: East Coast Reporter, 1942.

as wireless operator and secretary to the Captain.”⁸⁹ Even at sea, women found it hard to escape female stereotypes.

The above profile of merchant crews described a labour force which had no land-based equivalent. The potential hazards of a seagoing occupation were unlike anything that a worker in a manufacturing or heavy industrial setting might experience. In many cases shipboard working conditions were intolerable due to obsolete equipment or incompetent and abusive masters and officers. Wages were pitifully low (far below those paid on American ships), and the degree of workers’ control was almost non-existent.⁹⁰ On the other hand, Canadian merchant seamen “had better wages and conditions than their naval counterparts.”⁹¹ But merchant seamen as a social group were marginalized as a result of their multi-racial and multi-national composition and their undeniable appetite for disreputable pleasures while ashore. These attributes obscured their small town origins and the fact that, based on who they named as next of kin, approximately one in five were married [Fig. 5-3]. Jim Green claims that the average age of Canadian merchant seamen was “not over 25.”⁹² In fact, the documentary evidence indicates that this estimate may have been high. It is difficult to determine whether the high mortality rate among seamen younger than 25 was a function of inexperience, seniority or an objective reflection of age distribution within the seagoing labour force. In any case, the notion that sailors were

⁸⁹PANS MG1 Vol. 498, H.B. Jefferson papers, unidentified newspaper clipping, 8 December 1943.

⁹⁰U.S. merchant seamen received \$100 per week, plus a \$100 bonus for Atlantic duty, and another bonus each time a war zone was entered, or an air raid occurred. See Levine and Platt, p. 197.

⁹¹Green, p. 97.

⁹²Ibid., p. 98.

Fig. 5-3. Next of Kin, Canadian Merchant Seamen Lost due to Enemy Action, 1939-45.

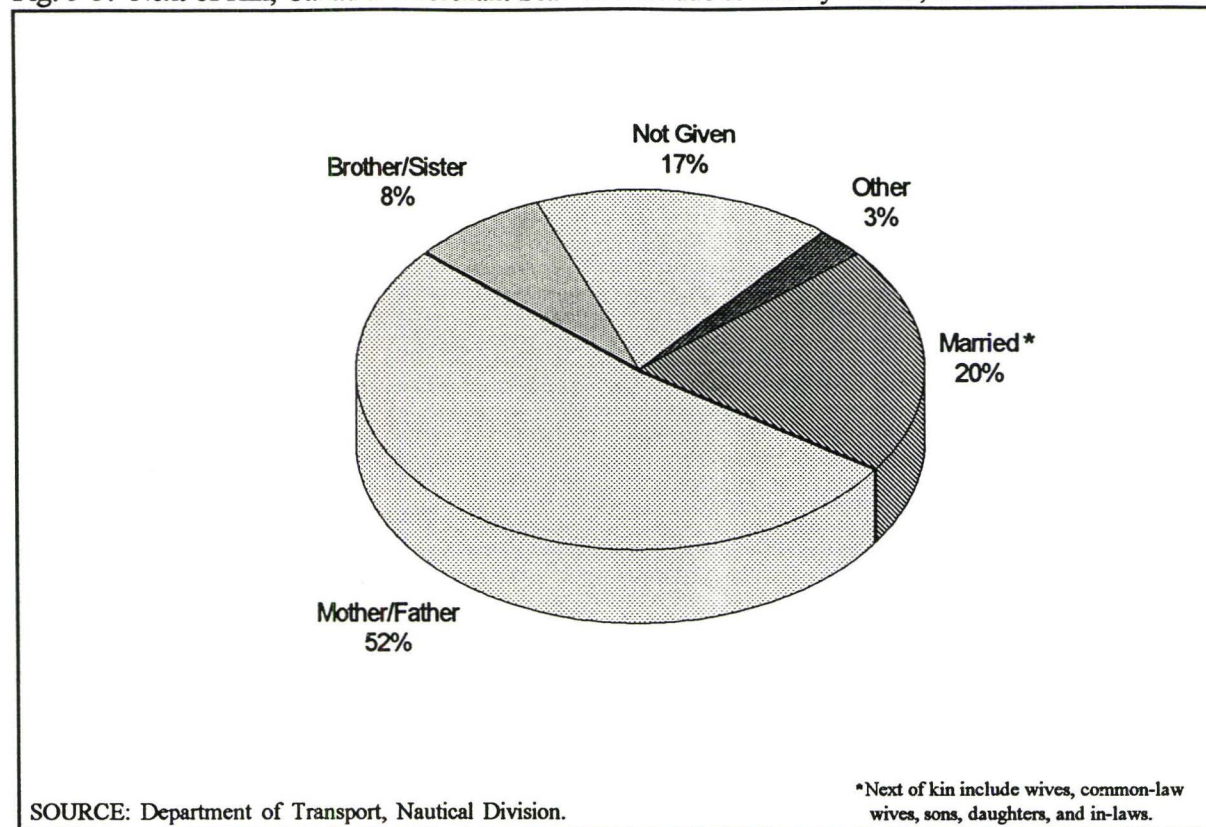
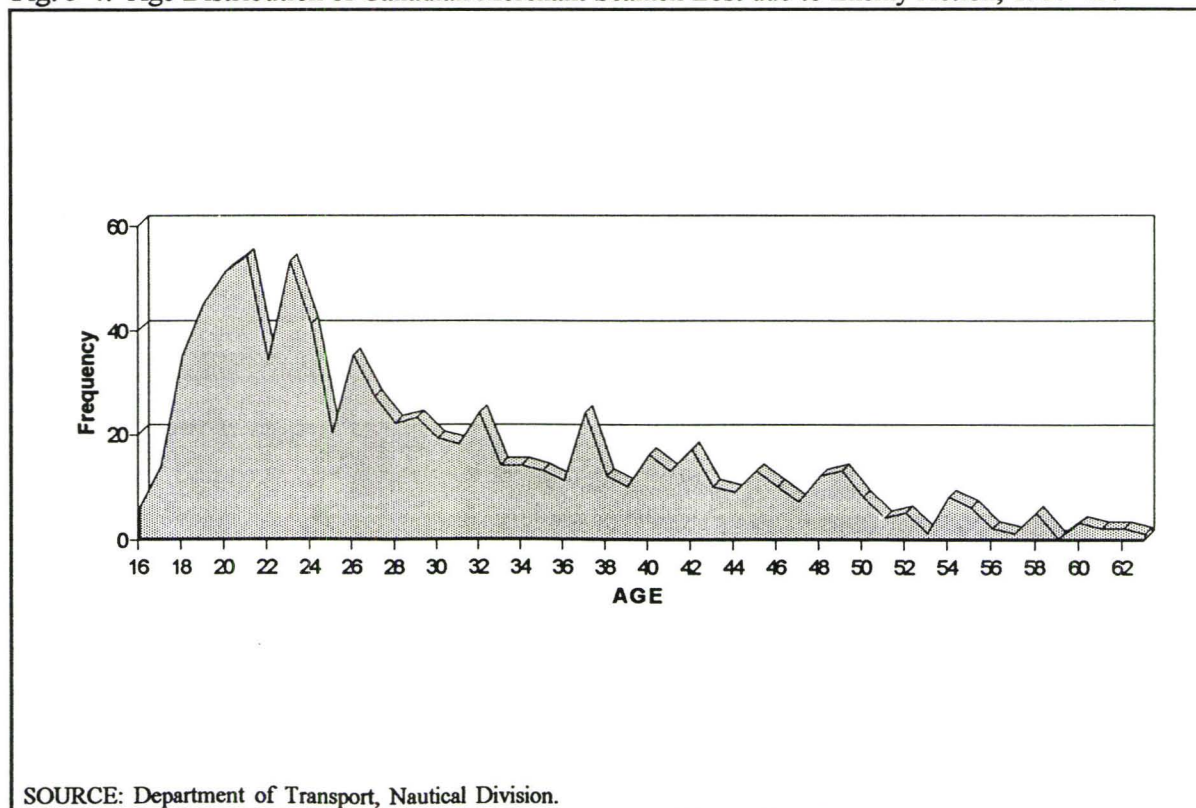


Fig. 5-4. Age Distribution of Canadian Merchant Seamen Lost due to Enemy Action, 1939-45.



mostly young and unruly overshadowed the significant numbers of older workers who also made up the seafaring labour force [Fig. 5-4].

The work of the Naval Control Service notwithstanding, it is remarkable how *little* disruption occurred in ship movements due to labour unrest. The jury is still out on whether this was the result of “manipulation by wily radical leaders” or the sailor’s stoic acceptance of his fate.⁹³ Based on the evidence found in the present study, it seems clear that managerial inexperience, bureaucratic conflicts between British, American and Canadian authorities, and simple congestion, created more havoc in Halifax harbour than the activities of messroom subversives.

The experience of merchant seamen illustrates the inequities of personal sacrifice in wartime. Merchant seamen were as integral to the port of Halifax as industrial production centred on the shipyards and dockyard. As the largest single non-military employer in the city, Halifax Shipyards Limited (HSL) dominated the local economy, but its fortunes fluctuated with the ever-changing complexion of Allied strategy. This became painfully clear to workers as early as the summer of 1944, when HSL management opted to wait out a legal strike because business had fallen off.⁹⁴ Elaborate though the convoy system was, the unprecedented level of port usage was not translated into permanent expansion of the local economy. Shipyard workers were even more vulnerable than merchant seamen in this respect, but they were also better positioned to seek concessions from entrenched corporate hierarchies. This was the heyday of industrial unionism, and the hope was that

⁹³Heron, p. 233.

⁹⁴Jay White, “Pulling Teeth: Striking for the Check-Off in the Halifax Shipyards, 1944,” *Acadiensis* Vol. XIX No. 1 (Fall 1989), p. 131.

wartime state intervention in labour-management relations would benefit labour in the long run. Events after the war would show this to be a false hope, but the failure of industrial unionism in the shipbuilding industry in Halifax owed as much to internal fragmentation as an unsympathetic conciliation process.

Wartime labour disputes in Halifax were infrequent and short-lived, not simply because of the no-strike pledge given by organized labour in 1942 but because there had been little cohesion within the urban working class before the war. As Ian McKay, John Manley and others have pointed out, labour leaders in Halifax had long ago adopted a policy of accommodation with employers rather than overt radicalism.⁹⁵ Even though the war introduced new stakeholders and a new set of ground rules, the balance of power in labour relations rested with employers.

The dominant influence in the new tripartite relationship between labour, management and the state after 1939 was the federal Department of Munitions and Supply (DMS), which controlled virtually all war production in Canada. Ernest R. Forbes argues that the DMS, under the direction of C.D. Howe, discriminated against industries in the Maritimes because the government foresaw little potential for postwar development in that region.⁹⁶ Officials in other federal agencies such as the Department of Labour and the Wartime Prices and Trade Board cited inefficiency and wastefulness as just cause for either increasing intervention in Maritime industries or transferring contracts to plants in

⁹⁵Ian McKay, *The Craft Transformed: An Essay on the Carpenters of Halifax, 1885-1985* (Halifax: Holdfast Press, 1985), pp. 77-79.

⁹⁶Ernest R. Forbes, "Consolidating Disparity: The Maritimes and the Industrialization of Canada during the Second World War" *Acadiensis* Vol. XV, No. 2 (Spring 1986), pp. 9, 17.

Central Canada. The impact of centralist policies on local labour markets does not appear to have influenced federal decision-makers, many of whom seemed prone to making sweeping generalizations based on regional or industrial stereotypes.

In May 1944, for example, a memorandum circulated in the upper echelons of the Wartime Prices and Trade Board in Ottawa criticizing the performance of Canadian shipyards in general but Maritime firms in particular. The author, H.R. Kemp, singled out the Halifax Dockyard for special attention, claiming that "high paid labour in local manufacturing operations [there] such as the production of sails, bunk covers, boat and gun covers, signalling flags and other things...could be produced far more cheaply by a staff of girls working in a textile plant in Upper Canada."⁹⁷ Kemp acknowledged that the WPTB had no authority to investigate the operations of Canadian shipbuilding yards, but that he was merely passing along "widely disseminated reports" regarding their efficiency.

The memorandum also discussed the wage increase granted earlier that month by the National War Labour Board to Maritime shipyards. Long overdue, the award was made retroactive to 16 April 1943, but only the largest shipyards in the region were affected. The NWLB reasoned that major yards in Halifax and Saint John possessed the necessary financial resources to absorb a lump-sum retroactive pay increase whereas many of the smaller yards – those employing 50 to 200 workers – ran on shoestring budgets.

This disparity was justified on the grounds that, on average, wages were higher in urban areas due to higher living costs. Regional and National War Labour Board rulings

⁹⁷NA RG 64 Vol. 782 file 101-7-2-12 "Ship Repairs Controller," Kemp to Dewar, 26 May 1944.

tended to uphold this gap by taking prevailing local wages into account. Therefore, Halifax and Saint John were designated "Zone 1," which was categorized as having both high living costs and higher wages. Smaller urban centres were included in "Zone 2" areas, where wages and the cost of living were ostensibly lower. When the retroactive discrepancy was announced, a storm of protest arose among workers at small Maritime yards, who felt they were being penalized for not working for a larger company. To express their anger, the small union locals instructed their members to refuse overtime shifts, and a flurry of follow-up briefs made their way to Ottawa.⁹⁸

Halifax Shipyards Limited was decidedly unhappy with the retroactive award. HSL immediately attempted to offset the cost of the pay raise by petitioning the government for a subsidy, but this ploy was rebuffed by federal authorities.⁹⁹ Raising prices to cover the costs of the increase was then proposed, but the WPTB warned that "essential services" had to first demonstrate "the need for financial assistance" before price increases would be permitted.¹⁰⁰ WPTB officials noted that shipyards engaged in naval ship construction could recover "the additional sums chargeable to the cost of constructing ships to government account." Naval ship repair contracts were usually let on a cost-plus basis, and there too, the companies could "submit delayed charges for the increased labour costs."¹⁰¹ By this time, most Canadian merchant ships were owned by the Park Steamship

⁹⁸NA MG 28 I 103 Vol. 66 file 9 "Maritime Shipyards NWLB Finding (1944-45) part II," Ryan to Conroy, 18 August 1944. A union official in the Pictou shipyard, in submitting his brief in August 1944, commented: "I think we have a good strong case particular [sic] on the Zoning by calling us Rural and Depressed instead of Urban and happy."

⁹⁹NA RG 64 Vol. 782 file 101-7-12, Gordon to Godsoe, 29 May 1944.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹Ibid., Kemp to Dewar, 26 May 1944.

Company, a Crown Corporation, so that even the repairs to these vessels were chargeable to government account.

On the surface the NWLB award in May 1944 represented a long overdue victory for eastern shipyard workers, but in reality the government was indirectly subsidizing the shipyards and thus giving both the unions and the companies a false sense of security. At HSL, the wage increase bolstered the confidence and credibility of Local No. 1, Industrial Union of Marine and Shipbuilding Workers of Canada, thus setting the stage for their renewed drive to secure recognition for their union. But the government posturing behind the scenes clearly sought to accommodate the objectives of shipyard executives, not workers, and the former became accustomed to the government directives and guidelines that governed so many aspects of their industrial operations. Just how completely federal labour regulations were incorporated into the adversarial bargaining strategies of both business and labour became clear in the Halifax Shipyards strike of July-August 1944.

The federal government's self-styled role as conciliator in labour-management relations yielded a semblance of harmonious industrial production, but other policies seemed to have the opposite effect. Manpower regulations imposed arbitrary divisions between groups of workers – differentiating between the public and private sector, or military and civilian occupations. Sometimes the rationale was difficult to discern, as in civilians working in the Navy Dockyard, for instance. Much discord was created by government contracts which paid higher wages to tradesmen at military establishments than their counterparts employed in local firms. The government physically segregated workers as well – housing single male transients in barrack-style dormitories on the fringes

of settled residential districts. Isolation in workhouse ghettos and hastily-erected housing projects did not foster social interaction of migrant workers and families with the rest of the community. It also reinforced the notion that wartime employment was abnormal and temporary.

In some respects peacetime employment patterns remained relatively unchanged despite new priorities and a greatly expanded labour force. In prewar days, there had always been a steady trickle of freshwater sailors from the Great Lakes ports drifting down to ice-free Atlantic ports looking for winter work. A similar exodus occurred from Maritime outports when fishing craft were hauled out in the fall. Technology and politics each played a role in displacing work patterns in the shipping industry before the war accelerated the process. The transition from coal-fired to oil-burning boilers on steamships put large numbers of firemen out of a job in the 1930s. Subsidies by foreign governments also reduced the demand for Canadian seamen.¹⁰² Waterfront workers were thus already accustomed to cyclical variations in the Halifax economy, and the uncertainties of North Atlantic ocean trade.

The war also did not prevent business decisions from being made which would affect the future economic base of the area. The shutdown of the Acadia Sugar refinery in the summer of 1942 seemed untimely and somehow tied to the war economy, but it was more symptomatic of the long term erosion of Halifax's industrial and manufacturing

¹⁰²PANS MG 20 Vol. 416 folder 5 Welfare Council of Halifax-Dartmouth: G.V. Shand [executive secretary, Social Service Index] to B. Touzel [secretary, Public Welfare Division, Canada Welfare Council], 19 November 1938.

sectors as a result of Central Canadian competition.¹⁰³ Even if a war industry plant closed its doors, the sense of dislocation and disappointment felt by workers could be no less intense. When the Clark Ruse aircraft repair facility in Dartmouth laid off its workforce in 1944, local labour leaders reported feelings of "discrimination and resentment over the action of the Government."¹⁰⁴ By such action, employees were reminded that job security even in a period of full employment depended not simply on the war effort but on the bottom line as well. What workers did not know at the time was that the closure of the plant had been at least partly due to the 150 WHL houses they occupied, and which were now "badly needed by Halifax Shipyards for the destroyer programme."¹⁰⁵

Longshoremen, merchant seamen and shipyard workers each made an essential contribution to winning the Battle of the Atlantic. Without dockworkers the modern harbour facilities built up over the years would have been useless. Without merchant seamen, the convoy system would not have been possible. Without the shipyards, minimal wartime industrial expansion would have occurred, and the housing problem would have been even more severe since it was the shipyards that brought Wartime Housing Limited to the city. In many ways, these three key labour groups epitomized the war economy in Halifax. But the economic base of the community also underwent significant growth in other areas, most notably the administrative and service sectors. In the following chapter, selected occupations and wage scales in Halifax are examined in order to further

¹⁰³Halifax *Daily Star*, 3 August 1942.

¹⁰⁴NA MG 28 I 103 Vol. 163 H.A. "Pat" Shea Correspondence 1942-44, (part III): Shea to Conroy, 26 March 1944. See also *ibid.*, (part II): 6 May 1944.

¹⁰⁵NA RG 2/18 Vol. 9, file H-13 1942-44, Howe to Heeney, 18 March 1944.

demonstrate how unevenly the economic benefits of the war boom were distributed amongst the urban population.

CHAPTER SIX

OCCUPATIONS AND WAGES

Just as buildings and streets define the physical attributes of the urban environment, the occupational characteristics of the population form the building blocks of community social structure. Describing wartime Halifax in these terms is made possible by two demographic databases, the 1941 Dominion Census and the population component of the 1944 Cousins survey. Census data and the Cousins survey outline the contours of wartime occupational and wage patterns, while documentary evidence provides specific examples of how economic status or occupational skills were affected by wartime opportunities or burdens.

The census coincided with the first major buildup of the war. In Halifax, it revealed an overwhelming dominance of commercial and clerical occupations. The Cousins survey three years later presented a more complicated picture. Considerable growth had taken place in transportation and manufacturing, but other sectors of the economy experienced minimal expansion. This chapter postulates some reasons for this asymmetric development by analyzing the composition of occupational groups in Halifax and comparing local figures for earnings and living standards with national trends. The various and sometimes incongruous roles of women in the paid and unpaid labour forces are also examined in order to determine how local conditions conformed to the popular view that involvement in the war effort represented a significant step forward for Canadian women.

On the surface, both employers and workers in industries deemed "essential" profited by their participation in the war economy. Many unions began to bargain collectively for the first time during the war, gaining wage increases and better working conditions by appealing to War Labour Boards. Workers were accommodated in modern, affordable dwelling units built at public expense by Wartime Housing Limited. The main disadvantage to being an industrial war worker seems to have been restrictions on job mobility. In nearly every war-related industry, wages were better than they had been before the war. But gender and age still played a role in determining wages. The Wartime Wages Control Order, (P.C. 5963) introduced a Cost-of-Living Bonus (COLB) of \$4.25 per week for workers who earned a weekly wage of \$25 or more, or 17 per cent of their income if they earned less than \$25. Males under 21 and females were singled out for the latter rate, a formula which paid proportionately less as the wage decreased. The bonus was based not on personal or family need, but designed as an incentive to make employees work harder and seek higher wages. In fact "women and boys" had initially received an even lower percentage of their weekly rate, and the COLB for them was only raised to 17 per cent in August 1943.¹

If workers in essential occupations reaped considerable benefits from the war economy, others faced a lifestyle typified by low wages and rising living costs. Workers in occupations not closely supervised by the government were generally at the mercy of their employers. They were not as protected from wartime inflation because employers were

¹NA MG 28 I 103 Vol. 64 file 12 "TUMSW of C Local 1 (1943)" Neilson to Conroy, 9 August 1943.

reluctant to raise wages above prewar levels unless compelled to do so. Furthermore, non-essential workers were largely unassisted in their efforts to secure housing. Despite WPTB rent controls, landlords devised various means of charging what the market would bear.

The participation of women in both essential and non-essential occupations was a prominent feature of the war economy, just as it had been during the First World War. The government turned to women as a convenient reserve labour pool after the armed forces or war-related industry had absorbed most able-bodied male civilians by mid-1941.² However, aiding the war effort was a mixed blessing for many Halifax women. Most who were working held low-paying service sector positions in government and military offices, taught in schools, laboured in domestic service in hotels and restaurants, or found jobs as retail sales clerks. Women employed in war industry earned good wages, but relatively few such jobs existed outside of major urban centres in Central Canada. For example, the federal agency in charge of regulating the wartime labour supply transferred an estimated 15,000 young single women from the Maritimes and the Prairies to centres of war production in Ontario and Quebec during the winter of 1942-43.³ In Halifax, women were largely excluded from employment in the three key areas described in the previous chapter. Female workers were far less common in Halifax yards than in shipyards specializing in new construction, such as the Pictou Shipyards, where they comprised upwards of 25 per cent of the workforce. Repairing older vessels and building warships

²Pierson, *Canadian Women*, p. 8.

³*Ibid.*, p. 9.

required more specialized skills than those needed for the simplified designs used for new cargo vessels.⁴

Many women responded wholeheartedly to the patriotic appeals to lend a hand in the war effort, but not everyone sought employment for the same reasons. In Halifax a significant number of women were girlfriends or wives of servicemen who came to the city not to find work but to be nearer their partners. Nearly everyone experienced difficulty in finding adequate and reasonably-priced housing, and shortages of basic household commodities drove up black market prices.⁵ The economic realities of living in an overcrowded city, and the fact that the labour shortage in the service sector was so acute by mid-1943 that employers were willing to hire workers without any previous training, induced many women to accept positions that probably would not have attracted them otherwise. Women workers in low-paying non-essential occupations were not as likely to pressure employers for better wages and working conditions as their higher-paid counterparts in war industries.

Despite an ongoing labour shortage in occupations that actively recruited women, there was little evidence that the war offered women in low-paying jobs in Halifax an opportunity to collectively improve their economic position. In male-oriented union shops, the war did offer precisely that opportunity by facilitating the formation of

⁴Metson, pp. 86-87, 92.

⁵An example of a "black market" transaction would be the illegal sale of marked gasoline for use in a private automobile, whereas a "grey market" deal would involve a retailer holding a rationed item or commodity for a valued customer, in return for a tidy mark-up on the regulated price. The former entails an illegal sale of (probably) stolen goods; the latter would be a legitimate transaction were it not for the premium paid "under the counter."

collective bargaining units and securing union recognition. But the social backgrounds, economic motivations, and working conditions of women were far too diverse to foster union allegiances. The prospect of employment was not what brought many to Halifax in the first place, and it was only after discovering what living conditions were like and how desperate many employers were to hire workers that women responded. For many wage-earning women in the Halifax area, patriotism was less powerful an incentive to seek employment than opportunism and need. The ongoing labour shortage was also likely exacerbated by wartime wage rates that remained too low to entice many women – at least until inducements like propaganda, peer pressure and the NSS validation of part-time work in 1943 began to take effect.⁶ The figures told the tale: for the year ended October 1st, 1943, the Dominion Bureau of Statistics estimated that nationally, only 37,251 women were employed full time in “manufacturing industries,” whereas 80,238 were reported to be working “in trade, 32,958 in finance and 25,819 in miscellaneous services.”⁷

Because of the dramatic expansion of military and government administrations during the war, clerical workers were nearly always in short supply. Once again local conditions seemed to highlight the shortcomings of a hastily-erected war bureaucracy. Despite the tight controls over allocation, mobility and wages of wartime workers, the government often faltered in the execution of efficient and equitable labour management. The Halifax Mobilization Office of the National Selective Service was a noteworthy

⁶Pierson, *Canadian Women*, p. 11.

⁷PANS MG 1 Vol. 494, H.B. Jefferson papers, unidentified newspaper clipping, 19 December 1943.

example. An exasperated registrar at the office wrote to his Ottawa superiors in September 1943:

[W]e were definitely promised that employees in this city would receive...\$75.00...per month after six months service... It has been explained to me time and time again that these increases were to be automatic...

For the past year I have had the unpleasant duty of writing, telephoning, telegraphing and on one occasion visiting the Ottawa office in an effort to retain the people on our staff who could do the work we ask. It is true in some cases adjustments have been made, in others my representations have been simply ignored...

What we require in Halifax is a minimum of seventy-five dollars...and advances on that rate after experience. What I ask is that...all employees of this office be reviewed for increases at proper intervals.⁸

The registrar, Colonel E.W. Mingo, enumerated eleven clerks in his office who had not been promoted despite Mingo's persistent entreaties to the Department of Labour. The clerks, all women, were graded Class 1 and as such received the lowest probationary rate of \$60 per month, even though all had accumulated enough experience to qualify them for a Class 2 salary of \$75. One woman had worked for five years in a Hamilton, Ontario office prior to her employment by the NSS; another clerk in the filing department was a graduate of Dalhousie University.⁹ Mingo protested that "these employees [are] now on the 'sweat shop' salary rate." This was no exaggeration. Charwomen employed by the National Harbours Board were paid ten dollars more per month than the Class 1 clerks in Mingo's office.¹⁰ Income disparity between white and blue collar workers also

⁸NA RG 27 Vol. 990 file 2-3-8 (part 2), Mingo to Rutledge, 24 September 1943.

⁹Ibid. Four of the eleven women were married.

¹⁰NA RG 66 Vol. 31 "National Harbours Board, Halifax, Schedule of Wages and Conditions in effect 1st July, 1943". Based on a 44 hour work week at an hourly rate of 40 cents.

existed in male occupations. For example, a common labourer at the NHB earned nearly one-third more than a male office clerk.¹¹

Wage discrimination against women was endemic and not necessarily restricted to the civil service, but the bureaucratic inertia that taxed Colonel Mingo's patience actually drove many competent workers of both sexes away from government jobs in search of better pay and more frequent advancement. Mingo cited one case where a highly-prized but underpaid male clerk waited in vain for promotion. By the time the authorization finally came through, the employee had already given his notice.

In response to these complaints, Ottawa suggested hiring married women to work part-time, recruiting female clerks in Western Canada, and canvassing government departments in Ottawa to find "Maritime girls [who] would return to the Maritimes." The latter idea "appeals to me," a National Selective Service official wrote, but hiring married women was "not too satisfactory," nor was Western recruitment "in view of the shortage of living quarters" in Halifax.¹² His observations reflected the implied assumption that there was a qualitative difference between what native Maritimers would accept in terms of housing conditions and what others – notably Western Canadians – would find tolerable.

The real crux of Col. Mingo's labour problems was that private firms were adapting more quickly to changes in labour market conditions by paying higher salaries than the public service – well over \$60 per month in some cases. Mingo insisted that nothing less

¹¹NA RG 66 Vol. 31, "Schedule of Wages and Conditions, 1st July, 1943."

¹²NA RG 27 Vol. 990 file 2-3-8 (part 1), Rutledge to McNamara, 29 September 1943.

than \$75 per month should be the starting salary in the Mobilization office. At least one federal official agreed that “unless the Government realizes that they will have to pay this price, we will never get any workers.”¹³

Just as some workers benefited from the war boom more than others, the same was true of employers. While Colonel Mingo complained about the low salaries of clerical workers, private sector employers were protesting that government pay packets were too fat – thus driving up the going rate for the same occupation in the city. One such employer, Joseph R. Murphy, wrote to the Minister of Defence for Naval Services, Angus L. Macdonald, in June 1942, voicing concerns about the high wages being paid to seamstresses in the Halifax Dockyard. Murphy employed seamstresses at two-thirds the \$22 per week rate paid by the Dockyard, and he wanted the government rates changed. Macdonald referred the matter to the Minister of Labour, Humphrey Mitchell, who replied that “it [was] hard to justify a rate of \$12.00 to \$15.00 a week for girls, even though Mr. Murphy feels they would be satisfied to work for such wages.” Mitchell took no action on the matter, commenting that he was sure the Naval Minister did not support interfering in the work which was being done in Dockyard “even though it meant that a private employer had to suffer.”¹⁴

Mitchell’s aside notwithstanding, one may assume that the employees of Murphy’s firm endured greater hardship during the war than their employer. Most wage earners in Halifax – particularly women – did not profit from the industrial expansion that

¹³NA RG 27 Vol. 990 file 2-3-8 (part 1), McLaren to MacNamara, 4 October 1943.

¹⁴PANS MG 2, Angus L. Macdonald papers, file F883/7, Mitchell to Macdonald, 2 July 1942.

characterized the wartime economy, driving up wages and giving organized labour in other parts of Canada a sense of unity and purpose. Other than skilled occupations related to the military and shipbuilding, the war boom in Halifax was limited to a sudden expansion of the public and private service sector – but little else. The demand for clerical workers was always high, but because most of the jobs were filled by women, wages were depressed from the outset and kept low by government wage controls. The same was true for the wartime glut of menial jobs servicing the massive transient population that inundated the city. Hotels, restaurants, cafes, hostels, laundries, cinemas, dance halls, retail stores all enjoyed brisk business activity, yet employees in those businesses – waitresses, maids, kitchen help, ushers, sales clerks – barely earned a living wage given the high cost of housing. Examples abound. By January 1945 the Gainsboro Hotel employed maids at the paltry rate of \$28 per month, a figure so low it suggests they worked only half-days. By contrast, custodial services – a traditionally male occupation – at the same hotel paid \$91 per month, and a desk clerk earned \$125. At Citadel Motors, a large automotive franchise, the starting monthly salary for a parts department assistant was \$64, for a stenographer-secretary it was eight dollars more. At the top end of the wage scale, an entry-level service manager at the same dealership started at \$140 and with experience he could earn as much as \$200 per month.

The upper and lower limits of average wages and salaries did not vary all that much from prewar levels, since the finance minister, J.L. Ilsley, sought to keep a tight lid on runaway inflation of the type that had plagued the Canadian economy during the First World War. The virtual elimination of unemployment rolls and the recruitment of women

into the labour force did nothing to erase the income inequities already built into the local economy. By 1944, a female industrial worker was still earning only two-thirds the wage of her male equivalent, although she could easily make double the hourly rate of her counterpart in the textile industry.¹⁵ Little headway was made by women in manual labour occupations, however, where significant gains in average earnings were made due to the wartime shortage of male workers. The median wage of a labourer in the construction industry in Halifax, by the end of the war, was about 50 cents an hour or \$90 per month.¹⁶

Another oft-mentioned but seldom analyzed side to the whole question of the participation of Halifax women in the war effort was their involvement in a plethora of voluntary groups providing food, lodging and entertainment to thousands of transient service personnel. The Dominion Census did not record participation rates in voluntary organizations. Producing quantitative figures on the precise dimensions of this involvement would entail meticulous research into the activities and membership rolls of many organizations. This labour was a crucial aspect of the community's overall war effort and it is difficult to conceive how these essential services would have been provided without the contributions of many hundreds of women volunteers. Since by and large these activities were accepted as being the responsibility of charitable and church organizations, the government depended on philanthropic voluntarism to provide labour which would otherwise have placed a considerable burden on the federal treasury.

¹⁵Pierson, *Canadian Women*, p. 10. The figures given are 83 cents per hour in the aircraft industry, and 37 cents for female textile workers.

¹⁶NA RG 36 series 4 Vol. 75 file: Nova Scotia Regional War Labour Board, January 1945. Application of W.G. Foley & Son Limited, Halifax, 10 January 1945.

There is little question that a large proportion of employable – as well as employed – women were engaged in voluntary activities. Some women devoted all of their spare time to volunteer work. Others contributed less frequently due to family responsibilities or steady jobs, preferring to work a shift or two per week in canteens and hostels, or knit “comforts” – wool socks, mitts, and caps – for seamen. But enthusiasm waned in the latter stages of the war when the novelty of the experience wore off and the long hours and meagre rewards began to take their toll. One of the most frustrating aspects of voluntary work for organizers was the high proportion of transients among volunteers. Women’s Voluntary Services (WVS), a sort of labour exchange for volunteers much like the seamen’s manning pool, issued a desperate plea for workers on the day that Allied forces landed in Normandy. Lamenting that “women who are making their homes temporarily in Halifax have not...been responding” to the call, the WVS declared that it was “constantly receiving requests for emergency workers, for one day, or for a few weeks, and needs the time of every [available] woman... especially in the daytime.” The housing and population survey conducted by E. L. Cousins in early 1944 found many women “living in our midst with plenty of time for movies and bridge,” but when the WVS attempted to enlist volunteers, it was “met by ready alibis.”¹⁷

There undoubtedly was intense social and peer pressure on women to engage in voluntary work, but their reluctance to do so might not necessarily be attributed to selfishness. Unlike those who entered the war effort by joining the armed forces, civilian

¹⁷Unidentified newspaper clipping, 6 June 1944, courtesy the late Edith Girouard, *nee* Macneill.

women more often than not were fully-occupied maintaining a household. Thus becoming involved in war service often required a greater commitment than organizers and propagandists often realized. The executive membership of the Halifax Council of Social Agencies and its various divisions revealed disproportionate representation of middle class women whose economic and social backgrounds predisposed them to social service activities. Among the eight married women listed, the husbands of three were managers of large companies. One each was married to a newspaper reporter, university professor, lawyer and physician. Family responsibilities were presumably minimal for nine other women who were unmarried, and for two belonging to religious orders.¹⁸ The men on the CSA executive were also drawn largely from the professional and managerial classes, with two lawyers, two clergymen, two physicians, one university professor, the president of an insurance company and the vice-president of a large retail firm among the thirteen male executives listed in 1944.

Volunteers leading private war service organizations also evinced relatively narrow socio-economic origins, if the Ajax Hospitality Headquarters can be taken as a representative example. On its 1942 executive of thirteen women, all but three were married. Two were wives of physicians, the husband of another was a lawyer, and two others were married to a civil servant and a realtor, respectively.¹⁹ Of the 56 women volunteering part-time at Ajax Hospitality Headquarters in 1944 and 1945, only 16 were

¹⁸PANS MG 20 Vol. 409 folder 10, Welfare Council of Halifax-Dartmouth, Shand to Bradford, 23 March 1944; occupations taken from 1950 *Might's City Directory*. Five women were employed in professional social service occupations in 1950, and nine were not listed.

¹⁹NA RG 24 Vol. 11063 file 30-13-14, *Ajax Hospitality Headquarters, Halifax, Nova Scotia, September 1942 - December 1942*. Published privately in Halifax, n.d.

single. Over half the volunteers could not be positively identified in the 1950 *City Directory*, suggesting that a large number were not native to Halifax. Among those married volunteers who could be identified, the husband's occupation in 1950 included the director of the National Research Council, the local manager of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, two civil servants, a fish merchant, an investment broker, an accountant, an insurance agent, an Anglican minister and employees of the telephone company and a transatlantic cable company. One unmarried volunteer was the secretary of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia and another was a teacher.²⁰

These occupations reflected a strongly middle class bias, but more importantly, the composition of Ajax volunteers demonstrated the degree to which organizations led by non-natives and funded largely from outside sources depended on local women for voluntary labour. Socio-economic background thus appears to have influenced volunteer propensity to a greater extent than one's status as a permanent or temporary resident. The latter were under-represented in war service organizations not because they were unwilling to become volunteers, but because the majority were dependents of lower rank service personnel or employed in wage-earning occupations. When Marjory Whitelaw selected interview subjects for her radio retrospective "Women and the Halifax War" in 1975, one had been an officer in the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service, one a naval gunnery officer's wife, and three others were health or social service professionals. Only one – Whitelaw herself – was employed in a wage-earning occupation (albeit a well-

²⁰*Ajax Hospitality Headquarters, Halifax, Nova Scotia, January 1944 - March 1945*. Published privately in Halifax, ca. April 1945. Copy in possession of the author courtesy Marilyn Smith, curator, Maritime Command Museum, Halifax.

paying one) as a Dockyard secretary.²¹ The women volunteers mentioned in Graham Metson's 1982 photographic retrospective of the war years also tended to come from middle and upper-class families.²²

For those who did volunteer their services, the hours were long and monetary compensation meagre. Most of the work performed by volunteers was closely related to traditional domestic tasks – cooking and serving meals, sewing and knitting, and organizing social events. By far the busiest venue throughout the war was the North End Services Canteen, which began in a church basement in the fall of 1939. Over the first Christmas season of the war, the canteen played host to 5,000 French sailors and 4,000 British sailors “from battleships, a carrier and cruisers which happened to be in Bedford Basin at the time.”²³ Operations in 1940 were described in the following summary of “two weeks’ work at the Canteen”:

Two French naval ships arrived and Bernard deMassy (French Liaison Officer) called up at 6 p.m. to ask what our Canteen could do for them. The following night, Sunday, we invited all who were ashore for supper as our guests, and arranged with the Halifax Concert Bureau to give them a bilingual concert. A three course meal was served – soup, cold ham, potato scallop, ice cream, cake and coffee. Subsequently the men returned to our canteen for meals during their stay in port.

We gave three ships’ company dances for British battleships. They provided their own ships’ [company] band. We invited the girls from a carefully prepared list which we have, and the only charge made was five cents for the evening’s refreshments consisting of sandwiches, cake and coffee (as much as they

²¹PANS Film & Sound Archives, FSG 30 6.15.1 Mf 48-38 (transcript) and FSG 2 42.36.1 Ar 672 (tape), CBC Halifax radio production, “Between Ourselves” series, summer 1975, “Women and the Halifax War,” written and narrated by Marjory Whitelaw.

²²Metson, p. 107.

²³Lorna Inness, “When We Get Back To Port, I’ll See You At The North End,” *Mail-Star*, 25 October 1969, p. 5.

desired). Our regular Tuesday and Thursday dances for all three services took place as usual.

We gave two [afternoon] parties...for boy seamen off British battleships. A high tea, with ice cream, was served, the expense of which was shouldered by Halifax friends. The boys, on leaving, were given sweets, apples, and magazines to take back to the ships.

More French ships arrived and there were some five thousand 'pompons rouges' in the town. Despite the existing difficulties we managed to entertain many hundreds with five cent meals. On Sunday there was a bilingual concert. Two street cars were hired to take the men back to their ships, which was paid for out of the kitchen and entertainment fund... [A] French rating gets six cents a day, minimum pay, and the maximum pay is twelve cents. The following Sunday night we gave another bilingual concert. The hall was packed to the roof, over 700 being present, and it was literally impossible for late workers to make their way through the crowds from the entrance to the kitchen and dry Canteen. The Kiwanis Club of Halifax shouldered the entire expense...

That week we arranged through our Canteen for drives in the country, each car owner taking the men back to tea in their homes. This was arranged through the kindness of the Women's Canadian Club... This week the men of the Merchant marine are to be our guests at a party given in their honour.²⁴

This passage suggests that there was much more to the organization of voluntary war work than simply serving tea and sandwiches. Volunteers had to be part social worker, part cultural ambassador, part tour guide and full-time fund raisers in order to provide all the amenities – and even then there were some bluejackets who grumbled about the Spartan surroundings and the absence of a wet bar. Self-appointed though they

²⁴From a one-page flyer entitled: "North End Services Canteen" (n.d.); "Extract from a letter written by Mrs. C. Stuart McEuen, who is controller of the Interallied Hospitality and Food Fund of the North End Services Canteen, in conjunction with Miss Alice O'Brian and Miss Edith Macneill, Secretary-Treasurer." Document contained in scrapbook on North End Services Canteen loaned to the author by the late Edith Girouard.

were, the women who ran the North End Services Canteen were acutely aware of the demand for their services. Indeed, the executive and most of the volunteers were wives of naval officers.

In September, 1941, the canteen moved to a new building on Barrington Street, erected on land donated by Halifax Shipyards Limited. Upwards of 10,000 meals per month had been served at the old location; the new facility could handle three times as many meals and the dance floor was large enough to accommodate 1,000 instead of 300.²⁵ At its peak in 1944, the North End Services Canteen employed 130 unpaid volunteers in addition to a paid staff of eight women.²⁶

Older volunteers drew upon past war service activities during the First World War, or utilized domestic or clerical skills they already possessed. The familiar role-playing at places like the North End Canteen worked both ways, due to the extreme youth of a majority of the clientele. As one volunteer at the Airmen's Club in Winnipeg put it, the men "watched us do the cooking as they had watched their mothers in their own homes. They helped us wash dishes, peel potatoes, and, in fact, did everything but the cooking. Indeed, many the bowl and spoon were licked after the cake was iced."²⁷ For younger women, volunteer work created opportunities for personal development and kindled career-oriented interest in the fields of education, social work or the service sector. This was an aspect of the home front often overlooked in studies of wartime employment

²⁵*Herald*, 16 September 1941, p. 8.

²⁶Inness, "When We Get Back To Port."

²⁷Gertrude Laing, *A Community Organizes for War: The Story of the Greater Winnipeg Co-ordinating Board for War Services and affiliated organizations* (Winnipeg, 1948), p. 13.

patterns usually focusing on women in male-dominated occupations. Unfortunately, because of its fluid nature, measuring the dimensions of voluntary war work is difficult to assess with precision. The fact that this type of employment was unpaid does not warrant its being ignored, however, especially in terms of revealing how women – and society – perceived the significance of their participation in the war effort.

The chief distinction between paid and unpaid labour was of course a paycheck, but lack of recognition also reflected cultural biases that viewed volunteer work as the extension of a woman's "natural" role as maternal caregiver. Consequently, the acceptance of women into traditionally male roles in the armed forces and in civilian occupations garnered far more public attention, particularly when the need arose to remind women that their wartime occupations were temporary. In April 1945, the *Halifax Mail* ran a series of interviews with women in uniform and on the job, asking them about "their postwar plans."²⁸ The implication was clear that whatever those plans might be, they should not include using skills acquired in temporary employment to compete with servicemen re-entering civilian life.

It was regrettable that so much of the vast network of war service organizations created during the war would be quietly dismantled when women volunteers returned to raising families on a full-time basis. But the truth is, there was enough duplication of effort, inefficiency, petty rivalries, and mismanagement among the various volunteer groups to discourage any notion of turning the whole effort into a permanent organization.

²⁸NA RG 2 series 18 Vol. 29 file R-70-10 (vol. 1), Wartime Information Board: Rehabilitation Information Committee, "Press Survey for April 1945."

Thus the long term rewards of the volunteer experience tended to rub off on individuals, as they became more politically or socially conscious as a result of their wartime activities, and on the national service organizations able to apply what they had learned in a peacetime context. As a community, however, Halifax derived little of lasting value from the remarkable record of civic altruism achieved during the war, and today this aspect of the city's history remains largely forgotten.

The professionalization of social work and bureaucratization of community social service functions previously supported mainly by church-based organizations also directed larger numbers of women along income-oriented rather than marriage-directed paths. Some of them would become role models for the next generation of aspiring career women. It is worth noting, however, that half of all Halifax professionals in 1941 already were women, and by 1951 women continued to outnumber men in that occupational group.²⁹ Nationally, the participation rate of women in professional occupations was still only 43 per cent in 1961.³⁰ This suggests that the predominance of health care and educational institutions in Halifax provided enhanced career opportunities for women aside from any apparent gains achieved as a result of the war.

It is true that the war created increased demand for workers in low-paying service sector occupations that were most often filled by women – in hotels and restaurants, and in typing and stenographic work, for example. Domestic service, “the unemployment insurance of the poorer woman,” was still common in the 1940s, especially among black

²⁹See Figs. 6-7 and 6-8.

³⁰Dominion census data cited in John Porter, *Canadian Social Structure: A Statistical Profile* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967), Table E7, p. 94.

women, despite long hours, low pay and low status. Not much better in terms of remuneration and prestige was the food service industry, where working conditions fluctuated “unpredictably from one business to another” and workers were unduly dependent on gratuities to supplement meagre paychecks.³¹ Perhaps the best that uneducated or semi-skilled women could expect in terms of steady employment was work in the garment industry (Clayton & Sons), the telephone company (Maritime Telegraph & Telephone Co.) and Moir’s confectionery works. The Clayton company received several large government contracts during the war, and MT&T benefited from the huge demand for telephones. Both firms hired large numbers of women, but the majority of female workers continued to be employed in low-paying clerical, sales and personal service occupations.

Notwithstanding the rhetoric of patriotism and self-sacrifice, what mattered most to the average citizen was earning a living wage. Workers in war industry and most government jobs were able to achieve this basic goal with little effort, but others found the going a little tougher. There was no guiding principle or strategic planning with regard to wartime wage controls, the labour supply, or economic management at the local level. When deemed necessary by the exigencies of war, as in the case of manpower requirements on the Halifax waterfront, state controls were strictly – if belatedly – applied. But this was the exception, not the rule. By and large, one is struck by the degree to which prewar socio-economic patterns persisted against the backdrop of an urban

³¹Veronica Strong-Boag, “The Girl of the New Day: Canadian Working Women in the 1920’s,” in Michael S. Cross and Gregory S. Kealey, eds., *The Consolidation of Capitalism, 1896-1929* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1983), p. 176.

economy only partially transformed by the war. The size of the urban work force changed, but the stark social contrasts between economic classes did not.

The Cousins survey data brought these discrepancies into broad relief. For the purposes of this study, occupations were aggregated into seven categories: manufacturing, construction, transportation, commercial/clerical, professional, service, and armed forces. These groupings reflect those adopted by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics for the 1941 and 1951 censuses. The wartime census-takers made no attempt to categorize members of the armed forces from an occupational standpoint. Military personnel were usually identified by rank, which rarely denoted a position easily compared to a civilian occupation. Service personnel are included here as an occupational category, not because the Cousins survey contained especially revealing information, but simply to show what percentage of the adult population was employed by the military. In this context, members of the armed forces comprised the largest single occupational group in the city, but the 1951 Dominion Census revealed more service personnel residing in the city than at any time during the Second World War.

In 1941, one of every four jobs in Halifax was either commercial, (including wholesale and retail), or clerical. Fig. 6-1 indicates a marked decline in this category between 1941 and 1944. This apparent decrease may be misleading, however, since many clerical and retail workers were single women who would not have turned up on the Cousins survey, which tended to record the occupations of household heads. By 1944, the worst was over in terms of the labour shortage in office clerks, typists and stenographers.

Fig. 6-1. Major Occupational Groups in Halifax, 1941, 1944 and 1951.

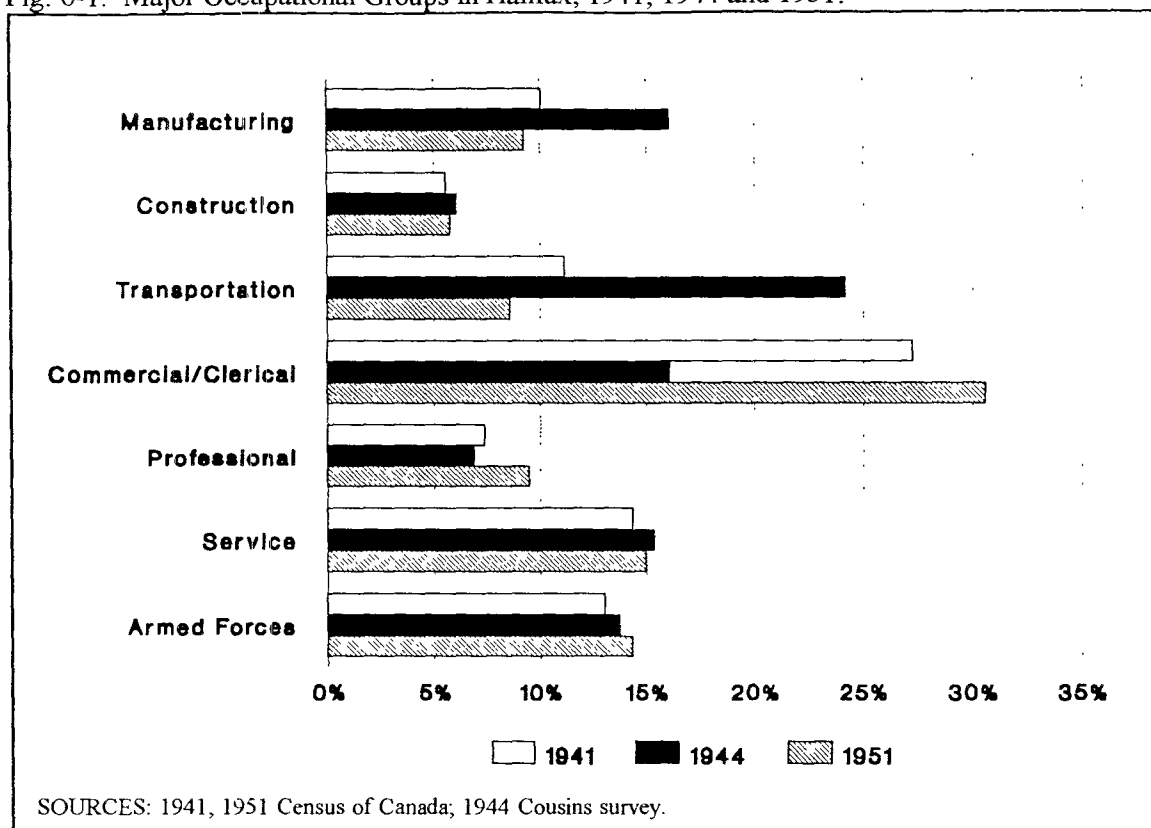
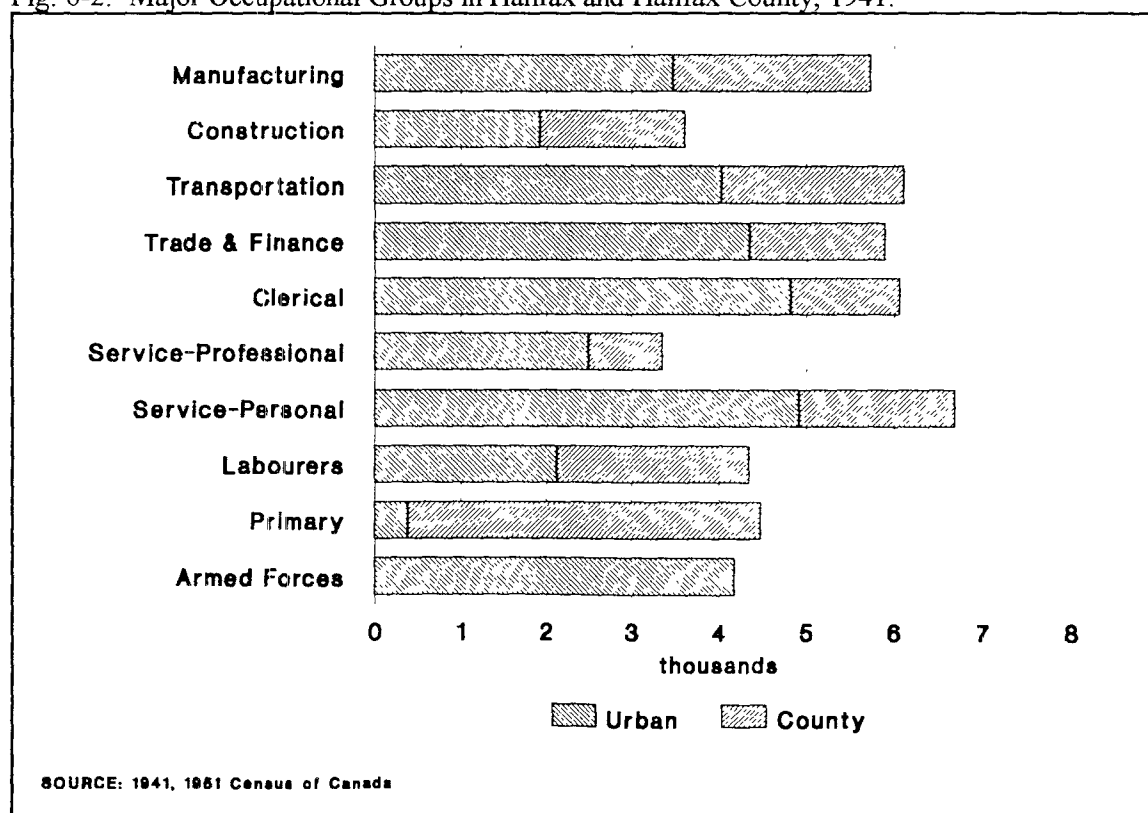


Fig. 6-2. Major Occupational Groups in Halifax and Halifax County, 1941.



A less ambiguous statistic is that of construction, the smallest category of all the groups surveyed. The bulk of construction contracts in the Halifax area consisted of government projects for workers' housing and expansion of naval and air bases on both sides of the harbour. Without the presence of Wartime Housing Limited, construction activity in Halifax would have been slight, aside from modernization of the Dockyard and HMCS *Stadacona*, where an ongoing building programme barely kept pace with manning and operational requirements.

Comparing 1951 figures with census data gathered ten years before show that white collar and professional occupations in Halifax fared better in the immediate postwar period than blue collar jobs. In manufacturing and transportation sectors, the number of blue collar workers declined after the war, and the construction industry recorded almost no growth. Meanwhile, professionals and workers in the service sector grew between 1941 and 1951. Fig. 6-2 suggests that one explanation for the apparent white collar ascendancy during this period was that many blue collar workers, either by necessity or by choice, moved outside city limits and commuted to work once wartime restrictions on automobile travel were lifted.

Until the United States entered the war in December 1941, American ports could not be used for assembling convoys. Thus the transportation sector in Halifax was the first to be positively affected by the war, and subsequent growth far exceeded that of other sectors. Manufacturing also grew, albeit less dramatically. These two sectors declined rapidly once the war ended, however. Fewer manufacturing and transportation jobs existed in 1951 than in 1941, yet 40 per cent of Halifax workers in 1944 belonged to these

two sectors. In Halifax at least, the short-term economic benefits of full employment and higher wages appear to have been offset by the failure of these key wartime sectors to maintain their wartime momentum into the postwar period.

The shipping industry represented one important area where the transportation and manufacturing sectors overlapped. As outlined in the previous chapter, the chief task of the shipyards was repairing and refitting vessels. In one six-month period, from the beginning of November 1941 to the end of April 1942, “a total of 2943 cargo ships arrived in Halifax, and out of this number, 2230 [76 per cent] required repairs.”³² There were, at any given time, 40 to 50 vessels either undergoing or awaiting work of some kind. Vessels were not only serviced in the floating dry-dock or marine railways; for minor repairs, the work was often carried out while the ship lay at anchor in Bedford Basin. Traveling by lighter back and forth each day, some shipyard workers laboured for months without ever seeing the inside of a shipyard.

Given the congestion in the harbour and the seriousness of the shipping situation at the time, the decision to award contracts to the Halifax Shipyards for two Tribal class destroyers in June 1941 – with two more soon to follow – seems in hindsight to have been unwise.³³ The pronouncement by a Halifax Member of Parliament in late December 1943 that the wartime shipbuilding and ship-repair industries “would continue to be of vital

³²NA RG 25 G2 Vol. 207 file 3645-40C, “Comments on Report by Mr. D.B. Carswell, Controller of Ship Repairs and Salvage, Department of Munitions and Supply, Canada,” pp. 1-2.

³³Recent research supports this assertion. Dean Chappelle, “Building a Bigger Stick: The Construction of Tribal Class Destroyers in Canada, 1940-48,” paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association, Calgary, 11-14 June 1994. I am grateful to the author for providing me with a copy of his paper.

importance for many years after the cessation of hostilities” sounded more like a tonic for the troops than a statement of fact. “The irritations of wartime restrictions have been experienced in large measure in this city,” he continued, “but to the lasting credit of its citizens...they have sustained their hardships, inconveniences and discomforts in such a spirit as to win the admiration of all Canadians.”³⁴ The honourable member did not wish to sour the holiday mood of his constituents.

Political considerations notwithstanding, the Tribals programme did have its practical side, since it provided a means of furnishing steady employment for shipyard workers during lulls in repair work. This was especially true in the latter stages of the war. But the logical long term benefit to building warships in Halifax was the training of a highly-skilled, well-paid workforce which would presumably contribute to expansion of the industrial base after the war. Events would show such dreams to be short-lived.

The occupational skills of shipyard workers were closely linked to the war economy. They were not readily transferable to other types of manufacturing and, unlike the aircraft industry, shipbuilding did not shift from military to civilian production after the war. For the industry as a whole, the period was unquestionably a high-water mark – shipbuilding workers had not enjoyed such job security since the First World War. The industry also underwent significant technological change as a result of the war. Standardization became the norm, and some craft-oriented practices were phased out in favour of methods more akin to the automobile assembly line. Apprenticeship programmes were accelerated in

³⁴PANS MG 1 Vol. 494, H.B. Jefferson papers, unidentified newspaper clipping, 19 December 1943.

some occupations and eliminated entirely in others. In effect, a whole new industry was fashioned out of remnants of the old.

Government regulatory policy aimed at preserving the status quo as much as possible, and only reluctantly were the fundamental transformations taking place acknowledged. Eventually, a new job classification system was instituted in May 1944, reducing the number of job titles to 90 from 120 and establishing basic wage rates for five broad categories: “highly-skilled”; “journeyman”; “specialist”; “semi-skilled”; and “unskilled.” *Highly-skilled* denoted workers who possessed several years’ experience as a journeyman. *Journeyman* applied to skilled tradesmen who completed at least four years in a recognized apprenticeship programme, or who demonstrated, “to the satisfaction of their employer, their ability to lay-out, set up and carry through, independently, any job that might be assigned, working from blueprints and specifications.” *Specialists* performed specific operations in trades that were “generally not subject to formal apprenticeship training.” *Semi-skilled* workers were non-apprenticed labourers or helpers who acquired some “work knowledge” by practice and instruction under the direction of a foreman or supervisor. *Unskilled* classifications performed “common labour work” for which no previous experience was necessary.³⁵ [See Appendix D for further details].

The new classification scheme set out in the National War Labour Board ruling of 2 May 1944 pleased union leaders because it established wage guidelines for shipyard trades, however not all repair yards came under the jurisdiction of the National Board.

³⁵NA MG 28 I 103 Vol. 66 file 8, “Schedule I - Part II, Occupational Definitions,” n.d. Shipyard classifications are explained in detail in APPENDIX D.

Large firms like Halifax Shipyards Limited and the Naval Dockyard were deemed essential war industries and thus fell under the purview of the National Board, whereas smaller firms such as Purdy Bros. and T. Hogan & Co. applied to the Regional War Labour Board for wage adjustments and reclassifications.

The May 1944 ruling placed all repair and shipbuilding operations under the same regulatory umbrella, but subtle differences remained between wages and benefits in large and small firms, between yards in urban and rural localities, and among Maritime, Central and Western regions. One issue frequently raised by labour leaders in Halifax in the wake of the NWLB award was the failure to grant the same retroactive pay increases to all ship workers, regardless of their place of employment. Only workers at Halifax Shipyards Limited and the Naval Dockyard were given a pay raise that included a one-year retroactive bonus. Another source of discontent in the smaller yards was the NWLB ruling giving employees at HSL annual paid vacations, whereas a similar application by T. Hogan & Co. was turned down by the Regional War Labour Board.³⁶ The rationale of government adjudicators in both cases was that the small yards might be financially incapable of affording the same benefits as larger concerns, however in the case of the T. Hogan application, the manager of the company joined his employees in petitioning for paid vacations. These variations in the application of government labour policy clearly perpetuated competition and confrontation on the business front, despite the superficial

³⁶NA MG 28 I 103 Vol. 66, file 9, Murray to Conroy, 16 May 1944.

appearance of a unified war effort so carefully cultivated in the media and promoted by official decree.

Small firms receiving infrequent war contracts were often less inclined to go along with the government's maladroit attempts to appease labour than those riding the crest of the war boom. Political leadership in the standardization of labour practices drew a wide range of responses. Some employers, surveying the rapidly changing landscape of labour-management relations, decide to hunker down and ride out the storm. Others saw government intervention as intrusive, obstructionist and a violation of their freedom to conduct business with due attention to the bottom line. The T. Hogan & Company and Purdy Bros. Ltd. vigorously contested efforts by the Industrial Union of Marine and Shipbuilding Workers to blur distinctions between big and small establishments. In addition to retroactive pay, labour and management clashed over numerous minor issues, such as the "dirty money" bonus (T. Hogan general manager F. J. Hogan called it "a racket" where workers received extra pay "every time anyone comes in contact with a bit of grease"); the automatic up-grading of helpers' wages every six months without a qualifying test; and the designation of acetylene welders as journeymen in a "hazardous" occupation.³⁷

This hard line towards labour indicated that there were limits to how far business was prepared to go to preserve the status quo within the framework of state control. Long after the standardization order of May 1944, employers persisted in applying their

³⁷NA MG 28 J 103 Vol. 66, file 8, Purdy to Neilson, 14 November 1944; Hogan to Neilson, 20 November 1944.

own criteria to working conditions and labour requirements in their own establishments. By the same token, trying to work within the constraints imposed by the government was in many ways more demanding for employers than workers.

The war created contingencies and priorities over which employers could exert little control. During the latter half of the war, for example, attention shifted from ship repair to servicing the growing fleet of escort vessels. In January 1942, the Minister of Munitions and Supply, C.D. Howe, issued a plea to engineers employed in the Great Lakes region to “volunteer for work as engine fitters or lathe hands on ship repair work in Halifax and Saint John during the winter months.”³⁸ Obviously, this solution to the labour shortage in the east coast yards was only temporary, since workers recruited in this fashion would soon return home once the St. Lawrence opened to navigation. Maritime yards could hardly expect to build efficient workforces when the turnover rate was as high as Howe’s proposal implied.

Only a few months later, Halifax Shipyards Limited claimed it still needed “four or five times as many skilled men” as the 1,200 then employed, “if they could be made available.”³⁹ Over the next eighteen months, the labour force at HSL nearly doubled; by the summer of 1944, the yard employed three thousand workers.⁴⁰ But seasonal and

³⁸NA RG 2 series 18 Vol. 28 file D-19-B (part 1) 1942-44, “R.C.N. Monthly Review No. 1, January 1942.”

³⁹NA RG 25 G2 Vol. 207 file 3645-40C “Report made by a committee...representing the War Shipping Administration of the United States to Rear Admiral Emory S. Land...30th March 1942 with reference to the port of Halifax, N.S., Canada,” p. 1.

⁴⁰NA MG 30 A 94 Vol. 42 file 3123, Department of Labour, *Report and Findings of the Board of Conciliation and Investigation*, “In the Matter of...a dispute between the Halifax Shipyards, Ltd., Halifax, N.S., and its employees...” (Ottawa, 17 June 1944), p. 13.

operational fluctuations in labour demand continued to occur. In the spring of 1942, for example, HSL management were planning to lay off workers once Montréal and points upriver became accessible. As it happened, U-boats suddenly appeared in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, effectively shutting down merchant traffic in that area and maintaining pressure on Saint John and Halifax through the summer. By early 1943, East Coast repair facilities “had become saturated.”⁴¹

The instability of the labour supply and the government’s policy of relying on yards in Central Canada whenever they were available militated against Halifax shipyards taking full advantage of the windfall business opportunities afforded by the war. Ironically, one of the reasons why HSL received the destroyer contracts was to maintain “continuous employment during the summer months when there is normally a falling-off in the amount of repair work,” but the net effect of the Tribal contracts was to siphon off about 40 per cent of HSL’s productive output. A company representative would later claim that the destroyer contracts hindered the ability of the yard to accept certain repair work, and “prevented [us] from getting into the building of freighters to any great extent.”⁴² On the other hand, vessels requiring emergency repairs still resulted in workers being temporarily reassigned, imposing delays in the shipbuilding programme as well. Unlike the private yards, the Navy was free to draw upon its own reserves of personnel for “work parties and shop labour” – an increasingly common practice after 1942.⁴³ In general, however, ship

⁴¹Knox, “An Engineer’s Outline, Part I,” in Boutilier, *RCN in Retrospect*, p. 112.

⁴²NA RG 36 series 4 Vol. 133 file 3N-715, “Application... for a general increase in wages and changes in working conditions for employees of Halifax Shipyards Limited, et. al.,” National War Labour Board Proceedings, 30 January 1947, p. 91

⁴³Knox, p. 113.

repair operations in Halifax progressed beyond a state of chaotic congestion only when the frequency of convoy traffic and U-boat attacks began to taper off in late 1943.

As with most aspects of the war effort, human resources were allocated on an *ad hoc* basis rather than according to any systematic plan to maximize efficiency. An American team of observers were not impressed with the manner in which ship repairs were carried out when they inspected the port soon after the United States entered the war. They criticized efforts to train local workers and import skilled tradesmen, and noted that vessels often waited for weeks to receive necessary repairs. In some cases, “so-called skilled workmen” performed tasks for which they had little training – machinists were assigned jobs more suited to pipefitters or plumbers, and boilermakers served “as tinsmiths or sheet metal workers,” for example.⁴⁴

Officials in Ottawa objected to a mission from the United States visiting Halifax without first alerting the Canadian government, but the Deputy Minister for Naval Services, W.G. Mills, admitted that the report was “extremely fair and represents a true picture of the situation.”⁴⁵ Nevertheless, Canadian authorities took issue with several American charges. It was noted, for example, that the shipyards were in the process of training some 200 men for various trades – a fact overlooked by the American mission, as was the extensive training programme in the Dockyard machine shop. The Department of Munitions and Supply denied that skilled workers regularly crossed trade lines, asserting

⁴⁴War Shipping Administration, p. 2.

⁴⁵NA RG 25 G2 Vol. 207 file 3645-40C, Mills to Robertson, 22 June 1942.

“anyone familiar with labour conditions in Canada would know that labour unions [would] not tolerate such a practice.”⁴⁶

This statement betrayed a certain naiveté concerning the nature of shipyard operations in Halifax. HSL was primarily a repair yard, and as such workers were often called upon to “perform work in other classifications during periods when there is not continuous work in their particular classifications.” The practice had been widespread before the war, especially with regard to semi-skilled or journeyman occupations, because it tended “to develop...ship repair workers to a higher skill than workers confined to new ship construction.”⁴⁷ Shipyard unions could then use this advanced level of expertise among its semi-skilled members to bargain for higher wages in contract negotiations.

When business was slack, HSL used temporary classifications to avoid hiring extra workers, even though this sometimes led to “disputes over the rate of pay applicable at the time.” During the war, the system was employed, with union acquiescence, to expedite urgent repairs of damaged vessels. Union negotiators argued that ship repair workers were more highly-skilled than ship construction workers and ought to be paid accordingly; they also attempted to secure journeyman classifications for linemen, drillers, cradlemen, packers, asbestos insulators, and acetylene burners. These efforts formed part of a general campaign to consolidate wartime gains and entrench principles of industrial unionism. The campaign proved abortive, however, because the main objective, wage parity with

⁴⁶NA RG 25 G2 Vol. 207 file 3645-40C, Comments on report by Mr. D.B. Carswell, Controller of Ship Repairs and Salvage, Department of Munitions and Supply, Canada, n.d.

⁴⁷NA RG 36 series 4 Vol. 133 file 3N-715, “Application... for a general increase in wages and changes in working conditions for employees of Halifax Shipyards Limited, et. al.,” National War Labour Board Proceedings, 30 January 1947, pp. 145-46.

shipyards in Central and Western Canada, was opposed by government policymakers who were “not prepared to stabilize wages even on a regional basis which would necessitate increased costs to the government.”⁴⁸

The multiplicity of trades recorded in the 1944 Cousins survey, (which was much more detailed in this respect than census data), suggests that shipbuilding and ship repair had evolved into a mature and stable industry, despite evidence that an exodus of marine workers from Halifax began that summer due to a protracted strike.⁴⁹ Shipyard-related occupations appearing on the survey included shipwright, marine pipefitter, iron worker, riveter, corker, tankman, machinist, fireman, stage builder, plumber, driller, boilermaker, rigger, diesel mechanic, electrician, blacksmith, cabinet maker, and machine operator. But the implications of the new classification scheme introduced in 1944 were ominous. The shipbuilding industry underwent fundamental restructuring as a result of construction methods pioneered by the Kaiser yards in California and Oregon. By breaking the manufacturing process down into simplified repetitive tasks, shipyards mimicked automobile assembly lines in order to produce vessels more quickly. Although the system produced the desired result, union leaders worried about the long term security of overly-specialized as well as under-skilled workers, particularly when the shipbuilding industry resorted to the fierce competition and long dry spells that were typical of the industry in

⁴⁸NA RG 36 series 4 Vol. 133 file 3N-715, “Application... for a general increase in wages and changes in working conditions for employees of Halifax Shipyards Limited, et. al.,” National War Labour Board Proceedings, 30 January 1947, p. 25.

⁴⁹See White, “Pulling Teeth.”

peacetime.⁵⁰ These fears proved well-founded when political promises of a rosy postwar future for the Canadian shipbuilding industry turned out to be hollow.

Technological innovation also caused severe disruption among shipworkers during the war because of the transition from rivet-based construction to welding. Welding ship plate together instead of riveting became the preferred method of ship construction because it was simpler and faster. Such innovations affected a whole class of shipworker, including riveters, reamers, and bolters-up, whose numbers were drastically reduced by war's end. Despite this trend, however, many vessels – especially older ones which obviously could not be retired due to the shipping shortage – required the services of riveters and their attendants. It was not unusual to find situations where both modern and traditional techniques were employed on the same repair job. Nevertheless, riveting as a skilled trade was gradually being phased out in favour of welding, threatening the job security of those who possessed outmoded skills. Workers at the Halifax shipyards were acutely vulnerable to this development, since a disproportionate number repaired older vessels instead of building new ones. To be sure, the war boosted employment and placed a premium on the price of labour, but rapid technological change also exacted its own toll on workers caught in the crossfire between traditional skills and new manufacturing processes.

Employers were not without risk either, since exclusive attention to short-term contracts related to patching obsolete, aging merchant vessels created a workforce which

⁵⁰Telephone interview with Mr. J.K. Bell, 28 February 1991.

might be ill-suited to future peacetime requirements. Occupations in the shipbuilding and ship repair business were therefore subject to constant training and retraining, as shipyards strove to meet specialized wartime demands, and prepare themselves for the eventual resurgence of competition in the industry. An important side effect of occupational fluidity was the lack of cohesiveness and sense of common identity among shipworkers, who were perhaps less inclined to see themselves as a unified community of interest than, say, auto workers or coal miners. The course of events leading up to and during the 1944 Halifax Shipyards strike amply illustrates the disjunctive tendencies of shipyard workers.

One of the great advantages of the Cousins survey was that it permitted precise correlation of occupation with street address, so that spatial variations of socio-economic status based on occupational group could be plotted for the Halifax peninsula. The product of these calculations is presented in Figs. 6-3 and 6-4. The juxtaposition of the two graphs illustrates the degree to which occupational status influenced where in the city one was likely to reside. Professionals and managers tended to congregate in the southwest quadrant of the peninsula, whereas skilled workers occupying wartime housing in Platoon Areas Twelve and Thirteen inflated blue collar representation in the northeast. Unskilled workers may be found living in all sections of the city, however three platoon areas – Three, Five and Seven – possess significantly larger than average numbers.

These findings corroborate the housing and neighbourhood characteristics outlined in Chapter Four. Of greater interest is the spatial distribution of armed forces, which are spread more evenly throughout the city than expected, given the wide variations in housing costs and the concentration of civilian transients in certain well defined areas.

Fig. 6-3. Percentage Distribution of White Collar Occupations in Halifax, 1944.

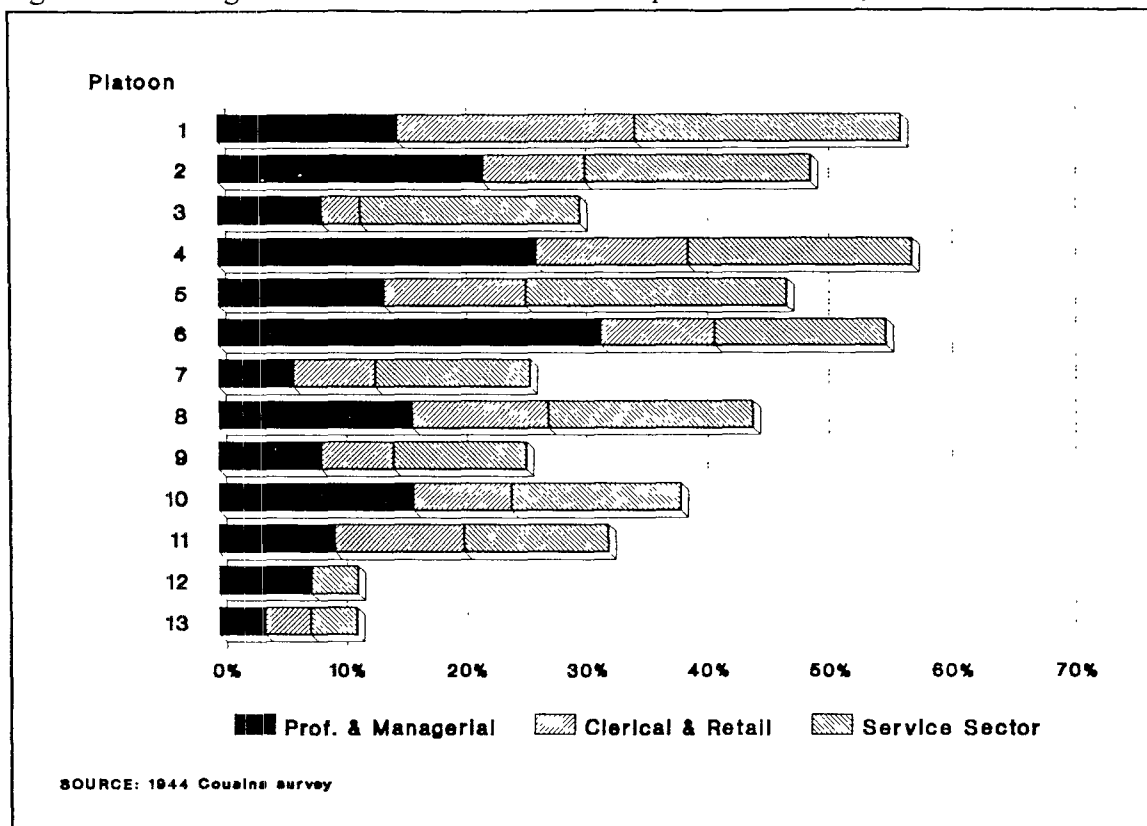
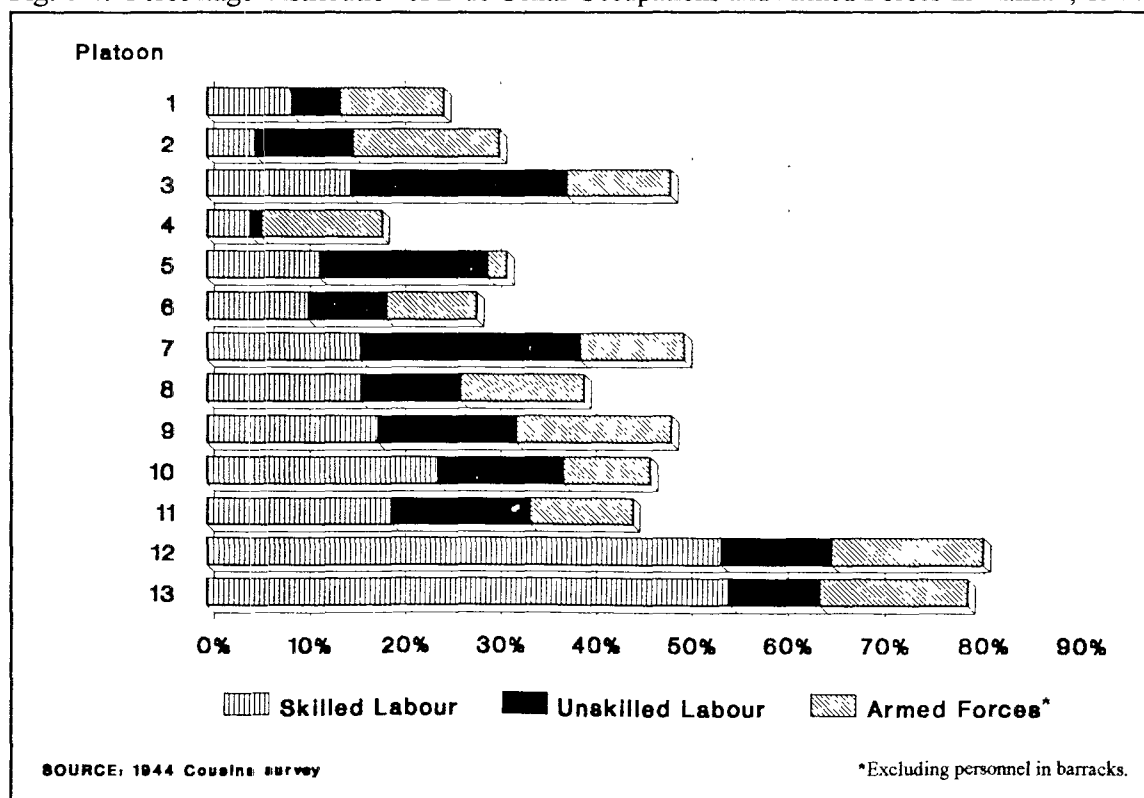


Fig. 6-4. Percentage Distribution of Blue Collar Occupations and Armed Forces in Halifax, 1944.



Since the majority were naval personnel, it would be necessary to analyze class structure in the Royal Canadian Navy in order to fully explain this phenomenon. However, the large proportion of commissioned officers among Halifax-based naval personnel undoubtedly contributed to their strong presence in more affluent neighbourhoods. [See Fig. 6-4].

The participation of women in voluntary or unpaid war work has already been discussed. Much can be said about their contribution to the paid labour force as well, but the historiography of this aspect of the Second World War is fairly robust, thanks chiefly to the work of Ruth Roach Pierson.⁵¹ Figures 6-5 and 6-6 illustrate the limited range of occupational choices open to women seeking paid employment in Halifax as compared to men, at least in the early stages of the war. The figures for 1951 show that women were successful in making long term inroads into clerical and professional occupations, but no headway at all occurred in four key sectors of the local economy – transportation, trade and finance, manufacturing and armed forces.

We have seen that government regulatory mechanisms attempted to stabilize wages in certain industries. Standardization of pay scales was much less prevalent outside essential war industry. A case in point was the National Harbours Board [NHB]. Salary raises of administrative employees averaged 41 per cent between December 1939 and December 1946, but the range of increases varied widely [Fig. 6-7]. For example, an electrical superintendent at the NHB earning \$2,400 in 1939 saw his salary go up only one

⁵¹Ruth Roach Pierson and Marjorie Griffin Cohen, *'They're Still Women After All': The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986).

Fig. 6-5. Occupational Groups by Gender (Males) in Halifax, 1941 and 1951.

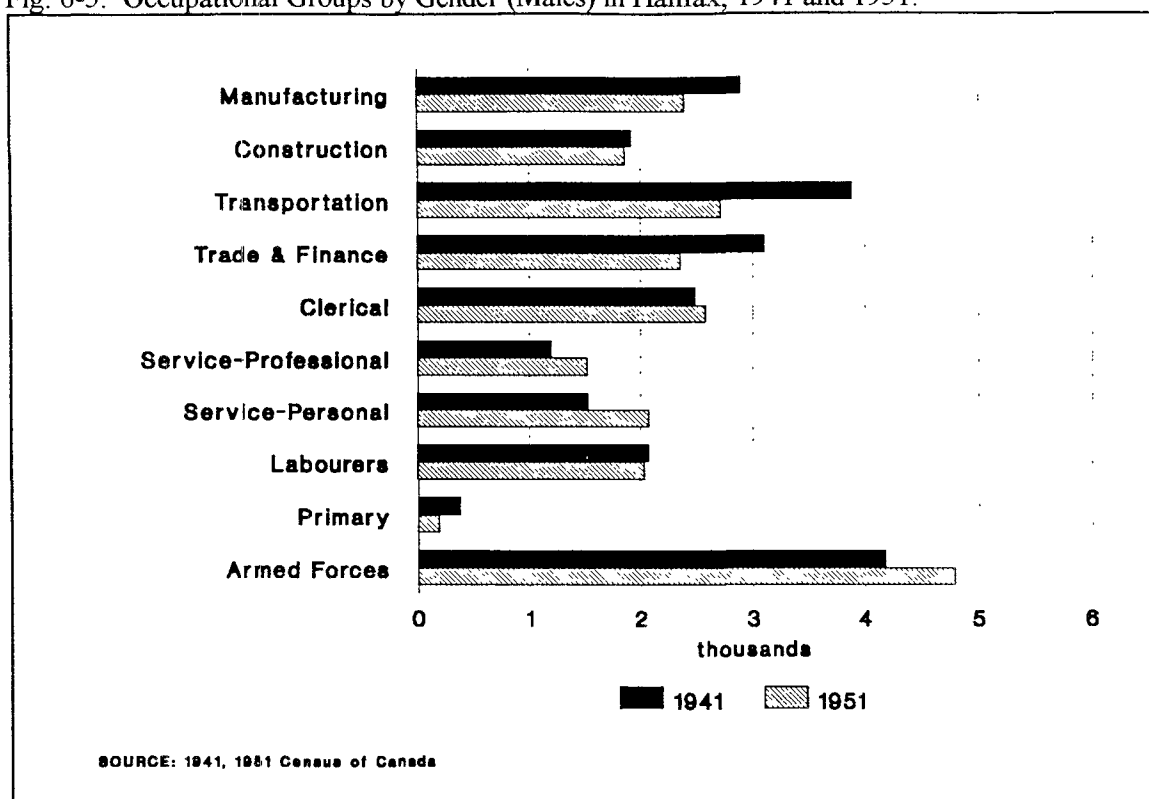
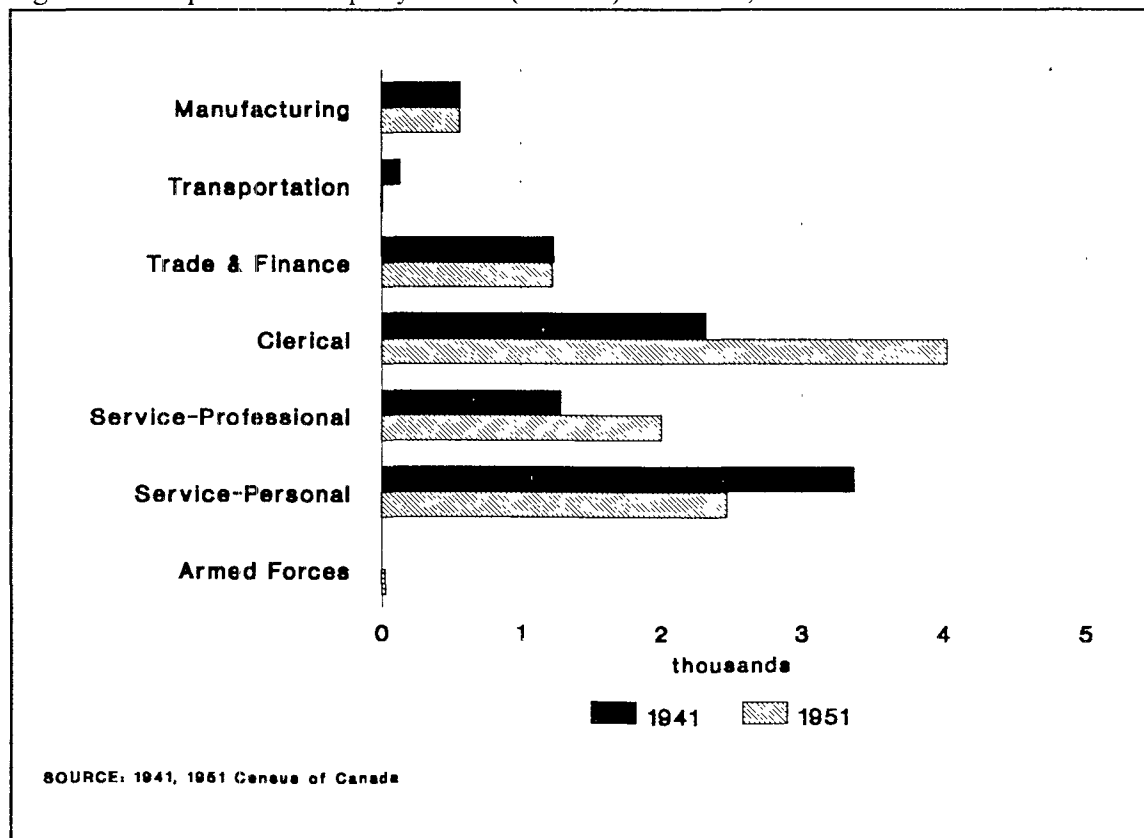


Fig. 6-6. Occupational Groups by Gender (Females) in Halifax, 1941 and 1951.



per cent per year, whereas a clerk, whose 1939 annual income was \$960, earned \$1,764 in 1946, an 83 per cent increase.⁵² These figures suggest that the war afforded greater opportunities for promotions and raises in junior positions, and the scarcity of qualified workers drove the cost of labour up in spite of the government's anti-inflationary policies. By contrast, salary levels of senior personnel had suffered less erosion during the depression, and lateral career moves were far less common among upper management because of factors like seniority and specialized knowledge acquired only through experience.

A similarly wide range of wage rates prevailed among general workers and tradesmen at the National Harbours Board. Wage-earners were grouped according to workplace: dock or transit shed, grain elevator, and cold storage plant. Overall, hourly employees accrued raises of nearly 60 per cent over seven years. Cold storage plant workers earned 76 per cent more in 1946, whereas wages at the grain elevator rose only 51 per cent [See Fig. 6-8]. Pipefitters, millwrights and electricians received the smallest increases (20 per cent); the largest were recorded by foremen and temperature men at the cold storage plant (96 and 95 per cent, respectively), truck drivers and grain elevator workers (82 per cent), and hosemen and sheet metal workers (78 per cent).⁵³

These lopsided gains reflected two conflicting trends at work in the war economy – the attempt by government to cap spiraling wage levels, and the determination of organized labour to recapture upward earnings momentum lost during the depression.

⁵²NA RG 66 Vol. 6 file H2-22, part 2, "Memorandum respecting Salaries."

⁵³Ibid.

Fig. 6-7. Salary Increases in Administrative Positions, National Harbours Board, Halifax.

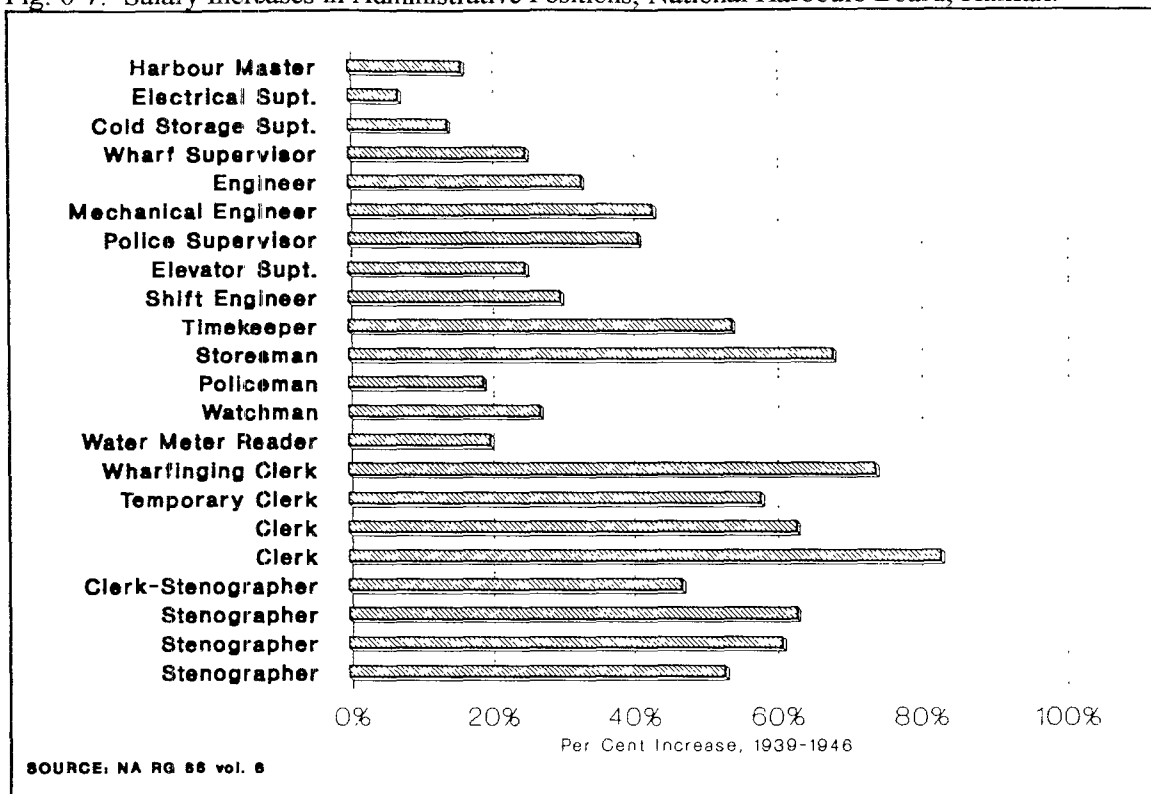
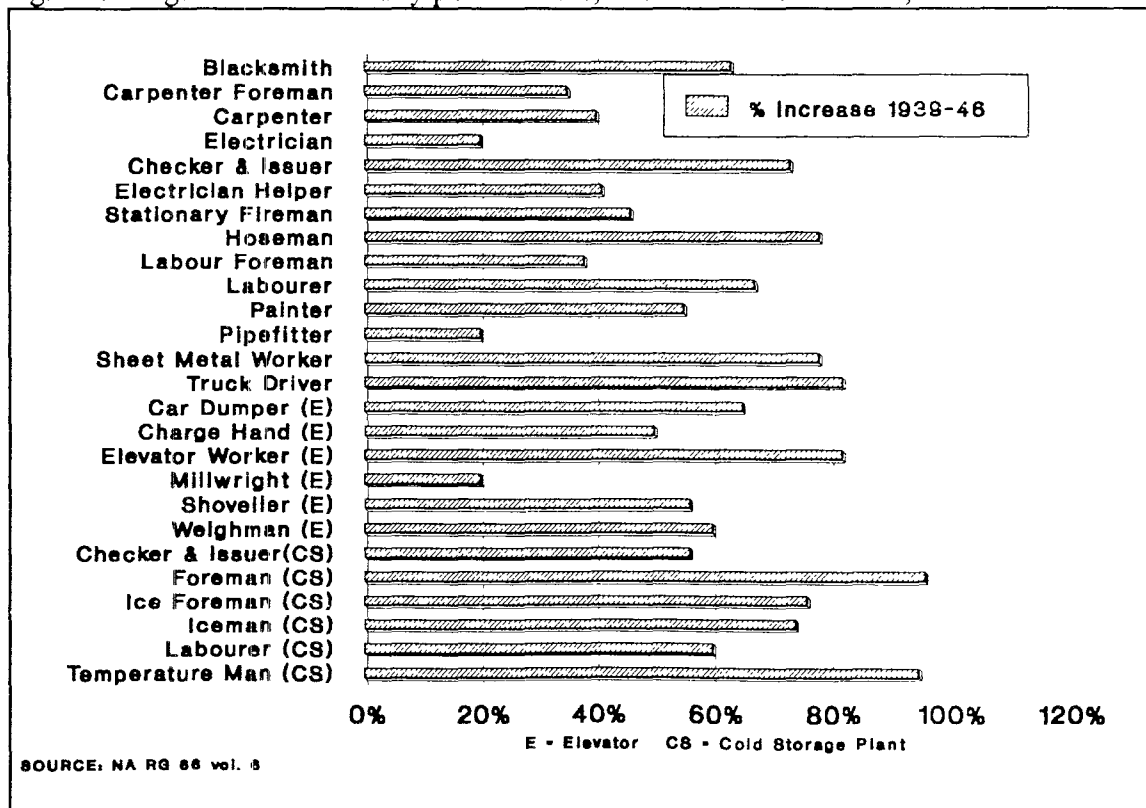


Fig. 6-8. Wage Increases in Hourly-paid Positions, National Harbours Board, Halifax.



Since the creation of the National Harbours Board in 1935, hourly-wage employees on the government waterfront had accepted lower-than-prevailing wage rates in return for year-round employment because, in the words of the NHB chairman, “artisans who were permanently employed by us could hardly expect to receive year in and year out a rate established for casual, spasmodic and uncertain employment.”⁵⁴ With the coming of war and the manpower shortage, union agitation increased among NHB workers seeking standardized job classifications and better pay.

Workers at the grain elevator and cold storage plant negotiated separate contracts with NHB management. Before the war, cold storage foremen received ten cents less per hour than general foremen at the Harbours Board. By 1946, the former’s hourly rate had nearly doubled, while the latter’s increased only 38 per cent to 83 cents per hour. An ordinary elevator worker bettered his prewar wage by 82 per cent, but millwrights, who prior to 1939 were the only skilled workers in the grain elevator (unlike the cold storage plant, which had no skilled classifications at all), earned only 20 per cent more in 1946. The war appears to have boosted real wages among unskilled workers to a larger degree than skilled workers. Indeed, in the case of the Harbours Board at least, lower echelon, unskilled or semi-skilled employees for the most part recorded far more significant gains than their managerial and skilled counterparts. This phenomenon spoke to the levelling influence of the war economy which placed a premium on labour, imposed restrictions on

⁵⁴NA RG 66 Vol. 13 file H-4-32 part 1, R.K. Smith to W.C. Macdonald, 16 September 1942.

the mobility of skilled workers in essential industries, and limited the opportunities for advancement among managers.

This point is underscored by available data on wage rates in the building trades in Halifax. The average earnings of skilled tradesmen in Halifax were comparable to Montréal but lower than prevailing rates in Toronto. This had been the case before 1939. But the war did appear to place a higher premium on unskilled labour in Halifax, especially in railway occupations [Fig. 6-9]. There is also contradictory evidence that the war itself may not have been the only factor influencing prevailing wage rates. Economists at the University of Toronto found “a general narrowing of [wage and salary] differentials among occupations in Canada during the period 1931 to 1951.” They reported that “relative earnings decreased for white-collar occupations and increased for several lower-wage occupations, namely, manufacturing and mechanical, construction trades and labourers.”⁵⁵ Moreover, between 1931 and 1951 relative wage and salary earnings among clerical, commercial and finance, and transport and communication occupations – key sectors of the Halifax economy – followed a sharp downward trend which was only briefly interrupted by the advent of war in 1939. Among clerical and secretarial workers, for example, rising demand and diminishing supply caused by the war produced conspicuous wage gains in the short term, but “relative earnings for the clerical group as a whole decreased steadily from 1931 to 1961.”⁵⁶

⁵⁵Noah M. Meltz and David Stager, *The Occupational Structure of Earnings in Canada, 1931-1975* (Hull: Canadian Government Publishing Centre, 1979), p. 74.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, p. 80.

Fig. 6-9. Average Wages in Selected Trades in Halifax, 1944.

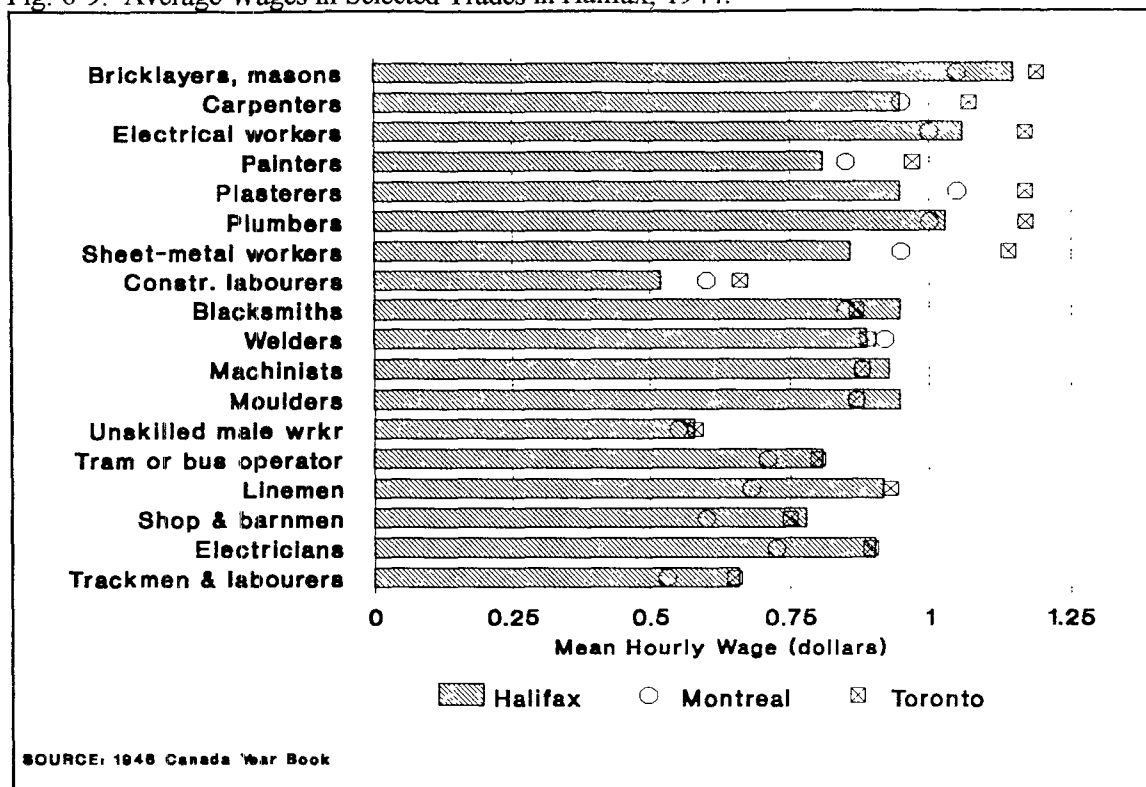
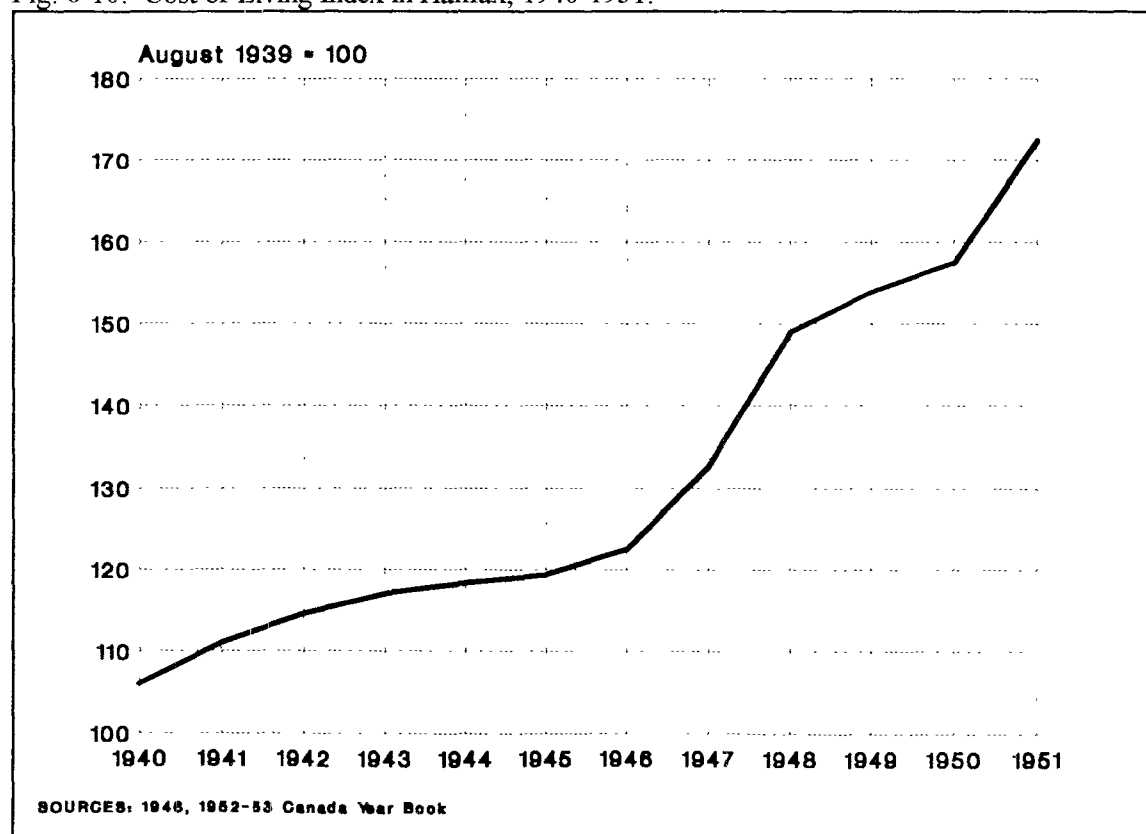


Fig. 6-10. Cost of Living Index in Halifax, 1940-1951.



The case of clerical occupations illustrates the danger of attaching too much importance to the immediate effects of the war economy without consulting long-term trends. Nor were low-paying white-collar occupations unique in suffering setbacks during this period. The salaries of doctors, dentists, lawyers, firemen, locomotive engineers, telegraph operators, to name a few, continued to decline in relative terms throughout the 1940s.⁵⁷ Neither the Dominion Census nor the Cousins survey disclosed earnings in specific occupations, but the index of retail prices and rental costs compiled by the government gives some indication of the impact of the war economy in major urban centres. According to these figures, the cost of living in Halifax escalated dramatically in the early months of the war, and continued to remain one of the most inflationary urban economies in the country. Starting from a 1913 base of 100, the index for Halifax stood at 120 in September 1939; by May of 1940, it had risen to 129.⁵⁸ This was ten points lower than the national average, but the national index rose only seven points in the same period. In other words, food and shelter costs were slightly lower in Halifax than in other Canadian cities when war broke out, but prices rose more steeply there than elsewhere in the early months of the war [Fig. 6-10].

In an effort to keep labour costs down, many war workers were given cost of living bonuses (COLBs) rather than raises. This was not universally applied at first and led to some curious anomalies. In September 1942, for example, the basic wage for carpenters

⁵⁷Meltz and Stager, Chart 6, "Patterns of Change in Relative Wage and Salary Earnings in Selected Occupations 1931-71," p. 90.

⁵⁸NA RG 66 Vol. 13 file H-4-32 part 1, Memorandum re "Cost of Living at Halifax compared with other Cities," 5 July 1940.

was 80 cents per hour, but the Dockyard gave its carpenters a COLB of \$1.85 per week, whereas private firms paid only one-third as much. The Halifax Shipyards paid its carpenters the going rate but without the bonus; the National Harbours Board paid 70 cents with a COLB of about \$15 per month; and the CNR was out of step with everybody, paying a monthly COLB of \$18.42 over an hourly wage of just 61-65 cents. In the case of electricians, the shipyards, Dockyard, and railway all paid similar rates, with the aforementioned varying bonus schedules, but a private electrical contractor in the city offered 20 per cent higher wages, time-and-a-half after five p.m. and double-time after ten o'clock. The firm did not bother with a COLB – at those wages, it could hardly have mattered much.

It has already been mentioned that employers adopted a number of individualistic approaches to dealing with the labour shortage, despite tight controls on the mobility of skilled workers. The prewar policy of paying government employees slightly lower-than-prevailing rates in return for more secure employment seems to have remained essentially intact in some trades but was abandoned in others. Private firms could not provide the same guarantees of job security as the civil service, but they compensated workers in other ways, such as by paying premium rates on overtime.

At Halifax Shipyards Limited, the Industrial Union of Marine and Shipbuilding Workers negotiated a flat rate for all skilled trades, but HSL did not pay a COLB. Workers also had to pass through a multi-tiered apprenticeship system before achieving the full union scale, beginning with “helper” (at 53 cents per hour), then “improver” (three different rates), “2nd class” (75 cents per hour) and finally “1st class” at 80 cents.

National Selective Service regulations prohibiting free mobility of skilled workers in essential war industry may have accounted for the absence of incentives like the COLB at the shipyards. By contrast, employees at the National Harbours Board were included in the public service and thus fell under the provisions of Order-in-Council P.C. 6702 (26 August 1941), which paid a Cost of Living Bonus to government employees.

The COLB was undoubtedly progressive for the time, but in retrospect it worked to the advantage of management and government as much as it benefited employees. Unions sought the COLB as a measure of insurance against high living costs, but it resulted in lower wage demands than would have been the case otherwise. During a period of strict anti-inflationary fiscal policy, it made a great deal of sense to tie wage rates to the cost of living. As long as inflation was kept in check, wage rates did not spiral out of control, and companies did not have to increase prices in order recoup higher labour costs.

The strategy worked well, for the most part, according to census figures. But it took some time for the wartime anti-inflationary policies to be put in place. As a result, the cost of living index rose more quickly in some areas of the country – notably Eastern Canada – than elsewhere during the first year of the war [Fig. 6-11]. Prices in Halifax reflected this trend, but they did not rise as sharply as in Montréal. By the end of the war, living costs in at least four urban centres – Saint John, Montréal, Toronto and Saskatoon – were higher than Halifax.⁵⁹ The Halifax economy was far more inflationary before the

⁵⁹*Canada Year Book*, 1946, Table 4, p. 864.

Fig. 6-11. Cost of Living Index in Selected Canadian Cities, 1940-45.

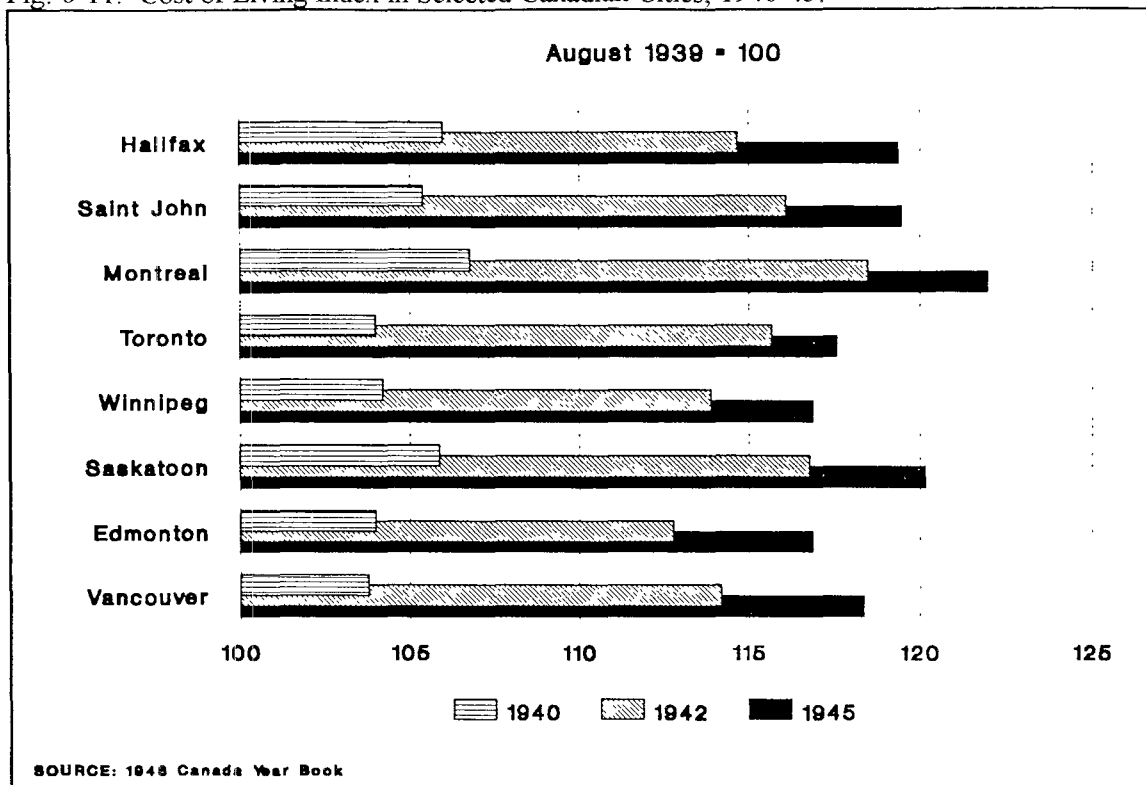
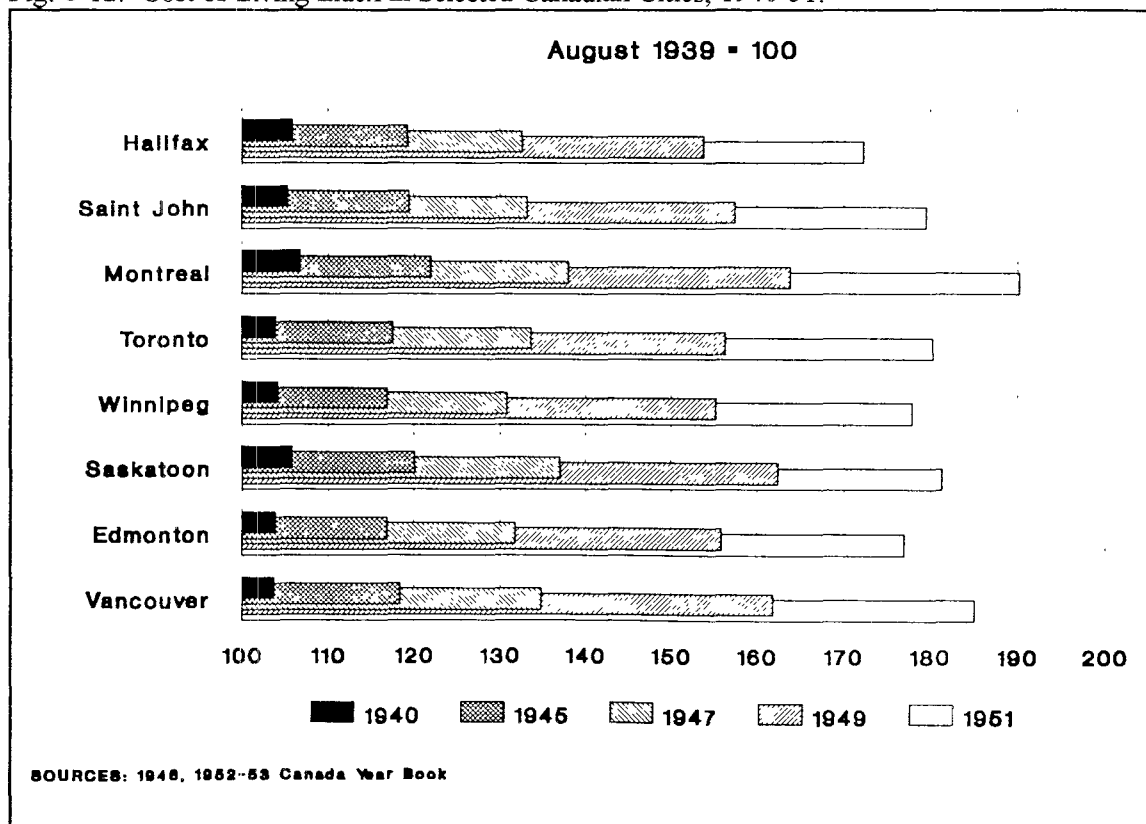


Fig. 6-12. Cost of Living Index in Selected Canadian Cities, 1940-51.



midpoint of the war than after, but postwar inflation in the period 1946 to 1951 far surpassed anything seen during the war [Fig. 6-12].⁶⁰

Occupational groups are frequently called upon to delineate social stratification in urban populations – for example, it is often assumed that professionals will occupy the upper stratum and unskilled or manual workers will not. Between these two extremes, however, the relationship between occupational and economic status is not so easily established. Michael Katz's observation regarding nineteenth century Hamilton, that it was "impossible to predict the income of a man simply by knowing what trade he followed," was no less true of Halifax a century later.⁶¹

The available data on occupational characteristics of the Halifax labour force show that it included large service and professional sectors. Most wartime workers in Halifax were not employed in large factories, but in small shops, offices, and retail stores. Shipbuilding, ship repair, naval vessel maintenance and modernization were all important functions requiring hundreds of highly-paid workers. When measured against the numbers employed in non-industrial sectors, however, their numbers were relatively small. It is a truism that the Second World War put Canadians back to work, but the benefits of wartime employment in Halifax were not distributed equally in all economic sectors, and workers and their families prospered to varying degrees, depending on the particular circumstances of their jobs, housing, and living standards.

⁶⁰*Canada Year Book*, 1946, Table 4, p. 864; (1941 index estimated from Table 3, p. 863). 1952-53, Table 6, p. 1015.

⁶¹Micheal B. Katz, *The People of Hamilton, Canada West: Family and Class in a Mid-Nineteenth-Century City* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 71.

At worst, occupational groups afford a “short-hand” method of tallying up individuals in society – without telling us much about the people behind the statistics. At best, occupational characteristics can shed considerable light on urban social structure and current economic conditions. In the case of Halifax, occupational patterns suggest that the Second World War reinforced or perpetuated existing labour practices in non-industrial sectors, despite advances made on the industrial front by organized labour. Even though war industry trades commanded higher-than-average wages, particularly when cost-of-living bonuses and overtime were included, wartime pay raises in the shipyards were circumscribed not only by the anti-inflationary policies of the federal government, but also by regional wage differentials already in place before the war began. Beyond the obvious fact that the war put many unemployed people back to work, thereby raising living standards, wartime price controls gave workers the illusion of increased purchasing power. This illusion evaporated after 1945, when the soaring cost of living seriously eroded the wage gains made during the war.

Notwithstanding its usefulness as a benchmark statistic, the cost of living index did not reflect all factors contributing to the functioning of a local economy in wartime. In Halifax, for example, census data on living costs did not take into account black or grey market transactions. The underground economy was rife with inflated housing and commodity costs despite the imposition of price controls. Halifax was notorious for surreptitious deals between landlords and tenants, and rationed products were also subject to hoarding and profiteering. Since the index surveyed retail prices, not families, to determine average living costs, the scope of the underground economy cannot be

extrapolated from census data. The cost of living index therefore provided little more than an approximate gauge of the economic status of wage-earners.

The inherent weaknesses of the war boom were exemplified by the postwar fate of the shipbuilding industry in Halifax. Soon after the war ended, prewar practices such as “broken employment and periodic lay-offs, elimination... of piece work and overtime employment, [and]...the down-grading or sliding-scale practice” reappeared.⁶² Repair contracts continued to be awarded to the Halifax yards, but the vastly expanded workforce hired and trained to meet wartime demands could not be maintained. The rise in marine work and ship repair contracts had been due primarily to the temporary disruption of competing industries in Britain, Europe and the United States. Indeed, during the summer season Halifax was unable to compete effectively against Canadian yards along the St. Lawrence, because so much of the material required for repair work had to be imported by rail.

The data on personal income per capita by region supports the argument that the war economy produced little change in long term economic status for Maritimers. The eastern provinces began the war with an average per capita income of roughly 60 per cent of the national average – the lowest in the country. Per capita income rose slightly during the first two years of the war, then dipped sharply in 1942 to below prewar levels, before recovering in 1943 and stabilizing by the end of the following year.⁶³ Only Ontario and

⁶²NA RG 36 series 4 Vol. 133 file 3N-715, National War Labour Board Proceedings, 30 January 1947, p. 25

⁶³John Warkentin, ed. *Canada: A Geographical Interpretation* (Toronto: Methuen, 1968), Fig. 17-1, p. 563.

the Maritimes shared an upward trend in per capita income during the Second World War, but Ontario's rate of increase – based on lucrative manufacturing jobs – outstripped that of the Maritimes, where low-paying resource, agricultural and service sector occupations were more prevalent.

Well into the 1950s, leading economic indicators confirmed that war-induced prosperity did not have a lasting effect on the Maritime economy. After 1947, per capita income of Maritimers (as a percentage of the national average) began a decade-long plunge that ended below Depression era levels. Halifax did not escape this trend. The necessary postponement of attention to the chronic housing crisis, and the failure to sustain wartime levels of activity in areas such as shipbuilding and repair, hindered the smooth transition of Halifax from a small provincial city to a modern, regional metropolis.

Like others before him, Gordon Stephenson pinpointed the chief cause of this attenuated prosperity in his landmark redevelopment study of Halifax, published in 1957. The problem was not poverty, Stephenson wrote, because “poverty is not as prevalent as it was before the war.” But “poor physical conditions” continued to plague the community, even though “fuller employment and higher wages” indicated a rising standard of living. “The housing problem remains more or less as it was before the war and,” he added ruefully, “as recorded in previous reports.”⁶⁴

The following chapter describes how the war placed extraordinary demands on public health care, social services and recreation facilities in Halifax. The wartime influx

⁶⁴ Stephenson, p. 38.

highlighted deficiencies in the organization of municipal services and diverted attention away from other important social issues such as the housing crisis. Unlike the housing problem, however, significant progress was achieved in revamping municipal social services before the war ended.

CHAPTER SEVEN

WELFARE CITY

Following the great wave of immigration in the early twentieth century, Canadian society began to take on new characteristics: ethnic and religious diversity, high mobility, and rapid urbanization became the norm. These characteristics were well represented in the social structure and urban development of Halifax long before they became a North American phenomenon.¹ Formerly, the parish church functioned as the clearinghouse for charitable work – a system which worked well in a village or small town setting where the social problems of a relatively homogeneous population were predictable and manageable. Owing to the special character of a garrison-port, which tended to “reinforce the division of society into the rough and the respectable,” other “agents of change” joined church-led reform in Halifax: military authorities, civic reformers, and moral crusaders. But Judith Fingard concludes that by the end of the century, “social reformers still had a long way to go to understand...the social, familial, gender and racial problems faced by people on the margin.”² As a wider, grimmer conflict took its toll on the European continent, the final outcome of these domestic battles remained in doubt. Despite the “accelerated pace of progressive reform in wartime,” Ian McKay observes, “moral regulation in a city that was at once a port, a garrison, and a naval station, and where the ‘upper streets’ beneath

¹T.B. Akins, “History of Halifax City,” *Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society for the Years 1892-94*, Facsimile edition, (Belleville, Ont.: Mika Publishing, 1977), pp. 110-14, 126; Fingard, *Dark Side*, pp. 16-19.

²Fingard, *Dark Side*, pp. 21-26, 195.

Citadel Hill had long been crowded with cheap groggeries, brothels, and other disreputable resorts, was not for the faint of heart.”³

In the early twentieth century, social reform shifted emphasis away from individual morality to the larger economic and social forces shaping the lives of urban populations. The “rough” classes became subjects of study rather than objects of scorn and pity. The growing social gospel movement played a critical role in politicizing debate about “social ills” and introducing professional standards to the field of social work.⁴ Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia was one of the first universities in Canada to offer courses in sociology, leading the way for other “land-grant institutions and colleges affiliated with the Congregational, Baptist, Methodist Episcopal, and Presbyterian denominations...to introduce courses in social science, social welfare, and sociology.”⁵

Halifax did not ride the crest of these developments. In 1910, the campaign against the liquor trade – *bête noire* to social gospellers – was defeated in Halifax County while succeeding everywhere else in Nova Scotia.⁶ Dalhousie University did not establish a Department of Sociology until 1924, and its Maritime School of Social Work, founded “in the face of great obstacles” by Dr. Samuel H. Prince in 1941, had no full time director until 1949.⁷

³Ian McKay, “The 1910s: The Stillborn Triumph of Progressive Reform,” in E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, eds., *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press and Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1993), p. 211.

⁴Colin Howell, “The 1900s: Industry, Urbanization and Reform,” in Forbes and Muise pp. 155-157.

⁵Marlene Shore, *The Science of Social Redemption: McGill, the Chicago School, and the Origins of Social Research in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p. 75.

⁶Howell, p. 187.

⁷*Mail-Star*, 20 October 1960, p. 7.

The interwar period represented a transitional phase for social agencies in Canada. The welfare state was in its infancy and there still existed a strong private constituency in social service. During the 1930s and 40s, traditional charitable institutions increasingly found their activities co-opted by state-sponsored welfare and health programmes, including unemployment insurance, old age pensions, mothers' allowances and public health initiatives. The creation of the Social Service Council of Canada in 1926 signified a watershed in the transition from church-based to secular social services.⁸ This trend was evident in a growing reliance on tax-funded social programmes, but in Halifax, the community based Council of Social Agencies (CSA) continued to place great emphasis on private social service:

The private agency fills in the gaps (and there are many), does the pioneering in new fields [and]...new methods of social work, educates the public on all phases of social welfare, and gives the individual touch to "service" in a way the larger agency can never quite accomplish. In helping to solve the most difficult problems,...the private agency with its greater flexibility, seems to be more successful. It also gives a chance for the personal expression of the philanthropic instincts of many people in our community.⁹

By the time of the Second World War, social welfare no longer consisted primarily of feeding and sheltering the poor, but was joined by public health, family counseling, rehabilitation, housing, recreation, nutrition, and education as legitimate spheres of interest for charitable institutions.¹⁰ This diffusion of philanthropic endeavour often occurred

⁸Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada, 1914-28* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), pp. 284-285.

⁹*Master Plan*, p. 99.

¹⁰The literature on this subject is extensive and a full accounting will not be attempted here. Two standard works are Roy Lubove, *The Urban Community: Housing and Planning in the Progressive Era* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967) and Robert H. Bremner, *From the Depths: The Discovery of*

quite by accident as organizations focused on specific social problems. Gradually, national social service organizations with religious roots evolved into familiar components of Canadian secular life, each with its own distinctive role. The Salvation Army, for example, maintained strong identification with Christian beliefs, but its street level ministry dispensed material as well as spiritual comfort.¹¹ The Young Men's Christian Association offered cheap temporary lodgings while promoting physical fitness and "clean living."¹² The Young Women's Christian Association served a similar purpose for single young women, although functioning more like a group home than athletic centre. By the 1930s, these national organizations had become so large that their business operations required as much attention as their social programmes. At the same time, private agencies operating in the local sphere continued to conduct charitable work in much the same way as they had 50 or 100 years before.

Social service at the outbreak of the Second World War was thus an extremely diverse field, with religious, secular, progressive and patrician components. The key element binding all of these distinctive – and sometimes conflicting – components together

Poverty in the United States (New York: New York University Press, 1956). For useful perspectives on aspects of social reform in Halifax up to the mid-twentieth century, see Fingard, *Dark Side*, esp. Chapters 5, 7 and 8; idem, "Evangelical Social Work in Canada," in D.C.M. Platt, ed., *Social Welfare, 1850-1950: Australia, Argentina and Canada compared*, (Basingstoke [Eng.]: Macmillan, 1989); Christina Simmons, "'Helping the Poorer Sisters': The Women of the Jost Mission, Halifax, 1905-1945," *Acadiensis* XIV No. 1 (Autumn 1984), pp. 3-27. Also helpful is Katherine McCuaig, "'From Social Reform to Social Service.' The Changing Role of Volunteers: the Anti-tuberculosis Campaign, 1900-30," *Canadian Historical Review* LXI No. 4 (December 1980), pp. 480-501.

¹¹Partisan accounts of the Salvation Army in Canada include R. Gordon Moyles, *The Blood and Fire in Canada* (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1977) and Robert Collins, *The Holy War of Sally Ann* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1984).

¹²For an overview of YMCA activities, see Alan M. Hurst, *The Canadian YMCA in World War II* (n.p.: National War Service Committee of the Y.M.C.A., 1948).

was the concept of voluntarism. Like their military counterparts, volunteers who had been active in “war service”¹³ during the First World War dusted off twenty-year-old plans when war broke out in 1939.¹⁴ Organizations and individuals previously engaged in catering to the needs of servicemen were called upon once again to provide hostel accommodation, food and entertainment. This conservative approach was practical if not prescient. Why reinvent a system which had worked reasonably well twenty years before?

The precedent established by the First World War adversely affected the manner in which the community responded to the latest emergency. “One great drawback in Halifax has probably been the vivid memories of the last war, and what was done then,” wrote Gwendolyn Shand, secretary of the Halifax Council of Social Agencies:

These [memories] are probably more clear cut in Halifax than in many places. They had much to do with the failure in 1939 to set up a more closely co-ordinated programme for the whole city, both for those in the Services and those in civilian life. Many of those attending the organization meetings had been prominent in the city’s war effort of 1914-1918. It was difficult for them to realize that times had changed materially, and that different methods must be used. Our social agencies had not been widely enough or long enough developed to counteract this previous war mentality.¹⁵

¹³The terms “war service (or services),” “war work,” “social service (or services),” “community services,” “welfare” and “social welfare” will be confusing to readers unfamiliar with contemporary usage. In this chapter, war service is understood to mean services provided mainly for the benefit of service personnel. War work is voluntary unpaid work in war service-related activities, rather than its alternate definition of paid work in war industry. Social services and social welfare were sometimes used interchangeably, but the former is taken to be more wide-ranging, including public health and recreation activities, rather than the more narrowly focused family and income support services offered by social welfare agencies. Social services can also include armed forces personnel, but never to the exclusion of the rest of the population.

¹⁴McKay, “Stillborn Triumph,” p. 211.

¹⁵PANS MG 20 Vol. 409 folder 10, Welfare Council of Halifax-Dartmouth, Shand to Bradford, 3 June 1944.

One Canadian city which adopted a different and highly successful approach to war services in 1939 was Winnipeg. Not long after the federal government conducted a voluntary registration of Canadian women for war work, women volunteers organized a “central manning pool of volunteers for war and community service” which formed the basis for what became known as the “Winnipeg plan.” Within a few weeks, the names of 7,000 volunteers were compiled into a cross-indexed file detailing individual skills such as “car-drivers, menders, nurses, cooks, librarians, teachers, etc.”¹⁶ The demand for war services was low at this early stage of the war, so the women, now calling themselves the Central Volunteer Bureau, “set out...to ‘sell’ volunteers” on the value of community service in order to offset defections to paid employment:

This was the philosophy of the Central Volunteer Bureau from the start – that winning the war meant fighting on the “home front” as well as on the war front, and in addition to rolling bandages and knitting socks, women would have to help by maintaining community agencies such as the family Bureau and the Community Chest, which protected the homes and families of the fighting men ¹⁷

There was no evidence of such ‘blitzkrieg’ tactics in Halifax, although in fairness the city was deluged with foreign service personnel and other war-related demands much sooner than inland centres. At first, providing social services to the civilian population seemed to be a separate and more urgent challenge, since the war intensified existing social needs in addition to creating new ones. Municipal coffers, already depleted by Depression relief rolls, now had to deal with the added infrastructure costs as a result of

¹⁶Laing, *A Community Organizes for War*, p. 15.

¹⁷Ibid.

the wartime influx.¹⁸ National organizations such as the Salvation Army, Knights of Columbus, Canadian Legion and the Navy League possessed financial resources with which to serve the armed forces that were unavailable to municipalities, but their specific duties were unclear until July, 1940 when the federal government formally defined them as “such Welfare Projects and Services as sports, recreation, lectures, schools, reading rooms, entertainments, canteens, shelters, refreshments and other facilities of a like nature.”¹⁹

Considerable pressure was thus lifted from municipalities like Halifax where national service organizations were already well-established and federal grants enabled them to enlarge on their peacetime activities. But as Fig. 7-1 indicates, it took some time for wartime programmes to mature, whereas in Halifax the need for war services was as great in 1940 (due to the presence of large numbers of foreign service personnel) as it would be in 1944.

Since the bulk of civilian social services was funded through municipal taxes, one would expect a rise in population to be reflected in an expanded revenue base. However, the large numbers of wartime in-migrants who chose to settle in areas just outside the city placed an inordinate burden on taxpayers residing in Halifax.²⁰ Moreover, as social emergencies like infectious epidemics enveloped the entire community, it became increasingly clear that social welfare services could not be so easily pigeonholed into

¹⁸Donald V. Smiley, *The Rowell Sirois Report, Book I* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1963), pp. 182-83.

¹⁹NA RG 35 series 7 Vol. 17, #12, Appendix 23, “Memorandum of Agreement,” 24 July 1940.

²⁰Stephenson, p. 32.

‘service’ or ‘civilian’ needs. “With the constant intermixture of the civilian population and the armed forces,” wrote the authors of a report on civic health services in 1942, “the local public health situation is really a single problem, and in the best interests of the

Fig. 7-1. Federal Grants to National War Service Organizations, 1941-46 (in 000's dollars).²¹

	1941-42	1942-43	1943-44	1944-45	1945-46	TOTAL
Canadian Legion War Services Inc.	300	1,570	3,042	4,946	3,797	13,655
Knights of Columbus Army Huts Fund	200	999	1,860	2,573	2,741	8,374
Canadian YMCA War Services Fund	500	2,376	3,300	4,001	3,783	13,962
YWCA National War Services Fund	75	183	381	541	454	1,634
Navy League of Canada	100	140	200	530	164	1,134
Salvation Army Red Shield Fund	—		1,633	2,377	2,103	7,345
<i>TOTAL</i>	1,175	6,499	10,416	14,969	13,044	46,103

community's health, more systematic cooperation is advisable.”²² Above all, overcrowded housing, long targeted by reformers as a cause of urban crime and a threat to public health,²³ steadily worsened.

²¹NA RG 35 series 7 Vol. 17, #12, Appendix 16, “Statement Of Accountable Grants By Fiscal Years.” (Rounded figures).

²²D. Bruce Wilson and W.A. McIntosh, *A Survey of the Public Health Services of the City of Halifax, Nova Scotia* (King's Printer: Halifax, 1942), p. 90.

²³W. B. Wallace, *The Housing Problem in Nova Scotia: An Evil, Its Growth and Its Remedy* (Halifax, 1919); Edith Elmer Wood, *The Housing of the Unskilled Wage-Earner: America's Next Problem* (New York, 1919). See also Shirley Sprague, “A Confluence of Interest: Housing Reform in Toronto, 1900-1920” in Alan F. Artibise and Gilbert Stelter, eds., *The Usable Urban Past: Planning and Politics in the Modern Canadian City* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1979), p. 251.

Accommodating service personnel and transient workers remained the most pressing social problem in Halifax, but filling this need was not the responsibility of the CSA. The Canadian Legion (400 beds), the YMCA (500 beds), the Salvation Army (2 at 410 beds each), the Knights of Columbus (310 beds), and the Navy League all opened hostels in Halifax, with an aggregate capacity of well over 2,000 beds.²⁴ As we have seen in Chapter Five, the Navy League catered only to merchant seamen. The largest hostel for servicemen was located in the former Halifax Ladies' College on Barrington Street. Although operated by the YMCA, the purchase of the building was financed out of a hostel fund established in December 1939 by the Red Cross. Grants were received from three sources: the Red Cross (\$60,000), the province (\$25,000), and the city (\$15,000), but interestingly, the Red Cross grant included "an individual contribution of \$35,000 made by a generous donor in Montréal."²⁵ Most of the money was put towards the purchase of the Ladies' College, but a substantial grant was also authorized for the Salvation Army (\$20,000), with lesser amounts going to the Knights of Columbus and the North End Services Canteen.

In addition to hostels operated by national organizations, there were also a number of private residences leased by foreign governments or patriotic organizations to provide hostel accommodation for expatriate servicemen and seamen. Free French sailors found shelter at "Maison Surcouf," named after the ill-fated submarine. The Free French were an unusual case in that their government had no representative in Halifax. Consequently,

²⁴PANS MG 20 Vol. 409 folder 10, Shand to Bradford, 23 March 1944.

²⁵Ibid., Vol. 1366, #1, item 84, "Recreational facilities for men on leave," 8 January 1940.

“Maison Surcouf” was the brainchild of a small group of volunteers led by Mrs Leonie Richard, a native of Buctouche, New Brunswick. Richard was inspired “to do something to help the French war effort” after hearing a radio speech by General de Gaulle early in the war. For a time, French sailors were “placed in canteens, homes or whatever lodgings could be found,” but German occupation of France in May 1940 sparked an influx of expatriates into Halifax from other parts of Canada. Richard and her committee purchased “a large house on Victoria Road [PA 1],” with “\$2,000 of her own money to make the down payment.” The facility could accommodate up to 14 sailors, most of whom were from merchant vessels waiting for convoys. The volunteers “had to regularly approach businesses for aid,” Richard later recalled. It would “often take more than an hour or two to win an employer over to her cause.”²⁶ The house was turned over to the French government after the war and used as a consulate until 1979.

Other foreign governments provided more direct housing relief for dispossessed sailors. A dwelling on Bishop Street [PA 3] served as the Netherlands Seamen’s Home, and the Belgian government leased space in the Dresden Arms Hotel [PA 5] for their Belgium Seamen’s Residence.²⁷ In January 1941, the “Norwegian Shipping and Trade Mission” rented the third floor of a commercial building on Barrington Street [PA 5] for “a reading room and a canteen for the sailors on board our ship in this port.”²⁸ The Norwegians later acquired the palatial Odell estate on Tobin Street [PA 1] after the demise

²⁶Charles Perry, “Centenarian recalls years as ‘beggar’ to help Free French,” *Moncton Times-Transcript*, 20 June 1983, p. 17.

²⁷PANS MICRO City Council Minutes, 14 May 1942; 1950 *Might’s City Directory*.

²⁸PANS RG 35-102 (1B) Vol. 66, #14, Lodrup to McManus, 10 January 1941.

of the Ajax Club [See Appendix A, Fig. A-24]. By early 1944 there were more than thirty hostels in operation in Halifax, exclusive of those run by churches. While the accommodation proved adequate to meet normal demands, there continued to be short periods when the supply of beds was exhausted. At this late stage, however, even less enthusiasm could be raised for expanding temporary facilities than existed when the crisis was most acute, two years before.

Recreation centres built during the war were usually hastily-erected temporary “huts” with more than a passing resemblance to mess halls. The official hostels usually provided canteens or cafeterias, and games rooms. Other popular amenities included a “Mother’s Corner” where women volunteers would sit with needle & thread in hand, mending overcoats and darning socks.²⁹ A table for writing letters back home was usually available, complete with free paper and pencils. The Knights of Columbus and the Canadian Legion each operated two recreation centres, and the Navy League Recreation Centre served double duty as an athletic and social club for RCN ratings and petty officers. The Wings Club just off the lobby of the Nova Scotian Hotel served airmen. Visiting BCATP trainees from Australia and New Zealand could relax at the Down Under Club, which opened in July 1941, and later the Anzac Club.³⁰

Most churches in Halifax held “periodic entertainments for the men,...some once or twice a week, others less often.”³¹ The Jewish Service Centre on Quinpool Road was a

²⁹OA, John Fisher papers, file: East Coast Reporter, 1942.

³⁰PANS MG 1 Vol. 485, H.B. Jefferson papers, 13 July 1941; *ibid.*, Vol. 501, “Daily Journal 1942,” 6 January 1942.

³¹PANS MG 20 Vol. 409 folder 10, Shand to Bradford, 23 March 1944.

popular meeting place for soldiers and sailors of all faiths, and was the only war service centre in Halifax that was not off-limits to black American servicemen. Church soirees were popular among visiting servicemen owing to the possibility of being invited afterwards to a private home for a cup of tea or home-cooked meal. At most war service centres, sandwiches and coffee were standard issue, but at the Ajax Club, opened in the fall of 1940 primarily for Royal Navy ratings, full course meals were available at low prices (25 cents), along with beer on tap. The beer license was wrested from a reluctant provincial liquor board by Janet E. McEuen, an indefatigable Montréaler of Scots ancestry. She stayed for the duration, but her Club only lasted fourteen months, the victim of backroom politicking by powers sympathetic to the temperance cause.³²

It was an isolated and controversial victory for the anti-liquor interests. At least they were more successful than those intent on eradicating another vice enjoying brisk business due to war conditions. In August 1943, the trial of a Halifax madam was reported as the first bawdy house case in several years, “the result of a recent sudden outbreak of moral sentiment in the city council, according to the police.” Court testimony later revealed, however, that “the prime movers were two American sailors, who had considered themselves over-charged at \$5 for 10 minutes, and had retaliated by laying a charge against the proprietress of a small joint on Barrington [Street].”³³ A year later, the Mayor of Halifax admitted publicly that “pressure exerted by politicians” and businessmen to spare the brothels and bawdy houses of downtown Halifax cooled the moral ardour of

³²Jay White, “The Ajax Affair: Temperance and Intolerance in Wartime Halifax,” *Moncton Times-Transcript*, 7 May 1988, p. 40.

³³PANS MG 1 Vol. 484, H.B. Jefferson papers, Police & Court Rulings, 24 August 1943.

civic authorities. “‘You can’t close this place – they spend \$400 a month for groceries alone’ – that’s the kind of thing I heard when we tried to make a clean-up. You’d be surprised at the various business angles that are tied up with it, ” a chastened chief magistrate explained.³⁴

The Ajax Club and its successor, Ajax Hospitality Headquarters, were two of several privately-operated clubs for servicemen and women in Halifax. Others included the Army, Navy and Air Force Club for Women (known as the “A.N.A”), the Wings Club – set up for airmen in the railway hotel – and the previously mentioned foreign hostels. No central agency coordinated recreation for the Services. Private clubs operated alongside government-approved establishments – the only regulatory requirement being the granting of a War Charities charter – consequently wide variation existed in staffing, resources and managerial methods. For example, executives of private clubs were more likely to be women than those of national organizations. “While the Nova Scotia Division [of the Red Cross] was headed by a small group of men, it was the women who did 99% of the work,” one 1946 report noted.³⁵ Working women and those raising young families were usually unable to devote much time to these activities. Well-to-do women gravitated easily to war service since voluntarism and charitable fundraising were common within their social class, and they were more likely to employ domestics at home, allowing them free time to devote to voluntary work. As the major Canadian “front line” city, Halifax attracted patriotic-minded citizens as well as social climbers and thrill seekers. The

³⁴*Citizen*, 21 July 1944, p. 1.

³⁵ PANS MG 20 Vol. 323, “1946 Annual Report of the N.S. Division of the Red Cross Society,” p. 110.

aggressive determination of some to “do their bit” in the war effort, and the impressive talents of others, occasionally ruffled sensitive feathers. William Pugsley, writing of the Ajax Club, claimed that it succeeded in “arousing the jealous fury of the Halifax women whose plans for what they were going to do for the sailors hadn’t got beyond the talk stage.”³⁶

An unkind cut, perhaps, but it was true that the club, and its offshoot organization, Ajax Hospitality Headquarters, were exceedingly adept at attracting support from across the country. A national fundraising campaign on behalf of Ajax Hospitality collected \$85,000 in 1944 – a lot of money for a non-profit charity.³⁷ During its heyday from November 1940 to March 1942 – a period when other war service activities were barely off the ground – the Ajax Club was the most lavishly outfitted centre for servicemen in Halifax. The fact that it was organized and financed mainly by wealthy Montréalers and corporate sponsors from Central Canada created resentment among local volunteers who felt that their less grandiose efforts suffered by comparison.

The profusion and diversity of groups engaged in war service activities in Halifax belied the one-dimensional notion that Canadians had a monolithic dedication to total Allied victory. As individuals, volunteers were certainly inspired by wartime rhetoric, but their actions reflected human rather than heroic qualities. Communal activity in clubs or club-like organizations gave citizens a sense of order and security during a period when the social structure was in a state of flux. The club paradigm was often employed by

³⁶Pugsley, *Sailor Remember*, p. 77.

³⁷*Ajax Hospitality Headquarters, Halifax, Nova Scotia, January 1944 - March 1945*, “Statement of receipts and disbursements for the period from January 1st, 1944 to December 31st, 1944.”

businessmen to ameliorate the unpredictability of unfettered competitive free enterprise. Business clubs engaged in vigorous boosterism and political finagling on behalf of their city or region. Sometimes they also practiced elitism and discrimination towards minority ethnic groups. The choices one made in deciding which clubs to join had a strong influence on status within the community. Peer pressure was keenly felt, especially in circles where the rank-conscious Navy set the tone for social and cultural relations. William Pugsley's biting observations about "the social pace" in wartime Halifax bore witness to the resentments felt by those excluded from participating:

With all the highly eligible visitors [the war] guarantees a brilliant social season. Not only does a war bring all sorts of interesting men to town, but with any luck it will take your husband out of town...But this life among the upper crust was strictly officer stuff. It lay far outside the simple, unsophisticated world of the serge-clad new entry, studying hard to become a sailor.³⁸

Halifax society in the 1930s was permeated with social clubs, musical clubs, political clubs, business clubs, union clubs, and athletic clubs – giving members a sense of identification with others who shared certain social and economic characteristics. Many of these organizations suspended regular activities after 1939, but the war service organizations springing up to do "war work" were imbued with the same cliquish atmosphere. Naval officers' wives gravitated towards volunteer work partly because military custom frowned on them working outside the home.³⁹ Wives of naval servicemen had a "very active" club under the auspices of the YWCA, but a similar society of Army wives was forced to disband in the fall of 1943 because all the members had found full or

³⁸Pugsley, pp. 77-78.

³⁹Interview with Jean Donald Gow, Ottawa, June 1986.

part-time work.⁴⁰ Commitment to the club paradigm as a socially advantageous method of aiding the war effort clearly had its limits.

But there was also genuine concern on the part of many Haligonians about the poor state of social services in the city. In February 1940, Dr. Samuel Prince delivered his annual presidential address to the Halifax Council of Social Agencies. A professor of Sociology at Dalhousie University and longtime urban activist, Prince had been a driving force behind the creation of the Halifax Civic Improvement League prior to the First World War. Considering the timing of his address, Dr. Prince was optimistic regarding the challenges ahead. Never had he seen a “better trained corps of leaders” or more volunteer groups involved in social service. Social service agencies in Halifax expended nearly \$300,000 in 1939. “That’s big business,” he continued, “in home defence,...and defence of the child, and defence of the health and the defence of public morals, and...we never had anything like these sinews of war in the old days.” Prince was perceptive enough to see that demographics, rather than war conditions, presented social workers with their greatest challenge. “[W]hile we have been working to overtake population, population has been overtaking us,” he said, resulting in “an increased ratio of problems which is a phenomenon of city growth.”⁴¹

In his speech, the CSA president urged that “welfare organizations...be put on a war-basis” by giving them enough money to meet the increased demand for their services. But he also criticized the lack of cooperation and preparedness among social service

⁴⁰PANS MG 20 Vol. 409 folder 10, Shand to Bradford, 29 March 1944.

⁴¹Ibid., Vol. 407 folder 2, Annual Reports 1930-60, “Feb. 7, 1940.”

agencies in Halifax. The Council oversaw a loosely organized collection of independent groups, some national, some local in origin and orientation. In Prince's view, each agency had achieved "splendid efficiency" in its internal administration without having "developed the ability to work together for common objectives."⁴²

More than two years later, these self-effacing observations were echoed by a critical voice speaking in *Canadian Welfare*. George F. Davidson found little to applaud in Halifax on the subject of social services. He conceded that "social workers, at least as individuals, if not as representatives of community forces, had been brought closely into the city's A.R.P. [Air Raid Precautions] set-up." He was also pleased to witness the birth of the Maritime School of Social Work at Dalhousie University. "The mere fact that this School, still in its infancy, has been developed in the midst of war is tremendously significant." But Davidson was less than impressed with the general administration of social services:

A welter of wartime organizations has...been superimposed upon the permanent peace-time program of the city. It is still not clear that these two elements in the total community picture have been synthesized into an organic whole; nor have the bonds of cooperation between the specific wartime services and the permanent agencies been developed in a manner which indicates close and unified teamwork. One gets the impression...that the special wartime services and the peace-time agencies are travelling perhaps along parallel paths, but not exactly on the same road together.⁴³

⁴²PANS MG 20 Vol. 407 folder 2, Annual Reports 1930-60, "Feb. 7, 1940."

⁴³George F. Davidson, "Impressions of Wartime Halifax," *Canadian Welfare* XVIII No. 6, (1 December, 1942), p. 32.

The low key approach to community services in Halifax was reflected in the casual initial response to the war emergency. To their credit, in December 1939 the CSA did attempt to organize a comprehensive and integrated support system, consisting of nine sub-committees

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 1 | Ways and Means |
| 2 | Sport |
| 3 | Hostels |
| 4 | Concert Parties |
| 5 | Magazines |
| 6 | Home Entertainment |
| 7 | Education |
| 8 | Entertainment of French sailors |
| 9 | Citizens' Welcome Committee |

Unfortunately, the anticipated coordination of these committees failed to materialize. The armed forces assumed responsibility for setting up sport programs, the Canadian Legion took over education services, the Concert Parties Guild quickly monopolized the provision of entertainment, and the Home Entertainment committee was disbanded within the year because private citizens were doing a better job on their own.⁴⁴ The committee organized to take care of French sailors “was no longer necessary” after the fall of France, and “a separate group” undertook the task on behalf of the Free French. The two most successful branches – the Concert Parties Guild and the Central Magazine Exchange – conducted their own fundraising, thus rendering the Ways and Means Sub-committee superfluous.

⁴⁴PANS MG 20 Vol 409 folder 10, Shand to Bradford, 29 March 1944

To the outside observer, the lack of coordination and limited scope of these various activities might easily have been attributed to a cultural bias against centralized control of public organizations – as Gwendolyn Shand explained it, “easterners are much more individualistic and tend to work in smaller groups.”⁴⁵ A simpler explanation was that Halifax did not respond to social problems in the same way as larger cities because it was older, smaller, and poorer. Theoretically, because of the relatively low population and compact urban form, social problems in Halifax could be handled effectively by small scale community based efforts rather than relying on cumbersome, bureaucratic institutions. In practice, however, the dedicated efforts of a small but vocal coterie of social reformers, led by Dr. Prince, failed to make much headway until large, well-funded national and international organizations came to Halifax after 1939. Another convincing explanation was the speed with which war conditions were imposed on the city, as Shand explained to a Vancouver social services official in 1944:

You opened your...Services Centre in September, 1943 after 2 years of working and planning. Halifax had to arrange for something in December 1939, without waiting to plan. We were literally deluged with men on leave, as well as with the troops to be regularly stationed here. In quick succession about 6 or 7 hostels and recreation centres were opened. But the deluge was only temporarily stayed, and it steadily increased in volume... There is probably a question as to which is the better method, – one or two large central [hostels], or many smaller centres scattered over the city. Because of the nature of this port, and of the diversified groups here, probably the present arrangement [*sic*] is better for us. On the other hand, it would be better to combine a few of the many. Lack of space has also prevented larger developments.⁴⁶

⁴⁵PANS MG 20 Vol. 409 folder 10, Shand to Bradford, 29 March 1944.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

National organizations had large paid staffs, but they still relied on voluntarism as a fundamental prerequisite to providing war services in Halifax. Most private social agencies would not have existed without the contributions of volunteers. The administration of private agencies by executive boards who formulated policy, hired and fired staff, and closely supervised the work of the agency, afforded wide discretionary powers to board members. But private organizations too dependent on volunteers could also be susceptible to high turnover rates.

It is tempting to categorize community based agencies as manifestations of middle class social control, but it seems unlikely that the majority of those involved in social service perceived their actions in that context. Before the advent of the welfare state and the bureaucratization of volunteer work, personal commitment to the betterment of one's fellow citizens was an accepted method of affirming fundamental Christian principles – as evidenced, for example, in the social gospel movement. By 1945, however, Christian charity was beginning to be defined more in secular, political terms. The prevailing view was not that one would be replaced by the other, but that the two would complement one another. The Council of Social Agencies insisted that both public and private social agencies were necessary “in a democracy where the expression of the individual and the community will is a part of our way of life.”⁴⁷ Given the nature of Halifax's social structure and the political inclinations of Haligonians, it is safe to assume that this

⁴⁷*Master Plan*, p. 99.

philosophy reflected old-fashioned conservative notions of “the public good” rather than a manifestation of socialistic impulses.⁴⁸

At the same time, however, the war effort conditioned Canadians to accept the idea of contributing a portion of their paycheque to the state by purchasing war bonds, war savings stamps, and paying personal income tax (the latter being an innovation of the First World War). Tax-funded philanthropy was simply an extension of the growing secularization of the old concept of redistributing wealth to the poorer classes. A report on welfare services in Halifax published just after the war explained it in the following terms:

The spirit of the old Poor Law is gradually disappearing. Provisions for need are no longer regarded as only a humanitarian task. The number of persons who have become destitute through their own fault or through handicap or disablement is today comparatively small. The main dependent group in modern industrial society consists of persons who have become needy through economic forces quite beyond the control of the individual. Towards them the formerly appropriate charity-dispensing attitude is out of place.

In the same way as measures leading to full employment and social security are devised by national and international authorities for sound economic reasons, social assistance and relief provisions under the control of the municipal government must be developed in terms of maximum economy and social benefit to the community.⁴⁹

Social services became increasingly bureaucratized and professionalized during the Second World War, but there is some question as to whether it became less patrician.

Women outnumbered men by a factor of two to one on the Council of Social Agencies

⁴⁸March, p. 399.

⁴⁹“Organization of Welfare Services in the City of Halifax,” A memorandum prepared by the Nova Scotia Municipal Bureau, Dalhousie University (Halifax, 1946), p. iii-iv.

executive committee, an indication not so much of male absenteeism in wartime but of the traditional view of the woman as caregiver. The CSA administered four “Divisions” (A, B, C, and D) dealing with Child Welfare, Dependency and Delinquency, Health Services, and Character-Recreation. Predictably, the chairman of Division C was a medical doctor, and a clergyman led Division B (Dependency and Delinquency). The executive sub-committees heading both Child Welfare and Character-Recreation were all women.⁵⁰

In addition to these four Divisions, the CSA also maintained a “Social Service Index” (SSI) which attempted to provide continuity and avoid duplication of services – and occasionally their exploitation by streetwise claimants. Government agencies and other organizations such as the Red Cross regularly consulted the SSI with growing frequency. The success of the Index may be attributed in large part to the efforts of Gwendolyn Shand, who acted as secretary to both the executive committee and the SSI. Shand devoted considerable time and energy to the cause of social work – in March 1944, an inquiry from a Vancouver counterpart regarding the organization of social services in Halifax elicited a series of detailed reports from Shand on virtually all aspects of social work in Halifax. These reports provided a timely overview at the precise juncture when housing and demographic data were being gathered for the Cousins Survey.

“[O]ur social agencies have been backward,” Shand wrote in 1944. “Our C.A.S. [Children’s Aid Society] has been for years notoriously understaffed and underfinanced. The [Community] Chest has not been able to see the neccessity [*sic*] for well-developed

⁵⁰PANS MG 20 Vol. 409 folder 10, Shand to Bradford, 23 March 1944.

child and family work...Our whole situation in Halifax is coloured by the lack of understanding by the Chest of what the needs of social agencies are. It has affected adversely much of our social work.”⁵¹

To some extent, municipal welfare services were inadequate due to the inherent conservatism of the political and social elite. Poverty was never viewed as a social cost of a local economy overly dependent on seasonal employment, but as a fact of life to be endured without unconditional public assistance. The wartime phenomenon of large numbers of economically marginal individuals and families coming to the city – and staying, despite the hardships – was unusual for Halifax. In recent years, most persons in this situation had boarded the first ship or train bound for better prospects elsewhere. During the decade of the thirties there had been little urban in-migration. Suddenly, enlistment in the armed forces and the promise of employment brought hordes of young men and women into Halifax – mostly from smaller communities in the Maritimes.

The sharp increase in single young women living on their own in Halifax was viewed with particular concern. Most of them came in search of work in manufacturing or the food service industry, an environment which was, according to Gwendolyn Shand, “not suited to young girls.” Moralistic judgments of this kind were common. Some women were reported to be “psychotic.” Others, according to Shand, “had little intention of working.”⁵² Social workers worried about women who sought “excitement” instead of employment. At the YWCA and the Sisters of Service convent – the only two institutions

⁵¹PANS MG 20 Vol. 409 folder 10, Shand to Bradford, 29 March 1944.

⁵²Ibid.

devoted exclusively to accommodating female newcomers – breaking curfew rules and other “undesirable” behaviour were not tolerated. “For the sake of the many other girls,” Shand wrote, “those who exhibited really bad conduct...were returned home.”⁵³ Even well-behaved young women with acceptable attitudes and secure occupations often found Halifax a difficult place to live. Some could not afford to leave the YWCA because their salaries were so low. The demand for affordable rooms was such that before the war ended, the Sisters of Service had moved to a larger building, and acquired the house next door.⁵⁴ The YWCA converted club rooms and recreation halls into makeshift dormitories, and on several occasions resorted to placing mattresses on the dance floor after a late evening’s entertainment.

As in so many other aspects of the home front, strategic planning in social services seldom advanced beyond immediate or short term requirements. It was the day to day efforts of individual volunteers, social workers and committed citizens that enabled organizations to function at all. As the war progressed, a small nucleus of trained professionals and inspired amateurs struggled to manage their burgeoning caseloads brought on by the influx of civilians and military personnel. But there was a marked lack of coordination of programmes and activities, especially between those for whom social service was a vocation. The federal government provided funds, for example, to the YWCA in order to assist its “Rooms Registry” service for women transients. Meanwhile,

⁵³PANS MG 20 Vol. 409 folder 10, Shand to Bradford, 29 March 1944. The Sisters of Service were a Roman Catholic Order established in Halifax in 1925. See J. Brian Hanington, *Every Popish Person* (Halifax, 1984), p. 183.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, “Report on Regular Social Services in Halifax,” n.d. (ca. March 1944), p. 1.

the Board of Trade turned the former Tourist Bureau into an “Accommodation Bureau,” but it closed after two summers because “the numbers of rooms and apartments available did not warrant the effort.” A CSA executive wrote: “Most of us were relieved at this decision for there was no inspection of...rooms, before renting.”⁵⁵ The frustration at having so much redundant effort expended in satisfying the demands of the service, permanent resident and transient populations was much in evidence throughout the wartime period.

The war did galvanize social workers into stepping up their campaign for increased governmental support for social agencies. Far from assuming that wartime social problems would subside with the coming of peace, social service activists argued that devoting so much energy to caring for the armed forces had created a pent-up demand for expanded civilian social programmes. One Halifax agency in 1945 saw “a substantial increase of work over 1944,” even though war service activities for the military were winding down.⁵⁶ National service organizations remained busy in Halifax long after their wartime programmes in other cities were discontinued. “Despite popular opinion the end of the war brought no slackening, but rather an intensification, of Red Cross effort,” the Nova Scotia Division reported in 1946. “From 1944 to 1946 a total of 673 troop and hospital trains left Halifax. Every train had a Red Cross representative aboard, and a total of 8,126,632 items, including smokes, fruit, candy, games and comforts, were issued.”⁵⁷

⁵⁵PANS MG 20 Vol. 409 folder 10, “Social Services,” p. 1.

⁵⁶Ibid., Vol. 414 folder 5, Social Service Index minutes, 14 May 1946.

⁵⁷Ibid., Vol. 323, “1946 Annual Report,” p. 113.

Welfare activists were eager to participate in postwar reconstruction because social planning in the interwar period had developed slowly in Halifax when compared with larger Canadian urban centres and even other parts of Nova Scotia. By the end of the war, church-sponsored charitable activities had been superseded by secularized, community based organizations based on kindred moral values but with more clearly defined social objectives. The conditions created by the war enabled social service providers in Halifax to adopt reforms which had heretofore been thwarted by conservative orthodoxy and fiscal constraints.

It was on the issue of prostitution that moral, social and health concerns in the community converged. A hard line was adopted with regard to "camp followers" who lingered near barracks or haunted restaurants. Alarming levels of venereal disease in both civilian and service populations sparked a concerted campaign to curb prostitution in 1943. Earlier, the Council of Social Agencies had attempted to raise public awareness of the dangers of sexually-transmitted diseases, but interest in the subject subsided following the death of a prominent V.D. control activist. Despite the opening of a venereal disease clinic at Dalhousie University with funding from the provincial government, medical and military authorities responded slowly to controlling the problem. "It has taken a war," wrote Gwendolyn Shand, "to bestir even the medical profession on this matter."⁵⁸ Even so, prewar advances in chemotherapeutic treatment of syphilis and other genito-urinary infections were hailed as revolutionary breakthroughs, though continued experimentation

⁵⁸PANS MG 20 Vol. 409 folder 10, Shand to Bradford, 3 June 1944.

with arsenide and bismuth dosages for the treatment of syphilis, and the scarcity of penicillin until late in the war, suggested otherwise. For example, at Liverpool, England, the eastern terminus of the convoy system and another commercial seaport and naval base, cases of syphilis rose by an alarming 300 per cent.⁵⁹

In the Royal Canadian Navy, there were more than 9,000 hospital admissions for gonorrhea representing about ten per cent of male and female personnel. Beginning in 1944 Army medical authorities discontinued hospitalization of most infected personnel, although it is unclear whether the Navy followed suit. It is also not known how many service personnel sought treatment by private physicians due to the stigma and penalties imposed upon disclosure. The statistical incidence of syphilis was slightly higher in the Navy than in the general population, about ten cases per 1,000 versus seven.⁶⁰

Prostitution was an occupation familiar to both seaport and garrison life, and the attendant health risks were accepted as inevitable. By 1942, however, sexually-transmitted diseases threatened to become an epidemiological problem in both the service and civilian populations. Both repressive and preventive countermeasures were gradually implemented. As early as Christmas 1939, prophylactics were being given to servicemen on the initiative of a few medical officers; however, large scale distribution was not undertaken before 1942. Beginning in November 1940, the names of V.D. patients being

⁵⁹John Costello, *Virtue Under Fire* (Boston, 1985), p. 83.

⁶⁰W.R. Feasby, ed., *Official History of the Canadian Medical Services, 1939-1945, Volume Two: Clinical Subjects* (Queen's Printer: Ottawa, 1953), Table 3: "Number of Hospital Admissions by Cause, 1939-1945," p. 402 and Table 5: "Medical Discharges - Category 'E'," p. 405; C. David Naylor, *Private Practice, Public Payment: Canadian Medicine and the Politics of Health Insurance, 1911-1966*, (McGill-Queen's University Press: Kingston, 1986), p. 98.

discharged from the armed forces were forwarded to public health authorities. Timely detection and treatment seemed unlikely as long as penalties imposed by the military, including segregation and loss of pay, remained in force. (The latter was discontinued in May 1942). The V.D. epidemic in the civilian population was so serious that provincial legislation was passed requiring medical practitioners to notify authorities of any infected patients. Most physicians chose to disregard the order rather than betray their patients' confidentiality.⁶¹ Military authorities adopted even more extreme measures, reminiscent of cholera epidemics of the previous century. Lawlor's Island in Halifax harbour served as a quarantine camp for more than 90 Army and Navy personnel stricken with venereal diseases. An officer who inspected Lawlor's Island in March 1941 reported that most of the patients "appear to me to be very sullen" and that the facility was "not clean." "Discipline among these patients is not good, and many cases have arisen where they have refused treatment," he wrote.⁶²

Following a reassessment of civilian and military policies across Canada early in 1943, the Army appointed venereal disease control officers – many of whom cooperated with civic health authorities – in each military district. That summer, Halifax's lone policewoman and a public health nurse attended a course in venereal disease control at McGill University. Thereafter, prostitutes were taken into custody and subjected to medical examination. Under terms of the provincial Health Act (SNS 138, amended

⁶¹Interview with the late Dr. Max Brennan, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, July 1986. See also Wilson and McIntosh, p. 34.

⁶²NA RG 24 Reel C4988 file 8589-25, "Abridged Report of the Inspection of the Halifax Military Hospital Installation, including Lawlor's Island Hospital," 7 April 1941, p. 3.

1942), any person found to be infected was subject to committal to the City Home, where they were quarantined, "in segregation from other inmates," until cured. In October 1944, "eleven young women were held in the Home under this provision."⁶³ Non-native prostitutes were quietly "deported" from Halifax.

These draconian measures reduced street prostitution from the peak levels of 1941-42, although more discreet operators continued to elude authorities.⁶⁴ Gwendolyn Shand admitted that "follow-up" procedures following release were inadequate, but concluded the anti-prostitution campaign was successful, since "[s]o many girls have been held in this way, and so many others have been ordered to leave the city, that Halifax has now got the name of being a 'hard' place."⁶⁵ Among service personnel, the potential dangers of illicit sex were reinforced with pamphlets, posters, films and lectures containing images of gross sexism.⁶⁶ In these propaganda pieces, the archetypal "good-time girl" – promiscuous, exploitative, preying incessantly on innocent male victims – presented a colorful if highly exaggerated caricature. Even the learned medical practitioners who authored the Rockefeller report succumbed to male myopia when it came to evaluating the role of prostitution in the venereal disease problem. "Amateur and professional prostitutes...[in] the lower class cafes and dance halls" were to blame, they argued.⁶⁷ When the gender

⁶³"Organization of Welfare Services," p. 33. The women were subsequently transferred to the Monastery of the Good Shepherd on Quinpool Road. Ibid., p. 34.

⁶⁴Police raided one notorious brothel on Hollis Street "several times" without "finding any women there" until a false wall was discovered in one of the rooms. Whitelaw, "Women and the Halifax War," interviewing Gwendolyn Shand.

⁶⁵PANS MG 20 Vol. 409 folder 10, Shand to Bradford, 29 March 1944.

⁶⁶Jay Cassels, *The Secret Plague: Venereal Disease in Canada, 1838-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), pp. 126, 131.

⁶⁷Wilson and McIntosh, p. 35.

distribution of venereal disease cases among service personnel is taken into account, however, a different conclusion may be reached as to who was infecting whom.⁶⁸

Had prostitution and venereal disease been the extent of the assault on public health brought on by war conditions, the city would have emerged relatively unscathed. In fact, a whole series of health crises gripped the community. By the end of 1940, four epidemics raged in the community: scarlet fever, measles, meningitis, and diphtheria.⁶⁹ The latter in particular had far-reaching consequences for the organization of municipal health services in Halifax.

The appearance of diphtheria in September 1940 was entirely unexpected. Although not known for its severity, this acute infectious disease could nevertheless lead to life-threatening cardiac and pulmonary complications. Symptoms included high fever, soreness and swelling in the bronchial passages, general malaise and weakness. The first sign of infection was usually the formation of tough, membranous tissue on the tonsils and back of the throat. Because of its similarity to other afflictions like Vincent's angina, tonsillitis and bronchitis, diagnosis was often difficult in the early stages. Laboratory tests were considered unreliable, because "proven and even fatal cases" of diphtheria had occurred "without ever obtaining a positive culture of the organism."⁷⁰

⁶⁸Based on RCAF figures showing over 13,000 cases involving males in Canada versus 241 for personnel of the Women's Division between 1940 and 1945. Feasby, Table 24, p. 513. Incidence of V.D. infection among women was one-third that of men. The rate of infection for RCAF male personnel overseas was "75 to 100% higher than it was in Canada." Ibid., p. 514.

⁶⁹PANS MG 20 Vol. 409 folder 10, Shand to Bradford, 3 June 1944.

⁷⁰Feasby, p. 4.

When properly identified, the patient was hospitalized with full nursing care for about two weeks. Curative treatment involved administering an antitoxin serum containing antibodies derived from the blood of immunized animals. Penicillin was sometimes used as well, but this was optional. Epidemic conditions called for mass immunization, using toxoids produced by exposing the diphtheria bacteria to heat or chemicals in order to neutralize toxicity while maintaining its antigenic properties. Successful treatment usually resulted in complete recovery and discharge from hospital after five weeks.⁷¹

The diphtheria which struck Halifax in September 1940 was an especially virulent type, known as the gravis strain. It resembled the common variety but was much more severe. Additional symptoms included rapid heart rate, low blood pressure, swelling of the cervical glands, and, in extreme cases, respiratory paralysis and death. It was first noticed among crew members of a Norwegian tanker anchored in Bedford Basin. Soon after, sailors on shore leave from a nearby Norwegian whaling ship became ill, and a full-blown epidemic was under way by the end of the year. About 60 cases per month were hospitalized throughout 1941 and most of 1942, thereafter the monthly rate dropped to 40 cases until the disease disappeared in 1944.⁷²

Diphtheria had not been a serious problem in Halifax since the last major flare-up in 1930. As a result, immunization practices were inadequate in 1940, and since the gravis strain was virtually unknown in North America, no natural immunity existed in the general

⁷¹Feasby, pp. 2-3.

⁷²Ibid., p. 5; Wilson and McIntosh, p. 27.

population. Furthermore, an unusually high proportion (two-thirds) of those afflicted were adults, and no one knew how older patients would react to treatment with toxoids. Medical authorities at HMCS *Stadacona* reported that the epidemic was “most revealing to the large number of medical officers at that base who had heretofore never seen a case of clinical diphtheria.”⁷³ The Infectious Diseases Hospital possessed only 40 beds – cots were set up to accommodate 20 more. The clubhouse of a nearby golf course was also appropriated to handle the overflow. Already swamped with cases of scarlet fever, measles and meningitis, and having no more room, the hospital eventually adopted an extramural quarantine system, confining stricken patients to their homes.

The local press was enlisted to urge parents to have their children immunized. Medical authorities recommended a compulsory programme, but in the event part-time nurses were hired by the city to conduct a door-to-door campaign. The Victorian Order of Nurses objected to this intrusion into their sphere of activity, but an arrangement was quickly worked out whereby the V.O.N. received a \$2,500 grant from the city for maternal and infant care performed on their home visits. The immunization campaign may well have prevented a much higher mortality rate, given that 28 of the 33 deaths attributed to the epidemic were children under 16.

Not since the great influenza pandemic of 1918-1919 had Halifax experienced a comparable health crisis. Fearful recollections of that deadly episode – which resulted in public health nursing being added to the medical curriculum at Dalhousie University⁷⁴ –

⁷³Feasby, p. 6.

⁷⁴Janice P. Dickin McGinnis, “The Impact of Epidemic Influenza: Canada, 1918-1919,” Canadian Historical Association *Historical Papers* 1977, p. 136.

were no doubt on the minds of many older Haligonians in 1940. The diphtheria epidemic revealed serious shortcomings in the municipal health and welfare department. Only in October 1940 did the city hire its first full-time health officer. A team of Harvard University doctors, in Halifax to study the gravis strain, commented publicly on the dearth of public health resources and staff. In the *New York Times*, Halifax was described as “the perfect culture medium for epidemics,” and a “hell-hole of infection.”⁷⁵ H.B. Jefferson remained unimpressed, calling the Harvard doctors a group of “publicity seeking...medical missionaries.”⁷⁶ Their findings – one of the first of many widely-disseminated negative press reports about wartime Halifax – sparked efforts to modernize municipal health services. To that end, nine public health nurses were appointed in August 1941, and vaccination and immunization clinics were held at Dalhousie University and in schools throughout the city. But lack of funding hampered further reform. The provincial government, already contributing medical supplies and money to civic health services, suggested the Rockefeller Foundation as a source of funding and expertise. A foundation representative visited the city in August 1941, and soon after, city council made a formal request that “a general health and economic survey” be conducted as a precursor to securing “financial assistance to the City of Halifax in its Health program.”⁷⁷

The Rockefeller Foundation appointed D. Bruce Wilson, a medical doctor with a graduate degree in public health, to undertake the study. He and co-author Dr. W.A. McIntosh submitted their report in October 1942. According to Gwendolyn Shand, by

⁷⁵*New York Times*, 23 March 1941, p. 30.

⁷⁶PANS MG 1 Vol. 489, H.B. Jefferson papers, LXII, “July 1941 summary of events,” p. 6.

⁷⁷Wilson and McIntosh, pp. 1-2.

early 1944 “most of the [report’s] recommendations...[were] implemented,” and the result was “a fairly adequate, modern Health Department.”⁷⁸ This was achieved only with the help of a sizable grant, spread over three years, from the Rockefeller Foundation. In a pattern reminiscent of the extraordinary assistance given to Halifax in the wake of the harbour explosion some 25 years before, the city once again seemed unable to provide essential public services without help from outside agencies.

The authors of the Rockefeller report paid particular attention to the monetary aspects of health care, emphasizing “the necessity of keeping expenditures within the economic capacity of a tax-supported government source.” Their findings were aimed not solely at “the war emergency,” but towards meeting “the long term, minimum needs of Halifax.”⁷⁹ Such foresight stood in marked contrast to the *ad hoc* responses typical of federal agencies operating in wartime Halifax. As impartial scientists, presumably unbound by political constraints, their views reflected a strong advocacy of public health practices in the United States. As New England academics from a region where rapid urbanization had necessitated modernizing public health services long before this, they were highly critical of what they found in Halifax.

The Rockefeller study supported the argument that social problems during the war owed as much to peacetime neglect as to extraordinary wartime conditions. Its recommendations were “definitely the minimum requirements necessary, even in peacetime, to give the City a modern, efficiently-functioning, health organization.”⁸⁰ As if

⁷⁸PANS MG 20 Vol. 409 folder 10, Shand to Bradford, 3 June 1944.

⁷⁹Wilson and McIntosh, p. 2.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 77.

to underscore this theme, the report carefully documented the period leading up to the war, taking pains to point out the historical background of municipal health issues and formulating recommendations based on the projected needs of postwar Halifax.

On the positive side, Wilson and McIntosh were impressed with the number of health care facilities in Halifax, citing the Dalhousie University medical, dental and nursing schools, the Victoria General Hospital, the Infectious Diseases Hospital, the Tuberculosis Hospital, the Grace Maternity Hospital, the Children's Hospital, various research laboratories, the Victorian Order of Nurses, and the medical and dental departments of the Board of School Commissioners. The Halifax Infirmary on Queen Street devoted a special ward to the care of merchant seamen, and the Sisters of Charity there were well known for their pioneering work in saving gangrenous limbs.⁸¹ In 1941, the Infirmary exceeded its peacetime capacity of 175 by nearly a hundred beds.⁸² "The medical skills and facilities are unusually abundant," wrote the authors. "What is needed is further organizational integration...[and] more hospital beds...for the civilian population."⁸³ The latter would come only in 1944 with the construction of a new Victoria General, following delays in getting the project under way due to the wartime labour shortage.

There were also the military hospitals. Work began in 1944 on turning Camp Hill, built during the First World War as a temporary measure, into a permanent structure. Meanwhile, the century-old Cogswell Street Military Hospital continued to be used,

⁸¹Marjory Whitelaw, "Women and the Halifax War," interviewing Sister Catherine de Ricci. See also PANS MG 1 Vol. 485 #1242, H.B. Jefferson papers, 15 November 1941.

⁸²Wilson and McIntosh, p. 42.

⁸³Ibid., pp. 38, 42.

despite the completion of two new hospitals on the naval base in late 1941 and 1942.⁸⁴ The notorious Rockhead Prison was also used by the Navy as a hospital for mentally ill patients and by the RCAF and the Merchant Navy as a detention centre for delinquents. Rockhead had been condemned by a provincial Royal Commission in 1933, but was still in use twenty years after the war ended.⁸⁵ Its 84 cells, containing “two bunks and no other furniture,” were “too small even for one person.” The inmate population averaged about 75 in 1944; two years before it had been “considerably higher” due to the presence of air force personnel and merchant seamen. The prisoners cooked their own meals in a wooden shed attached to the main building, and in the summer they produced their own milk and grew vegetables. In winter, the only work was “cutting stones...from a nearby quarry.”⁸⁶

Rockhead was a Dickensian relic glowering over the north end. [See Appendix A, Figs. A-41, A-42]. Any thoughts of residential development in the area were sure to be quickly discouraged by its “grim, fortress-like” presence.⁸⁷ (It is small wonder that the residents of nearby Africville remained undisturbed for so long). But there was nothing singular about its function. The 1945 Dawson Commission on Provincial Development and Rehabilitation was appalled at the “wretched conditions in local jails, and municipal institutions for the poor and mentally ill.”⁸⁸ Judith Fingard’s analysis of Confederation-era recidivists housed at Rockhead reflected a social milieu heavily influenced by Halifax’s

⁸⁴PANS MG1 Vol. 498, H.B. Jefferson papers, unidentified newspaper clipping, 10 December 1941; MG 20 Vol. 409 folder 10, Shand to Bradford, 3 June 1944.

⁸⁵*Founded Upon a Rock: Historic Buildings of Halifax and Vicinity* (Halifax: Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia, 1967), p. 102

⁸⁶Fingard, *Dark Side*, p. 9; “Organization of Welfare Services,” pp. 39-40.

⁸⁷*Founded Upon a Rock*, p. 102.

⁸⁸March, p. 338.

nineteenth century role as an Imperial garrison. The characteristics of the inmate population in 1945 showed little evidence that progressive penal reform had occurred in the interim. A “large percentage” were repeat offenders (versus Fingard’s figure of roughly 12 per cent for the 1864 to 1873 period), and average age remained about the same, with half being under 30, and ten per cent younger than 20 years of age. The 50/50 gender split in the earlier period, versus only ten per cent female in 1945, was the sole indication that the pattern of incarceration had changed significantly over time.⁸⁹ Perhaps it confirmed Gwendolyn Shand’s assertion that the wartime anti-prostitution campaign had been a success. Or possibly it suggested that greater opportunities for legitimate employment existed in 1945 for women of modest or racially-oppressed background than was the case in Victorian Halifax.⁹⁰ Undoubtedly the large numbers of servicemen in the city during the war resulted in a higher percentage of male inmates. For whatever reason, the “stone mansion” at the end of Gottingen Street, like the City Home just a stone’s throw away from the shining new Victoria General Hospital, symbolized the continuing dependence on institutions created to serve the social needs of a nineteenth century community.

Further proof of its incongruity lay in the fact that Rockhead Prison functioned in both penal and medical capacities. In fact, it was administered under the municipal Department of Health and Welfare and, like most public services, its operating costs were higher than its revenue.⁹¹ Rapidly rising costs associated with health care also contributed

⁸⁹ “Organization of Welfare Services,” p. 40; Fingard, *Dark Side*, pp. 9, 11, 37, 99.

⁹⁰ Fingard, *Dark Side*, pp. 104-105.

⁹¹ “Organization of Welfare Services,” p. 39.

to the short supply of conventional hospital beds in Halifax during the war. At the Infectious Diseases Hospital, for example, an adult paid ten dollars per week to stay in a public ward, fifteen dollars for a semi-private room, and \$21.00 to stay in a private room. A child patient could occupy a bed for half the adult rate in a public ward, but a private ward offered no discount. With these rates in effect, the IDH took in only one-fifth its operating costs in 1942-43.⁹² It was thus understandable that municipal authorities, who had to make up the revenue shortfall with hospital grants, were reluctant to expand health care services. Rather than expand facilities at the IDH in response to the wartime health crisis, the clubhouse of a nearby golf course was taken over and used as an annex.⁹³

Military personnel were rarely admitted to the Infectious Diseases Hospital, since they were charged the full \$21.00 per week regardless – even their children paid double the civilian rate. Presumably this discriminatory policy was adopted due to the shortage of beds in public hospitals, and was designed to encourage service families to patronize base facilities. Whether deliberate policy or not, the impression was given that service personnel should be regarded as transients with limited citizenship privileges.

Next door to the IDH stood the Tuberculosis Hospital, another municipally-funded health care facility. Although declining as a major threat to public health, tuberculosis still claimed 6,000 lives across Canada in 1941.⁹⁴ Patient fees at the Tuberculosis Hospital were charged on a weekly basis at \$7.50, or nine dollars for “non-residents.” Service personnel and “all Federal or foreign Government” employees paid three dollars a day, the

⁹²Wilson and McIntosh, p. 43.

⁹³PANS MG 20 Vol. 409 folder 10, Shand to Bradford, 3 June 1944.

⁹⁴Naylor, p. 98.

same as the Infectious Diseases Hospital. These fees did not even begin to meet the operating costs of the Tuberculosis Hospital, which were double those of its neighbour. Wilson and McIntosh asserted that many patients suffered from neglect due to “lack of adequate accommodation,” and even “advanced cases” were not receiving proper care. Nearly half the patients in the Tuberculosis Hospital were discharged during the year 1941, but 25 patients died – a mortality rate of nearly 15 per cent.⁹⁵

Health services in Halifax during the war were tested not only by increased caseloads but by an upward trend in the cost of medical care. Like the extensive harbour works, Halifax was fortunate to have reasonably modern hospital facilities in place when the war began. However, as David Naylor has pointed out, hospitalization rates and per capita medical costs were already on the rise, due to shifting disease patterns in the population, and more sophisticated surgical and clinical techniques.⁹⁶ Medical practitioners, aware that many of their low and middle-income patients would eventually be unable to cover hospital fees, began advocating “prepayment plans for hospital, diagnostic and medical services” in the late 1930s.⁹⁷ Eventually, in a move aimed at retaining control of medical care in the face of growing state intervention, doctors in Halifax sponsored their own health care plan in 1948. These developments would have as much of an impact on the quality of wartime health care in Halifax as factors directly attributable to the war.

⁹⁵Wilson and McIntosh, pp. 44-45.

⁹⁶Naylor, pp. 99-100.

⁹⁷Ibid., pp. 100, 146, 151.

Ironically, one of the most financially sound municipal health care facilities was the city poorhouse. Even so, the estimated revenue of the City Home covered just one-third of its annual expenses. During the war the City Home served as “a poorhouse, hospital and insane asylum.”⁹⁸ In 1942, 147 of the Home’s 396 residents were classified as “sane paupers.” Two years later, some of the inmates were moved to the new County Home, lowering the total inmate population at the City Home to 353, of which 111 were “sane.”⁹⁹

The City Home was also used “as a refuge for families evicted from their homes or otherwise in need of public aid.”¹⁰⁰ The presence of thirteen “sane” children in the City Home in February, 1942 suggested the presence of one or more families in that unfortunate predicament. The Children’s Protection Act stipulated that “no normal child shall remain in an institution like the City Home more than fourteen days” without special authorization from the Director of Child Welfare, however it was reported in 1944 that “housing conditions and overcrowding of specialized institutions in recent years...made this consent a more or less routine matter when...requested by Halifax social agencies.”¹⁰¹

Wilson and McIntosh contended that “everything possible” was being done “to keep the City Home spotlessly clean and in satisfactory repair. Inmates are encouraged to take up hobbies, and suitable employment is provided for those able to do light work.”¹⁰² The work available was clearly divided along gender lines: the able-bodied male inmates

⁹⁸Wilson and McIntosh, p. 68. The figures are as of 1 February 1942.

⁹⁹ “Organization of Welfare Services,” p. 26.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 31.

¹⁰¹Ibid., pp. 31-32.

¹⁰²Wilson and McIntosh, p. 69.

chopped wood “for the Home carries on a thriving fuel business,” and the women were “kept busy with a variety of household tasks associated with the upkeep of the institution.” In 1944 a laundry was added to the Home which also serviced the nearby Infectious Diseases Hospital and the Tuberculosis Hospital.¹⁰³

Incarcerating people of all ages and mental conditions, both infirm and able-bodied, under one roof, could not possibly have created a healthy atmosphere. In 1944, the only practitioners employed by the Home were a senior medical student from Dalhousie University and four graduate nurses.¹⁰⁴ Perhaps the statistic most startling to modern sensibilities related to the age distribution of inmates classified as sane. Fully three-quarters were over the age of sixty [Fig. 7-2]. Investigators found that in 1944, nearly half the so-called “sane paupers” were in good health, and more than half “were fully or partially maintained by responsible relatives or friends, old age pensions, workmen’s compensation,” pension benefits, and other sources. These inmates sometimes caused problems for the staff, since they considered themselves “‘leisured folk,’ free from the necessity of assisting in work connected with the institution.”¹⁰⁵ Clearly, the City Home was being used to a large extent as a public rest home. “Probably some old people...have been sent to the City Home sooner than they would have been if housing conditions were normal,” Gwendolyn Shand wrote. On the other hand, she reported that “a number of quite elderly men have been able to secure light work because of the labour shortage,”

¹⁰³ “Organization of Welfare Services,” p. 22.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

thereby contributing to household incomes and lessening their dependence on younger family members.¹⁰⁶

Notwithstanding its shortcomings, the indigent and the infirm would have been literally on the streets without the City Home, particularly since agencies like the Salvation Army were so overwhelmed by the needs of armed forces personnel. However, the multiple uses made of the Home as an insane asylum, poorhouse, and refuge for the needy

Fig. 7-2. "Sane Paupers" at the City Home by Age and Sex, 1 October 1944.¹⁰⁷

AGE GROUP	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>%</i>
20-29	1	1	2	1.7
30-39	4		4	3.4
40-49	4	5	9	7.8
50-59	11	6	17	14.7
60-69	6	11	17	14.7
70-79	29	17	46	39.7
80-89	6	12	18	15.5
90-99	1	2	3	2.5
<i>TOTAL</i>	62	54	116	100.0

underscored its anachronistic nature and its utter inappropriateness as a modern health care facility. Shunting mentally ill patients from the provincial psychiatric hospital in

¹⁰⁶PANS MG 20 Vol. 409 folder 10, Shand to Bradford, 3 June 1944.

¹⁰⁷"Organization of Welfare Services," p. 28. Figures did not include 11 women "committed under the Health Act for treatment of venereal infection."

Dartmouth to the City Home, then the County Home, and then back again, according to changes in their condition, was just one example of how desperate the situation had become. In 1945, it was recommended that the City Home be abolished.¹⁰⁸

The quality of health care did not draw as much criticism from the Rockefeller investigation as the disorganized administration of social services. Responsibility for the latter was shared by provincial and local bodies, and problems inevitably arose in coordinating activities between the two. Moreover, both Gwendolyn Shand and the Rockefeller Foundation team noted that the city's Public Health and Welfare Department focused on food inspection, sanitation and immunization programmes, while the welfare branch was limited to operating the City Home. In 1944, Shand wrote: "Halifax has no real Welfare Department." All available resources had been focused on dealing with health-related issues. Fearing the expense, the city refused to participate in direct relief efforts, "hence the awkward expedient of setting aside a fund to be administered by a private agency." Shand hoped that this would "lead to some sort of a real department" in the following year.¹⁰⁹

This seems not to have been realized; the Dalhousie Institute of Public Affairs report on Halifax Welfare Services expressed a similar opinion with regard to state of existing services in 1945:

Cordial relationships exist between the City Home and private social agencies such as the Halifax Welfare Bureau and the Halifax Children's Aid Society. However, little formal inter-agency cooperation has been developed, and it is not the policy for the City Home to register cases with the Social Services

¹⁰⁸ "Organization of Welfare Services," p. 133; *Master Plan*, p. 97.

¹⁰⁹ PANS MG 20 Vol. 409 folder 10, "Social Services," p. 4.

Index. Nor does the Division of Public Charities and Welfare participate in the Halifax Council of Social Agencies. The lack of social case records at the City Home is a serious handicap to closer cooperation with voluntary agencies.¹¹⁰

The province also maintained a Health and Welfare Department, which by all accounts was chronically understaffed and underfunded.

One social issue which received wide publicity during the Second World War was juvenile delinquency. The Halifax Juvenile Court, consisting of one judge and one probationary officer, struggled to keep up with a 60 per cent annual increase in cases between 1938 and 1943.¹¹¹ There were more cases handled in Halifax than all other juvenile courts in the province combined. Juvenile delinquency was commonly blamed on the wartime absence of male parental authority. Other contributory factors caused by the war included fewer opportunities for outdoor excursions due to gasoline rationing and restrictions on non-essential travel. The public adulation of "boys in uniform" may have elicited a backlash of resentment and envy among those too young to enlist. By the same token, impressionable young males captivated by the heroic image of the soldier and sailor may have been disillusioned by the behaviour of off-duty service personnel. The war economy also lured youths away from the protective atmosphere of schools and into the adult world of wages and work. Some would have been involved in black market activities, just as others provided cheap labour for disagreeable or hazardous tasks like loading ammunition.¹¹²

¹¹⁰PANS MG 20 Vol. 409 folder 10, "Social Services," p. 38.

¹¹¹Ibid., Shand to Bradford, 29 March 1944.

¹¹²PANS MG 1 Vol. 484, H.B. Jefferson papers, 19 March 1943. Jefferson reported that the school board was investigating "why so many school age boys were going to work" at 60 cents an hour.

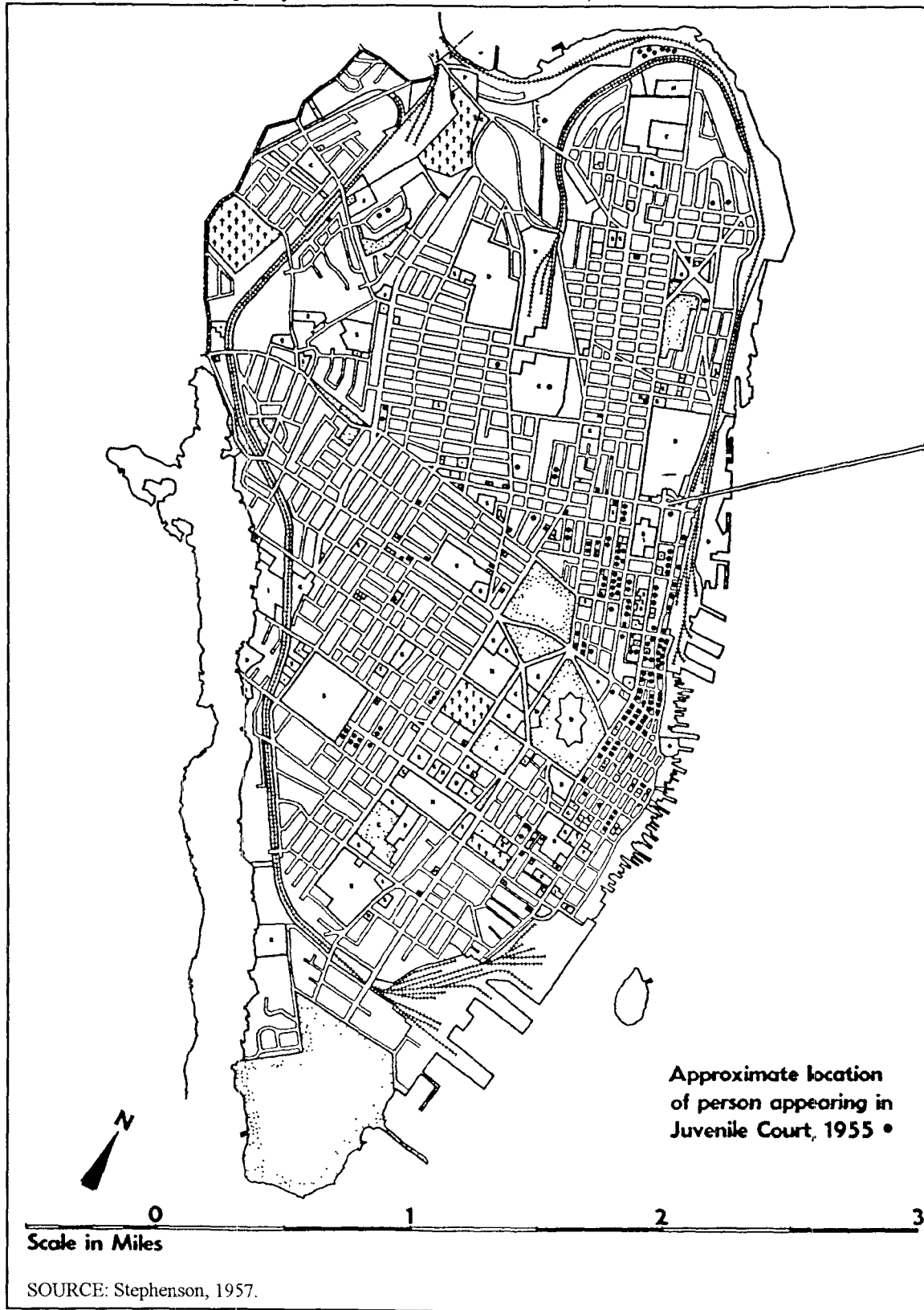
Notwithstanding the above factors, most social activists saw a direct relationship between a poor recreational and housing environment and youthful misconduct. Overcrowded households drove restive adolescents onto back streets of inner city neighbourhoods. Inadequate or non-existent public recreation facilities provided few outlets for physical activity. Amateur athletic organizations curtailed their activities for the duration. The author of the previously-cited Halifax redevelopment study published some years after the war noted that "most of the young who get into trouble come from the bad housing areas...They are forced onto the streets from overcrowded, objectionable homes."¹¹³ Although overcrowding in the late 1950s was not nearly as severe as it had been during the war, the causal relationship was clear in that a large majority of juvenile court cases involved young people residing in the most congested areas of the city.¹¹⁴ [See Fig. 7-3].

Many were convinced that solving the juvenile delinquency problem depended on expanding leisure activities for young people. Halifax seemed to have an abundance of open spaces, thanks largely to areas like Point Pleasant Park at the southern tip of the peninsula and the broad expanse of the Commons, northwest of Citadel Hill. During the war, however, military requirements outweighed the needs of the civilian population. The Playgrounds Commission, a private organization funded jointly by the Community Chest and the city, watched the areas under its jurisdiction melt away as government and military agencies appropriated land for their own uses. The city may have been blessed with

¹¹³Stephenson, p. 40.

¹¹⁴Ibid., Map 5, p. 39.

Fig. 7-3. Juvenile Delinquency Cases on the Halifax Peninsula, 1955.



ample public land, but it was unevenly distributed. The parks of the south end were not easily accessible for inhabitants of the northern half of the peninsula. The north end, where most of the peninsular population was located, did not have a single playground until 1942.

Public parks in Halifax essentially consisted of a small beach area on the Northwest Arm, Point Pleasant Park, the Public Gardens, and Fleming Park, also known as the “Dingle.” The latter, although less accessible and smaller than Point Pleasant Park, was more popular in the summertime when a ferry operated from the foot of Oakland Road, near South Street [See Appendix A, Fig. A-45]. One Sunday in July 1942, “about 25,000 people” were reported at the Dingle, which had become a “‘mecca’...since restrictions on gasoline and tires came into effect.”¹¹⁵

Recreation services expanded slowly in response to wartime demand because the municipal board of works had no recreation department *per se*, no guiding policy to speak of, no equipment, and no trained staff. It did, however, appoint a recreational committee. Beginning in the winter of 1942-43, the city opened several supervised skating rinks on school grounds, and \$8,000 were allocated for recreational programmes in the following fiscal year.¹¹⁶ Once again, however, effective coordination faltered between the Council of Social Agencies, municipal officials, and the Playgrounds Commission over how and where the funds should be allocated.¹¹⁷ The impasse highlighted the limited role of the municipality in funding social services. Municipal subsidies “paid to private health and

¹¹⁵*Herald*, 27 July 1942, p. 14.

¹¹⁶PANS MG 20 Vol. 409 folder 10, “Social Services,” p. 6.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, Shand to Bradford, 29 March 1944.

welfare agencies...are relatively small in number and in amount and they have changed but little over a period of years,” a report on Halifax welfare services noted. “The Halifax Playgrounds Commission grant of \$1,800 for 1944-45 represents the extent to which public responsibility is taken for recreational facilities for children.”¹¹⁸ Private sources were relied upon to provide the other 40 per cent of the Commission’s operating budget.

The absence of an effective public policy regarding recreation was due to the practice in the past of allowing private associations like the YMCA to administer recreational programmes. Organized physical recreation for adults was oriented more towards private clubs – of which there were many in Halifax – offering golfing, sailing, curling, and other activities to those who could afford the membership fees. War conditions impinged on adult recreation as well. E.L. Cousins ordered that participants in a curling bonspiel “be housed in Pullman cars” outside the railway station because of the housing shortage, for example.¹¹⁹ But public venues suitable for recreational activities were inadequate not due to war conditions but because they had been uncommon before the war. Oddly, a city nearly surrounded by water possessed no public boating or canoeing facilities, despite having several private clubs. Even the tiny ferry which carried citizens across the Northwest Arm to the Dingle was privately operated.

A serious obstacle to organizing recreational programmes for young people during the war was the difficulty in finding adult leaders. This was true even of the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, whose paramilitary philosophy dovetailed with wartime activities such as

¹¹⁸“Organization of Welfare Services in Halifax,” pp. 42-43.

¹¹⁹PANS MG 20 Vol. 409 folder 10, Shand to Bradford, 3 June 1944.

salvage drives, first aid drills, and civil defence.¹²⁰ But the chief impediment to youth-oriented recreation seemed to be the competing demands of service personnel. For example, the Catholic Boys' Club lost its spacious club house for the duration because the Knights of Columbus required a hostel. The Army "took one of our larger open spaces, much used by children [for]...play."¹²¹ During the winter of 1943-44, the Navy League announced that it would allow schoolchildren to use the Forum for Saturday morning skating. The response was so overwhelming that a rotation system among the various schools had to be organized.¹²² In the summer of 1942, the outdoor track and soccer field of the Wanderers' Amateur Athletic Association was turned over to the Navy League for use as a recreational centre for naval ratings and petty officers.

Probably the most publicized form of recreation for Halifax children was Rainbow Haven and Camp Sunshine, two summer camps sponsored by city newspapers. Rainbow Haven was based on the so-called "fresh air funds" popular across North America as part of the urban reform movement three decades before. Unlike those funds, however, the *Herald* newspaper operated the summer camp for needy children itself, rather than simply dispensing monies to charitable organizations. The publisher, reports William March, realized "the importance of children...as adult newspaper readers of the future." The result was a happy union of "circulation-building" and "social service."¹²³ Although circulation did not slacken during the Second World War, social service did. By 1941,

¹²⁰PANS MG 20 Vol. 409 folder 10, "Social Services," p. 6.

¹²¹Ibid., p. 2..

¹²²Ibid., p. 6.

¹²³March, p. 399.

Rainbow Haven and its opposite number, the *Chronicle's* Camp Sunshine, were shut down for the duration because of gas rationing or appropriation by the Department of National Defence. Meanwhile, making the best of a bad situation, the YMCA and YWCA organized "Stay at Home" camps, with children attending daytime activities without having to leave Halifax.¹²⁴

The Council of Social Agencies always considered housing and overcrowding to be their "first and most important " priority, but the wartime emergency diverted attention from civilian needs because "the appeal of the armed forces...[was] greater."¹²⁵ Even though the military took care of its own in areas such as health care and dependents' benefits, service families with problems adjusting to new surroundings were referred to civilian agencies for assistance. In the words of Gwendolyn Shand:

All Halifax is, in one way or another, engaged in entertaining or helping the service man and woman, and in trying to make their leisure time agreeable and profitable. Hundreds of women are engaged in some volunteer service...The Services (and the Merchant Marine men) are the centre around which revolves the life of Halifax, and this has been so, since late 1939.¹²⁶

"The terrific pressure, and lack of time to plan," Shand wrote, "influenced the whole structure of the wartime welfare services materially."¹²⁷ More than any other single factor, the enormous strain on the existing housing supply exacerbated by the lack of barrack accommodation probably contributed more to the caseloads of social agencies in wartime Halifax.

¹²⁴PANS MG 20 Vol. 409 folder 10, "Social Services,"p. 6.

¹²⁵Ibid., Shand to Bradford, 29 March 1944.

¹²⁶Ibid., "Social Services,"p. 4.

¹²⁷Ibid.

The war presented social service providers in Halifax with overwhelming challenges, but it also brought increased public scrutiny to longstanding social issues such as substandard housing, inadequate recreation facilities, and an obsolete public welfare system. Wartime demands also provided an increasingly professionalized corps of social service workers with abundant experience. Every indication was that social agencies would be expanding their services when the war ended. Indeed, the heavy concentration of health care facilities and government agencies in Halifax practically ensured that social services would play a major role in the postwar urban development of the city. Social reformers had been championing the need for reform of municipal institutions since the days prior to the First World War. Finally, it seemed, victory was in sight.

CHAPTER EIGHT

LEBENSRAUM

“We have outgrown our historical beginning.”¹

With war finally over, Halifax faced an uncertain future. Beyond the obvious expectation that the military establishment built up over six war years would no longer be required, there was no clear indication of how large the postwar civilian population would be. The rate of urban growth in the fringe areas just outside the city had exceeded that of Halifax during the war, raising the possibility of expanding municipal boundaries or accommodating another influx as the wartime transient population subsided and undeveloped land on the peninsula became available. No one really knows what the precise population figures were for Halifax proper during the war--the estimates range from 75,000 to 130,000--but considering the fact that the Cousins Survey was based on a house-by-house census conducted over a relatively brief period, the figure of 95,459 must be a fairly accurate head count, at least for early 1944. The population in civilian accommodation, (that is, excluding service personnel in barracks), was the same in 1944 as the estimated peninsular total for 1975--remarkable given the marked changes in housing and land use that occurred in the intervening period.²

¹PANS RG 44 Box 14 #1, *Submission by the City of Halifax to the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations. February 1938*, p. 4.

²City of Halifax Planning Department, “Population Statistics: Past, Present and Future,” (February, 1975), Fig. 5, Distribution of the Estimated Present Population by Census Tract. The peninsular total in 1975 was 81,974; in 1944, it was 82,018.

The war exacted a high price on municipal services, taxing the mass transit system to its limits, and postponing progress on both the harbour bridge proposal and the traffic bottleneck at Fairview. Without doubt the most glaring example of arrested infrastructure development involved the municipal water service. Owing to “the pressure of wartime demands” and an unusually dry summer, the water supply nearly broke down in 1942. “For weeks the citizens had to use water sparingly, and in addition, for six weeks, all water for drinking or for cooking had to be boiled at least 20 minutes. Intestinal disturbances were prevalent.” When similar problems developed the following summer, an extra main and new pumping equipment were added “despite critical shortages of personnel and materials.” Again citizens were told to boil their water. Only in October 1943 was the water declared safe, after installation of “expanded chlorination equipment.”³

City engineers were aware of serious shortcomings in the water supply but could do nothing to permanently correct them until after the war. In 1946, a New York engineering firm was hired to survey the water system, and for several weeks Halifax was dotted with dozens of “yellow doghouse-like structures” containing instruments to measure water flow. The survey discovered “underground leakage amounting to more than...42% of the total [water] use,” soil conditions which prevented detection of most leaks at the surface, and “under-registration of industrial and commercial meters amounting to 324,000 gallons per day.”⁴ Halifax expended \$2.7 million in 1946 correcting these and other defects in a

³McVittie, p. 2; MG 20 Vol. 409 folder 10, Shand to Bradford, 3 June 1944.

⁴“Halifax Learns About Water Waste,” *The American City* 62 No. 5 (May 1947), pp. 86-87.

system which had just undergone an \$800,000 upgrading three years before. The repairs resulted in a significant improvement in water pressure in “the downtown section”—precisely the area most affected by the wartime influx and where, during the war, “the pressure was so poor, that people on second and third floors would be without water for hours.”⁵

The housing issue towered above all other postwar development questions. Urban reformers in Halifax like S.H. Prince and R.M. Hattie had been sounding the alarm for years, but federal politicians believed that employment would be the number one issue of the immediate postwar period. The politicians were wrong. Public concerns about the housing shortage were paramount in the minds of Canadians. While civilians and sailors celebrated V-E Day in Halifax by ransacking the downtown business district, and less violent festivities marked the occasion elsewhere, in Toronto “the queue of people seeking housing accommodation” remained distinctly “unenthusiastic.”⁶

The Halifax Civic Planning Commission (CPC) was formed in December 1943 to articulate the city’s vision of its postwar future.⁷ Harold Lawson, a prominent Montréal architect and town planning expert, was hired as a technical consultant to the commission. Aside from this one exception, the CPC was drawn from “business, professional and labour organizations” within the community, including the president of the Halifax Welfare Bureau, a newspaper editor, a parish priest, two representatives of the Halifax Trades and

⁵ “Water Waste,” p. 87; Shand to Bradford, 3 June 1944.

⁶Pierre Berton, *Remember Yesterday: A Century of Photographs* (Toronto: Canadian Centennial Publishing Co., 1965), p. 103.

⁷PANS RG 35-102 Vol. 16 (3B.177), Ira P. Macnab, “Civic Planning,” CHNS radio talk, 21 December 1944, p. 1.

Labour Council, and an executive of the Halifax Business and Professional Women's Club. George T. Bates, a local planning consultant, ran the commission office with the aid of a secretary. They were the only paid staff.

The commission's stated purpose was to prepare a master plan "for the best social, physical and economic development of the city of Halifax."⁸ Its chairman, Ira P. Macnab, was an energetic and talented civil engineer who also belonged to the provincial public utilities board. Macnab frequently tested the limits of the commission's mandate, but in the final analysis its work was strictly advisory. From the beginning, the work of the CPC followed the American practice of "preparing a plan and making a general report, leaving the detailed scheme and the financial considerations for subsequent consideration," as opposed to adopting the "British method" of simultaneously releasing both a plan and "the scheme to give it effect."⁹ The commission declined to include cost estimates in their proposals because of a "lack of sufficient technical staff."¹⁰

Macnab avowed a practical, businesslike planning philosophy aimed at "figuring out the proper way to get the best economic results with the smallest expenditure of time and money," but it was quite clear that the options available in this regard were exceedingly narrow. The commission would "study ways and means by which the proposed projects may be financed under present housing legislation."¹¹ Given the

⁸PANS MG 20 Vol 93 folder A, Commercial Club correspondence 1943-44. Civic Planning Commission meeting minutes, 18 August 1944.

⁹Ken Hillis, "A History of Commissions: Threads of An Ottawa Planning History," *Urban History Review* XXI, No. 1 (October 1992), pp. 52-53.

¹⁰*Master Plan*, p. 7.

¹¹Macnab, "Civic Planning," pp. 13-14.

lackluster record of municipal and provincially-sponsored housing initiatives in the past, the unmistakable inference was that the federal government would have to play a major role in rehabilitating postwar Halifax.

Thanks to the Cousins survey, the Commission already possessed a reasonably accurate assessment of the physical structure of the city. The result, according to Macnab, was “not...a pleasing picture.” Halifax was deficient in “library facilities, public auditoriums and district social centres,” as well as “modern school facilities both academic and vocational.” These shortcomings in the city’s cultural inventory were considered to be “part of the general housing problem,” which the commission viewed as its chief task and one which required “immediate attention.” The crux of the housing issue in the eyes of the CPC was the “present assessment and tax structures” which were forcing residents to move outside the city “to escape taxation.” The commission estimated that the Halifax peninsula could only accommodate another 2,000 single family dwellings before exhausting the supply of land. When the findings of the Cousins survey were taken into account – which indicated that as many as 3,000 existing dwellings on the peninsula were “unfit for human occupancy” – the scope of the emergency facing Halifax at the end of the war became apparent. Fully one fifth of the city’s housing stock needed to be replaced.

The concept of postwar reconstruction was thus much different in Halifax than in European urban centres, where enemy occupation and aerial bombardment radically altered the social and physical environment, or in Western Canadian cities, where urban development was still in its early stages when the war began. Planners in Halifax focused on the geographic limitations of the urban site and on replacing an antiquated

infrastructure run down by peacetime neglect. Housing did not receive as prominent a place in the *Master Plan* as one might expect considering the severity of the problem during the war. The items deemed most urgent were slum clearance, street changes and improvements, the implementation of a zoning by-law, a vocational training facility, and a new public library, “but not necessarily in that order.”¹²

The *Master Plan* was replete with assumptions which would guide town planning policy for years to come. With respect to housing, the report stated that “one-family houses, duplexes and apartment houses should be kept separate,” since “only by doing so can maximum benefits be derived by...owners, tenants and the city.” According to this thinking, “mixed neighbourhood development...inevitably leads to the spread of slums.”¹³ But only two residential neighbourhoods needed to be “replanned and redeveloped” – one was approximately 200 acres comprising most of Platoon Areas One and Three and the other, not surprisingly, was the 160-acre district known to the Cousins survey as Platoon Area Seven.¹⁴ To illustrate the degree of blight in the latter, the *Master Plan* compared two four-block “study areas” in *PA* Seven with a similarly-sized area in *PA* Ten. The differences in housing quality and population density were as striking in 1945 as they had been during the height of the accommodation crisis in 1941. In the two *PA* Seven study areas, located just north of Citadel Hill, 31.6 per cent and 41.2 per cent of the dwellings were classified as “deficient,” whereas the comparable figure for *PA* Ten was only 1.1 per cent. Similarly, the coefficient of overcrowding in *PA* Ten stood at a respectable 1.27

¹²*Master Plan*, p. 7.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 42, 46

rooms per person, but the two *PA* Seven areas returned rooms-per-person ratios of only .86 and .90. “Naturally,” the commissioners noted, “these...figures give no conception of the extremes which exist in both the better and the poorer housing districts.”¹⁵

In the final analysis, the CPC argued its case for eradicating slums on economic grounds. It was revealed that tax revenues derived from the two overcrowded study areas vis-a-vis the better neighbourhood were virtually identical, but the number of people being provided with municipal services in the former study areas was 2.5 times higher than in *PA* Ten. “The entire community thus subsidizes the maintenance of slums,” the commission wrote, and moreover, “the cost of providing fire, police, medical, social and other services in [slum]...areas is always higher than for other sections.”¹⁶

While civic officials and planners might have viewed blighted districts in terms of their untapped tax revenue, many occupants of substandard housing felt trapped because there was simply nowhere else for them to go. The authors of the *Master Plan* realized that “no large-scale slum clearance...can be undertaken without providing ... accommodation elsewhere for the dispossessed people,” but they worried that relocating slum dwellers might ‘contaminate’ other areas of the city.¹⁷ Some hope of acquiring the pre-fabricated homes built by Wartime Housing Limited was expressed, but in the event these dwellings were sold off to their tenants and thus did not become available.¹⁸

¹⁵*Master Plan*, p. 49.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 52, 53.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 54.

¹⁸McVittie, pp. 9-10.

The housing proposals set forth in the *Master Plan* were significant chiefly for the assumptions they reflected about future urban growth. The Civic Planning Commission assumed that the blighted districts downtown – including *PA Seven*, where the housing stock was 50 per cent single family residential in 1944 (see Fig. 4-6) – were no longer tenable for “individual home ownership.” In their place, “thousands of low rental apartments within a reasonable distance of the major centres of employment” should be built.¹⁹ Not only did this statement ignore the possibility of opposition from homeowners (many of whom were black) to wholesale redevelopment of their neighbourhood, but it also took for granted that the major employers alluded to – Halifax Shipyards Limited and the Department of National Defence – would survive into the postwar period.

The south end blighted district was, according to the CPC, an ideal area for “apartment house development.”²⁰ In this the commission would be proved correct, but it would be many years before extensive modernization of this part of the city would take place. Large scale housing projects in Halifax in the late 1940s and early 50s were mostly suburban developments made up of single family dwellings, or apartment blocks built on the Dartmouth side of the harbour for armed forces personnel.²¹ When Central Mortgage and Housing Limited (CMHC) built the first public housing project in Halifax in 1953, it avoided the badly deteriorated downtown entirely, choosing instead “new land in the northwest section of the city” on Bayers Road.²² Four years later, during a debate on

¹⁹*Master Plan*, p. 54.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 55.

²¹McVittie, pp. 10, 12-13.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 11.

slum clearance sparked by publication of the Stephenson report, a city alderman declared that “the Bayers Road housing project...did not accomplish its purpose of taking people out of sub-standard housing.”²³ The housing conditions noted by S.H. Prince in 1932, and deplored by E.L. Cousins and others in 1943 and 1944, had survived nearly fifteen years of postwar prosperity.

However useful it may have been as a vehicle for advocating more systematic planning of the urban environment, the *Master Plan* failed to generate the decisive action needed to address the chronic deficiencies in the existing housing stock. The report was considered “ahead of its time” for “proposing thorough use of the neighbourhood unit principle” pioneered by planners in the United States, but tangible benefits arising from this foresight were disappointing. The four residential projects envisioned for the north and western fringes of the built-up area were only partially constructed. Hugh Millward, commenting in 1982 on the *Master Plan* housing proposals, observed that the “planned developments were composed [mostly] of modestly priced homes (some, indeed, were frankly cheap), and this reinforced the tendency for the north and west ends to be regarded as working class neighbourhoods.”²⁴ Meanwhile, the supply of prestige housing along the Northwest Arm continued to expand as the remaining open tracts and estate lands were consumed by private developers. The Second World War had done nothing to dislodge these firmly entrenched land use patterns. As long as the local real estate sector remained dependent on the lucrative rental market, political support for municipal redevelopment

²³*Mail-Star*, 30 August 1957, p. 8.

²⁴Millward, *Geography of Housing*, p. 13.

schemes would be weak. Only gradually, as urban sprawl and worsening housing conditions in older neighbourhoods made housing development outside the peninsula look more attractive both to developers and prospective tenants, did demand for rental accommodation downtown soften. The announcement by the federal government in 1957 that it would pay half the cost of clearing and acquiring land and three-quarters of the cost of building new housing was just the sort of bail-out that Halifax landlords had been waiting for. One CMHC official, commenting on the sweeping slum clearance proposals contained in the Stephenson report, observed that “owner’s valuations on their property have probably gone up 25 per cent on receipt of the report.”²⁵

The extent to which the mindset of the Civic Planning Commission dovetailed with that of the landed elite in Halifax surfaced obliquely in their proposal for an “elevated highway” to connect two downtown streets [Fig. 8-1]. “Such a structure would provide beneath it a very large amount of useful space capable of yielding a substantial revenue,” the commissioners wrote.²⁶ The viaduct with its half-mile of “rentable space” was never built. The *Master Plan* contained many other recommendations related to the improvement of thoroughfares, and nearly all sought to overcome geographical limitations of the Halifax’s urban site. Future traffic problems associated with the onset of the automobile age were an acknowledged but secondary consideration. The artist’s sketch of a typical neighbourhood shopping centre, for example, seemed positively utopian with its ample green space and dearth of parking [Fig. 8-2]. The roadway proposals reflected a

²⁵*Mail-Star*, 30 August 1957, p. 8.

²⁶*Master Plan*, pp. 14, 16.

Fig. 8-1. Plan of Proposed Viaduct, 1945.

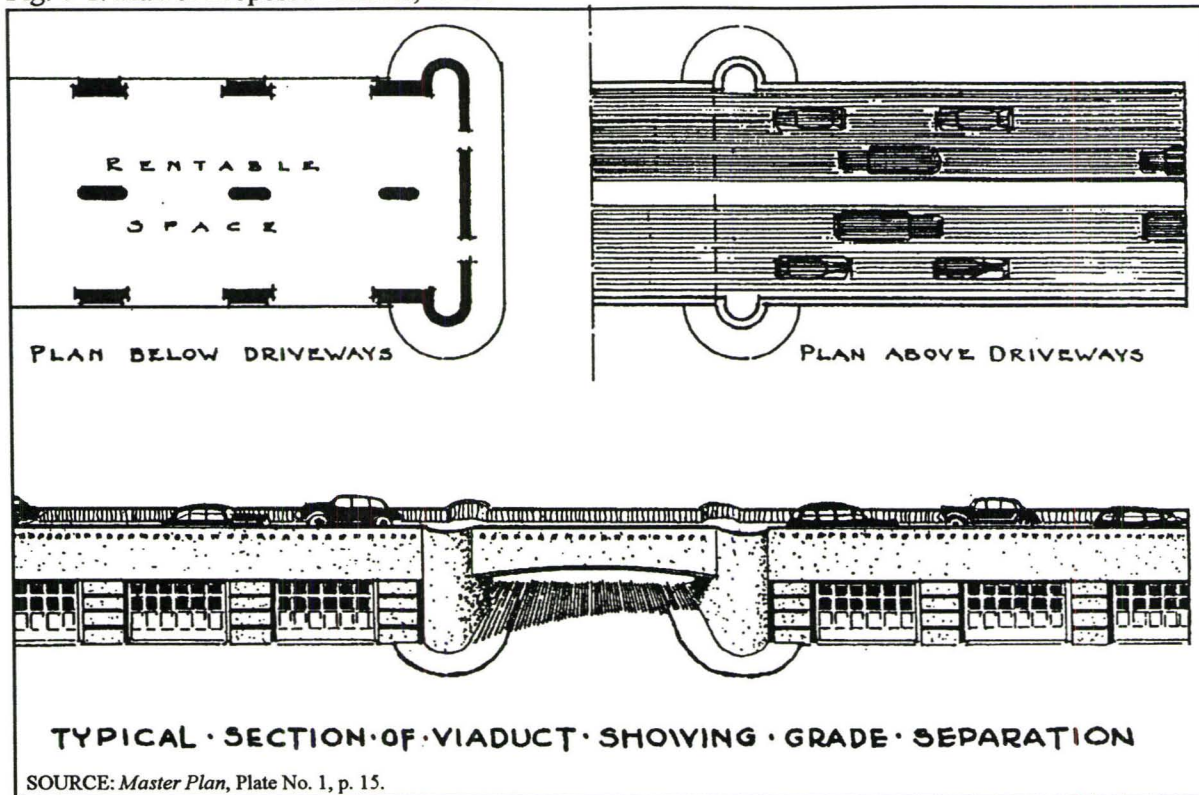
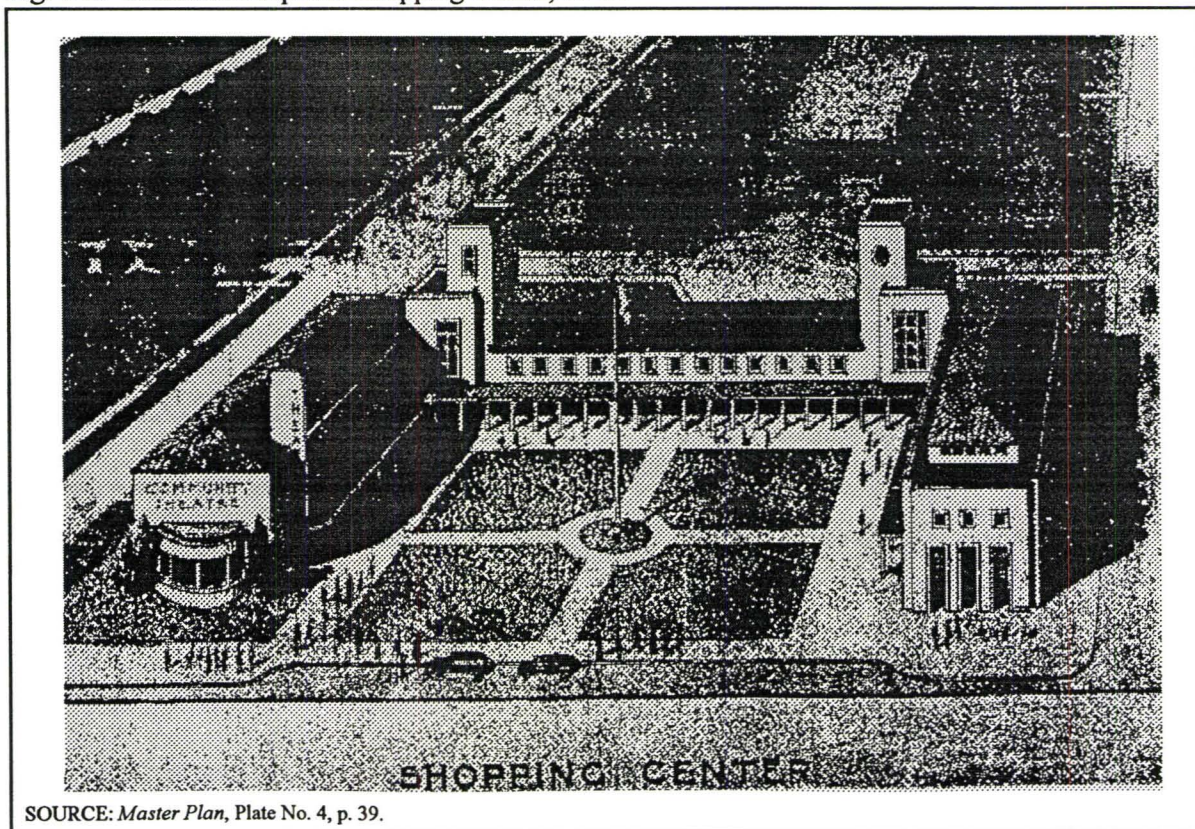


Fig. 8-2. Sketch of Proposed Shopping Centre, 1945.



preoccupation with peninsular ingress and egress (the traffic bottleneck at Fairview, and two bridges – one across the harbour and one across the Northwest Arm). Where possible, new streets would be built along diagonal routes in order to minimize grade elevations caused by uneven topography.²⁷

The infrastructure proposals were instructive because they highlighted the fact that the *Master Plan* was less a blueprint for civic reconstruction than a series of suburbanization schemes for the remaining undeveloped land on the peninsula. Almost all proposed development was to occur on the northern half of the peninsula. The two major exceptions – the replacement of dilapidated housing in the lower Barrington Street area and the construction of a bridge across the Northwest Arm – were never seriously contemplated.²⁸ Ironically, the portion of the peninsula which had undergone reconstruction after the First World War was now subjected – on paper at least – to the same process all over again.

State involvement in building large, homogeneous subdivisions during the war, and the realization that further urban expansion of many Canadian communities could be disastrous without regulatory controls, provided a firm foundation for the incorporation of planning departments into postwar municipal bureaucracy. One is struck, however, by how little the pressures on urban infrastructure imposed by wartime conditions seem to have affected public opinion in terms of postwar expectations. City dwellers in general, both permanent and transient, seemed relatively unconcerned about the prospect of

²⁷*Master Plan*, pp. 16-30.

²⁸Millward, *Geography of Housing*, p. 13.

Fig. 8-3. Postwar Location Preferences of Halifax Residents, March 1944.

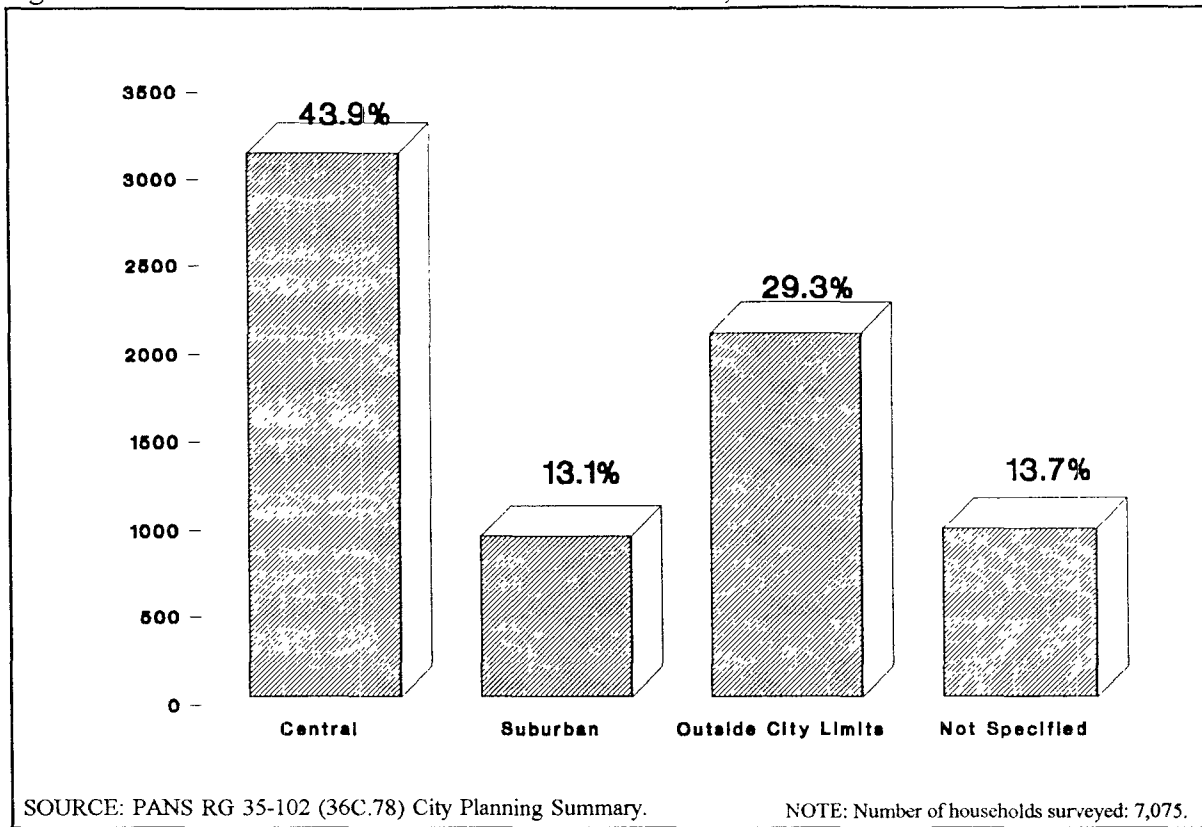
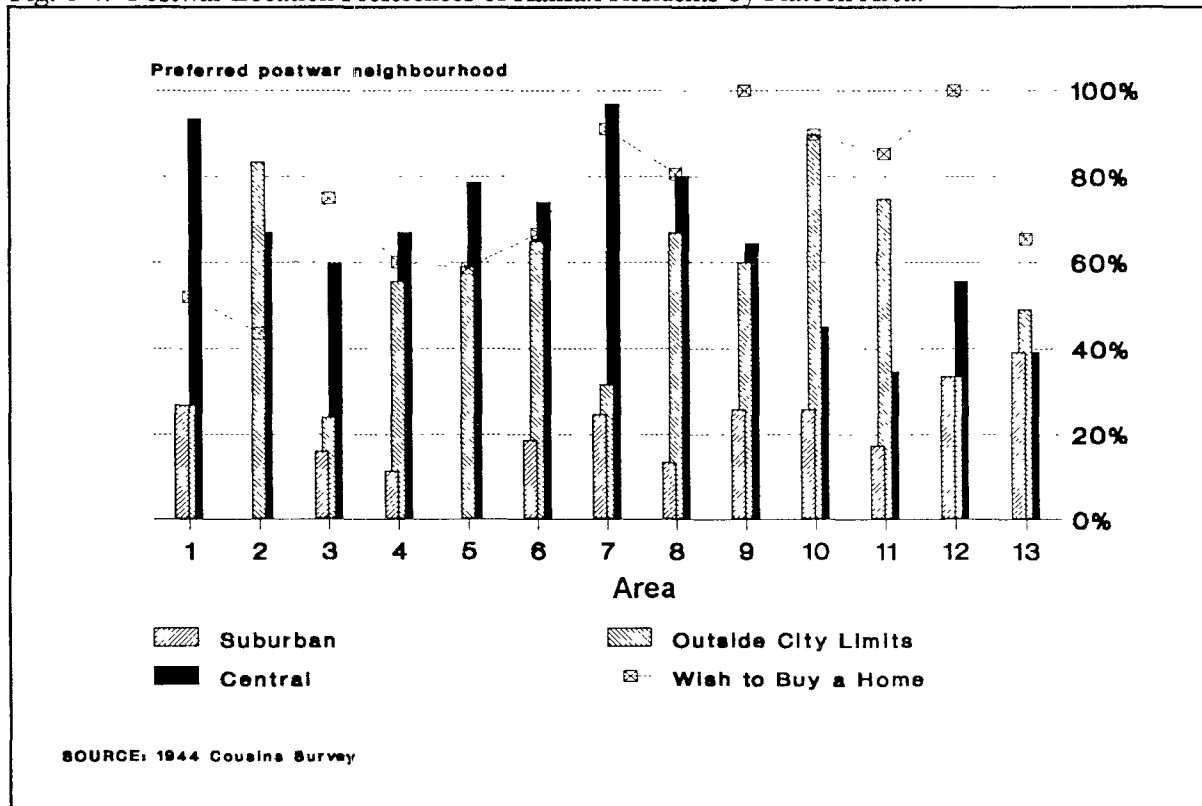


Fig. 8-4. Postwar Location Preferences of Halifax Residents by Platoon Area.



continuing to reside in Halifax after the war, despite the rather alarming housing and population density problems that many areas of the city experienced. Less than a third of those surveyed in March 1944 expressed a desire to live outside the city, and nearly half stated that they would prefer to remain in a central location [Fig. 8-3]. Moreover, residents in the most congested areas of the city were much less receptive to the idea of moving to a suburban or rural locale [Fig. 8-4]. These findings suggest that, for all the hardship and discomfort that wartime conditions may have caused, few perceived them as being indicative of what Halifax would be like after the war.

A comparison of key housing characteristics of selected Canadian cities in 1961 revealed the extent to which the Halifax housing stock changed during the postwar period vis-a-vis other urban areas. Census figures show that in 1961, Halifax still had one of the lowest per capita rates of homeownership in the country, and the cost of buying a home was more similar to median values in larger centres than the medium-sized cities listed in Figure 8-5. Halifax also retained a higher than average percentage of small dwellings, (although Sudbury, Ontario was highest), indicating the continued presence of rooming houses and large homes subdivided into apartments. Overcrowded conditions remained higher in Halifax than the national average, but they were not as severe as in St. John's or Sudbury. Finally, one can see that urban growth – as measured in the number of new dwellings added to the housing stock – proceeded at a respectable pace in Halifax during the 1950s, but fell far behind that of cities over 100,000 population, and even smaller centres like Regina and Saskatoon.

Fig. 8-5. Housing Characteristics of Selected Canadian Cities, 1961.²⁹

CITY	<i>% dwellings owner- occupied</i>	<i>Avg. number rooms per dwelling</i>	<i>% dwellings with 1-3 rooms</i>	<i>Avg. number persons per room</i>	<i>% increase in number of dwellings, 1946-59</i>	<i>Median house values (000's of dollars)</i>
St. John's	60	5.7	9.9	.85	79.8	12.7
Halifax	55	5.1	16.6	.79	69.2	14.7
Saint John	46	5.4	11.7	.71	21.2	9.9
Kitchener-Waterloo	71	5.4	11.3	.67	78.2	12.4
London	68	5.3	12.6	.65	74.2	13.1
Windsor	74	5.4	9.2	.67	55.2	10.3
Sudbury	58	4.6	21.7	.91	93.3	13.3
Regina	66	4.8	15.8	.76	97	12.2
Saskatoon	69	5.0	15.2	.72	99.3	11.8
Victoria	72	5.0	15.2	.62	77.4	11.6
URBAN CANADA (cities over 100,000)	56	5.1	15.8	.72	90	14.8
CANADA	66	5.3	13.8	.74	72.7	11

These figures suggest that postwar Halifax, despite substantial growth and a healthy economy, continued to possess a social structure and pattern of settlement which were historical in nature and resistant to outside influences. The peninsula remained essentially a population of renters, even though significant suburban development had taken place, and housing consumers in Halifax continued to pay more for less than their counterparts in most other parts of the country. These attributes were partly economic, partly social, and

²⁹Hugh A. Millward, "The Convergence of Urban Plan Features: A Comparative Examination of Trends in Canada and England," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Western Ontario, 1975, Appendix E, p. 191. Figures cited taken from 1961 Dominion census.

partly geographic in origin, but they clearly show the interdependencies that build up over time between urban inhabitants and their physical landscape. Social structure begets infrastructure, and social relations are in turn molded by the built environment. According to Wetherell and Kmet, the “social values attributed to the house...consistently reinforced the long held notion of a social structure based upon the nuclear family and private property.”³⁰ What Halifax possessed – no less in 1961 than in 1945 – was a social structure where a large minority were denied access to owning their own homes, and where landlordship was as powerful an economic imperative for the middle class as homeownership. One of the reasons why the housing proposals in the *Master Plan* were so weak was that wartime transients were not perceived as being stakeholders in Halifax’s postwar future. The Civic Planning Commission focused therefore on the need for extending civic boundaries, rather than rearranging the social boundaries which already existed. The recommendations for residential development, based on Clarence Perry’s “neighbourhood unit” plan, reflected a middle class vision of postwar suburbia which may not have coincided with the views of many Halifax residents, judging from the responses in the Cousins survey.

The social planning components of the *Master Plan* also reflected the cultural and class backgrounds of the architects. The Council of Social Agencies took an active role in submitting suggestions to the Civic Planning Committee, particularly with respect to planning “some central directing force” to guide the development of “expanded public

³⁰Wetherell and Kmet, p. 215.

recreation facilities,” an issue which had gained particular attention as a result of the war. Rather than advocating outright municipal control of recreation, the CSA argued that the public and private agencies should coordinate their activities. A resolution proposing the creation of a municipal Parks and Recreation Department appeared in July 1944, and the *Master Plan* a year later contained detailed recommendations for playgrounds, playing fields, swimming pools, a municipal golf course, tennis courts, and an athletic stadium.³¹ The so-called “blighted” areas downtown and northeast of Citadel Hill were singled out as deficient in playground space; the CSA recommended that recreation needs be included in any postwar “slum clearance and rehousing” schemes. Neighbourhood playgrounds at least three acres in size, located no more than a half mile from the furthest house, were the minimum requirements for any modern city, according to “recreation authorities.”³² It was also noted that only ten per cent of the estimated 15,000 school-age children in Halifax attended summer camps. The *Master Plan* recommended that both the operating season and the facilities themselves be expanded so that all children would have access to the camps.³³

“Reconstruction” planning was not simply a matter of building playgrounds for schoolchildren. Recreation was seen as an integral component of an overall postwar welfare programme. The Council of Social Agencies argued that existing facilities were under-utilized, and recreational areas were too unevenly distributed, to adequately serve all citizens. Older age groups – teenagers and adults – were singled out as being in need of

³¹*Master Plan*, pp. 114-115.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 113.

³³*Ibid.*, p. 118.

“special attention.”³⁴ Social service providers hoped that the many military recreation halls, hostels and canteens erected for the benefit of military personnel would be preserved for postwar civilian use.³⁵ Unfortunately, most of these structures were built with the understanding that they would be dismantled after the war – a provision insisted upon by municipal officials concerned about a postwar cityscape littered with derelict buildings. As it happened, their life span was indeed extended, but not because of recreational needs. They served as emergency shelters during the prolonged postwar housing crisis.³⁶

With few exceptions, recreational activities for adults had historically been provided through exclusive clubs for golf, yachting, boating and curling, to name a few. When the Gorsebrook Golf Club had come into being in 1900, its membership was restricted to “fifty ladies and fifty gentlemen, and the playing guests included officers of the Royal Naval Squadron, who brought the [ship’s] band...to discourse sweet music on sunny afternoons.”³⁷ The war helped to redefine adult recreation in less formal and less exclusionary terms. The military emphasis on sports and physical training introduced many to the concept of personal fitness, and set an example for civilians to follow.³⁸ But the full development of this trend would have to await the appearance of a more generally affluent society than that of Halifax in 1945.

³⁴*Master Plan*, p. 117.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 118.

³⁶McVittie, p. 12.

³⁷Raddall, p. 243.

³⁸As a result of changing operational demands on infantry during the Second World War, a new emphasis was placed on individual stamina. “Long distance running was preferable to route marches, both physically and psychologically. This change stimulated sports; nearly everyone became interested in them.” G.R. Stevens, *A City Goes to War*, (Brampton, Ont.: Charters Publishing Co., 1964), pp. 215-216.

Planners looked upon recreation as a harmonizing force which would help create the orderly, slum-free city of the future. Social reformers also identified “adult education” as being “inseparable from a comprehensive recreational programme.” The Halifax Council of Social Agencies submission to the *Master Plan* recommended that schools should remain open at night for evening classes and club meetings, and that radio, film, photography, music and art should all be utilized to help establish adult education as “a key activity in building public opinion.”³⁹

The postwar planning proposals of the Council of Social Agencies were only incidentally related to the war. The best evidence of this was the vigorous campaign for a new civic library. To many the fact that Halifax possessed no public library demonstrated an astonishing example of civic backwardness, although the abundance of educational institutions in the city certainly compensated for this deficiency to some extent. Still, the situation embarrassed Haligonians. The CSA received unanimous approval from its member agencies that a public library was essential “from the point of view of recreation,” and that the building should also include rooms for “discussion groups” and adult education classes.⁴⁰

Nora Bateson, the civic librarian who prepared a brief on behalf of the CSA, argued that a new civic library should educate citizens about issues related to postwar reconstruction – housing, health care, social security, and town planning. It would also counteract the “propaganda of shallow ideas so prevalent today.” Library services would

³⁹*Master Plan*, p. 117.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 119.

lessen the incidence of juvenile delinquency by redirecting misguided behaviour “into constructive and creative channels.” Bateson credited the “rapid spectacular progress of Russia” to that country’s massive expenditures on public libraries. “Skilful and unobtrusive guidance through careful selection of books” for young people comprised an integral part of the “policies in any progressive library today,” she wrote. Most of all, Bateson claimed, adults would profit from the salutary influence of the public library. Reading gave a person the means to “develop and enjoy his faculties and individual tastes.”⁴¹

One might be tempted to argue that the unifying spirit brought on by the war effort triggered a fresh commitment among reformers to rectifying social inequalities such as that represented by the lack of a universally-accessible public library. Certainly the military requirements for highly-skilled personnel placed renewed emphasis on the need for better education. But the proposals outlined by Bateson also contained strong implications of middle class social control. They followed along the lines of progressive educational theory between the wars, which viewed the school as a place where “the attitudes, standards, principles which have society’s approval...can be realized and undesirable patterns inhibited.”⁴² A similar philosophy was expressed by a Halifax YWCA official in 1942 with respect to the operation of their summer camp for underprivileged girls.

Although each child comes from an indisputably poor home, each ...has worked in some way to earn the privilege [of attending], and therefore does not feel that she is going just because she is poor...

⁴¹*Master Plan*, pp. 121-122.

⁴²Nancy M. Sheehan, “Indoctrination: Moral Education in the Early Prairie School House,” in David Jones et. al., eds., *Shaping the Schools of the Prairie West* (Calgary, 1979), p. 226, quoted in Bumsted, *Peoples of Canada*, p. 219.

Thus it is thought of as a definite reward for character. We try to encourage the virtues of truthfulness [*sic*], unselfishness, punctuality, cleanliness, gentleness and good sportsmanship. We feel it is very desirable that those children should be aided to grow up into social beings rather than anti-social people who can so readily develop [*sic*] from the class that has so few privileges.⁴³

The deep class divisions much in evidence on the peninsula after 1939 had been present before the war. The campaign for a public library highlighted the fact that community-wide support for cultural projects had seldom occurred in Halifax. Residents and civic leaders still tended to view public projects in terms of their association with “south end” (e.g., middle-class) or “north end” (working-class) constituencies. Moreover, the anemic tax base discouraged non-essential municipal expenditures. These social and economic factors were just as important in shaping attitudes toward public education as military requirements for highly-skilled personnel.

Along with housing, health care, recreation and social services, the needs of Halifax in the field of primary and secondary education also occupied a prominent position in postwar municipal planning. The unusually large influx of children during the war, beginning about 1940, placed tremendous pressure on the school system. It was not long before many Halifax schools implemented double shift schedules, holding classes for one group of children in the morning and bringing in another group in the afternoon. Teachers suffered more under this timetable than students, but everyone was affected by the overcrowded conditions. However, not surprisingly given the weakness of the local tax base in the interwar period, overcrowding in Halifax high schools had been a longstanding

⁴³PANS MG 20 Vol 170, Cooley correspondence 1943-44, 20 April 1942.

problem. In 1935, for example, one-third of all male students in the city were denied the option of taking Industrial Arts classes due to lack of space.⁴⁴ When schools opened the following year, the principals of two Roman Catholic High Schools notified the School Board that “they would be unable to accommodate the large numbers who would be enrolled at their Schools.”⁴⁵ At another school, the Assembly Hall was converted into two makeshift classrooms.

The Halifax School Board blamed City Council for cutting back on budget estimates which would have permitted the extra classes. The Board was so conscious of their financial status that they turned down a subsequent request from a nearby suburban district to take in 25 high school students. The Bedford School Section 35 offered to pay \$40 per student, but the Halifax Board refused on the grounds that its per capita cost had been \$62.75 in the previous year.⁴⁶ A dispute over non-resident pupils attending Halifax high schools had been brewing between the School Board and the provincial Department of Education since the numbers began to rise in the mid-1930s. In October 1936 the Board rejected an annual high school grant from the province, and nearly 200 students from outside Halifax were denied admission unless the province paid a fee of \$60 each. The dispute surfaced again in 1937. Finally a settlement was reached in September 1938 when the provincial education grants for Halifax high schools were doubled “provided

⁴⁴PANS “Chebucto School 1910-1975,” unpublished pamphlet.

⁴⁵PANS: MICRO: PLACES: HALIFAX: School Commissioners' Minutes Vol. 17 reel 9 (July 1936-August 1941), meetings: 23 July, 3 September 1936.

⁴⁶Ibid., meeting: 3 June 1937.

qualified...pupils were admitted from sections beyond the city limits without the payment of tuition fees.”⁴⁷

Overcrowding of elementary schools was particularly acute in growing sections of the city. One such school was filled to capacity in 1937, forcing the staff to give up their dining room and hire an extra teacher to accommodate the overflow. By the end of 1937 the School Board recommended that “the whole question of overcrowding be gone into and a building programme outlined.”⁴⁸ A series of meetings in March 1938 resulted in the announcement of an ambitious plan to erect a new 20-classroom high school with Chemistry, Physics and Biology laboratories, and a “large auditorium and gymnasium.” Two eight-room schools, one adjoining the Oxford School in the middle-class Quinpool-Oxford district, and the other at the northern end of Robie Street, were also recommended, and a new ten-room high school on Brunswick Street for Roman Catholic students.

Finally, the Board called for the acquisition of “a suitable lot” in the Dutch Village area on the city’s northern outskirts for the erection of a four-room schoolhouse. By the end of 1938, however, the scope of the programme was being reconsidered. One school commissioner “felt that in view of [the] present state of things we were asking for more than we could expect to get.” A revised plan calling for a new building to replace the old Halifax Academy and Bloomfield High School, and another to replace the Roman Catholic St. Patrick’s School, was put forward. The school commissioners insisted that this was

⁴⁷School Commissioners’ Minutes, Vol. 17 reel 9, meetings: 8 October 1936, 1 and 6 September 1938.

⁴⁸Ibid., meetings: 10 September 1937, 30 December 1937, 31 March 1938.

their absolute minimum requirement, adding that “if the City Council deleted one [school] the responsibility was theirs, and not on the shoulders of the Board.” But the City Auditor took issue with the deferred financing intended to pay for the scheme, which “had never been undertaken by the City,” whereupon the School Board trimmed its proposal once more, leaving one school out of the original five.⁴⁹ The School Board placed a second high school near the top of its 1944 Post War Planning Committee priority list, but Roman Catholic students would have to wait until 1951 for construction to begin.⁵⁰

Meanwhile, the war delayed construction of the new Queen Elizabeth High School for another two years, and when the cornerstone was finally laid in September 1941, the school did not have a gymnasium or auditorium – much to the chagrin of many citizens.⁵¹ The wartime influx of families placed inordinate pressure on the school system. By 1941, one in ten students attending technical classes at night were armed forces personnel.⁵² Moreover, school buildings were now in constant demand by every local service group from the Boy Scouts to the Red Cross, and few organizations offered to remunerate the Board for operating costs.⁵³ Beleaguered school janitors threatened at one point to walk off the job because of the long hours and low pay, and students were employed as

⁴⁹School Commissioners’ Minutes, Vol. 17 reel 9, meetings: 31 March, 14 December 1938.

⁵⁰PANS, R. Bernard Hum, “The History of St. Patrick’s Schools” unpublished pamphlet, n.d., unpaginated.

⁵¹School Commissioners’ Minutes, Vol. 17 reel 9, meetings: 19 December 1939, 17 March 1941, 2 May 1941, 2 October 1941.

⁵²PANS RG 14 Vol. 163, No. 10, “Report of the Halifax Board of School Commissioners 1941,” p. 49.

⁵³One of the more sobering requests came from Dr. S.H. Prince, who asked that the Chebucto Bungalow School be made available for use as a morgue “in case of an emergency.” School Commissioners’ Minutes, 5 December 1940. For other examples, see 30 May 1940, 27 February 1941, 17 March 1941, 2 July 1942, and 3 September 1942.

janitorial assistants at 40 cents per hour – not much below the going rate for a full time position.⁵⁴

Overcrowding continued to be a serious problem throughout the war; virtually every school in the city was affected, including Richmond, Alexander McKay, St. Joseph's, Alexandra, the Halifax Academy, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Patrick's, and Oxford Schools.⁵⁵ Congestion was naturally most acute in the densely populated areas in the northeast quadrant of the peninsula. Wartime Housing Limited alleviated the situation somewhat by building (though not furnishing) two new elementary schools, Mulgrave Park and Edgewood, in the spring of 1942, but they were filled to capacity almost as soon as they opened. Even the basements of local churches were pressed into service as temporary classrooms.⁵⁶ By the fall of 1943, Mulgrave Park and Edgewood schools were seriously overcrowded. Other schools were forced to set up makeshift classrooms in their assembly halls, a practice first adopted in the 1930s.⁵⁷

The primary and secondary school system in Halifax graphically illustrated the effect of war conditions on urban development. The war introduced a new set of priorities and demands on an already overburdened educational system, but just as importantly, it halted action on priorities and demands which had existed before the war began. To be sure, the new high school did get its gymnasium and auditorium in 1945, albeit at more than double

⁵⁴School Commissioners' Minutes, 4 February 1943, 19 January 1945, 1 February 1945.

⁵⁵See, for example, School Commissioners' Minutes, reel 9, 3 October 1940, 2 May 1941, 2 October 1941, 9 September 1943, 6 January 1944, 11 May 1944.

⁵⁶Ibid., 5 June 1942, 29 October 1942. Although advised by WHL that the Mulgrave Park and Edgewood schools fell under School Board jurisdiction, they refused to undertake required modifications until WHL officially turned over the buildings. Ibid., 4 March 1943.

⁵⁷Ibid., 23 July 1936, 30 September 1943.

the projected cost in 1941.⁵⁸ But as the war drew to a close, the school board was still scrambling to secure funds for long overdue facilities, and looking to acquire “three or more military buildings for use as temporary Schools,” as soon as they were declared surplus by the government. Eventually, the Department of National Defence turned over nine buildings at Rockhead Prison to the Board.⁵⁹

Wartime fiscal policy had limited public spending for non-essential purposes, restricting thereby expenditures on municipal infrastructure, a major part of which was the civic school system. Like the Council for Social Agencies, the school board eagerly participated in postwar planning for “reconstruction,” an abstract exercise without a tax base and permanent population capable of supporting systemic improvements. The war contributed little towards achieving the latter end, so that school board officials found themselves incorporating prewar expansion plans and promises into their postwar reconstruction programme.⁶⁰

One of the first issues discussed by the school board’s Post War Planning Committee after its formation in early 1944 was the need for vocational training at the secondary level, since many students were “leaving our schools at too early an age and without sufficient Education.”⁶¹ The war certainly increased demand for workers with

⁵⁸The estimated cost in the original 1941 plan had been \$176,500; the board decided to postpone construction when the only tender bid doubled that figure. In April 1945, a bid from the Fundy Construction Company for \$463, 225 was accepted. School Commissioners’ Minutes, 14 May 1941, 13 August 1941, 24 April 1945

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 1 August 1945, 4 October 1945, 31 October 1945.

⁶⁰In June 1944, for example, the principal of St. Mary’s College reminded the school commissioners of their prewar promise to build a high school for Roman Catholic students. His letter was referred to the School Board’s Postwar Planning Committee. *Ibid.*, 29 June 1944.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 1 June 1944.

technical skills, but the fact is that this trend was clearly perceived by educators in Halifax long before 1944. Literally on the eve of war, the school board had passed a resolution urging the federal government to revive long-dormant legislation designed to promote technical education in Canada. "The present scarcity of trained technicians," they observed, "is ample evidence of the need for technical training...[since] the newer industries require skilled and semi-skilled labor."⁶² The board could not possibly have foreseen how the coming war would vindicate their views a hundred times over. Members were merely commenting on conditions as they saw them in August, 1939.

Curricular reform sought by the Halifax school board offers a good example of how easy it is to overestimate the social impact of the Second World War. The war did represent an historical turning point during which fundamental assumptions about industrial relations, family structure, the national economy, and the relationship between the individual and the state changed. But crediting the war with all that happened of a progressive nature after 1939 overlooked the nuances of incremental change at the local level. By recognizing the prewar-to-postwar continuity of social issues which collectively made up much of the reconstruction programme, the argument that the experience of war redefined social policy for the postwar period seems less convincing.⁶³ In the field of education, in Halifax at least, the war represented an interregnum rather than a stimulus to reform.

⁶²School Commissioners' Minutes, 31 August 1939.

⁶³See, for example, Paul Addison, *The Road to 1945* (London: Quartet Books, 1977), p. 21.

In addition to social policy, postwar planning also concerned itself with economic issues; indeed, it can be argued that at the national level the reconstruction programme was primarily a public relations exercise designed to allay widespread fears of an economic slump when the war ended. Ernest Forbes argues that the economy of the Maritime provinces was systematically underdeveloped by a wartime federal bureaucracy intent on locating war-related industries outside the region.⁶⁴ With reference to Halifax, however, there were sound strategic reasons for not locating industries there – the concentration of naval and ship repair facilities, not to mention the petroleum refinery and storage tanks, already made the city a too-inviting target of enemy attack. While the air raids turned out to be an empty threat, fear and apprehension of such a threat certainly existed in the minds of the military and the civilian populace.

There is also evidence to suggest a centralist bias in the industrial policy of the Department of Munitions and Supply. More instructive, perhaps, were the expectations and assumptions of postwar planners concerning the potential for postwar industrialization in Halifax. Surely its industrial prospects seemed brighter in 1945 than in 1939. Was it not the largest urban centre in the region, and one of the busiest wartime ports on the continent?

If Halifax felt that it was being discriminated against in terms of wartime industrial development, one finds no evidence of it in the *Master Plan*. In fact, just two of its nearly 150 pages refer directly to industrial development – “Halifax,” the authors explain, “has

⁶⁴E. R. Forbes, “Consolidating Disparity: The Maritimes and the Industrialization of Canada during the Second World War” *Acadiensis* Vol. XV, No. 2 (Spring 1986)

not been an industrial city.” The Plan notes that “no public agency [is] definitely charged with making available information as to sites, labor, raw materials or marketing details” for prospective businesses. The authors recommended that a “committee of representative citizens” be created to attract new industries and “assist those already in operation in their efforts to expand,” but there is no clear idea expressed as to what types of industry might be suitable for the city.

The authors of the *Master Plan* were content to rely on the provincial Department of Industry and Publicity to furnish the incentive for seeking out “new undertakings [that] may be located in this area.”⁶⁵ The very name of the provincial agency hinted that promoting industrial development – at least of the kind that characterized the war period – was not its primary mandate. Indeed, many Nova Scotians believed the chief asset of their province to be an intangible commodity known as “scenery.” The CPC agreed that “the tourist industry...[could be] the source of substantial revenue to business houses and of employment to...workers in Halifax.”⁶⁶

Any discussion in the *Master Plan* of the postwar industrial potential of Halifax was couched in the language reminiscent of the prewar national port campaign:

Your Commission is impressed with the possibilities of trade with Central and South America and the West Indies if national policies are directed to that end, as it has been indicated they will be. Moreover, before the war, substantial traffic had been developed between Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa and...the East Indies. Unfortunately,...[few] goods carried from this or other Canadian ports was of Nova Scotian origin and still less of Halifax make. It is believed that if the advantages of this city’s location and the accessibility of raw materials were made known to industrialists, there could be a substantial development of production here. In the same way the home

⁶⁵*Master Plan*, p. 83.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, p. 84

market now largely supplied from other sources could obtain commodities which, it already has been demonstrated, can be manufactured locally.⁶⁷

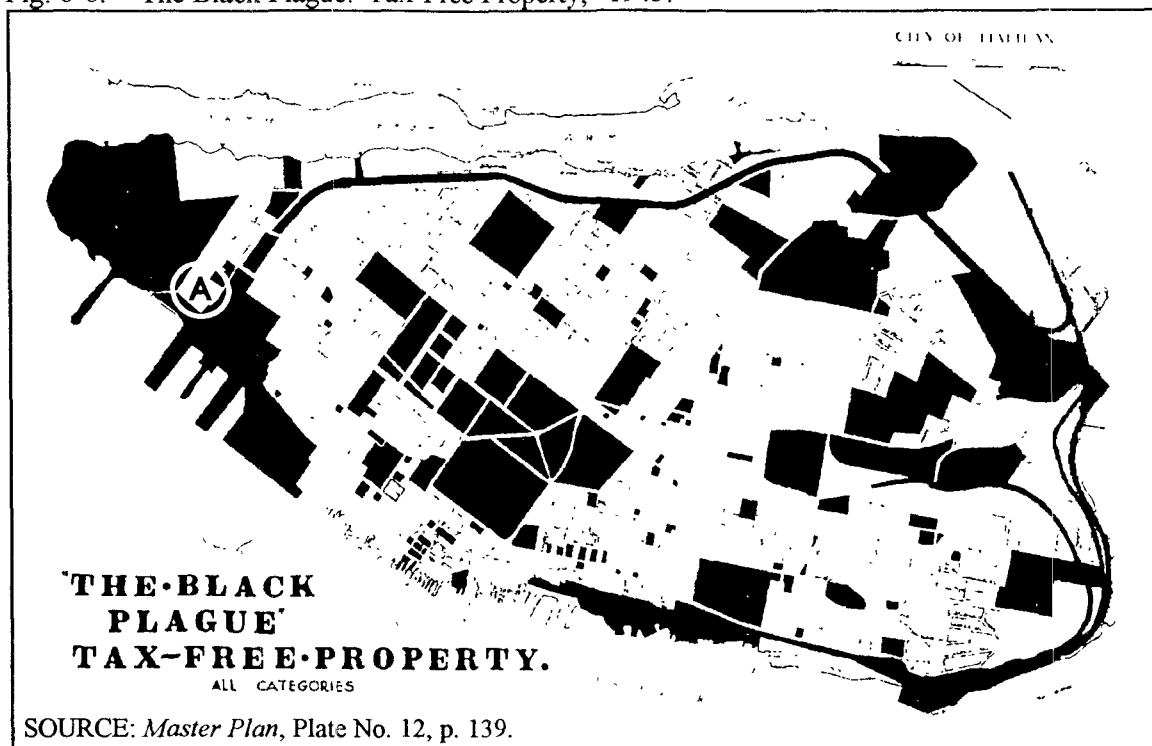
This argument followed a slightly different tack than the prewar agitation for increased port traffic – the distinction was now made between Halifax, the national entrepôt, and Halifax, regional hub for marketing, manufacturing and trading locally-produced commodities. The *Master Plan* reiterated that the major obstacle to industrial development in Halifax was the availability of land, noting that less than five per cent of the Halifax peninsula was set aside for industrial purposes.⁶⁸ But at least there seems to be recognition of the fact that future urban economic growth should not rely entirely on national port status. This revelation signified something quite different from mere “reconstruction” of prewar urban society – it marked the beginning of a fundamental rethinking of what role the city should play within Canada and how Halifax should address the challenge of the future.

At the root of all postwar planning proposals was the unanswered question of how they would be financed. The *Master Plan* resurrected a familiar bugbear in describing the fiscal constraints that Halifax was labouring under in 1945. In its 1938 submission to the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations, the civic administration had argued that “owing to the large amount of property within the limits of the City, which is exempt from taxation, the City of Halifax is compelled to stint essential services and is unable to undertake improvements which should be made due to the growth and expansion of the

⁶⁷*Master Plan*, p. 84.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, p. 41.

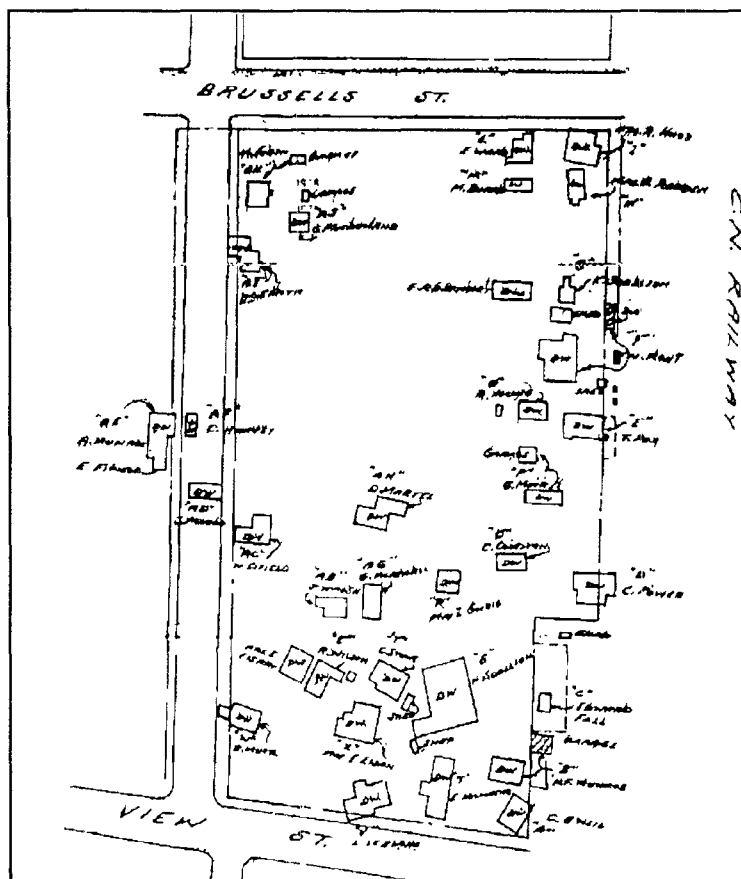
Fig. 8-6. "'The Black Plague.' Tax-Free Property," 1945.



SOURCE: *Master Plan*, Plate No. 12, p. 139.

Fig. 8-7. Plan of Greenbank district, south end Halifax, ca. 1950. (See above [A] for location).

A striking example of unplanned residential development, the Greenbank district was the south end equivalent to Africville. Workers engaged on the Ocean Terminals project began erecting shacks and small houses in the area during the First World War. As this plan shows, no building lots were laid out, and at least two dwellings were situated in the middle of projected city streets. Most had outdoor privies. Since there were no street numbers, tax assessors assigned a letter code to each dwelling. According to the 1950 *City Directory*, only five of 17 households in the Greenbank district owned their home. The landowner, who collected ground rents from the occupants, was a widow who inherited the property from her late husband, a medical doctor. Eventually the land was expropriated by the federal government. PANS RG 35-102 (19H) Vol. 16, Box 2, Assessment Field Cards Wards 1-2, 1947-54.



City within the past twenty years.”⁶⁹ The submission stated that nearly half of all real property on the Halifax peninsula was exempt from taxation, the majority of which belonged to the federal government. The rest was held by the city itself, the provincial government, charitable and educational institutions, churches, and other “miscellaneous exemptions,” including hefty concessions to the Halifax Relief Commission, Moir’s confectionery works, and Halifax Shipyards Limited. “We have outgrown our historical beginnings,” the submission declared. “What was a reasonable method of municipal taxation once has long since outlived its usefulness [*sic*]...[and] the change to be made points towards the assumption of these services by the governments responsible for their initiation.”⁷⁰ The *Master Plan* did not elaborate on these arguments, yet the inclusion of a map showing the extent of tax-exempt property in Halifax graphically underscored the importance attached to the issue [Fig. 8-6]. Once again, the city seemed to be reaffirming its dependence on the metropolis while ignoring local factors which also contributed to the long term decline of its urban infrastructure [See Fig. 8-7]. Given the wartime tensions informing municipal-federal relations, and the mixed success of federal intervention in the local economy between the wars, how supremely ironic it was that much of the credit for improving housing conditions and stabilizing the economic base in the 1950s would be due to federal agencies like CMHC and the Department of National Defence.

⁶⁹*Submission by the City of Halifax*, p. 4.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*

CONCLUSION

The arguments for the Second World War being a catalyst for change in Canada are strong. One could hardly name a field of human endeavour which was not in some way connected with the war effort. The unemployed went back to work, learned new skills, and joined unions. Women sewed mittens for sailors and also helped build the ships in which merchant seamen sailed. Schoolchildren collected scrap metal and memorized enemy aircraft recognition charts. Civilians donned uniforms and criss-crossed the country. A half-million Canadians went overseas, and 40,000 did not return. Whole new industries were created, while established firms shifted production from consumer goods to war materiel. And above all, the federal government assumed powers and responsibilities which would reshape the political landscape in Canada for many decades to come.

But what of the civic perspective? For many urban communities, the war hastened the onset of problems related to rapid population growth. The war disrupted urban living patterns by bringing in more new residents than the existing infrastructure could accommodate, by creating shortages of materials and products required to maintain essential services, by siphoning off administrative expertise into war-related jobs, and, in the case of Halifax and other garrison towns, by placing large segments of the population under military jurisdiction.

These conditions were not at all unprecedented – Canadian settlement patterns had seen many boom towns and frontier outposts in the past.¹ The susceptibility of Halifax to metropolitan forces like British imperial policy and economic nationalism (in the form of the National Policy) gave it much in common with other single-industry hinterland towns during the nineteenth century. But Halifax did not participate in the 1900-1913 immigration boom, when towns in the West went from “buffalo to board of trade almost overnight.”² The city had become too important as a seat of government and regional financial centre to be entirely bypassed by urbanization, yet after the First World War the local economy seemed rudderless. Municipal politics in Halifax has never been known for its dynamic or progressive leadership, and the interwar period was no exception. Under the rubric of “Maritime Rights,” Haligonian boosterism was expressed in regional terms and energetic political leadership gravitated towards the provincial and federal spheres.

The financial elite of Halifax had always been more interested in provincial development than urban development. Little more than lip service was paid to the concept of town planning, and no concrete plan for expanding the industrial base was put forward in the interwar period – nor would it emerge from the reconstruction exercise attempted in 1944-45. The fiscal crisis caused by the costs of relief and the peculiar weaknesses of the Halifax housing and labour markets were merely the visible symptoms of a more endemic malaise: the reluctance of private capital to invest in the future growth of the community.

¹Rex A. Lucas, *Minetown, Milltown, Railtown: Life in Canadian communities of single industry* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971).

²John Herd Thompson with Allen Seager, *Canada, 1922-1939: Decades of Discord* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985), p. 97.

A new economic dynamism gathering momentum by the mid-1950s was ascribed by one observer to “a significant change of attitude” among the “younger business and political leaders” of Halifax. They were “revolting against the idea of waiting for Ottawa to solve the problems of Nova Scotia.” Instead, they were looking to “the ocean trade routes that formerly led Nova Scotia to prosperity.” New piers, a 50 per cent increase in port business between 1951 and 1954, and the prospect of larger volumes of locally-produced exports produced “a spirit that, while it could hardly pass for optimism in Edmonton or Medicine Hat, still feels so strangely buoyant to the Haligonian that he is apt at times to distrust it.”³ It was noted that Halifax and environs were the fastest growing urban area in Canada in the decade following the war.

Halifax was slow to take steps to meet this population increase, believing that the end of the war would automatically bring its own solution. Even today there is an impression among many prominent Haligonians that both the overcrowding and the business boom are really only wartime phenomena, and they are still waiting for a return to normal. Some cannot believe that the 35,000 new inhabitants are anything but temporary visitors.⁴

While the ghosts of unkept political promises were finally being laid to rest in the 1950s, the underlying conservatism grounded in a relatively static urban social structure persisted. It was this social and economic continuity that shaped the community’s response to the war emergency, and helped create a wartime setting in which the most prominent players in the war effort – merchant seamen, shipyard workers, federal

³Marcus Van Steen, “The New Halifax Faces Old Problems,” *Canadian Geographical Journal* LI No. 3, (September 1955), pp. 123-125.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 125

bureaucrats, and service personnel – remained essentially marginalized members of an urban society which had traditionally been “proud of its homogeneity.”⁵

The war forced community leaders to consider ways and means of improving the level of municipal services for a population much larger than they had ever planned for before 1939. This strategic planning process initiated during the preparation of the *Master Plan* proved timely when urban growth accelerated in the 1960s. Ultimately, however, it was not the Second World War but Cold War politics and the baby boom which stimulated expansion and prosperity after 1945. Canadian membership in NATO required the maintenance of a sizable naval establishment on the East Coast, and this secured the Royal Canadian Navy’s position as an integral component of the local economy. This was by no means a foregone conclusion before 1950.

The Second World War subjected Halifax to issues and problems which would not be faced by other cities until years later: rising crime rates, urban planning, more schools, better health care, community social services, and improved recreational facilities. All of the major complications associated with postwar urban and suburban expansion were present in Halifax – except that war conditions prevented them from being effectively addressed. Today the Halifax-Dartmouth metropolitan area possesses a population approaching three times its wartime size; two bridges now span the harbour, and automobiles jam the narrow downtown streets where once the toy-like Birney cars clattered along their cobbled routes. Few visible signs remain of the hectic six years when

⁵Suzanne Morton, “Men and Women,” p. 13.

convoys, troop trains and blackouts were part of the daily routine. All is silent where once the great Queens, cloaked in grey camouflage, embarked ten thousand soldiers in half a day. The 2,000-ft. quay wall at the Ocean Terminals is rarely used. Pier 21, through which 125,000 immigrants passed in 1946, has been closed since 1971.⁶ Two container terminals dominate present-day harbour traffic. Since 1945, contracts at the Halifax Shipyards have never matched the fever pitch of wartime.

Because of the fiscal challenges that remained unresolved from the Depression years, the uncertainty about the long term stability of wartime population and economic growth, and a natural reluctance to accept change, the Second World War did little to fundamentally alter the political and economic framework upon which urban social relations were built. The seasonal workforce only had to adjust to a different cycle. The affluent turned their attention to altruistic activities on behalf of servicemen and women, but at the same time Victorian attitudes and institutions continued to serve the most basic needs of the civilian population.

Because of its historical role in the strategic planning of both Great Britain and Canada, it was assumed that Halifax could accommodate the training and administrative requirements of the Navy, support convoy assembly and organization, massive troop movements, and ship repair and construction needs. Unfortunately, no one could predict at the outbreak of war how large the Royal Canadian Navy was going to be, how extensive the convoy system and the Allied air forces would become, how many soldiers

⁶Trudy Duivenvoorden Mitic, "Gateway to Canada," *Chronicle-Herald*, 8 March 1988, p. 10.

and airmen would embark from the port on their way overseas, and how many civilians would descend on Halifax looking for a place to live. By the time the realization set in that all of the wartime tasks expected of the city could not possibly be handled efficiently, it was too late to do anything about it. Halifax was left to ride out the storm. Far from playing the role like a seasoned veteran, the city instead found itself thrust into the operational side of the war effort without being given the opportunity to prepare, repair and upgrade its aging infrastructure.

Since its founding, the urban growth of Halifax had been dependent on military and political considerations over which the city had little direct control. By 1939, it had become a cliché that “war means prosperity” to Haligonians, and “between conflicts, the town warms itself on memories of the last war and dreams about the next one.”⁷ “This the city that wars built,” began an Associated Press article describing the “Atlantic boom town...on the eastern fringe of the continent” in May 1941.⁸ But the two great wars of this century – while bringing intense business activity – also exacted a high social cost. The 1917 explosion in Halifax Harbour inflicted a terrible toll in human lives and destruction. Today, the memory and consequences of the harbour explosion are recalled much more vividly in Halifax than any economic benefits realized by the First World War.

The visible effects of the Second World War were more subtle, but no less ambiguous economically than the 1914-18 period. “As for physical appearance, the community does not show much change,” Frank Doyle wrote in 1946. “Hotels which

⁷Pugsley, *Sailor Remember*, p. 77.

⁸PANS MG 1 Vol. 489, H.B. Jefferson papers, “Atlantic Boom town,” by Morgan M. Beatty, (part one), 21 May 1941.

were commandeered as barracks are being passed back one by one to private ownership...Nearly two thousand 'wartime' homes were built and all are occupied; the public is clamoring for more to ease the congestion which has prevented the razing of slums declared unfit for human habitation a dozen years ago."⁹ Outside the Dockyard and the naval base, one was hard pressed to point out the transfiguring impact of the Second World War on the peninsula. Even Thomas Raddall's roseate review found little of permanent value had been added to the urban landscape by 1948. "The late war left certain scars, as all wars do, but it also provided a first-class airport and naval base which have an important bearing on the future."¹⁰ As for the economic impact of the war, Frank Doyle observed that

Halifax...does not emerge from this war, as it has from others, a much wealthier city. In the past, it has been said, conflict has made it. Fortunes were accumulated in supplying the fleets and land forces and sometimes in privateering...This time the top has been taken off here, as elsewhere, by the federal treasury. Its only war factory is [now] a warehouse and its sugar refining industry has been closed down.¹¹

Two factors only indirectly related to the war had a more lasting influence on the course of Halifax's postwar urban development. The first was the appearance of an indigenous military culture that introduced new blood and a nationalist sensibility into the naval establishment heretofore dominated by the Royal Navy. The second was the revitalization of the middle class which had been demoralized by the prewar depression and ravaged by out-migration from the Atlantic region. The war bureaucracy, though

⁹Doyle, p. 137.

¹⁰Raddall, p. 338.

¹¹Doyle, pp. 136-137.

sometimes criticized for the mistakes it made and its inefficiency, also re-vivified the professional classes. Halifax received an infusion of professionals in fields of health care, business and government administration who directed various aspects of the war effort, and native Haligonians with similar qualifications were also often given the opportunity to acquire experience and develop managerial skills, albeit under abnormal conditions. The publication of the *Master Plan* in November 1945 was perhaps the best example of community leaders attempting to apply those skills in a peacetime context. Aside from its public relations value, however, it had little effect on urban development. It did not properly appreciate the importance of the automobile in its proposals, and some elements of the plan were clearly impractical. The *Master Plan* called for “immediate action” in the elimination of slum districts, including the notorious Africville, but it would be well over a decade before real progress was made on this front. Thus, the war may have been influential in bringing about social change from an individual standpoint, but it did not substantially alter the existing physical context shaping urban social and economic relations, or launch Halifax on a new path of urban development. Furthermore, while espousing the need for postwar planning to “be done in a democratic way to serve the needs and best interests of all...citizens,” there was no evidence of an inclusive consultation process which solicited, for example, the views of low-income families in the slum districts earmarked for demolition.¹²

¹²Macnab, “Civic Planning,” p. 13.

As for the “demountable” houses put up with such haste by Wartime Housing Limited, most are still occupied today, albeit in almost unrecognizable form due to extensive interior and exterior remodeling. Pockets of tumble-down rowhousing remain in Halifax to this day, but federal housing programmes in the 1960s facilitated slum clearance and the construction of public housing projects. The worst areas have long since been razed, but in many cases no new housing was built on the site. Commercialization of the central business district has become far more pervasive than it was in the 1940s. By 1971, 65 per cent of the private dwellings in the Halifax metropolitan area had been built after 1945. This is comparable to 69 per cent for Toronto – arguably Canada’s most dynamic postwar city – in 1971.¹³ Ironically, however, most of the growth occurred outside the city proper, so Ira Macnab’s goal of rebuilding 20 per cent of the peninsular housing stock was probably never realized.

Halifax recalls the Second World War with ambivalence. The seamy side of the war economy, the poor housing, and above all, the V-E Day debacle are all aspects of the city’s history that Haligonians would just as soon forget. The community felt it had been judged unfairly by the rest of Canada for the problems it experienced in performing its appointed role. As William H. Pugsley put it, Halifax “got what it deserved” on V-E Day for the manner in which the transient population had been treated.¹⁴ The negative portrayal of Halifax in the national press as a result of the housing crisis and V-E Day ignored the extraordinary contribution made by literally thousands of volunteers – most of

¹³D. Michael Ray, *Canadian Urban Trends* Vol. 1: National Perspective (Ministry of Supply and Services Canada: Ottawa, 1976) Table A1.1, pp. 31, 34.

¹⁴Personal communication to the author.

them women – to the provision of food, clothing, housing, entertainment and friendship to the armed forces. When the magnitude of the housing crisis facing Halifax during the Second World War is realized, the wonder is that an incident like the V-E Day disorders did not occur sooner than it did.

APPENDIX A

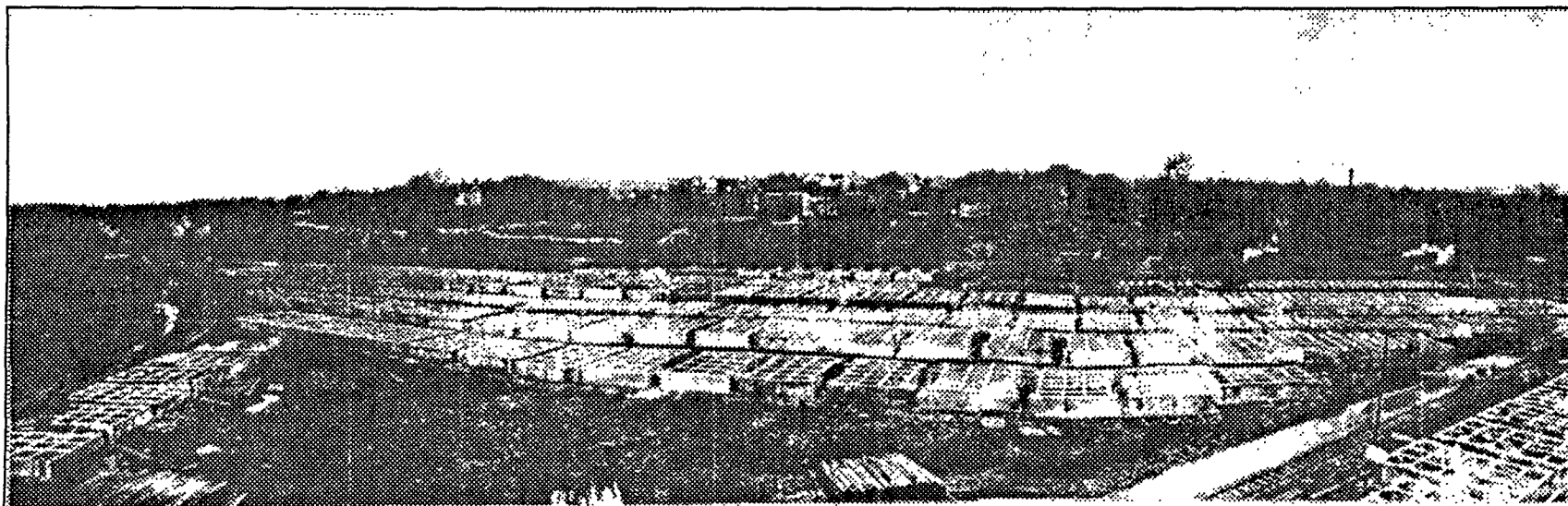


Fig. A-1. Pouring concrete shells during construction of Intercolonial Railway Ocean Terminals, south end Halifax, 1915. The 63-ton shells were transported on flatcars to water's edge, then stacked and filled with rubble to form the quay wall. (*Sessional Papers* 1916, No. 20, Plate XII).

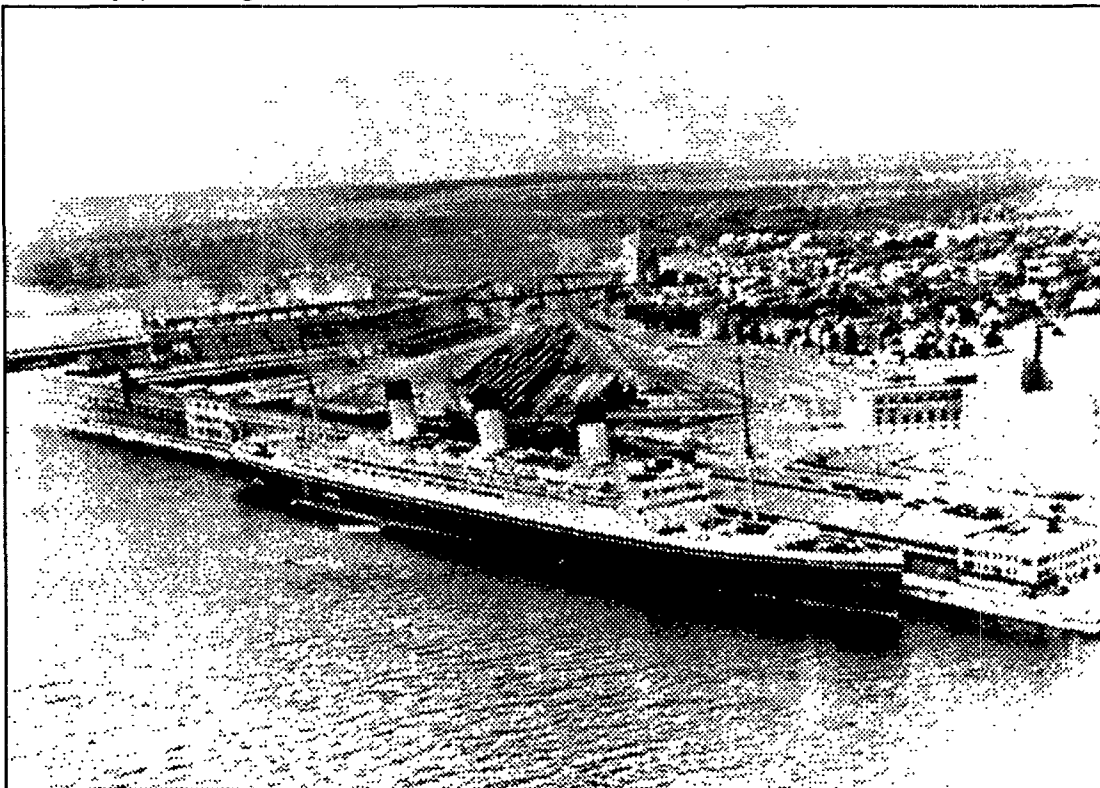
Fig. A-2. Fifteen employees (11 men and 4 women) pose in this 1930 photograph of the Pickford & Black shipping agency office. A copy of *Lloyd's Register of Shipping* is circled in the centre of the picture. (Buggey, "Halifax Waterfront Buildings," Parks Canada, 1975, p. 149).





Fig. A-3. Halifax peninsula, looking northwest, ca. 1930. *Top of picture*, Bedford Basin. *Bottom*, Ocean Terminals. (National Archives of Canada [NA], PA42043)

Fig. A-4. Ocean Terminals, looking southwest, 1932. *Foreground*, Cunard-White Star liner *Majestic* alongside 612-metre quay wall. *Right*, new Nova Scotian hotel. (NA, PA180958).



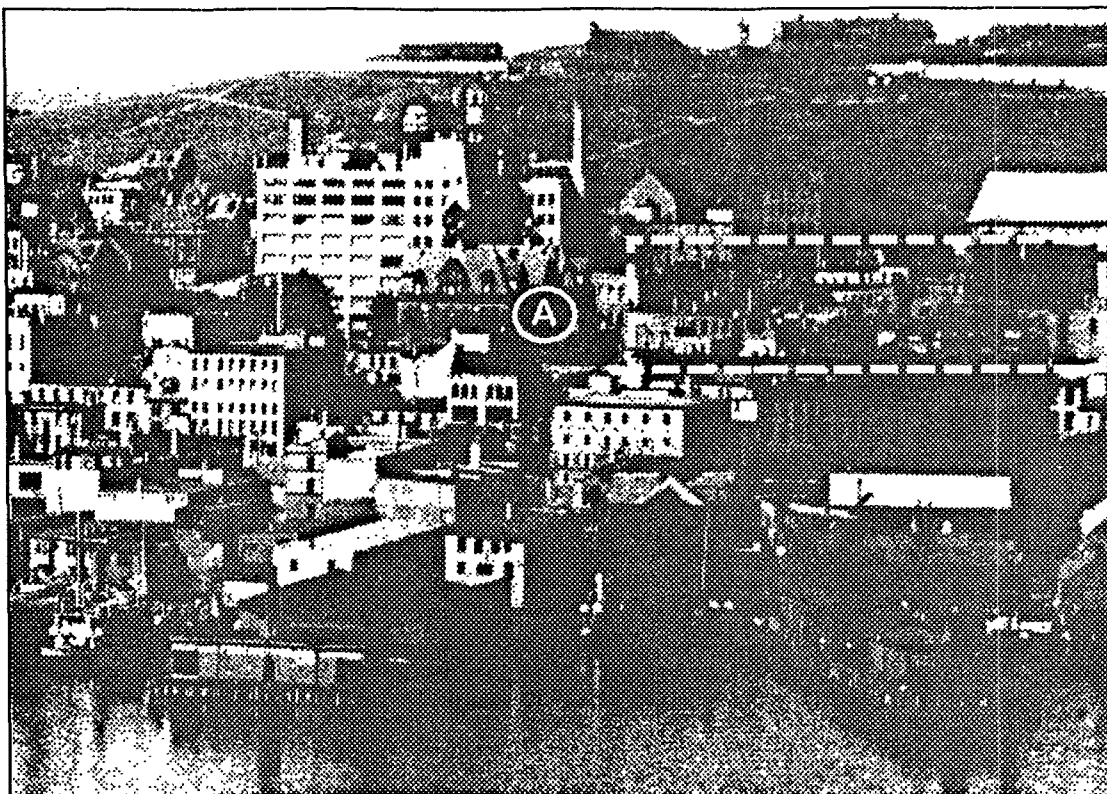


Fig. A-5. City centre [PA 5], looking west from waterfront, 1931. One of the worst slum areas [see box] was located just north of City Hall [A]. Buggey, "Halifax Waterfront Buildings," Parks Canada, 1975, p. 157.

Fig. A-6. Halifax waterfront [PA 3 & 5], looking southeast, ca late 1940s. *Bottom right*, Lower Water Street. (PANS Photo Collection, Acc. 1987-481).



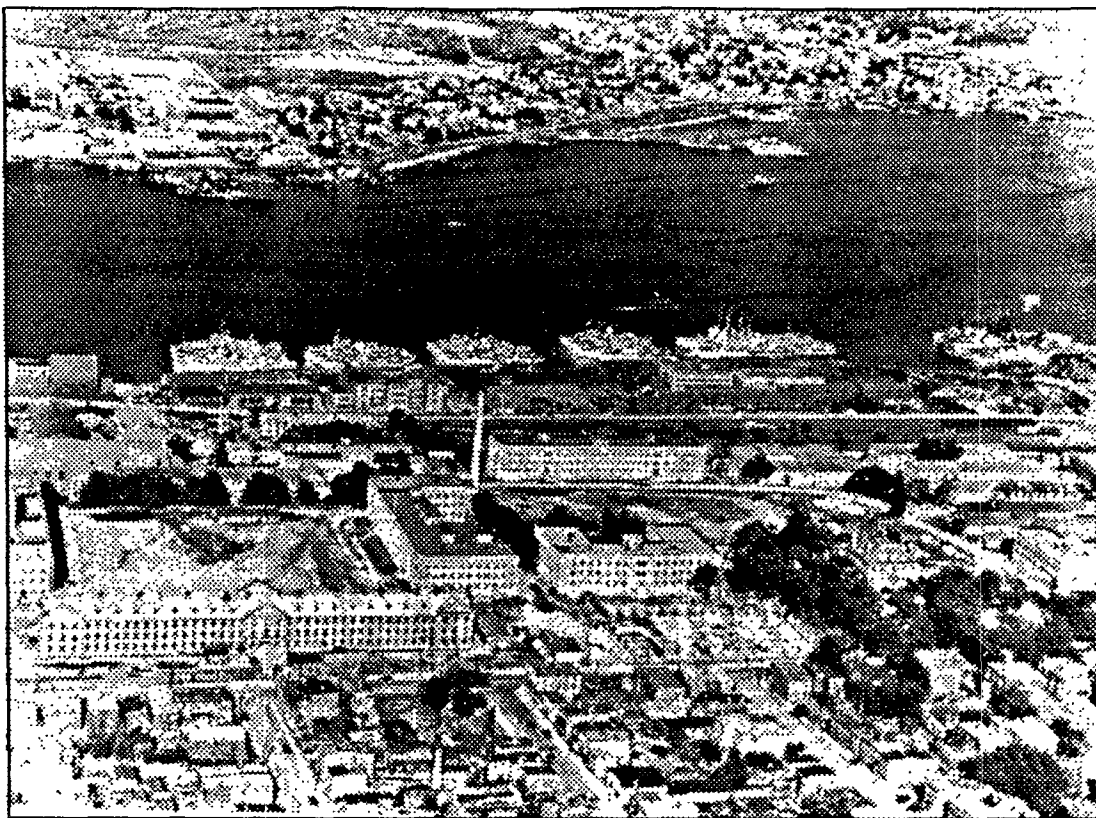
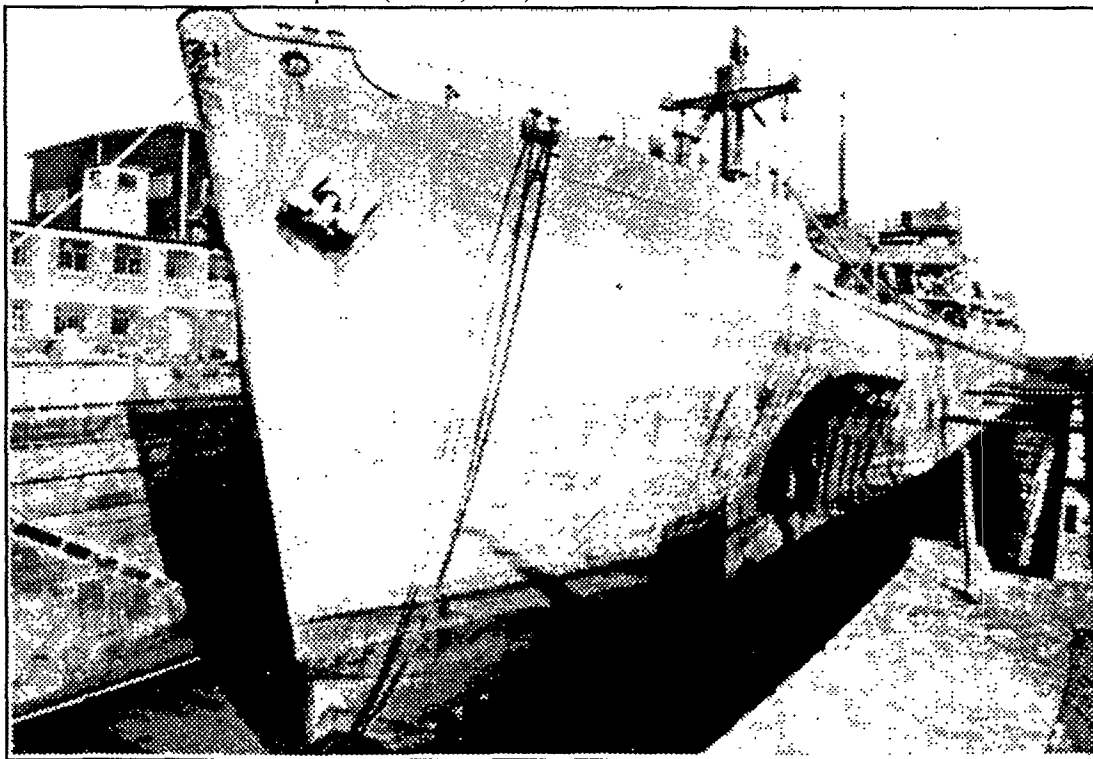


Fig. A-7. HMCS *Stadacona* [PA 9], looking east, ca.1944. (NA, HS0619-37).

Fig. A-8. Norwegian freighter *Kronprinzen* in dry-dock at the Halifax Shipyards, 1942. The damage caused by German torpedoes was so severe that this vessel was later towed to an American port for further repairs. Foundation Maritime/C. Climo photo. (Metson, 1981).



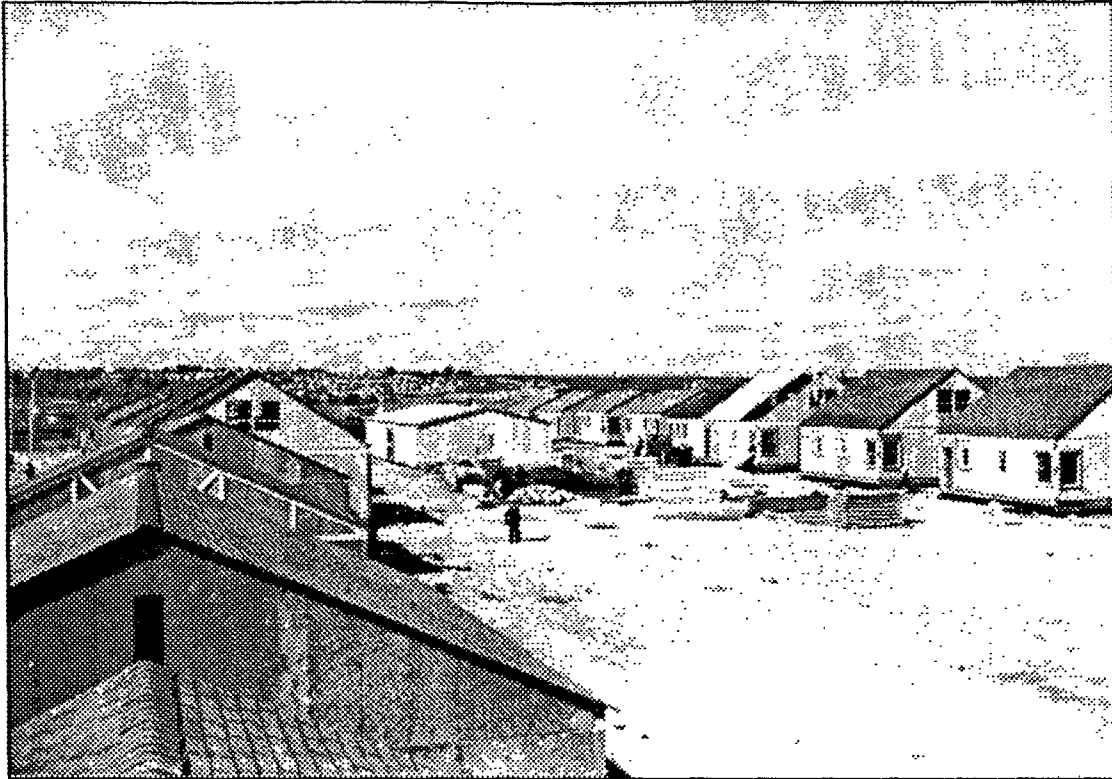


Fig. A-9. Wartime Housing Limited bungalows under construction in Dartmouth, 1942. Another WHL project in north end Halifax [PA 13] is visible in the background (PANS, E.A. Bollinger Collection, #84).

Fig. A-10. Wartime Housing Limited staff houses under construction in north end Halifax [PA 11], 1941. (PANS, E.A. Bollinger Collection, #11).





Fig. A-11. Tenement building in Market Street [PA 5] "within a stone's throw of...City Hall. It is neither better or worse than its neighbours," ca. 1955. (Stephenson, 1957).

Fig. A-12. Maitland Street [PA 7], 1950s. An "urban cottage" [see box] built on land behind shops fronting on Gottingen Street. (Stephenson, 1957).



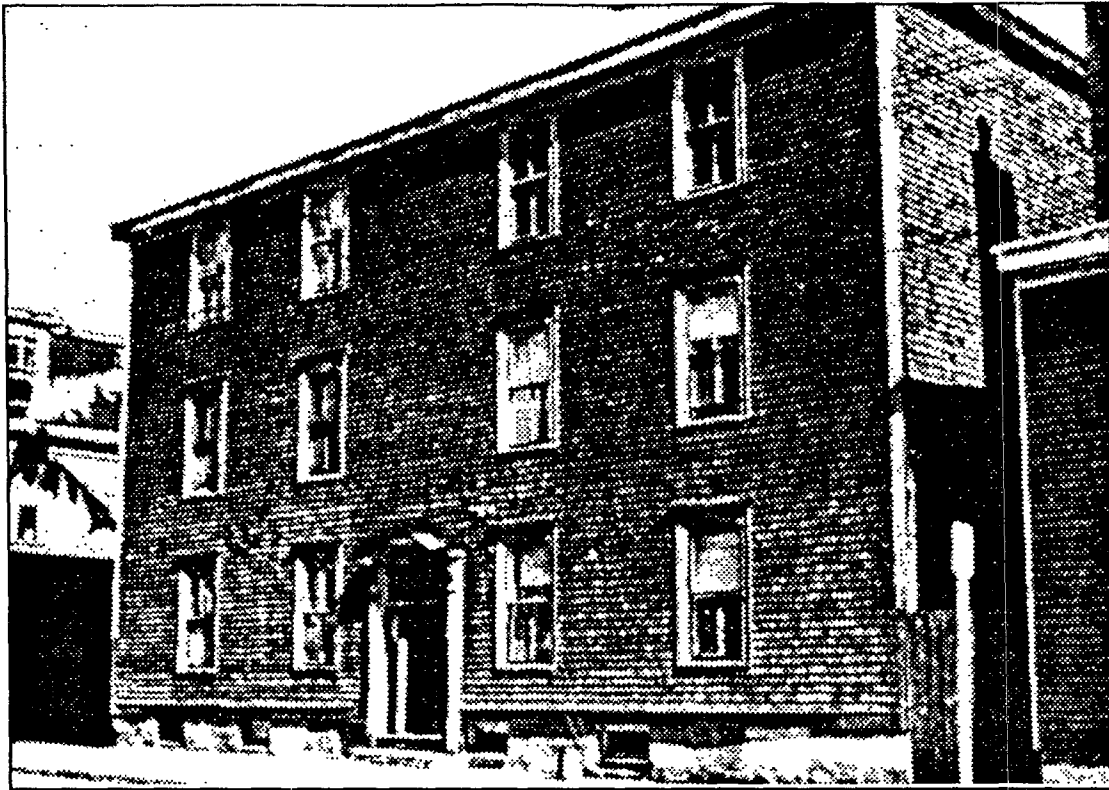


Fig. A-13. Eighty-one tenants (including 33 children) occupied this tenement on Barrington Street [PA 7] in the mid-1950s. There was only one full bathroom in the entire building. (Stephenson, 1957).

Fig. A-14. Dwellings in a court on Barrington Street [PA 7], 1950s. "What may have been a pleasant group of nineteenth-century houses...is now in a shocking condition." (Stephenson, 1957).





Fig. A-15. Terrace houses, Hollis Street [PA 3], 1960s. "Though encrusted with the grime of 140 years," these houses "have been remarkably little altered, except to be divided into apartments." (Heritage Trust, 1967).

Fig. A-16. Tenement building, Upper Water Street [PA 7], 1950s. "Living conditions are now so bad on Upper Water Street, it is impossible to contemplate its continued use as a residential street." (Stephenson, 1957)

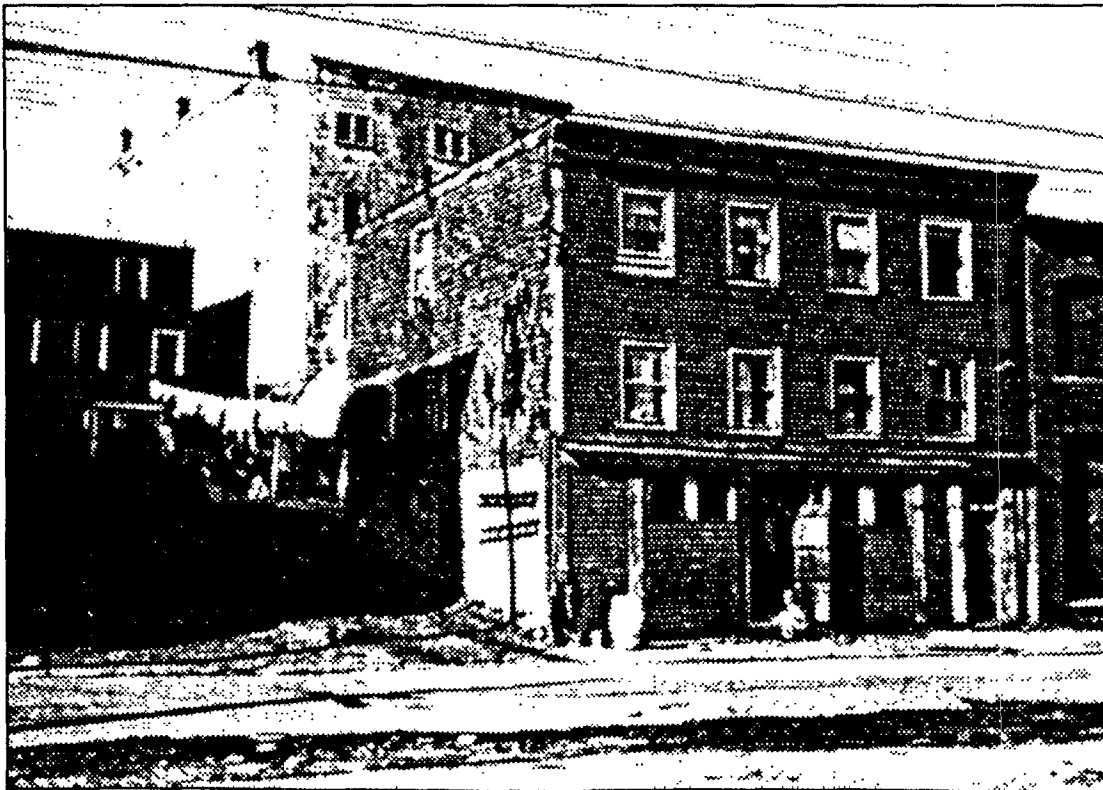




Fig. A-17. Row housing in "the old northern suburb" [PA 7], 1950s. The compact development shown here was typical of older residential areas in the north end. (Stephenson, 1957).

Fig. A-18. Nineteenth century row housing in the Maynard/Creighton area [PA 7] survives to this day. Note recent addition of skylights to the upper half-story. These units were restored in the 1980s. (Latremouille, 1986).



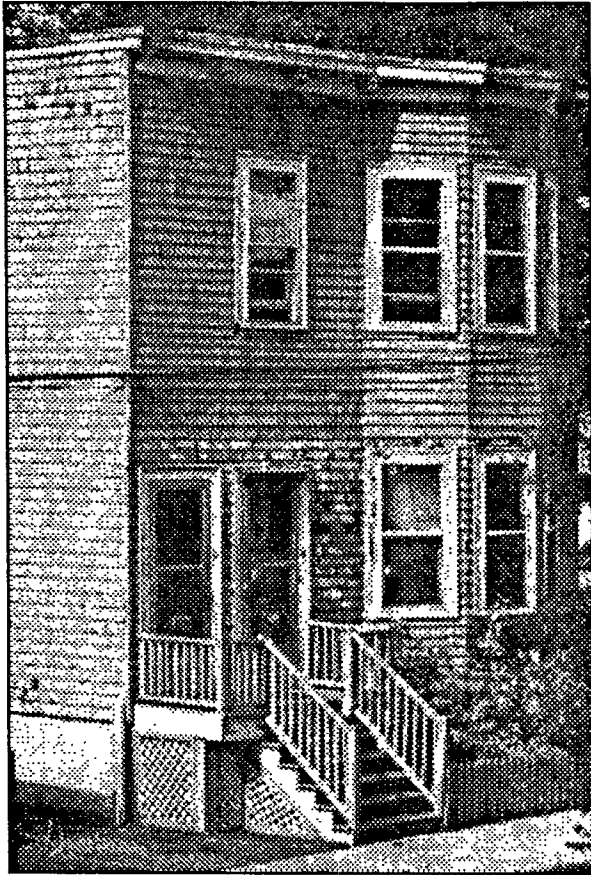
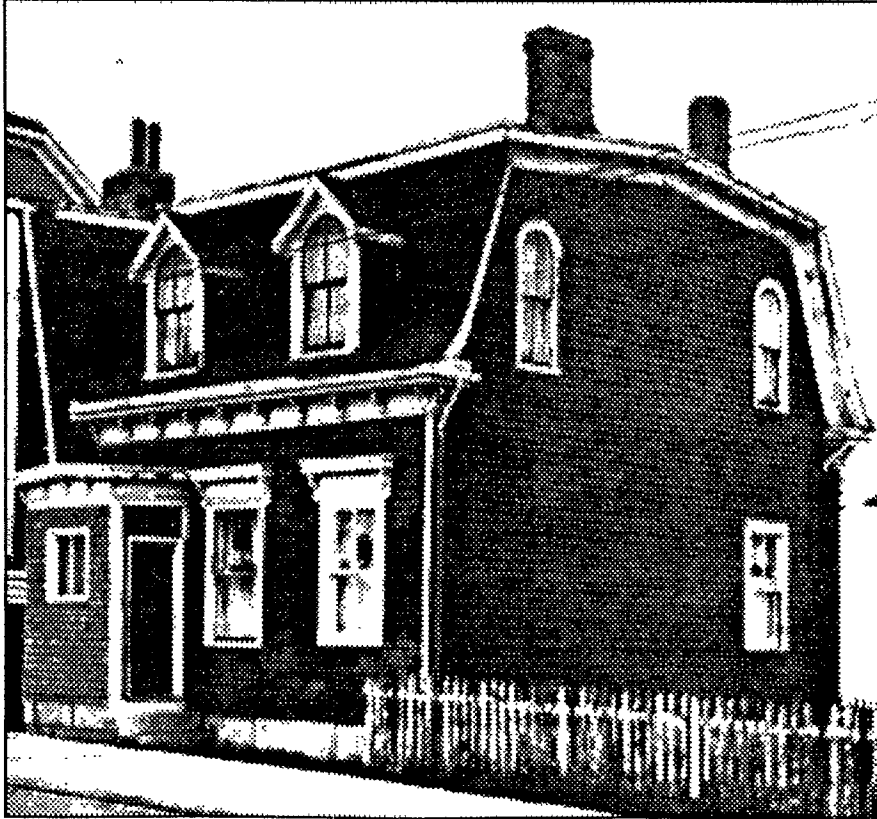


Fig. A-19. Three typical houses in the Maynard/Creighton area [PA 7], 1980s.
Left, An up-and-down duplex. *Above and bottom left*, single family dwellings.
 (Latremouille, 1986).



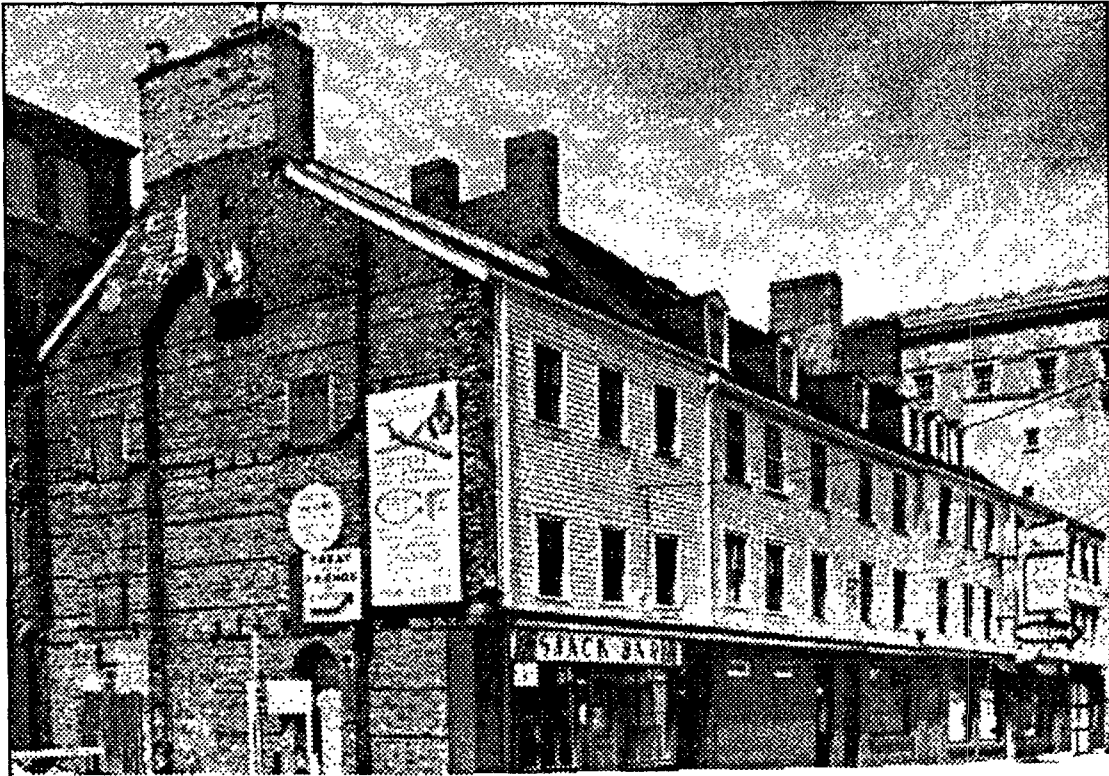


Fig. A-20. This block illustrates the mixed commercial-residential use which was common in the central business district [PA 5]. Built in the 1820s, its owner and primary use during the Second World War was a fish market. This photo by M.E.B. Martin was taken in 1967. (Heritage Trust, 1967).

Fig. A-21. Another example of street level commercial space with upper story living quarters, this time on Barrington near North Street [PA 7], ca. 1950s. (PANS Photo Collection, N-5249).



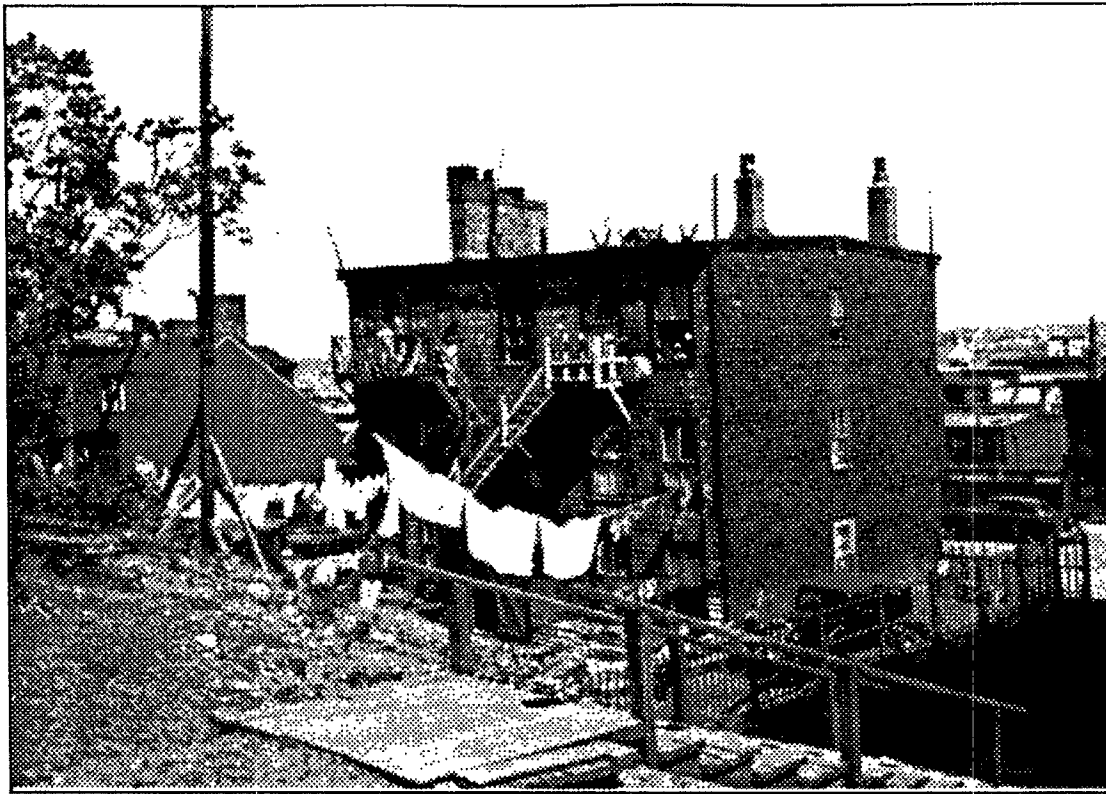


Fig. A-22. Multiple family dwelling, Market Street [PA 5], 1952. (PANS, R. Norwood Collection. #262).

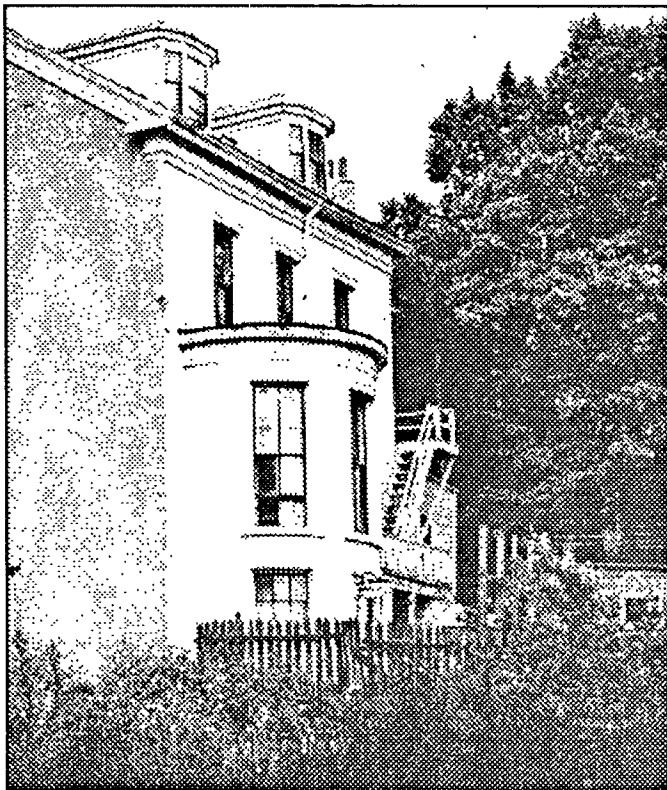


Fig. A-23. Jonathan McCully, a Father of Confederation, built this mansion on Brunswick Street [PA 7] in 1863. It was rented for \$25 per month in 1877. When this photo was taken by Barbara Smith in 1967, the building was a rooming house. (Heritage Trust, 1967).

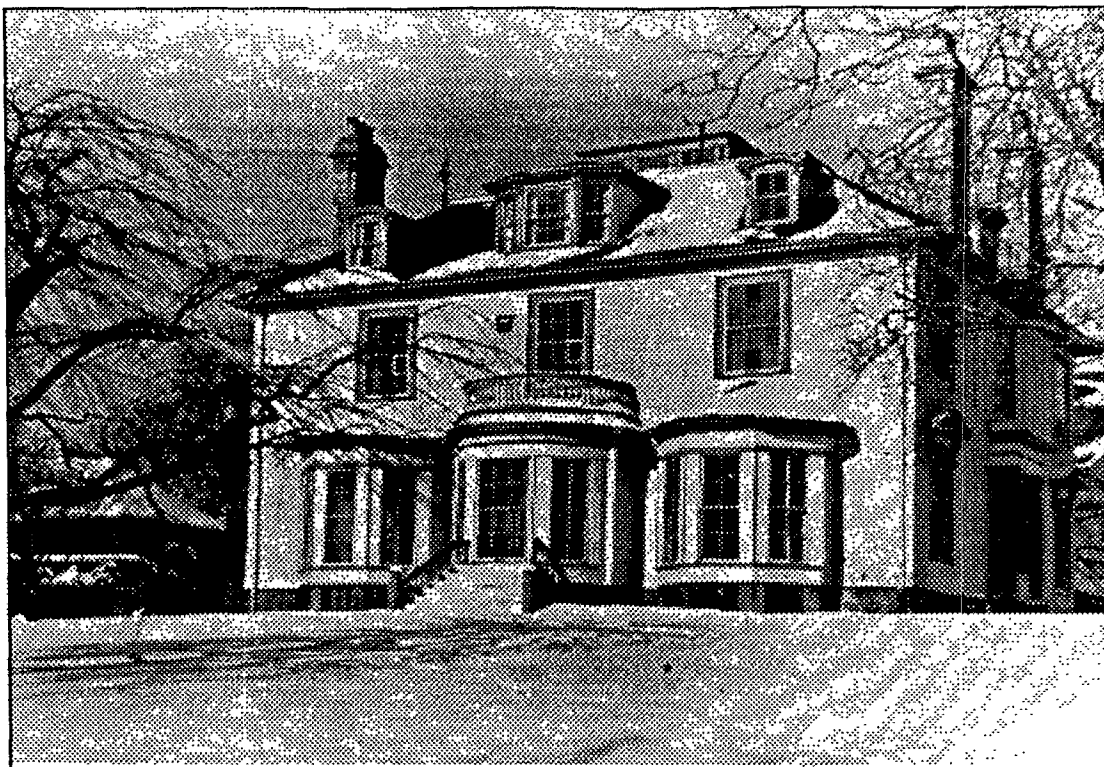


Fig. A-24. Odell estate, Tobin Street [PA 1], ca. 1940. This mansion served as a club for Royal Navy ratings and later as a hostel for Norwegian sailors during the war. It was torn down after 1950 and three apartment buildings were erected on the property. (Photo courtesy the late Isabel Macneill).

Fig. A-25. "Gorsebrook" [PA 2] prior to demolition in 1959. Last of the great south end estates, during the war this former golf course clubhouse became an annex to the Infectious Diseases Hospital (PANS Photo Collection N-7139).



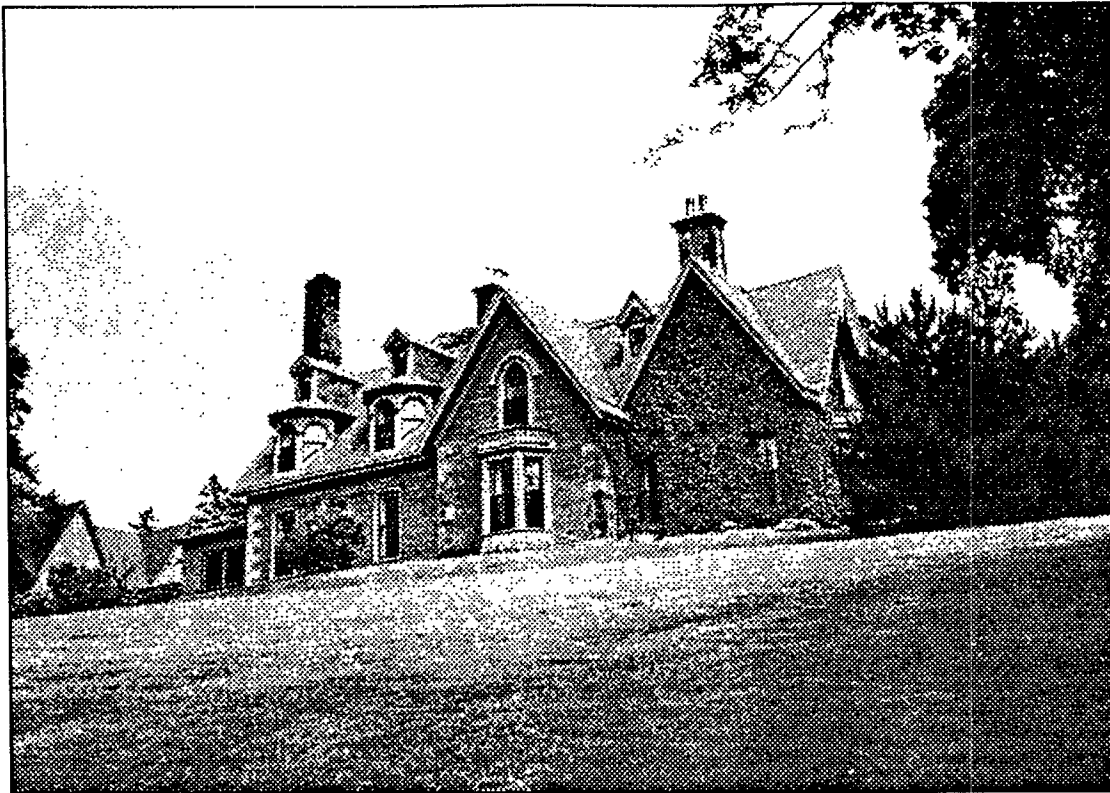


Fig. A-26. *Above*, "Fernwood" [PA 2]. home of F.B. McCurdy, president of the Eastern Trust Company. (Heritage Trust, 1967).

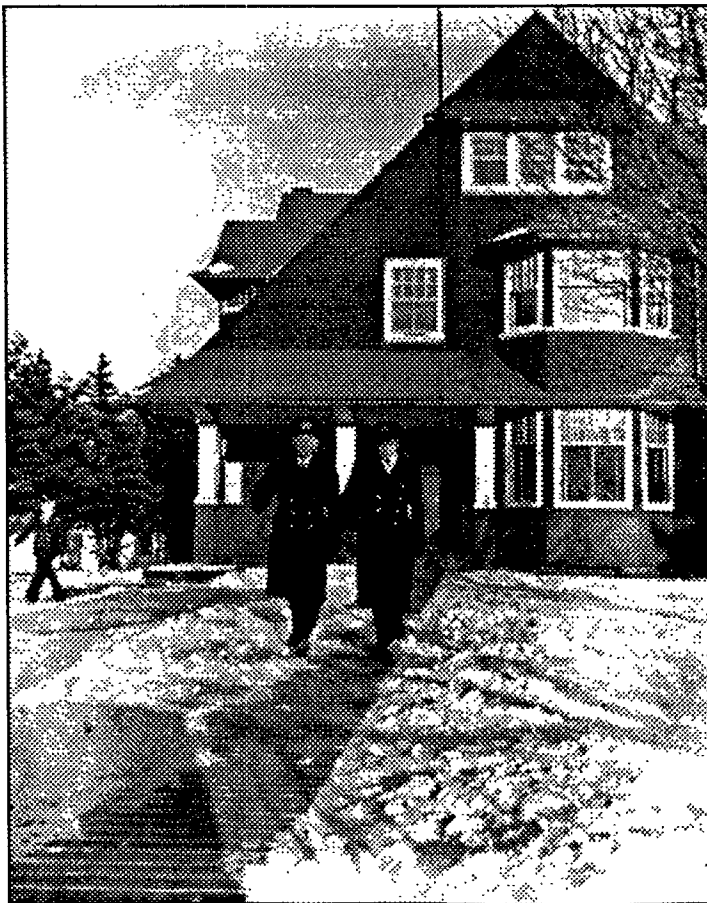


Fig. A-27. *Left*, A private home on prestigious Young Avenue [PA 1] became a club for junior officers of the Royal Canadian Navy. (NA, PA180547).

Fig. A-28. Two photographs from a series staged by the National Film Board in late 1943 to dramatize the housing shortage in Halifax. These rooming houses were located on South Street [PA 1] between Hollis and Barrington. (NA, PA180552).



Fig. A-29. *Right*, A serviceman and his wife are turned away by Halifax landlady. (NA, PA180551).



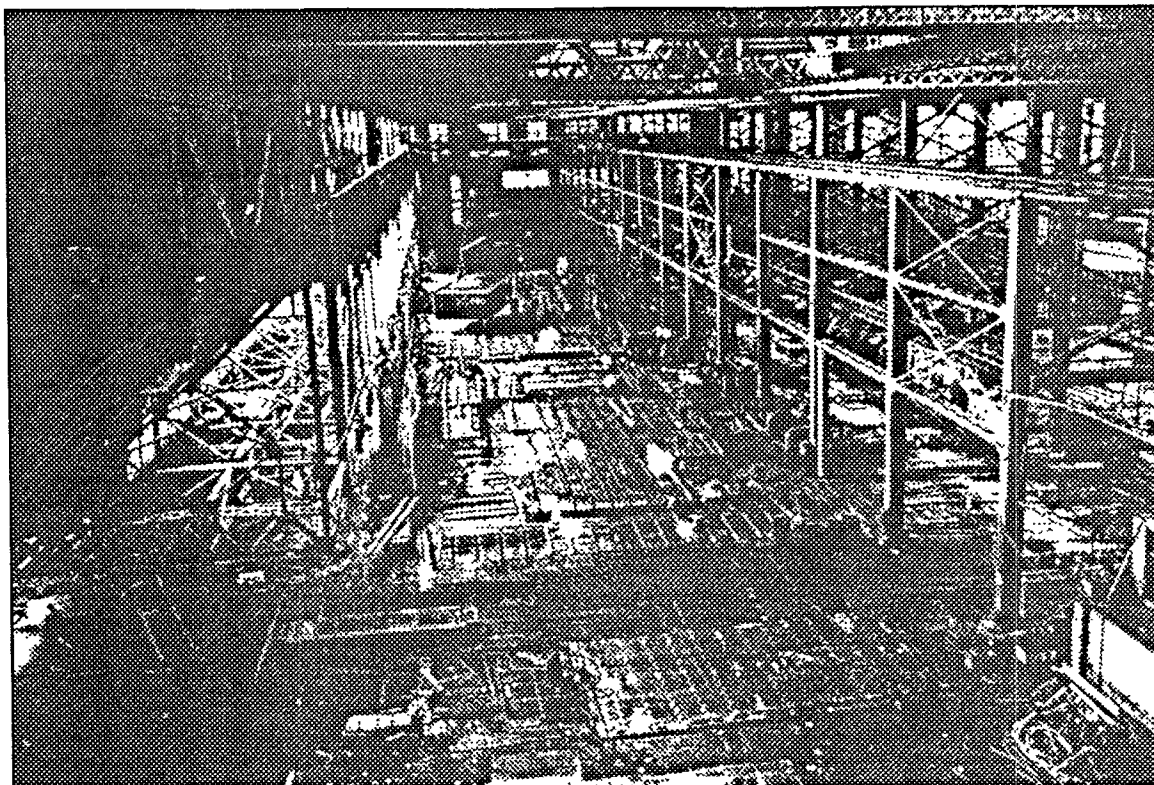


Fig. A-30. Welders at work inside the main shed at Halifax Shipyards Limited [PA 11], early 1940s. (PANS, HDIL papers, Box 116).

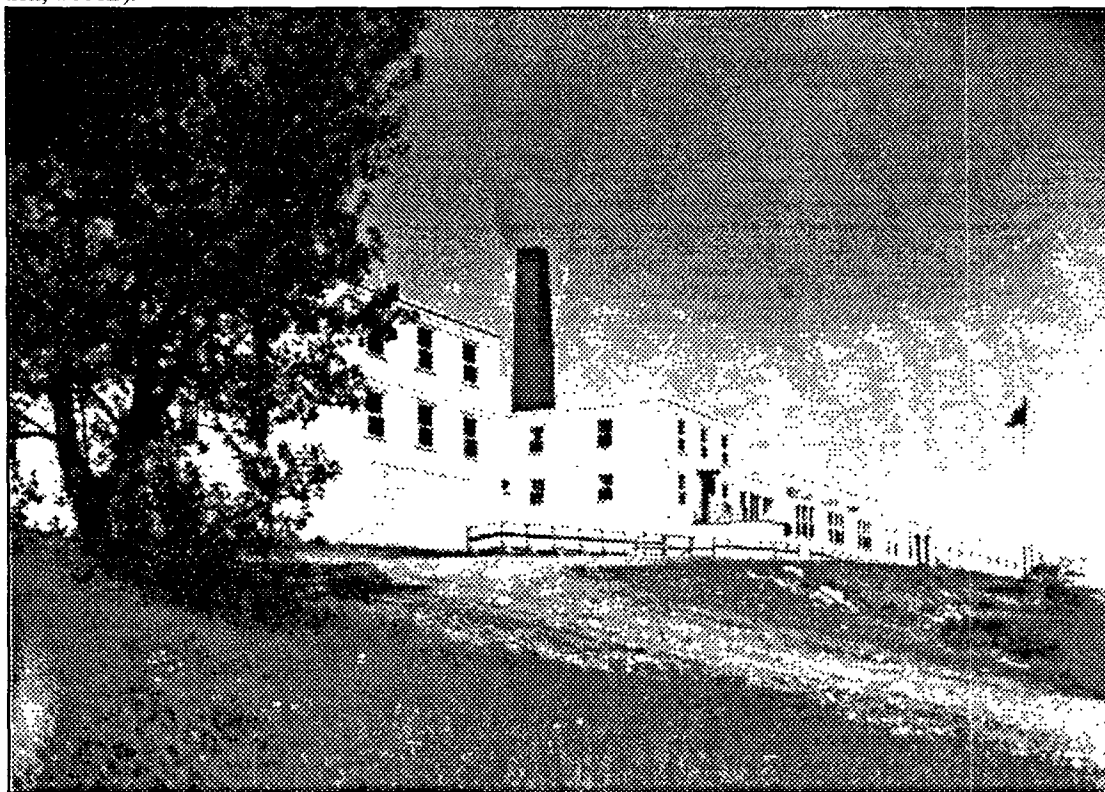
Fig. A-31. Birney tramcars and buses waiting for HSL shipyard workers at quitting time, ca. 1943. (NA, PA180548).





Fig. A-32. Merchantmen assembled in Bedford Basin, looking northwest, date unknown. Africville is in the foreground [PA 13]. (Metson, 1981, p. 38).

Fig. A-33. Merchant Seamen's Manning Pool, Barrington Street [PA 9], ca. 1942 (PANS, Bollinger Collection, #668B).



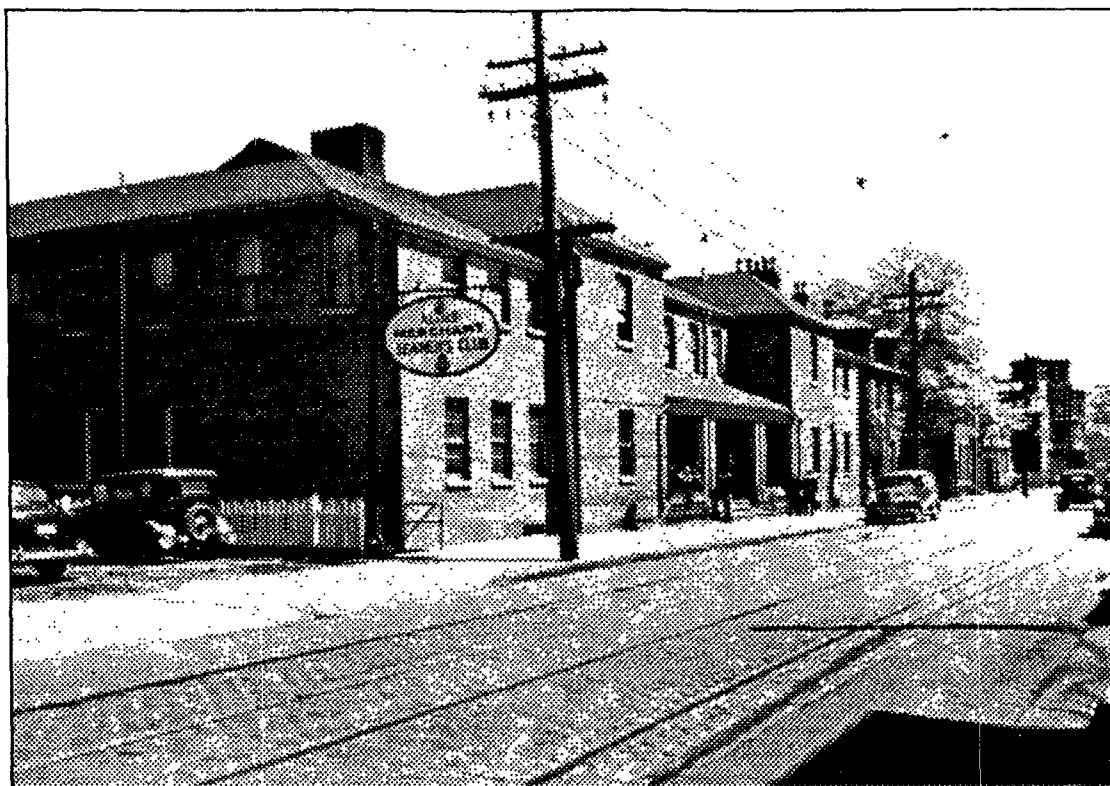


Fig. A-34. Allied Merchant Seamen's Club, Hollis Street [PA 3]. Renamed the Seagull Club after the war, this combination hostel, tavern and cafeteria was operated by the Navy League. (PANS, Bollinger Collection #602B)

Fig. A-35. Allied Merchant Seamen's Club, Hollis Street, ca. 1942. Most of the clientele were foreign nationals (NA, PA180550).





Fig. A-36. *Above*, Survivors of U-boat attack at the Allied Merchant Seamen's Club, Hollis Street, date unknown. Man in suit may be an interpreter or newspaper reporter. From Metson (1981), p. 68. (DND, PA 105675).



Fig. A-37. *Right*, A survivor with frostbitten feet is carried into the AMS Club. The nurse is a member of the St. John Ambulance Brigade. From Metson (1981), p. 68. (DND, PA 105669).



Fig. A-38. Troops arriving by train at CNR station [PA 1], ca. 1943. (NA, PA180554).



Fig. A-39. Service personnel lining up for the cinema, Barrington Street [PA 3], ca. 1943. (NA, PA180553).

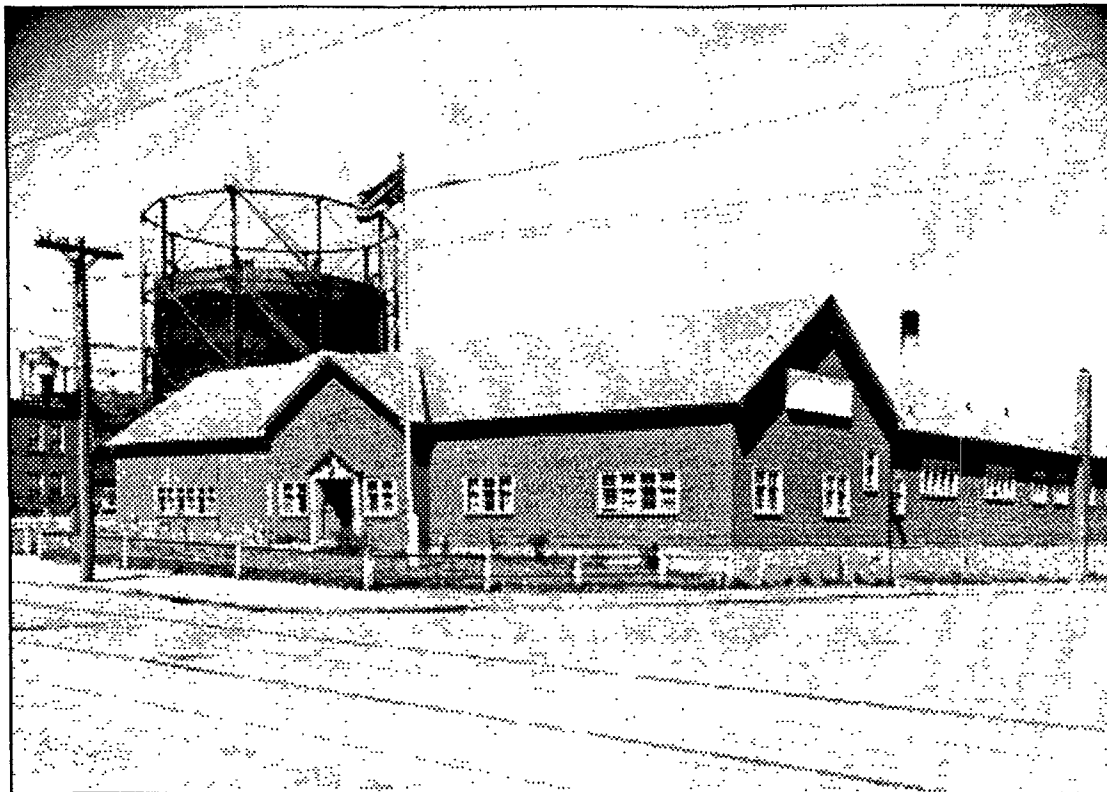
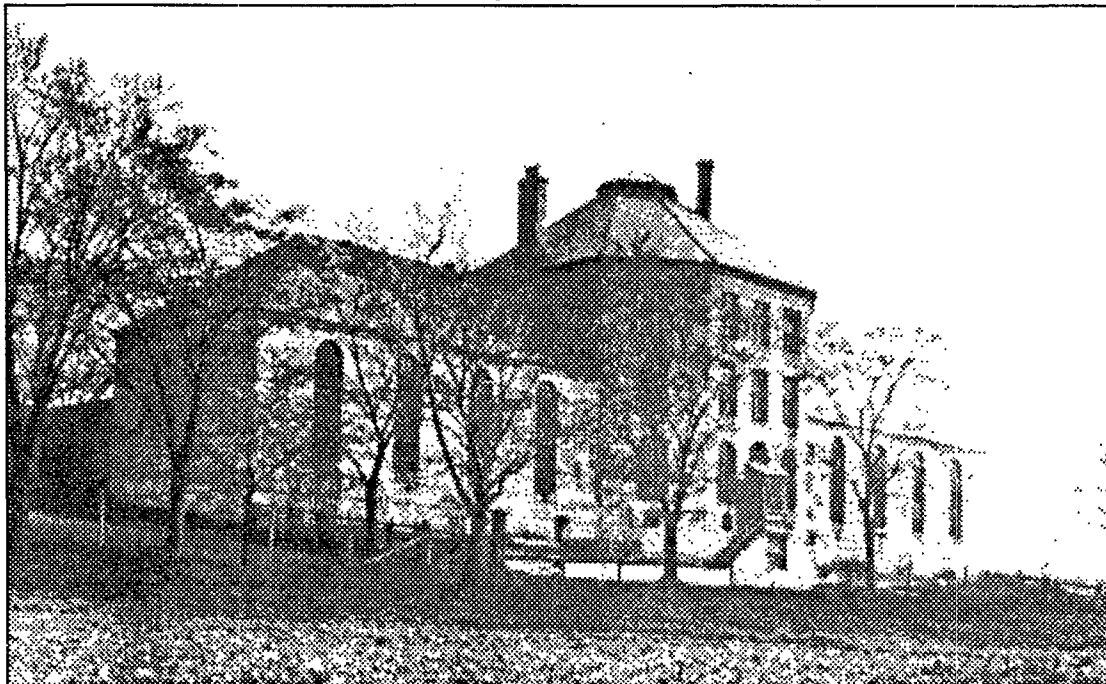


Fig. A-40. Knights of Columbus Services Hut, Hollis Street [PA 1], ca. 1941. Destroyed by fire in 1944, it was quickly rebuilt. (PANS, E.A. Bollinger Collection, #602H).

Fig. A-41. Rockhead Prison, north end Halifax [PA 13]. Although condemned in 1933, the Royal Canadian Navy used the prison as a detention hospital during the Second World War. (Heritage Trust, 1967).



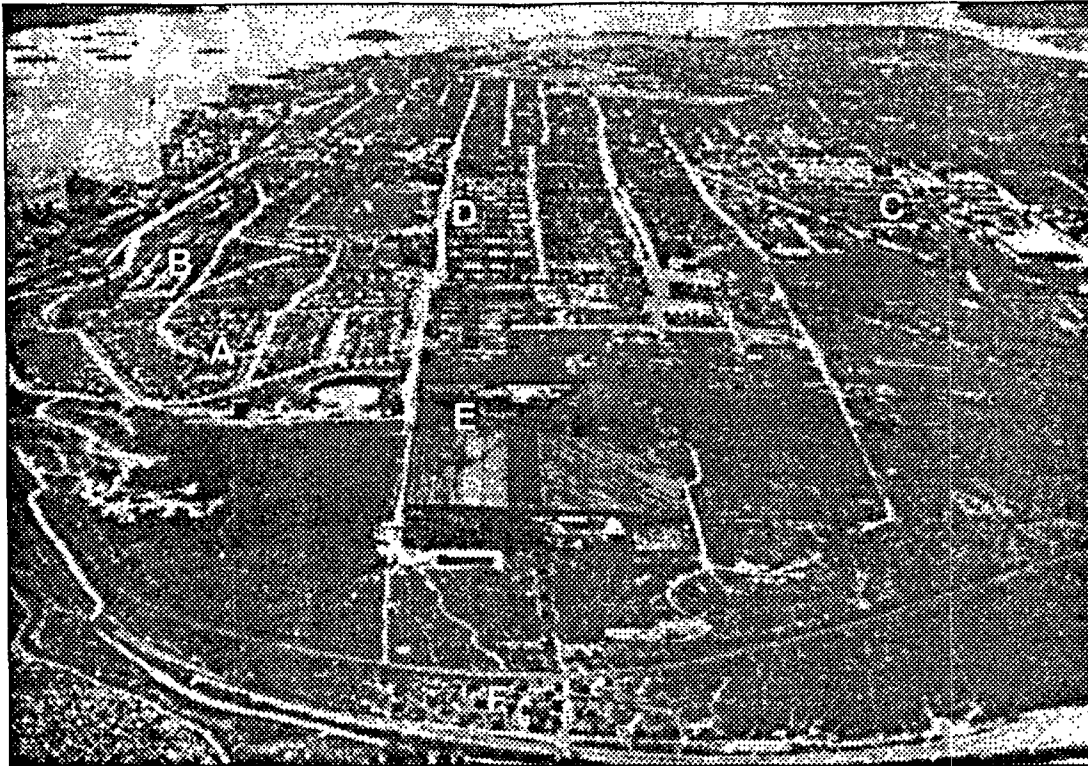
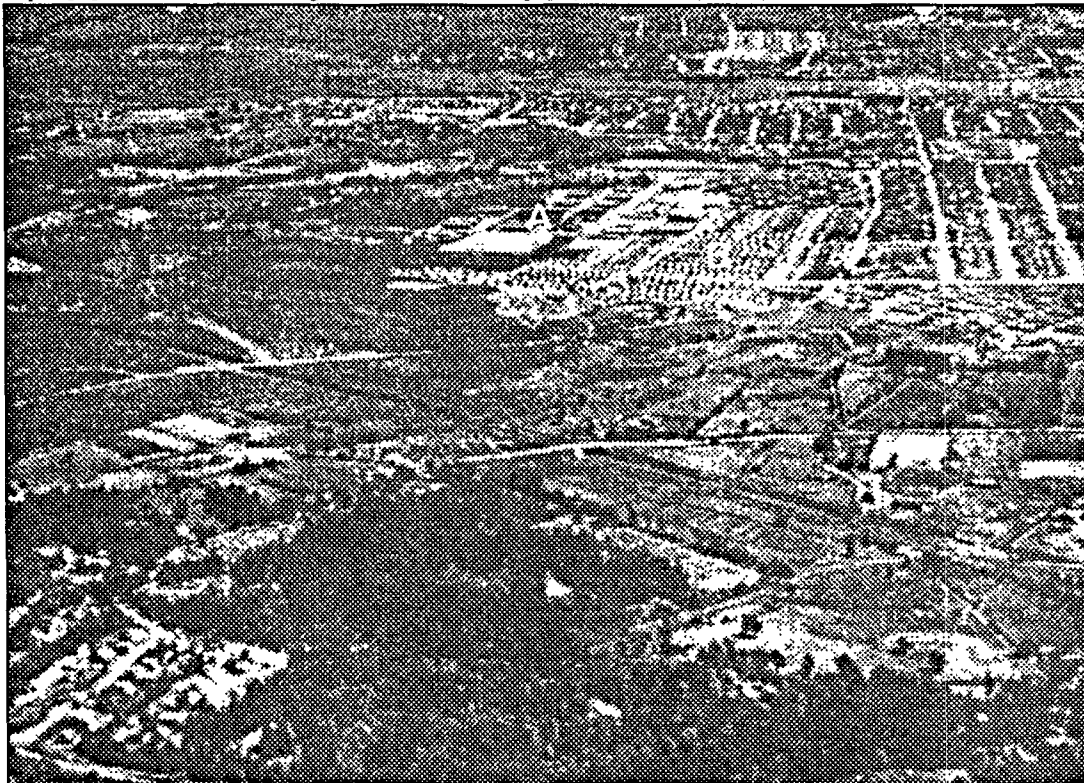


Fig. A-42. Aerial view of north end [PA 11, 13], looking south. *Left*, Wartime Housing Limited subdivision [A] and staff houses [B] (see Figs. A-9, A-10). *Right*, Industrial zone and Exhibition Grounds [C]. *Centre*, Richmond district (aka Hydrostone) [D] and Rockhead prison [E]. *Bottom*, Africville [F]. (*Master Plan*, 1945)

Fig. A-43. Aerial view of north end [PA 11, 12, 13], looking northeast. *Centre*, "Y" RCAF embarkation depot [A] and Wartime Housing Limited subdivision [B]. (*Master Plan*, 1945).



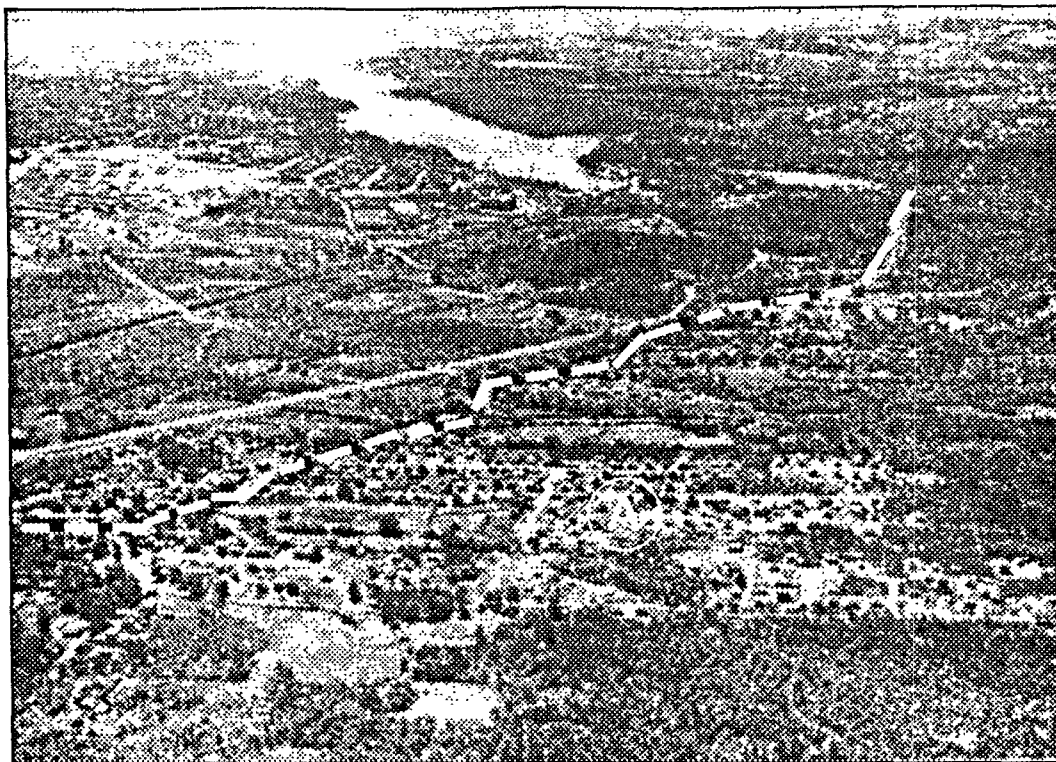


Fig. A-44. Aerial view of northwest outskirts, looking southeast. Residential development [A] outside city limits [dotted line] was fueled by cheap land and low taxes. (*Master Plan*, 1945).

Fig. A-45. Aerial view of Northwest Arm, looking northwest. The *Master Plan* revived a proposal to build a bridge across the Arm from the foot of South St. [A] to Fleming Park [B]. (*Master Plan*, 1945).

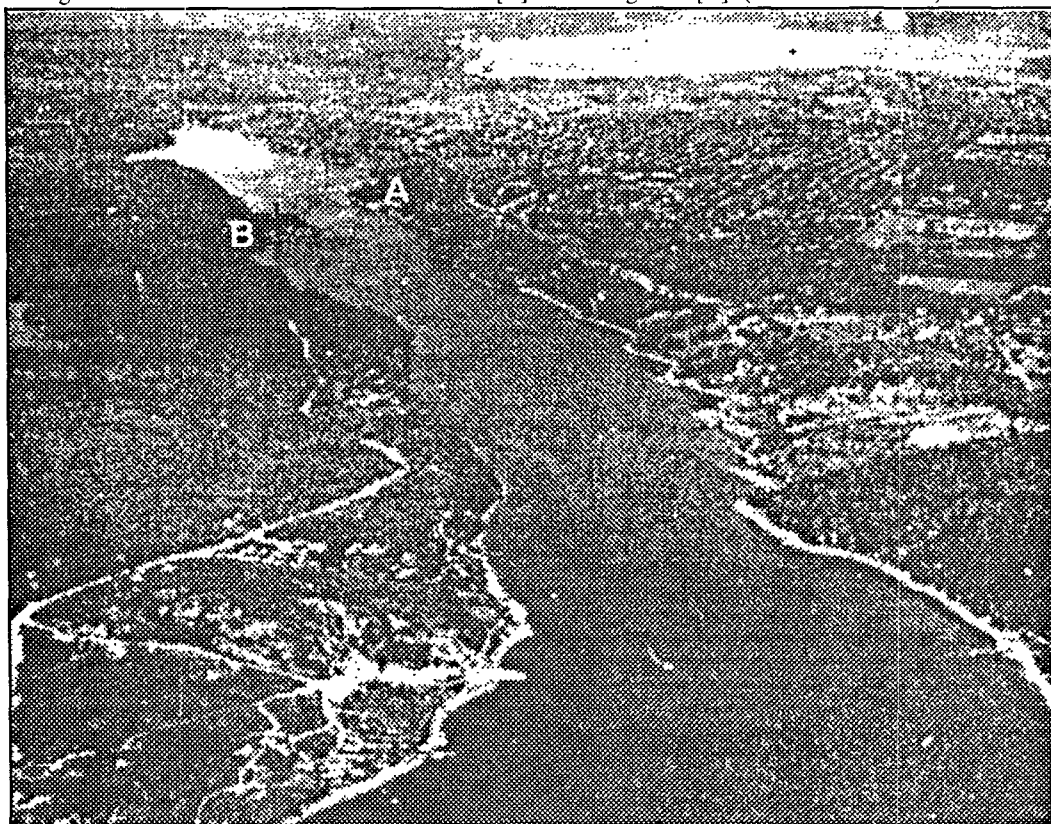




Fig. A-46. Hollis Street looking north from Nova Scotian hotel [PA 1], ca. 1943. *Foreground*, Knights of Columbus Services Hut, (see Fig. A-40). (NA, PA180546).

Fig. A-47. Same view as A-46 in mid-1950s. Angus L. Macdonald bridge (completed 1955) is visible in background. Note several dwellings have been torn down, (see boxes). (PANS, N-1122)



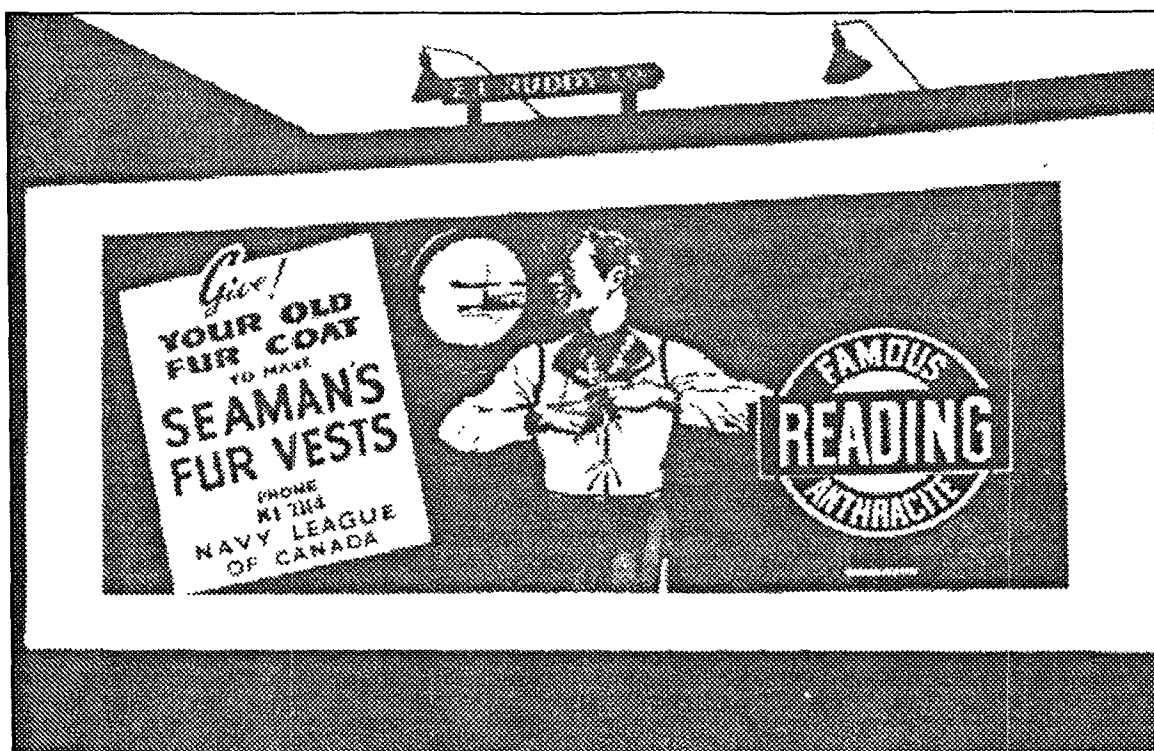
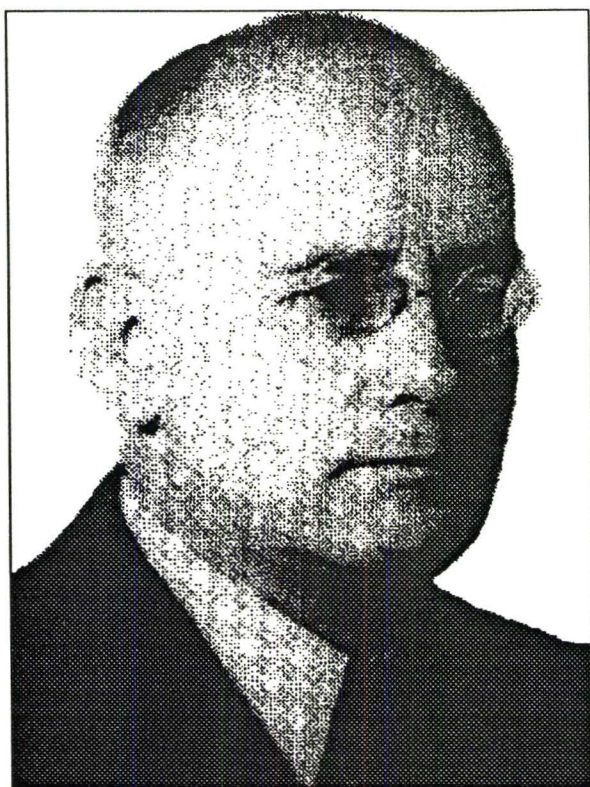


Fig. A-48. (Above) The crews of merchant ships had to rely on public goodwill in order to obtain adequate warm clothing to protect them from the elements. (City of Toronto Archives SC-488, reproduced in Granatstein and Morton, *Nation Forged in Fire*, p. 181).



Fig. A-49. (Left) Mrs. Leonie Richard, at age 100, with Charles de Gaulle medal and photograph of its presentation to her by the French Ambassador to Canada in Ottawa, 1945. (Moncton *Times-Transcript*, 20 June 1983).



a.



b.

Fig. A-50. (a) H. Bruce Jefferson. (b) F.B. McCurdy. (c) Gwendolyn Shand. (d) Halifax Mayor A.M. Butler (left) presenting Edward L. Cousins with silver cigar box "in appreciation of his civic services in World War II." SOURCES: (a) Metson, p. 23. (b) Blanchard, *frontispiece*. (c) *Halifax Daily Star*, 9 April 1938. (d) *Toronto Globe & Mail*, 6 April 1946.

c.



d.



APPENDIX B

TABLE B-1. Steamship Agents in Halifax, 1920-1950.

STEAMSHIP AGENTS (CODE)	20	30	42	45	50	STEAMSHIP AGENTS (CODE)	20	30	42	45	50
Allsop, John (A)	X					Hendry Ltd, Hendry's Wharf (H)	X	X			
Briser, Charles & Sons Ltd	X					Jones, A G & Co (J)	X	X	X	X	X
Burke, A J & Co (B)			X	X	X	Mathers, I H & Son Ltd (M)			X	X	X
Cook, Thos & Son (Pickford & Black)		X	X	X		Montreal Shipping (Mar) Ltd (ML)			X	X	X
Corbett, R A & Co (CO)		X				Nova Scotia Shipping Co Ltd		X			
Cabot Shipping Co Ltd (C)					X	NFLD Canada Steamships Ltd (N)		X	X		X
Campbell, G S & Co (CA)	X					Pickford & Black Ltd (P)	X	X	X	X	X
Cunard Donaldson Ltd (CD)					X	Reford, Robert Co Ltd (R)	X	X	X	X	
DeWolf, T A S & Son (D)	X	X	X	X	X	Smith, C Stewart		X			
Farquhar Steamships Ltd		X				Warren, F K Ltd (W)			X	X	
Furness Withy & Co (F)	X	X	X	X	X	Westport Steamship Co	X				
Inter-Provincial Steamship Co Ltd				X		Wood, Joseph & Co		X	X		

TABLE B-2. Steamship Lines in Halifax, 1920-1950.

STEAMSHIP LINE, head office (AGENT CODE)	1920	1930	1939	1942	1945	1950
Acadia Overseas Freighters Ltd						X
Acadia Steamship Lines (Montreal Shipping Co) (ML)						X
Alcoa Steamship Co (P)				X	X	X
American-South African Lines, New York (P)			X	X	X	
American-West African Line, New York (P)			X	X	X	X
American and Indian Line (P)			X	X	X	X
American & Manchurian Line (P)			X	X	X	X
Anchor Line Ltd, Glasgow (D)	X		X	X	X	X
Anchor-Donaldson Line Ltd (R)	X					
American Line, New York (J)	X	X				
Atlantic Transport Line (J)	X	X				
Baltic American Line (P)		X				
Bank Line Ltd, London (P)			X	X	X	X
Barber Steamship Line, New York (P)			X	X	X	X
Bernstein Line (J)				X	X	X
Black Diamond S S Corp, New York (R)				X	X	
Blue Funnel Line (Alfred Holt & Co), Liverpool (R/CD)	X		X	X	X	X
Blue Peter Steamship Ltd (ML)						X
Bristol City Line, Bristol (F)			X	X	X	X
Cairn Thomson Line (F)			X			
Cairn Line, Newcastle-on-Tyne (F)				X	X	X
Canada Asiatic Lines (ML)						X
Canada Continental Line (ML)						X
Canada Steamship Lines Ltd, Montréal (P)	X					
Canadian Australasian Line Ltd, Vancouver (D)					X	
Canadian Australian Line (D)						X
Canadian National Steamships, Montréal		X	X	X	X	X
Canadian Pacific Steamships, Montréal (D)		X	X	X	X	X
Canadian Pacific Ocean Services (D)	X					
Cape Line, London (F)						X
City Line, Glasgow (P)			X	X	X	X
Clarke Steamships Co, Montréal (D)						X
Clyde Mallory Line, New York (F)			X	X	X	
Clyde Line (F)		X				

STEAMSHIP LINE, head office (AGENT CODE)	1920	1930	1939	1942	1945	1950
Compagnie Generale Transatlantique (French Line), <i>Paris</i> (R)	X					
Constantine Line (Can) Ltd					X	
Co-operative de Transport Maritime et Aerien, <i>Magdalen Is.</i> (P)						X
Cosmopolitan Line (D)				X	X	
Cosmopolitan Shipping Co (D)						X
County Line Ltd, <i>Bergen, Norway</i> (D)			X	X	X	X
Crown Line (R)	X					
Cunard Donaldson Ltd						X
Cunard Steamship Co Ltd, <i>Liverpool</i> (R)	X	X				
Cunard White Star Ltd, <i>Liverpool</i>			X	X	X	X
Dominion Line (J)	X					
Donaldson Atlantic Line, <i>Glasgow</i> (R/CD)			X	X	X	X
Donaldson Line, <i>Glasgow</i> (R/CD)	X	X	X	X	X	X
Eastern Motorship Co. Ltd, <i>Halifax</i>			X	X		
Eastern Steamship Lines, <i>Boston</i> (D)			X		X	X
Elder Dempster Lines, <i>Liverpool</i> (D)			X	X	X	X
Ellerman & Bucknall Steamship Co, <i>London</i> (P)		X	X	X	X	X
Ellerman's Wilson Line, <i>Hull, England</i> (P)			X	X	X	X
Fabre Line, <i>Marseilles</i> (P)		X				
Farquhar Steamships Ltd			X			
Farrell Lines Inc (P)						X
Flotte Administrative, <i>St. Pierre et Miquelon</i> (P)						X
French Line (R/F)	X	X	X		X	X
Furness Line, <i>London</i> (F)			X	X	X	
Furness Bermuda Line, <i>London</i> (F)						X
Furness Canada Line, <i>London</i> (F)						X
Furness Red Cross Line, <i>London</i> (F)		X		X	X	X
Furness Warren Line, <i>London</i> (F)						X
Furness Withy Co Ltd, <i>London</i>	X					
Gdynia America Line, <i>Warsaw</i> (P)			X	X	X	X
Halifax & Canso SS Co, <i>Halifax</i> (CA/CO)	X	X	X			
Halifax and Glace Bay SS Co Ltd (H)	X					
Halifax and Inverness SS Co Ltd (H)	X					
Hall Line, <i>Liverpool</i> (P)		X	X	X	X	X
Hamburg-American Line, <i>Hamburg, Germany</i> (CO/D)		X	X			
Head Line (G. Heyn & Sons Ltd), <i>Belfast, Ireland</i> (P)				X	X	X
Holland America Line, <i>Rotterdam</i> (J/F)	X	X	X	X	X	X
Home Line, <i>Newcastle-on-Tyne</i> (F)						X
Iceland Steamship Co, (W)					X	X
Industrial Shipping Co						X
International Freighting Lines, <i>New York</i> (R/CD)			X	X	X	X
International Mercantile Marine Co (J/D)			X	X		
Intercontinental Transport Ltd (D)		X				
Interprovincial SS Lines		X	X	X		
Italian Lines (F)			X			
Java-China-Japan Line (Cunard), <i>Liverpool</i>					X	
Java New York Line (CD)			X	X		X
Johnston Warren Line, <i>Liverpool</i> (F)			X	X	X	
Kerr Steamships Ltd (F)						X
Leyland Line, <i>Liverpool</i> (J)	X	X				
Lloyd Sabando (F)		X				
Lloyds (P)			X	X	X	X

STEAMSHIP LINE, head office (AGENT CODE)	1920	1930	1939	1942	1945	1950
Manchester Liners Ltd, <i>Manchester</i> (F)		X	X	X	X	X
Manz Line			X			
March Shipping Agency Ltd (D)					X	
Montreal, Australia, & New Zealand Line, <i>Montréal</i> (P)			X	X	X	X
Montreal Shipping Co (Mar) Ltd					X	X
Moore-McCormick Lines, <i>New York</i> (ML)						X
Munson Steamship Line, <i>New York</i> (P)			X	X	X	
Nav Gen Italiana, <i>Trieste</i> (F)		X				
Newfoundland Canada Steamship Co, <i>Halifax</i>		X	X	X	X	
New Zealand Shipping Co, <i>London</i> (P)			X	X	X	X
Northern Shipping Co Ltd					X	
North German Lloyd Line, <i>Bremen, Germany</i> (F)		X	X			
Norwegian American Line, <i>Oslo, Norway</i> (D)		X	X	X	X	X
NS Steamships Ltd	X					
Ocean Dominion Steamship Corp, <i>Liverpool</i> (P)		X	X			
Old Colony Steamships Ltd, <i>Halifax</i>			X	X		
Panama Pacific Line (J)		X				
Pickford & Black Ltd, <i>Halifax</i>	X					
Pickford & Black Cuba & Jamaica Service, <i>Halifax</i> (P)			X	X	X	X
Polish Line (Gdynia American Line), <i>Warsaw</i>			X	X	X	
Port Line, <i>London</i> (CD)			X	X	X	X
Prince Line Ltd, <i>London</i> (P/F)			X	X	X	X
Red Cross Steamship Line (CA)	X					
Red Star Line, <i>Hamburg</i> (J)	X	X	X			
Rio Cape Line, <i>London</i> (F)			X	X	X	X
Robin Line (P)			X	X	X	X
Royal Mail Steam Packet Co, <i>London</i> (A/P)	X	X				
Scandinavian American Line (P)		X				
Shaw Savill and Albion Ltd, <i>London</i> (F)			X	X	X	X
Shaw Steamship Co Ltd				X		
Shepard Steamship Co. Ltd, <i>Boston</i>					X	
Silver Line, <i>London</i> (F)			X	X		X
Swedish American Line, <i>Gothenburg, Sweden</i> (F)		X	X	X		X
Swedish-American-Mexico Line, <i>Gothenburg, Sweden</i> (F)			X	X		
Sydney Steamship Co Ltd				X	X	
Thomson Line (R)	X					
Union Castle Mail Steamships Co Ltd, <i>London</i> (D)						X
United Fruit Co, <i>New York</i> (P)		X	X	X		X
United States Lines, <i>New York</i> (P/J)		X	X	X	X	
United States Lines (Canada) Ltd (J)					X	X
Vancouver-St Lawrence Line (F)			X	X	X	
Waterman Steamship Corp, <i>Mobile, Alabama</i> (D)				X	X	
Weir Andrew & Co Ltd, <i>London</i> (P)		X	X	X	X	X
White Star Dominion (1920)/Canadian (1930) Service (J)	X	X				
White Star Line (J)		X				

SOURCES: *Halifax and Dartmouth City Directories*, 1920, 1930, 1939, 1942, 1945, 1950. The assistance of Dr. Brady C. White is gratefully acknowledged. Head office data compiled from *Lloyd's Register of Shipping*, 1938-39, Vol. I, "List of Ship Owners and Managers" and Vol. II, "Fast Merchant Steamers and Motorships." In cases where more than one office was listed, the first was assumed to be the head office.

TABLE B-3. Head Offices of Shipping Lines in Halifax, 1938.

HEAD OFFICES, SHIPPING LINES		Frequency
UNITED KINGDOM		
	London	18
	Liverpool	9
	Glasgow	4
	Newcastle-on-Tyne	2
	Bristol	1
	Hull	1
	Manchester	1
	Belfast	1
UNITED STATES		
	New York	11
	Boston	2
	Mobile	1
CANADA		
	Montréal	6
	Halifax	6
	Magdalen Is.	1
	Vancouver	1
CONTINENTAL EUROPE		
	Paris	1
	Marseilles	1
	St Pierre et Miquelon	1
	Hamburg	2
	Bremen	1
	Warsaw	2
	Rotterdam	1
	Trieste	1
SCANDINAVIA		
	Bergen	1
	Oslo	1
	Gothenburg	2
TOTAL		79

SOURCES: *Halifax and Dartmouth City Directories*, 1920, 1930, 1939, 1942, 1945, 1950; *Lloyd's Register of Shipping*, 1938-39, Vol. I, "List of Ship Owners and Managers" and Vol. II, "Fast Merchant Steamers and Motorships."

APPENDIX C

SPSS SYSTEM FILE INFORMATION

File e:\spss\cousins.sav
 Label: SPSS/PC+
 Created: 19 Jan 94 09:43:14 - 50 variables and 1,524 cases
 File Type: SPSS Data File
 N of Cases: 1524
 Total # of Defined Variable Elements: 50
 Data Are Not Weighted
 Data Are Compressed
 File Contains Case Data

VARIABLE INFORMATION

Name		Position
AREA	* No label * Format: A1	1
HNUM	HOUSE NUMBER, .5=1/2 Format: A5	2
ST	STREET NUMBER Format: F2	3
NAME	OWNER/LANDLORD: SURNAME, FIRST, INIT/MRS Format: A23	4
NRMS	TOTAL NUMBER OF ROOMS IN DWELLING, 1944 Format: F2	7
TOCC	TOTAL NUMBER OF OCCUPANTS IN DWELLING Format: F2	8
CHIL	NUMBER OF CHILDREN UNDER 16 Format: F2	9
RMRS	NUMBER OF ROOMERS Format: F2	10
OWOC	OWNER OCCUPIED Format: F1 Value Label 1 YES 2 NO	11
COND	CONDITION OF STRUCTURE, 1944 Format: F1 Value Label 1 GOOD 2 FAIR 3 POOR	12

	4	VERY POOR	
	5	NEW	
MATL	BUILDING MATERIAL		13
	Format: F1		
	Value	Label	
	1	WOOD	
	2	BRICK	
	3	STUCCO	
	4	CONCRETE	
	5	TILE	
	6	STONE	
HTG1	HEATING TYPE, 1944		14
	Format: F1		
	Value	Label	
	1	HOT WATER	
	2	HOT AIR	
	3	STEAM	
	4	STOVE	
TYPE	TYPE OF DWELLING		15
	Format: F1		
	Value	Label	
	1	SINGLE RESIDENCE	
	2	SEMI-DETACHED	
	3	FLAT	
	4	TENEMENT HOUSE	
	5	HOUSE CONVERTED TO 3 OR MORE APTS	
	6	ROOMING HOUSE	
	7	LIVING ACCOMMODATION OVER STORE, BANK, ETC	
	8	COMMERCIAL	
	9	STAFF HOUSE WARTIME HOUSING	
SAN1	SANITARY FACILITIES, 1944		16
	Format: F1		
	Value	Label	
	1	OK	
	2	INSUFFICIENT	
	3	NIL	
PROP	PROPERTY CHANGES HANDS, 1921-194		17
	Format: F3		
	Value	Label	
	0	NO CHANGE	
	1	ONCE BEFORE THE WAR	
	2	ONCE DURING THE WAR	
	3	BETWEEN SEPT 1945 & DEC 1948	
	4	MORE THAN ONCE BEFORE THE WAR	

	5	MORE THAN ONCE DURING THE WAR	
	6	MORE THAN ONCE, BEFORE & DURING THE WAR	
YRIM	YEAR OF FIRST IMPROVEMENT, 1921-1946	18	
	Format: F2		
SIZE	CUBIC VOLUME OF DWELLING, IN 000/FT	19	
	Format: F5.1		
RMS2	NUMBER OF ROOMS WHEN CONSTRUCTED	20	
	Format: F2		
SAN2	SANITARY FACILITIES WHEN CONSTRUCTED	21	
	Format: F1		
	Value	Label	
	1	SEWER & WATER	
	2	NO SEWER	
	3	NO BATH OR TOILET	
	4	NO BATH, TOILET OR SEWER	
CON2	CONDITION GIVEN ON FIELD ASSESSMENT CARD	22	
	Format: F1		
	Value	Label	
	1	GOOD	
	2	FAIR	
	3	POOR	
	4	VERY POOR	
	5	NEW	
HTG2	HEATING TYPE GIVEN ON FLD ASSMNT CARD	23	
	Format: F1		
	Value	Label	
	1	HOT WATER	
	2	HOT AIR	
	3	STEAM	
	4	STOVE	
LOTS	AREA OF LOT	24	
	Format: F1		
	Value	Label	
	1	< 750 SQ FT	
	2	< 1000 SQ FT	
	3	<1500 SQ FT	
	4	1,500 - 2,999 SQ FT	
	5	3,000 - 4,999 SQ FT	
	6	5,000 - 7,499 SQ FT	
	7	7,500 - 9,999 SQ FT	
	8	10,000 - 15,000 SQ FT	
	9	> 15,000 SQ FT	

VALA	VALUE OF LAND, 1921-22 Format: F4	25
VAIM	VALUE OF IMPROVEMENT, 1921-22 Format: F4	26
LAIM	VALUE OF LAND + IMPROVEMENT, 1932-33 Format: F4	27
VAL2	VALUE OF LAND, 1944-45 Format: F4	28
IMP2	VALUE OF IMPROVEMENT, 1944-45 Format: F4	29
YALT	YEAR OF MAJOR ALTERATIONS OR REPAIRS Format: F2	30
TALT	TYPE OF ALTERATIONS/REPAIRS Format: F1	31
	Value Label	
	1 CONVERSION TO FLATS	
	2 CONVERSION TO ROOMS	
	3 GENERAL REPAIRS-- INTERIOR OR EXTERIOR	
	4 STRUCTURAL ADDITIONS	
	5 CONVERSION TO APARTMENT HOUSE	
	6 CONVERSION TO SINGLE RESIDENCE	
	7 NEW BUILDING	
	8 NEW OUTBUILDING-- COAL SHED, GARAGE, ETC	
	9 CONVERSION TO STORE OR OFFICE	
COST	ESTIMATED COST OF ALTERATIONS/REPAIRS Format: F1	32
	Value Label	
	1 LESS THAN \$200	
	2 \$200 - 499	
	3 \$500 - 999	
	4 \$1000 - 1999	
	5 MORE THAN \$2000	
CARD	NUMBER OF REPAIR PERMITS ISSUED, 1921-1945 Format: F1	33
TENA	TENANT: SURNAME, FIRST, INIT/MRS Format: A22	34
MSWD	MARRIED, SINGLE, WIDOWED, DIVORCED/SEP Format: F1	37
	Value Label	
	1 MARRIED	

	2	SINGLE	
	3	WIDOWED	
	4	DIVORCED, SEPARATED	
DATE	YEAR AND MONTH OF ARRIVAL IN HALIFAX		38
	Format: F3		
FROM	LAST PLACE OF RESIDENCE		39
	Format: F2		
	Value	Label	
	11	NOVA SCOTIA	
	12	NEW BRUNSWICK	
	13	PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND	
	14	QUEBEC	
	15	MONTREAL & QUEBEC CITY	
	16	SOUTHERN ONTARIO	
	17	TORONTO & HAMILTON	
	18	OTTAWA	
	19	NORTHERN ONTARIO	
	20	MANITOBA	
	21	SASKATCHEWAN	
	22	ALBERTA	
	23	BRITISH COLUMBIA	
	24	NEWFOUNDLAND	
	25	UNITED KINGDOM	
	26	AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND	
	27	UNITED STATES	
	28	OCCUPIED EUROPE	
	29	AT SEA	
	30	GERMANY	
	31	CARIBBEAN	
SERV	SERVICEMAN/WOMAN OR DND EMPLOYEE		40
	Format: F1		
	Value	Label	
	1	NAVY	
	2	AIR FORCE	
	3	ARMY	
	4	CIVILIAN EMPLOYEE, DEPT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE	
	5	MERCHANT MARINE	
	6	RESERVE ARMY	
OCCU	OCCUPATION OF TENANT		41
	Format: F4		
RENT	CURRENT RENT BEING PAID		42
	Format: F2		

POST	WILL BUY HOME IN HFX AFTER WAR?	43
	Format: F1	
	Value Label	
	1 YES	
	2 NO	
SECT	IF INTERESTED, SECTION OF CITY DESIRED	44
	Format: F1	
	Value Label	
	1 CENTRAL	
	2 OUTSIDE CITY LIMITS	
	3 SUBURBAN AREAS SERVED BY ADEQUATE TRANSPORTATION	
	4 NOT SPECIFIED	
PURC	PURCHASE HOME ON MONTHLY BASIS?	45
	Format: F1	
	Value Label	
	1 YES	
	2 NO	
MARI	MARITAL STATUS, OWNER	46
	Format: F1	
	Value Label	
	1 MARRIED	
	2 SINGLE	
	3 WIDOWED	
	4 DIVORCED, SEPARATED	
ARRI	YEAR & MONTH OF ARRIVAL IN HFX, OWNER	47
	Format: F3	
FRO2	LAST PLACE OF RESIDENCE, OWNER	48
	Format: F2	
SER2	SERVICEMAN/WOMAN OR DND EMPL, OWNER	49
	Format: F1	
	Value Label	
	1 NAVY	
	2 AIR FORCE	
	3 ARMY	
	4 CIVILIAN EMPLOYEE, DND	
	5 MERCHANT MARINE	
	6 RESERVE ARMY	
OCC2	OCCUPATION OF OWNER	50
	Format: F4	

APPENDIX D

HALIFAX, DARTMOUTH AND SAINT JOHN SHIPYARDS¹

Hourly Wage, May 1944

1. Hammersmith, Heavy forger	1.05
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2. Drop Hammer Operator, hammer boy (steam or air) under 18.....	.47½
" " " , 18 yrs. & over60-.70

3. Slab man, Frame bender	1.05
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¹Titles and wage rates from NA RG 36 series 4 vol. 133 file 3N-715, "Application...for a general increase in wages and changes in working conditions for employees of Halifax Shipyards Limited, et. al.," National War Labour Board Proceedings, 30 January 1947, pp. 38-43. Job descriptions quoted, with minor editing for clarity, from the U.S. Department of Labor *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* [DOT], Second Edition, vol. I: Definitions of Titles (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1949). Vol. II: Occupational Classification was also consulted.

*Classification**Hourly Wage, May 1944*

followed, but the process was tricky because allowance had to be made for shrinkage or distortion when the pieces cooled.

4. Blacksmith & Anglesmith..... .95

Blacksmiths forged metal articles and parts for repairing or manufacturing equipment by heating in forge and hammering metal into desired shape on anvil or in steam, electric, and compressed air-powered hammers. Metal forge-welding involved heating parts and hammering them together. Blacksmiths also sharpened hand and machine tools, "such as chisels, drills, and picks, by heating them and hammering them cutting edges to proper shape." Anglesmiths bent, shaped, beveled and welded light gauge metal to produce angular shapes, such as door frames, tank frames, and brackets.

5. Slab helper, Blacksmith's helper75

Helper was a generic term which applied to any worker who assisted another "by performing specific or general duties...such as keeping a worker supplied with materials, tools, and supplies; cleaning working area, machine, and equipment; performing routine machine operations, such as feeding or unloading machine; and assisting worker by holding materials or tools."

6. Hydraulic Forging Press Operator, bumper press operator (bulldozer)..... .80-.95

A forging press applied hydrostatic pressure to metal parts, compressing them between appropriately shaped dies. Bumper presses, (also sometimes referred to as a "straightening press"), removed irregularities from previously formed sheet metal parts, using a reciprocating hammer. Bulldozer was a term used for machines that formed or shaped heavy steel plates.

7. Plater, Shipfitter-charge hand..... 1.05-1.20

Plater may have referred to a job similar to *plate hanger*, although the precise difference between the two, other than the rates of pay, is unclear. (See #17). Shipfitters, consulting blueprints, fitted large structural members, such as plates, bulkheads and frames, into ship hulls and braced them in position for final riveting or welding. Members were forced into alignment with drift pins, wedges, jacks, and hoists, and held in place with planks, poles, or guy wires. Holes to be drilled and other alterations were marked; smaller structural pieces, such as doors, hatches, brackets, and clips might also be installed by shipfitters. More experienced workers, designated charge hands, prepared, "directly from the hull, molds and templates for the fabrication of parts which, because of their unusual design or shape," could not be "accurately pre-determined in the mold loft."

*Classification**Hourly Wage, May 1944*

8. Plater, Shipfitter..... .95

See above.

9. Lay-out man, Layer-out Boiler Shop..... 1.00-1.10

Marked off, with a hammer and centre punch, metals and ship plates, showing the exact position of all holes, and shaping and bending operations. Lay-out men needed mathematical skills to work from drawings or templates using scales, calipers, verniers, micrometers, bevel protractors, trammel points, dividers, and other tools. A boiler shop layer-out measured and marked all dimensions, curves, lines, points, and directions for machine operations in the fabrication of tanks and boilers. Familiarity with trigonometry, tank and boiler design, and the use of compass, divider, scale, and other lay-out tools were essential.

10. Marker, under 1847½

" , 18 yrs. & over60-.70

Laid out patterns on metal from blueprints, marked sheet metal with chalk for cutting, or stamped metal pieces with identifying markings using hammer and die.

11. Boiler Inspector 1.05

Inspected boilers under construction, ensuring compliance with prevailing underwriters' rules and government regulations governing the construction, safety, and use of boilers.

12. Boilermaker95

In shipyard work, a boilermaker usually repaired damaged hulls, bulkheads, and deck plates, removing defective rivets by drilling them out and cutting heads off with a chipping hammer. After removing damaged plates, wooden templates were made or measurements were taken so that new plate could be fabricated. Occasionally, similar tasks were performed on ships' boilers, condensers, and evaporators. Associated tasks: riveter, shipfitter.

13. Bending Roll operator95

Rolled cold steel ship or boiler plate to desired curvature by inserting plate into roll machine. Adjusted plate as it passed between rolls until correct curvature was obtained, following a template or gauge.

14. Flanging press operator, flanger95

Formed flanges on heavy steel plates for such uses as boiler heads, ship plate, and gear case housings. The metal was clamped over an anvil at the required spot and

Classification

Hourly Wage, May 1944

angle, and an air or hydraulic hammer used to bend the flange. The hammer and clamps were then released, the piece realigned, and the process repeated until the flange was bent all the way around. Sometimes a template was used; alternatively, dies were fixed on the anvil to bend the metal to the desired angle. Flangers, also known as flange turners, shaped steel plate manually by heating it in a furnace, positioning various steel forms on the hot plate according to markings of proposed flange, and manipulating a swinging ram to "hammer the desired flange into the hot plate." Flanges on small plates were formed with hand tools.

15. Machine operator (plate), boiler and blacksmith shop60

A low-paying classification for workers not specified elsewhere.

16. Boiler cleaner, Boiler scaler, Tank cleaner75

Cleaners drained and flushed dirty boilers, refilling them with clean water; scalers scraped accumulated scale from boilers with metal rods, wire brushes, of pneumatic chipping tools. Occasionally boiler cleaners were called upon to dismantle, clean, and reassemble burners.

17. Assembler, erector, plate hanger80

An assembler or erector performed tasks similar to *shipfitter* (#7), assembling and erecting various parts of a ship in the yard or in a shop. Sometimes set structural members, such as columns, in the hull and bolted them temporarily in place, and supervised hoisting of parts or equipment into place on the ship. Plate hangers positioned ship plates on the frame of a ship, bringing the rivet or bolt holes in line to make them ready for the *bolter-up*, using mauls, wrenches, and drift pins.

18. Bolter-up (hand or machine)75

Aligned rivet holes in steel members with pin wrenches or drift pins, and bolted members together tightly in preparation for reaming and riveting. Also worked with *reamer*, interchanging stay-bolts from unreamed holes to reamed ones.

19. Driller85

Drilled rivet and bolt holes in heavy plates, beams, angles, or other parts of a ship, according to lay-out marks, centre punches, and instructions, using a pneumatic, hand, or electric drill. Some holes were threaded, using a power-driven or hand-operated tap.

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20. Reamer, countersinker75
Reamed out rivet holes in ship plates and frame structures in preparation for riveting. Arranged for staging to be erected if necessary and selected proper tool to insert into chuck of portable pneumatic reamer. (See # 18). Counter-sinker generally enlarged or chamfered the edge of a hole already drilled so that a screw or other part would fit flush with the surface.	
21. Rivet tester	1.00
Testers tapped each rivet with a small light hammer to determine if the rivet was driven tight. They also supervised the movements and operations of several riveting gangs.	
22. Riveter .....	.95
Fastened steel plates and members together with rivets by spreading the rivet shank and shaping the head with a pneumatic hammer. Riveters also cut off partially formed points of flush or countersunk rivets with a pneumatic chisel, rounding and flattening them with a rivet gun.	
23. Holder-on .....	.85
Worked with <i>riveter</i> in fastening together steel plates or structural steel members with rivets; pressed heavy steel bar ("dolly") against head of hot rivet while riveter clinches it from the opposite side by hammering shank down. Also cut out defective rivets with chisel and maul.	
24. Rivet heater .....	.80
Heated rivets to proper temperature in a forge and tossed them with tongs to <i>passer boy</i> or other worker.	
25. Passer boy, under 18 .....	.47½
" " , 18 yrs. & over .....	.55
Passer boys, also known in some yards as rivet catchers, caught hot rivets in a funnel-shaped bucket and inserted them in rivet holes with tongs.	
26. Liner fitter, linerman .....	.80-.90
These terms have no entry in the <i>DOT</i> , but "linesman" was a sub-classification under <i>loftsman</i> – a worker who specialized in laying down full-size line plans of ships on the mold-loft floor.	

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27. Acetylene burner, Oxyacetylene cutter87½

Set up and operated acetylene and oxyacetylene-burning (i.e. cutting) equipment to produce steel plate of various designs and shapes. Setting up involved connecting torch to hose and hose to regulator on gas tanks, screwing proper tip into torch nozzle, lighting torch and adjusting the flow of gases to obtain a suitable cutting flame. Also interpreted blueprints and marked cutting lines on the metal, using scales, dividers, and other instruments. In ship repair, special skills were required to burn rivets in old ship plate destined for re-rolling and re-riveting.

28. Welder - Acetylene, Electric (Arc)

Class A advancement between grades .....	.95
Class B based on efficiency .....	.85
Class C test & work requirements .....	.75
Class D test & work (trainee).....	.47½-.70

Fused metal parts together, using an acetylene or electric torch and welding rods, to fabricate metal shapes or to repair broken or cracked metal objects. Setup procedure was similar to above (#27) – the flame was guided along joint between parts to be fused while "applying a metal rod to the molten area to supply excess metal needed to form weld." The rods were sometimes used to apply flux to the molten area; metal parts might also be preheated with torch before welding "to obtain a better weld and lessen the internal strains set up in the metal by the intense heat of the welding frame." Welders consulted blueprints to lay out (mark) metal, if necessary.

29. Acetylene generator operator80

Produced acetylene gas in a generator for welding and cutting purposes. Acetylene was formed by combining calcium carbide crystals and water in an airtight container; the gas produced from the resulting chemical reaction was captured under pressure in a separate tank.

30. Caulker - Ballast tank testing 1.05

Caulkers made watertight or airtight joints in hulls, bulkheads, tanks, pipes, etc. by forcing sealing material into joints with a hand or compressed air caulking tool. Ballast tank testers supervised the sealing of tanks, visually inspected seams for tightness while tank was filled with water, and repaired leaks and defects by cutting, chipping, filing and caulking seams, angles and rivets, using chipping and caulking tools.

31. Chipper & caulker..... .95

See #30 and #31.

Classification

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32. Chipper.....	.85
Performed chipping work necessary to fit steel plate into structures, using a chipping hammer.	
33. Packer - Watertight work.....	.70
Packed paper, canvas, or other materials between metal surfaces to act as stopwaters, using a hammer and lap wedge to widen overlapped seams temporarily, and ramming wedge to force packing into seams or gaps.	
34. Coppersmith	1.00-1.15
Built assemblies of copper pipe and fittings, and fabricated various articles from sheet copper. Measured and cut pipe lengths, added fittings, and flared pipe ends with hammer. Cut holes in pipes for branch lines with acetylene torch, heated and manually bent pipe to desired shapes, and reduced pipe diameters by heating and drawing. Soldered pipe and fittings together to form complete assemblies. Also tinned or leaded inner surface of copper pipe to prevent corrosion from salt water.	
35. Sheet metal worker .....	.95
Fabricated and assembled ship units and equipment, such as ventilators, deck houses, and furniture, largely of heavy-sheet and light-plate steel. Installed and finished sheet metal assemblies on shipboard, such as tables, lockers, and ventilators.	
36. Loftsmen .....	.95-1.20
Working in the mold loft, loftsmen laid out to full scale the lines of a ship and made full-size wooden or paper templates or molds to conform to these lay-outs, using hand and woodworking machine tools such as cross-cut, rip and cut-off saws, planers, jointers, and band saws. If necessary, working models of vessels were also constructed.	
37. Pattern maker .....	.95-1.15
Not found in the <i>DOT</i> . More than likely worked in mold loft. May have been a senior classification for experienced <i>template makers</i> , judging from wage scale.	
38. Loft boy, under 18 .....	.47½
" " , 18 yrs. & over .....	.55
Assisted <i>loftsmen</i> in the fabrication of templates and patterns; aided <i>loftsmen</i> in laying out lines on loft floor.	

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39. Template maker95
- Performed tasks similar to *loftsman*, making wooden templates (patterns) for ship parts, working from drawings and using carpentry tools and woodworking machines.
40. Shipwright, Carpenter (wood caulker)95
- Performed skilled carpentry operations in the construction or repair of vessels, using carpenter's tools, adz, and broadaxe; built wooden foundations, lined up and trued keel blocks. Also laid wooden decks and installed backing strips, furring pieces, aprons, uprights, sills, and other wood framing against which finished work was supported. Prepared cargo battens and wood sheathing for bulkheads. As the name implies, wood caulkers ensured that wooden parts of vessel exteriors, particularly the seams of decks, were watertight.
41. Cradleman87½
- Set shores, erected stages, built ship's cradle, and prepared vessel for launching from marine slips. Where tides were present, familiarity with rise, fall, running speed, as well as seasonal tide cycles, was needed in order to dock and undock vessels. Knowledge of rough carpentry was also necessary to shape square timber to fit the sheer of ship hulls.
42. Joiner, cabinet maker95
- Assembled, fitted, and securely joined wooden parts of vessel interiors, such as furniture, cabinets, closets, and berths. Installed such pieces in vessel under construction or repair, using hand and powered tools. Assembled and fitted prefabricated parts into finished units of furniture. Laid out and cut decorative paneling and bulkhead sheathing from wood or composition material. Laid out on light sheet metal, for fabrication by other workers, such items as berth supports, storage racks, and flooring. Installed light metal fittings on shipboard, to blueprint specifications, cutting or grinding them to size as necessary with hand and power tools. Drilled and bolted, riveted, screwed or tack welded the fitted items, as specified. Laid linoleum on interior decks, and wooden decking on exterior decks.
43. Carpenter - maintenance95
- Performed carpentry duties necessary to construct and maintain in good repair structural woodwork and equipment in the shipyard establishment.
44. Stage builder, stager75-.80
- Also known as scaffold builder, this worker erected, moved, and removed wooden staging, scaffolding, ladders, and guard rails to afford access to ships under repair

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or construction. Measured, cut, drilled and squared timber; assembled timber into scaffolding and stages, using nails, spikes and bolts. Installed ladders, handrails, walkways, platforms, and gangways, directing the welding of supporting clips and hangers.

45. Ship rigger95

Installed all tackle and fittings of wire and manila rope on a vessel; fabricated and installed shroud stays, lifts, braces, life lines, radio aerials, and other rigging fitted to masts, spars, and booms. Laid out and cut materials according to specifications, using shears and cutting pliers. Spliced wire cable and manila rope, attaching appropriate fittings onto rigging when necessary, using hand tools. Tested ship rigging and crane lifting rigging for proper functioning.

46. Sailmaker, canvas worker90

Synonymous terms denoting someone who fabricated ship and boat canvas parts, such as sails, awnings, and boat, gun, and bunk covers, working from simple drawings and material specifications. Canvas was prepared for sewing by laying out material and cutting off lengths with hand shears or electric cutting machine. Sections of canvas were sewn together on a power sewing machine. When hand sewing grommets, the canvas was measured and marked off, and a mallet, punch and hardwood block used to make holes. Galvanized iron rings were then sewn into holes, using a sailmaker's palm, needle, and linen thread. Ropes and various metal fittings were also sewn onto canvas by hand.

47. Rigger, sailmaker specialist80

Specific functions unknown, but obviously closely related to #46 above. Lesser pay indicates lower skill requirements.

48. Leather worker, upholsterer90

Should be self-explanatory, although neither classification was recognized by the U.S. Department of Labour as pertaining to ship or boat building and repair.

49. Crane operator - portable (under 5 tons)75

Moved designated loads from point to point in a shipyard, using a tractor equipped with a one-ton hoist.

50. Crane operator - caterpillar, truck, locomotive, gentry, derrick75-.95

A general term applied to a worker who operated a crane to hoist and move materials, raise and lower heavy objects, and perform other related operations.

Classification

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Workers were designated according to the type of crane or crane attachment used, location of crane, or work performed.

51. Crane operator - electric bridge (overhead)
- | | |
|--------------|-----|
| Inside..... | .85 |
| Outside..... | .90 |
- See above, #50.
52. Slinger, hooker-on, crane chaser, follower, signalman 70-.80
- Assisted *crane operator*, affixing rope, cable, chain, sling, or other grappling equipment to object being lifted. Used hand signals to tell *crane operator* that load was made fast, and followed load to point of destination. Signaled where and when to lower load so as not to injure employees or equipment. Pushed and pulled load as it was lowered until deposited in desired place, and removed grappling equipment.
53. Tool maker95-1.15
- Specialized in the construction, repair, maintenance, and calibration of machine shop tools, jigs, fixtures, and instruments; operated various machine tools. Premium wage suggests higher degree of specialization than *machinist* classification (#54, below).
54. Machinist95
- This classification may have referred to machinists who worked primarily in the machine shop rather than on vessels under construction or repair. If so, they would have fabricated and repaired all kinds of metal parts, tools, and machines. Understood blueprints and written specifications; used machine shop tools such as lathes, boring mills, planers, shapers, slotters, and milling machines; and machinist's hand tools including scrapers, chisels, files, and measuring instruments. Possessed knowledge of shop mathematics, use of charts and tables, efficient planning of shop work, dimensions and uses of standard bolts, screws, threads, and tapers. Also required familiarity with working properties of various steels, aluminum, brass, cast and wrought iron.
55. Engine fitter, Machinist - marine, erector95
- Engine fitters installed propelling machinery, steam, diesel, or electric auxiliary engines. May have tested and inspected installed machinery and equipment during dock and sea trials. Marine and erector machinists, also known as "outside" machinists, installed pumps, cargo handling machinery, winches, windlasses, ventilating and firefighting equipment, steering gear, and armament. Working from blueprints and using hand and portable tools, such as calipers, micrometers,

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gauges, files, and electric drills, machinists installed below-deck auxiliaries, such as evaporators, stills, heaters, pumps, condensers, and boilers, and connected them to steam-pipe systems. Completed installation of temporary piping systems in machinery spaces. Laid out holes for passage of connections, such as shafting and steam lines, through bulkheads and decks. Used machine tools commonly found in machine shops. (See #54).

56. Millwright, maintenance mechanic, machine repairman..... .95

Changed the lay-out and setup of heavy machinery and mechanical equipment, and kept such equipment in efficient operating condition. Performed duties such as dismantling, moving, installing or repairing machines, power shafting, pulleys, conveyors, hoisting, and other equipment. Used hoists, dollies, rollers, and trucks to aid in moving machinery. Used wrenches, hammers, and other hand tools in erecting or dismantling machines and in installing new or repair parts. Used measuring devices, such as squares, micrometers, calipers, and plumb bobs in erecting machine foundations, in installing machines and equipment in correct position, and in aligning power shafting and pulleys. Maintenance mechanics and machine repairmen were primarily concerned with carrying out necessary repairs on machinery, rather than installation, lay-out, and set-up procedures.

57. Electrician - ship, maintenance95

Ship or marine electricians installed electric wiring, fixtures, and equipment for all shipboard electrical services, including motors, generators, pumps, refrigerating machinery, laundry machinery, blowers, fire detectors, electric gauges, recorders, clocks, bells, telephones, and lights. Located and repaired wiring defects; also repaired such equipment as motors, cooking ranges, and searchlights. A maintenance electrician kept electrical equipment in the shipyard, such as wiring, motors, switches, switchboards, and electrical mechanisms, in good repair and operating condition. Replaced burnt fuses, defective wiring, small parts on motors, and repaired electrical fixtures; installed new fixtures, motors, and other electrical equipment, and made connections to new installations.

58. Temporary lighting man75

No entry; probably set up and dismantled temporary light fixtures in order to illuminate work areas during the ship construction or repair process.

59. Pipe fitter, steam fitter, plumber95

Checked prefabricated wire templates of pipe assemblies for propulsion and associated systems of ships by fitting them in place; installed and tested completed assemblies. Working from blueprints, positioned templates and checked them for fit and clearance, adjusting height if necessary to clear unforeseen obstructions. Designed and sketched small pipe assemblies that could not be predesigned by

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architects. With aid of helpers, fitted pipe assemblies into place and screwed and bolted them together. Screwed and bolted fittings as necessary to tanks, pumps, and other equipment. Subjected installed assemblies to hydrostatic pressure to detect leaks. Sometimes fabricated and installed pipe and fittings for nonpropulsion systems in vessels, and lined with lead any pipes intended to carry sea water. Steam fitters installed components of a shipboard steam pipe system, including pump connections, boiler connections, and oil, air, and radiator connections. Plumbers laid out, assembled, and installed pipe, fittings, and fixtures for sanitary, heating, drainage, and other nonpropulsion systems in vessels. Lined battery boxes, steel pipes, and other articles used in salt-water systems with lead to prevent corrosion. The lining process involved inserting small-diameter lead pipe into the steel or copper pipe, plugging the ends with special fixtures, and pumping air under high pressure into pipe to expand lead and press it firmly against inside wall. Other articles such as battery boxes were also covered with sheet lead, cut and soldered to appropriate sizes.

60. Pipe coverer, asbestos insulation worker, lagging applier..... .87½

These classifications all entailed preparing and installing insulation material around pipes, tanks, and boilers, using heavy wire, pliers, and tin snips. Applied coatings of asbestos mastic or insulating cement, or covered pipe with asbestos or magnesia blocks. Covered base coating with wire netting and fastened in place with tie wires. Applied one or more secondary coats of plastic cement and troweled to a smooth finish. When covering brine, ammonia, and ice-water piping, wrapped felt frost-proofing material around pipes and secured in place with wire or jute twine. Covered insulation with layer of waterproof felt and sealed all joints with waterproof compound. Wrapped rosin-sized, tar, or asbestos paper around insulation or applied coating of asbestos cement. Stitched canvas jackets on insulated pipe with waxed sewing twine, using scissors, needle, and sailor's palm.

61. Cupola tender²75

Operated a cupola furnace, (a small forge for melting metals). Duties included chipping slag from interior walls, patching lining with refractory clay, packing and smoothing sand lining in bottom, breast, and spout of furnace, and supervised charging of cupola.

62. Moulder, coremaker..... .95

A moulder fashioned molds for casting metal by packing and ramming green sand, dry sand, or loam around patterns which have been placed in suitable flasks. Used riddles, shovels, trowels, slicks, lifters, bellows, and mallets, in the handling, compacting, and smoothing of sand.

²This classification and the following (#62) do not appear under "ship & boat building and repair" in the *DOT*. (See Vol. II, pp. 701-02). The presence of small foundries is perhaps indicative of the smaller scale of shipbuilding operations in East Coast shipyards than was typical of American yards.

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A coremaker made sand cores used in molds to form hollows or holes in metal castings. Cleaned core box, blowing out old sand with compressed air. Dusted parting sand over inside of core box to facilitate removal of finished core. Packed and rammed sand solidly into corebox, using hands, shovel, and tamping tools. Set vent wires and reinforcing wires as sand filled box. Lifted box from core, leaving core on plate for drying. Repaired breaks in core with spoon. Baked core in oven to harden it for use in casting molds.

63. Painter - sign, finish .....	.95
" - spray .....	.85-.95
" - ordinary .....	.85

Finish painters applied finish coats of paint and varnish to ship interiors and fittings, mixing paint and pigments to get desired colors. Sign painters made stencils of letters or designs, and painted over stencils onto surfaces. A spray painter used a compressed air gun to paint surfaces. The spray gun and hose assembly had to be cleaned with solvent between jobs; smaller items were sometimes mounted on revolving holder before spraying. Painters classed as "ordinary" might perform rough exterior work, such as hulls, deckhouses, and other parts of a ship's superstructure.

64. Painter - brush hand, red leader, scaler70
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Applied first coat of red lead (a mixture of lead oxide and litharge) to weather surfaces of ships and to bulkheads, using paint brushes. Scalers operated an air hammer to loosen old paint and rust from metal surfaces of a ship to prepare the area for repainting. A special scaling tool was inserted into the air-hammer socket, and reciprocated against the metal surface, removing the paint.

65. Cementer, cement finisher, Bitumastic worker, docklayer [sic]80
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Cementers or cement finishers mixed and laid cement, using a trowel, on decks and inner bottoms of ships, in water courses, crevices, under tiling, or in other areas, to make them watertight. Bitumastic, an anti-corrosive elastic cement used as a substitute for paint, was applied to metal surfaces, such as ship plates, tanks, and standpipes. Workers cleaned surfaces of rust, dirt and grease, applied priming coat with dauber, heated bitumastic enamel to proper temperature, and daubed material onto surfaces to thickness determined by specifications. The deck layer classification was equivalent to cementer or cement finisher.

66. Hoseman, waterman75
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Hoseman was a maintenance position assigned to repair burst air and water hoses, either on a ship under construction or repair, or around piers and docks. Waterman is an unlisted classification.

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67. Stationary engineer90

Stationary engineers operated and maintained stationary engines and mechanical equipment such as steam engines, generators, motors, turbines, ventilating and refrigerating equipment, steam boilers, and boiler-feed water pumps. Observed meters and gauges to determine operating condition of equipment, and made necessary adjustments or minor repairs. Kept clerical records, such as temperature of equipment and hours of operation, fuel consumed, and analysis of flue gases. This classification also included "Operation," "Power House," and "Heating Plant" engineer; all were paid the same wage as stationary engineer.

68. Air compressor operator

Grade I .....	.90
Grade II .....	.87½
Grade III .....	.80

Maintained and operated an air compressor driven by steam, electric, or gasoline power unit to supply compressed air for operation of pneumatic hoists and hammers. Regulated controls that automatically maintain air supply under constant pressure, interpreting temperature readings and pressure gauges, and making necessary adjustments. Oiled, greased, and cleaned equipment; sometimes connected pipes leading from compressor to tools and equipment, and made minor repairs.

69. Fireman, boiler operator, boilerman..... .70

Fired stationary boilers in shipyard power and heating plants generating steam or electricity for industrial processes.

70. Oiler, greaser, machine cleaner..... .70

Maintained moving parts or wearing surfaces of mechanical equipment, such as shaft and motor bearings, sprockets, drive chains, gears and pulleys, by routine lubrication. Forced grease into bearings with grease gun, or packed grease cups by hand and screwed down cap to force grease onto moving parts. Poured oil or smeared grease on drive chains and guides; kept sumps or wells for lubricating systems filled with oil.

71. Garage mechanic, auto repairman, garage man..... .90

Automobile mechanics and repairmen serviced trucks and other company vehicles, performing such duties as disassembling and overhauling engines, transmissions, clutches, etc. Used hoists, wrenches, gauges, drills, grinding wheels, and other specialized tools and machines. Garage men performed routine maintenance on company vehicles, checking fuel, oil and water levels and testing batteries and tires.

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72. Driver - truck, tractor, chauffeur65-.70

Truck and chauffeur drivers are self-explanatory; tractor drivers usually operated gasoline or diesel-powered automotive or crawler-tread tractors used to haul other non-powered vehicles, or to pull the cable of a winch in raising and lowering or loading and unloading heavy equipment or material.

73. Warehouseman - senior80-.90

" - ordinary65-.80

" - junior, stock chaser41½-.55

Warehouse workers hand-trucked, carried, pushed, or rolled material about a storage area, usually between loading platform and bins or shelves. Senior warehousemen would supervise such activities; stock chasers normally retrieved specific items or delivered material urgently needed from warerooms to ship construction and repair workers.

74. Steel handler, steel stockman, steel racker70

Classifications related to the handling and storage of steel materials.

75. Steel checker, steel stockkeeper80-.90

As above (#74), except some supervisory or clerical duties.

76. Storesman, warehouse labourer65

Similar to ordinary warehouseman, (#73).

77. Machine set-up man - woodworking95

Mounted cutting tools in machines and adjusted machines to produce articles as specified on blueprints, or like a sample of the required article, preparing machines for operation by the machine operator. Selected appropriate knives, reshaping when necessary by grinding.

78. Machine operator - sheet metal shop, machine shop, electric shop, pipe shop80

" " - wood working shop85

A general term used to designate any worker who operated machines to change the shape or condition of raw materials. Performed operations necessary to produce a finished article. Woodworking machine operators received slightly higher wages than other classifications.

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79. Galvanizing pickler and racker80

Applied a zinc-based rustproofing coating to iron or steel objects by immersing them in vat containing molten zinc. Rackers placed or removed objects on racks before and after the dipping process.

80. Motor or diesel launch operator80

Piloted motor-driven boats used to transport workers across harbour (between Halifax and Dartmouth yards), or to carry materials and tow barges.

81. Motor boat crewman or dockhand70

Performed various duties about ship's dock or wharf, such as fastening boats to dock by fastening lines and hawsers, moving gangplanks, and piling material on wharf as directed.

82. Skilled trades helper, helper

First six months60

Second six months65

Thereafter70

A general classification for workers not included elsewhere. See *helper*, (#5).

83. Labourer60

No special tasks specified.

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 Dr. Louis Greenspan, Hamilton, January 1985.
 Judge R.E. Inglis, Halifax, October 1982.
 Mr. Mel LeBlanc, Mount Hope, Ontario, March 1990.
 Mr. William Pugsley, Ottawa, Ontario, October 1990.
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