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THE DECLINE OF CHILD LABOUR
 IN QUEBEC, 1940-1960: CONFLICT
 BETWEEN POOR FAMILIES AND
 THE WELFARE STATE[♦]

DOMINIQUE MARSHALL

It is not easy to connect the image of nineteenth-century Western children labouring in fields or factories with today's image of schoolchildren, excluded from the world of adults, protected by the state, and, sometimes tragically, dependent on their parents. Nor is it easy to connect these images with the corresponding realities. After all, most children went to school in the late nineteenth century, and many children still work today.

When, where, how, and why did children work? The answers go beyond the bounds of child labour to the more general issues of the reproduction of social class and, in Quebec, the tardiness of the province in promoting education. Various trends in current history offer a range of hypotheses on the decline of child labour. Over the last three decades, historians have focussed in turn on the evolution of legislation, the role of unions and the agricultural movement, transformations in the perception of childhood, and the demands of the family economy and of the economy in general. This article is meant to enhance an increasingly detailed picture in two ways. Firstly, it focusses on Quebec between 1940 and 1960, a significant episode in the history of state intervention that continues to shape the definition of childhood to this day. This period is relatively unexplored yet abundantly documented, thanks to the specific record accompanying the implementation of the legislation described in this article. Secondly, it tries

[♦] Translated from an article published under the name Dominique Jean: "Le recul de travail des enfants au Québec entre 1940 et 1960: une explication des conflits entre les familles pauvres et l'État providence." Printed with the permission of the editor from *Labour/Le Travail* 24 (Fall 1989): 91-129. © Committee on Labour History.

Translated by Jane Parniak.

to take account of all the possible reasons for the decline of child labour across various socioeconomic levels.

During the 1940s, the legal status of children under fourteen years of age was dramatically changed with the passage of a compulsory school attendance act in Quebec and the introduction of federal family allowances. For the first time, all children were legally bound to attend school until the end of their fourteenth year, or until they finished Grade 7, and the state paid families to help make this possible. Moreover, if these changes did not compel fourteen and fifteen year olds to go to school, family allowances nevertheless were an explicit incentive for them to stay in school. Earlier legislation had affected a minority of young workers: only children working in factories and commercial establishments that were not owned by their parents had been legally bound to complete a certain level of education. Such children could not work before the age of fourteen, and between the ages of fourteen and fifteen they had to secure a certificate of age and education from the Quebec Department of Labour placement offices.

To appreciate how the perception and realities of childhood intertwine, it is important to ask how and why the state influenced families and, in turn, how and why families influenced the state. Much can be gained from studying the interaction of these two institutions. In addition, concurrently examining the issues in question from these two vantage points provides a broad overview. From the state we get an idea of the wide range of interests and the effects of pressure groups, public authorities, and the social relations found in public institutions. From families, we get a glimpse of the requirements and constraints of the economy, society, and ideology; moreover, within families, men, women, and children can be studied as individuals. After a critical review of existing hypotheses on the decline of child labour and a statistical examination of the trend, this article outlines the history of social policy affecting children, from its formation in the political arena to its implications for families and back to its actual practices in the public sphere.

In Quebec and Canada, historians have explored the changing economic role of children from many different angles. Some early political histories analysed the gradual tightening of child labour legislation. Liberal historians were the first to focus on the tardy introduction of a compulsory school attendance law in Quebec. Their purpose was to explain Quebec's hesitancy in adopting a law symbolic in the history of Western democracies. The explanation lay in the strength of the church, the views of which prevailed over those of radical members of the Liberal Party during a series of conflicts within the political elite in the early twentieth century.¹ Other researchers, more concerned with the social transformations of childhood, explored legislation applying to children, including laws concerning abandoned children, scattered attempts to control street children, and the introduction of a federal Juvenile Delinquents Act, which launched the juvenile court system in the early twentieth century.² In their investigation, they

included the formation of labour legislation, starting with the 1885 Industrial and Commercial Establishments Act, which prohibited girls under fourteen and boys under twelve from working in factories with more than twenty employees. Historians studied how, through such measures, the state and reformers gradually instilled the ideal of a protected and dependent childhood and extended their authority to an area that had always been controlled by families. To the history of political conflicts, these authors added an account of the transformations in the perceptions of childhood. Amongst them, Marxist historians opposed the liberal vision of the history of social policy concerning children, focussing instead on the "social control" fostered by the progressives and political elites to reinforce their class privilege.³

The history of the labour movement added yet more detail to the portrait, by pointing to the conflictual aspects of law formation. Historians stressed the democratic side of the law-making process, tracing the influence of unions and agricultural groups.⁴ Moving from the formation of laws to their enforcement, some of these historians produced a richer version of the social control hypothesis: once adopted, many legal provisions were poorly enforced since governments lacked determination and, thus, resources. For similar reasons, censuses underestimated the extent of child labour: the work-force data excluded individuals under the age of ten, and the definition of labour was too narrow to cover many of the tasks of young workers. Finally, these researchers found that the sectors that hired the most children were not regulated. Prior to compulsory schooling, there was no legislation to prevent children from performing farmwork or housework. For a longer time, in these sectors, the actual history of child labour was more influenced by economic than direct legislative considerations. Technological progress and urbanization were pivotal factors influencing the frequency and type of labour done by children.

Overall, the study of childhood has paralleled general trends in historiography: from the history of policy to the history of the labour movement, a more resolutely social history has emerged. Historians adopted the concerns of sociologists who were interested in the relationships between family and economy, and family and social change.⁵ This led to a more refined analysis of the economic mechanisms affecting child labour, often sketchily presented in earlier research. As family history developed, and as more "autonomy" was ascribed by historians to the family, child labour was studied not only in itself, but as one of the strategies used by urban, working-class, and migrant households at specific times in their life cycle to cope with the structural constraints of a capitalist economy.⁶ This historiography, perhaps because it was often an offshoot of working-class history, and perhaps also because it relied heavily on the testimonies of contemporary reformers, devoted little attention to rural child labour and housework. Moreover, because it used the manuscript censuses, only available for an earlier period, family history focussed less on the twentieth century.⁷

Historians are now seeking to mesh the strengths of separate focuses on state and family. This study explores the benefits of such a convergence. On one side, new studies of the state point to a diversified structure that is rela-

tively autonomous and thus warrants integrated attention.⁸ The diversification and vitalization of the concept of the state call for a more detailed study of state practices and the influence of families on legislation.⁹ The state is just one of many political institutions, and conflict between institutions, such as schools and school boards, is the focus of renewed interest. The political and institutional history of education and welfare thus make way for a sociocultural history.¹⁰ In the same way, family history has expanded to explore relationships between families and other institutions. Thus, families are not merely faced with socioeconomic constraints; they do not simply have strategies, interests, and modes of resistance. They can influence the overall structure in which they are situated.¹¹ From this perspective, family values are considered as political beliefs, and the history of perceptions of childhood is seen from a new perspective. Finally, viewed from the inside, the family itself becomes a complex, even contentious institution.¹²

Before attempting to explain the decline of child labour, it is worth measuring the extent, rhythm, and diversity of the trend. The most telling indication of the sectors involved and the extent of labour performed by children under the age of fifteen is a school inquiry of 1942. In January 1942, the Department of Public Instruction asked teachers throughout Quebec to enumerate children who had quit school the previous summer and to indicate their employment (see table 1). The census of 1951 provides the most complete portrait of fourteen- and fifteen-year-old workers; girls working at home had never before been enumerated; thereafter, fifteen year olds disappeared from the scene (see table 2).

In the light of these statistics, the most significant feature of child labour in Quebec from 1940 to 1960 is that only a minority of children worked full time. The enumerations, although clearly inadequate, indicate that in 1942 only one child in ten under the age of fourteen worked. In 1951 one child in four aged fourteen or fifteen worked at a job listed in the census. Thus, based on these statistics, labouring children were clearly a minority. But, as we shall see, child labour was used as a last resort for many families. Statistics from other provinces show that child labour in Quebec was unusually high: while less than 10 percent of boys and girls aged fourteen and fifteen worked in the other provinces in 1951, the rate in Quebec was 20 percent for boys and 25 percent for girls.¹³ This was directly related to the province's delay in implementing compulsory education.

The statistics allow some further observations on child labour. The number of young workers dwindled over the twenty years under study, continuing the pattern of preceding decades. Secondly, the vast majority were employed by their parents: the typical employer of the 1940s and 1950s was not an industrial capitalist but a mother or father. Thirdly, there was a strong sexual division in the child-labour market. Most boys performed farmwork: a boy who was born on a farm was likely to be put to work at a very young age. In 1941, of all fourteen- and fifteen-year-old

TABLE 1 EMPLOYMENT SECTOR AND OCCUPATION OF CHILDREN QUITTING SCHOOL, 1940-42, BASED ON AGE AND SEX

Occupation and Sector	Age [♦]			
	9 to 13		14 and 15	
	N	%	N	%
<i>Boys</i>				
Agriculture	1373	46.9	3602	42.7
Fishing, hunting, mining, construction	69	2.3	225	2.8
Plants, factories	55	1.9	667	7.9
Services [†]	289	9.8	1438	17.1
Other industries	91	3.1	372	4.4
Unspecified industries	1054	36.0	2118	25.1
Total	2930	100.0	8422	100.0
<i>Girls</i>				
Agriculture	910	25.0	1869	22.5
Fishing, hunting, mining, construction	20	0.5	53	0.6
Plants, factories	32	0.9	385	4.7
Services [†]	256	7.0	873	10.5
Other industries	301	8.3	860	10.3
Unspecified industries	2124	58.3	4277	51.4
Total	3643	100.0	8317	100.0
<i>Unpaid work for parents</i>				
Unskilled salaried worker	1598	54.6	4081	48.5
Messenger	105	3.6	988	11.7
Unemployed	200	6.8	823	9.8
Apprentice	326	11.1	626	7.4
Unspecified	51	1.7	562	7.6
Other	572	19.5	1184	14.1
Total	78	2.7	158	1.8
Total	2930	100.0	8422	100.0

♦ Age in January 1942 (we have added one year to the age indicated on the tables, which was "age last year").

† Under services, we have included retail trade, wholesale trade, transportation and communications, financial services and insurance, personal services, and construction. Personal services include barbering and hairdressing, laundering, dyeing, cleaning, pressing, hotels and boarding houses, restaurants, cafés, and taverns. Comité catholique de l'Instruction publique, *Enquête scolaire*, 31 Jan. 1942, ANQQ, E-13, C.r., 1942-96.

Sources: D.P.I., *School Inquiry, 1941-1942. Students across the province, registered in school in 1940-1941 but not registered in 1941-1942. Students attending French classes*, iii-18, iii-19, iii-24, ASJCF, 126-11.

TABLE 2 STRUCTURE OF THE ENUMERATED JUVENILE WORK FORCE ACCORDING TO SEX, QUEBEC, 1921-61 (% of total work force)

Sector [†]	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961
	10 to 15	10 to 15	14 to 15	14 to 15	15
<i>Boys</i>					
Agriculture	63	70	76	57	44
(unpaid familial)	(57)	(65)	(70)	(53)	
Transportation and communications	2 [♦]	8	8	10	3
Factories	15 [♦]	4	4	7	16
Unskilled labour	— [†]	3	4	10	—
Commerce	7	4	3	4	21
Offices	—	2	2	2	—
Service	3	2	1	2	9
Hunting and fishing	0	1	1	1	—
Lumbering	2	1	1	3	2
Other	8	4	0	4	5
Total %	100	100	100	100	100
N	24 292	21 259	18 372	13 649	4 584
<i>Girls</i>					
Service	37	59	71	27	(7) 40
Factories	49 [♦]	19	12	32	(9) 34
Unskilled labour	—	7	3	8	(2) —
Commerce	9	6	5	11	(3) 13
Offices	— [♦]	3	2	7	(2) —
Agriculture	1	3	6	10	(3) 8
Housekeeping	—	—	—	—	(72) —
Other	4	3	1	5	(2) 5
Total %	100	100	100	100	(100) 100
N	5 903	4 662	3 264	5 083	(18 377) 3 200

† The classification of economic activities used in the published censuses varies from one year to the next. Office employees, unskilled labourers, and messengers are not always grouped under the same heading. These figures have not yet been corrected in this sense, but we have tried to take account of these inconsistencies in our analyses. For a critique of these sources, see Frank T. Denton, "Section D: La population active" in *Statistiques historiques du Canada*, ed. F.H. Leacy (Ottawa 1983).

♦ In 1921, industry messengers and office workers are classified under factories; in subsequent years messengers are included under transportation, office employees under offices.

† A dash (—) means that the figure is unavailable.

Sources: *Recensement du Canada, 1921*, vol. IV, table 4; *Recensement du Canada, 1931*, vol. VII, table 40; *Recensement du Canada, 1941*, vol. VII, tables 4 and 5; *Recensement du Canada, 1951*, vol. IV, tables 3 and 11; *Recensement du Canada, 1961*, vol. 3.2, bulletin 3.2-8.

Québécois boys born in rural areas—including farms and villages—45.9 percent worked on the family farm; ten years later, this figure had dropped to 27 percent. In 1951, when it became possible to find out exactly how many fourteen and fifteen year olds lived on farms, it came to light that 41.6 percent of them worked for their father without pay.¹⁴ Girls tended to work in the home: this sector accounted for three-quarters of young female

workers. This means that at least 20 percent of all fourteen- or fifteen-year-old girls in Quebec were working at home full time in the last week of May 1951. These girls alone equalled the total number of fourteen- and fifteen-year-old boys in the work force. The surprising magnitude of housework was what set Quebec society apart, far more than differences in the rates of paid work.¹⁵ Finally, for girls employed outside the home, domestic work was most common, while most boys worked in non-familial commercial establishments.

To grasp the meaning the state ascribed to the new laws affecting children, it is first necessary to analyse the intentions that were publicly declared by Prime Minister Mackenzie King and Quebec Premier Adélard Godbout. These intentions direct our attention to the various groups whose support these leaders were trying to win.

The compulsory school attendance law enacted by Godbout's Liberal government in 1943 gave all children a new right to a minimum education. "Some parents would like to take their child out of school before the age of fourteen, or keep the child at home to work," stated the *Instructions concernant la Loi de fréquentation scolaire obligatoire* of the Department of Public Instruction, "[but] children are entitled to an education and, if they quit school before age fourteen, they lose a chance they will never have again."¹⁶ This new right allowed the government to justify in principle an additional sphere of intervention in opposition to the church, which invoked the rights of parents to safeguard its own prerogatives, and in opposition to parents, on whom it imposed a new obligation. Unlike his predecessors, Godbout proclaimed a faith in compulsory schooling and the right to education that was quite new, and quite firm, considering the determination required to convince not only church leaders but many members of his own government.

The state of Quebec, the school boards, and the church had all in some way promoted school attendance prior to 1943. Most sons of the franco-phone and anglophone elites enjoyed a system of relatively exclusive educational institutions, established and maintained by the public purse. However, the system for their daughters was clearly inferior, and this issue was the focus of many struggles on the part of middle-class feminists. For many poor children, the earlier Industrial and Commercial Establishments Act was a form of compulsory schooling in disguise.¹⁷ Here too, state efforts focussed exclusively on boys—more specifically, boys who worked in commercial or industrial establishments. In addition, the Montreal Catholic School Commission (MCSC), which controlled 25 percent of the students in Quebec, had had a truancy service since the 1920s; during the Depression, it had implemented assistance for poor schoolchildren.¹⁸ For both financial and ideological reasons, the MCSC tried to provide adequate school supplies to children who attended school; most of the children who could not go to school were left to private charities. Finally, the church had devised its

own way to enforce attendance by making First Communion available only to those who completed Grade 6.

In 1945, the Mackenzie King government's Family Allowances Act granted another universal right to children under sixteen years of age—the right to minimum welfare. The King cabinet heralded family allowances as the epitome of the democratic egalitarian ideal. The draft legislation, as explained by the future head of the program on the eve of its adoption, "seeks to give all our children an equal chance to succeed. This is a great Canadian measure since it puts Canadians from coast to coast on the same footing."¹⁹ The act represented the first universal social security program in Canada. Hitherto only needy mothers, military families, and respectable poverty-stricken families living in towns with charitable organizations had been able to receive material assistance when the vagaries of the market made it difficult for them to raise their children. The Family Allowances Act contained a concrete intention to guarantee education to children under the age of sixteen, insofar as the constitutional sharing of powers between the provinces and the central government allowed the federal government to act, and taking account of the sensitivities of Quebec *autonomistes* who were hostile to the very idea of federal allowances.²⁰ The monthly bonuses of five to eight dollars, depending on the children's ages, would be paid on the children's behalf to their mother as long as they complied with the provincial education laws and did not work for pay. "The law maker, without strictly prohibiting it, was opposed to children [under the age of sixteen] working for wages when they would have been better off continuing their schooling or vocational training." A civil servant at the Quebec Regional Office of Family Allowances admitted that in a federal law the only way for the law makers to achieve their ends was to make family allowances conditional.²¹

These laws were meant to allow poor children to stay in school longer, a labour movement demand dating back more than half a century. The editors of *Le Monde ouvrier*, for instance, in a vigorous 1943 polemic for compulsory schooling, asked "Why, in light of fateful events, where its fate is jeopardized, insist on cutting back on what belongs to the people in the way of progress and security?"²² In their mind, compulsory schooling was a democratic victory, since one of the main avenues by which the working class could raise its standard of living was through education. In practical terms, compulsory schooling seemed like a promise by the government to provide the equipment and services needed to guarantee all children a minimum education. *Le Monde ouvrier* anticipated that a system that "developed gradually, in accordance with the specific conditions of each case, would extend throughout the province facilities that until now only certain cities have enjoyed."²³ Contrary to the claims of detractors of compulsory schooling, these journalists contended that parents were ready to accept this encroachment on their rights. Children were prevented from attending school far less by an assertion of parental rights than by insufficient resources, which family allowances were to address.²⁴ Allowances were also an indirect concession—the cheapest possible—from the federal government to the Canadian labour movement, a benefit achieved by workers through protest

against the effects of wartime wage freezes on already poorly paid workers.²⁵ Specifically, family allowances were intended to compensate the parents of large families, who were penalized by a wage system that did not reflect the number of dependants.²⁶ The unions' motives for their lukewarm approval of the law were not disinterested. Fear of rampant postwar unemployment made family allowances fairly popular. As the leader of the CCF stated in Parliament, the program was likely to unclog the job market by keeping children in school.²⁷ Similarly, for many others, improved education was impossible without improved welfare for children. Thus, the Jeunesse ouvrière catholique (JOC) had refused to consider the issue of compulsory schooling until the economic problems of families had been settled.²⁸

These laws were particularly concerned with abolishing rural child labour. Family allowances were intended to remedy the fact that rural regions had been shortchanged in the allocation of social services. In addition, the issue of the education of farmers' sons underlay the turnaround in the opinion of the Quebec higher clergy, followed by the Union des cultivateurs catholique and the Confédération des travailleurs catholiques du Canada (CTCC), concerning compulsory schooling. Theological debates on family, state, and church prerogatives took a back seat. The time was ripe for the clergy to consider compulsory schooling. By the 1940s, the labour of farmers' sons was viewed as a problem, leading to a new clerical strategy of rural revival to check the rural exodus.²⁹ Only boys were affected. For girls, the concerns of educators and the clergy crystallized around the debate on domestic science schools.

As well as appealing to unions and proponents of the rural revival, the two new laws appealed to many women. Quebec women were about to vote for the first time in the provincial elections, and the leaders knew that they were particularly concerned with child welfare and education. Women's reform groups formed the largest contingent of associations that supported compulsory schooling. Moreover, Liberal women, invited for the first time to the provincial party convention in 1938, had made compulsory schooling a priority second only to women's suffrage.³⁰ The 1943 law was a revolution for young female workers, since domestic work and housework were addressed for the first time. But women were silent on the anticipated effects of compulsory schooling on girls in general. Unlike their male peers, reformist middle-class women were still fighting for education for their own daughters. This narrow goal may have led them to ignore poor girls; their need for servants probably made them even more oblivious to their plight.³¹ Family allowances also represented a victory for the women's movement. As the main administrators of the family budget, women were especially concerned with improved child-rearing conditions.³²

Both compulsory education and family allowances were generally supported by employers. The quality of the Canadian work force had been sharply called into question during the war. With compulsory schooling, Godbout promised to give Quebec the most educated working class in the world.³³ Employers were encouraged to view family allowances as part of a plan for postwar economic recovery through sustained demand and an

improvement in real wages. The Family Allowances Act symbolized the King government's decision to adopt a type of state intervention that was more capitalist than social democratic.³⁴

Not only could poor children stay in school longer, they all had to go to school until the summer following their fourteenth birthday. This coercive strain in the legislation was partly due to city reformers alarmed by juvenile delinquency, which they felt was reaching staggering heights. They deplored the lack of legal means for supervising the activities of neglected children. On this point, secular anglophone associations and reformers inspired by the social doctrine of the Catholic Church were unanimous.³⁵ Compulsory attendance also appealed to the proponents of a rationalized school system, headed by Godbout. Compulsory attendance would cut administrative costs and guarantee the success of educational reforms. Moreover, the bureaucratic mechanisms designed to enforce attendance would provide useful data for further policy development.³⁶ Similarly, the Family Allowances Act stipulated that payments could be suspended if families did not tend to their children's welfare. Thus, the legislation intermingled potentially antagonistic democratic and social control objectives. The confusion between coercion and encouragement was deftly sidestepped by both King and Godbout; if, in theory, parents were not opposed to the education and well-being of their children, the coercive clauses were there only on principle and there was nothing to worry about.³⁷

Thus the balance between coercion and encouragement was not clearly established; moreover, the means that would be implemented to guarantee the new rights of children remained undefined. "Such a law should not be passed unless it can be enforced among the majority of poor families," the CTCC had warned in 1942, when it demanded that family allowances and bonuses for large families be ushered in along with the compulsory school attendance law.³⁸ On the whole, the rights of children remained ambiguous because of the wide range of social agents that had defended them. How would they be interpreted by legal enforcers?

Soon after the Compulsory School Attendance Act came into effect, the provincial government discovered that family poverty was far more extensive than it had imagined, as evidenced by the new school statistics, inspectors' reports, and hundreds of letters sent by parents to the Department of Public Instruction. Young workers usually came from large families, and most of the parents who applied to the Department of Labour for a work permit for their fourteen- or fifteen-year-old children invoked the size of their family as the reason for their employment.³⁹ Large families who did not have children old enough to work legally were in an extremely difficult position.⁴⁰ Family size was a decisive factor in the case of maids who passed through the offices of the JOC in 1941: of one hundred young girls interviewed, eighty-one came from families of more than eight children.⁴¹

Similarly, the large number of children in farming families explains the use of family workers; the cost of raising children directly competed with the cost of operating and mechanizing the farm. As social scientists Haythorne and Marsh pointed out in 1941, putting sons to work, no matter how unproductive they were, was often the only immediate solution to a farm's financial troubles.⁴² For many farmers' daughters lacking the opportunity to work in the vicinity, parental needs had even more drastic consequences:

Once they have reached a certain age, [they] must earn money to help the family, or at least so that they are no longer dependent on the household. Many [of the Montreal girls interviewed by the JOC] admitted that on a farm, boys are valued more than girls and are granted all the privileges; the girls, on the other hand, have the happy lot of hearing over and over again that they are a burden.⁴³

In addition to substandard wages and large families, work stoppages due to an industrial accident or illness often forced a child to start working. Half of the letters sent to the Department of Labour asking for a work permit stated that the father was sick or disabled. Occasionally the mayor or parish priest promised that the child would only work until the father had recovered.⁴⁴ The mother might fall ill and entrust the eldest daughter with the housework, and mothers would sometimes keep their sons at home to chop wood or "run errands." Younger children would take over when their older siblings fell sick.⁴⁵ A similar response occurred when the father was unemployed. A Drummondville family managed to scrape by for fourteen months on its savings but, once the money was gone, the fifteen-year-old son started working. Shortly afterwards, the parents were considering sending their fifteen-year-old daughter out to work.⁴⁶

Gender-based discrepancies in pay for industrial and commercial labour made it logical to send a boy out to work before a daughter. Within the limits allowed by enforcement of the laws, families made the best of a labour market that was divided by sex and age and was based on the capitalist idea of the cheapest possible work force and the ideology of the male provider. The resultant income strategies took shape as a hierarchy of economic responsibility within the household. This was never more obvious than in "those families in which there is a succession of newspaper boys. The eldest is a newspaper boy until he turns fourteen, at which point he becomes a messenger; the vacant position is then filled by a younger brother."⁴⁷ Households that did not have the same economic capacity resorted to illegal child labour. "I am very sorry to say that I am urgently compelled to send X out to work so that the family can eat," explained a mother to a judge at the social welfare court. "My husband has been unemployed for three weeks. . . . This week we have no money coming in."⁴⁸ She went on to explain that she had to pay the rent and heating, there was not a grocer left to give her credit, and she was having trouble getting public assistance. Unemployment insurance payments were insufficient to see a family through such a crisis. A case in point was a household of eight children where the father, a labourer, had been out of work for two months. The \$14 per week in unemployment insurance and \$10 per month in family

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allowances covered the cost of food and clothing; they lived with the husband's mother and did not have to pay rent.⁴⁹ Charitable organizations offered even less adequate support. In 1941, needy French-Canadian families in Montreal received an average of \$18 per year from charities. Families from other groups were a little better off: \$33 for the Irish; \$37 for the English; \$40 for Jewish families.⁵⁰

For many families, the death of the father or his desertion of the family intensified the underlying insecurity. "I have been a widow for 15 years," wrote a mother from St-Jean to the federal Department of Labour, "and at present I have only one girl working. I am too ill to work myself now."⁵¹ One-fifth of the working children who appeared in the Montreal social welfare court on truancy charges were raised by a widowed mother. When mothers or older sisters could not handle the housework, a younger child often had to take over. If the mother worked in a factory to bolster the family income, young girls aged thirteen, twelve, or even ten stayed home to care for younger siblings.⁵²

In Quebec, the number of married women working for pay climbed from 19 650 in 1941 to 59 035 in 1951 to 152 073 in 1961.⁵³ The war had initially intensified this trend: the proportion of married female workers rose from 10 percent in 1939 to 35 percent in 1944. "In Montreal alone, more than five thousand children of women working in wartime factories are left to themselves or in the questionable care of older brothers or sisters, grandparents or even neighbours," concluded a survey conducted by the *Gazette* in 1942.⁵⁴ Only six day-care centres were opened in Quebec during the war (all of them in Montreal) under the July 1942 federal-provincial agreement on wartime day care.⁵⁵ While it likely meant increased child-care responsibilities for the eldest daughter, a wage-earning mother also brought in enough income to prolong her children's dependency. Unfortunately, it is impossible to gauge the importance of this trend over the long term.⁵⁶

It was not just immediate need that prompted families to send their children out to work. Insecure parents exhausted by survival strategies in times of economic crisis, either individual or social, took advantage of job opportunities in more prosperous times. The war seemed like a once-in-a-lifetime chance. In addition, the advent of a consumer society put growing pressure on incomes. To the outcasts of the "new standard of living," new consumption patterns may have been an added reason to put children to work.⁵⁷ In family businesses, tradition often added weight to financial need. These businesses, whether farms, groceries, fisheries, lumbering businesses, or restaurants, seldom brought in enough money to hire a paid employee in place of a family member. One restaurant owner living in Deux-Montagnes, for example, admitted that without the labour of his two daughters, aged fourteen and fifteen, he would have gone out of business: "The family is quite involved financially, having to pay \$125 every month on a \$3,000 mortgage on the restaurant, while the monthly rent for their apartment is \$70. There are nine children in the family. . . . They regret that the girls had to quit school, but the restaurant does not yield enough to pay employees."⁵⁸

In the light of contradictory market forces, it is difficult to estimate how much a family's socioeconomic situation was affected by specific economic

and demographic trends. On the one hand, the sharp rise in agricultural revenue during the war helped to break the vicious circle of juvenile farm labour. American sociologist Horace Miner noted the trend in the parish of St-Denis-de-Kamouraska, where surplus cash was used to hire a non-family work force and mechanize operations (although the connections between mechanization and labour requirements are complex).⁵⁹ Similarly, as family size diminished, girls probably performed less housework; unfortunately, due to a lack of census data, we cannot measure the change. But, on the other hand, housework increased significantly during the war when many girls replaced their mothers who went to work in factories.⁶⁰ It is even trickier to pinpoint the legislation's role in the later rise in the level of education in Quebec, since other factors were at play. However, this should not restrict historians from exploring the impact of the laws through methods other than macroscopic statistical studies. A thorough analysis of the enforcement of child labour laws helps to delineate the respective roles of employers, public authorities, parents, and children in the decline of child labour.

Concomitant with a growing awareness of the extent of poverty, the state realized that most families applauded the new public regulations on prolonged childhood dependency and welcomed state intervention in this direction.⁶¹ Most children had attended school long before the government made it compulsory; this pattern was not specific to Quebec, but the late introduction of legislation in the province highlights it. More interesting for our purposes, most of the parents who did not comply with the laws subscribed to the ideals enshrined in the legislation, motivated by either the higher academic qualifications required by employers, the notion that the better educated would be better prepared to face a crisis, or the hope of an easier life for their children.⁶² Parents also showed a striking concern for their children's physical vulnerability. Seven of the thirty families who wrote to the Department of Labour to ask for a work permit for a child under the legal age dwelt either on the unusual strength of their children or on the light nature of the tasks they had to perform. Parents also expected civil servants to treat their children with paternal concern.⁶³ Nonetheless, awareness of the value of formal education varied according to a family's socioeconomic background. In the 1940s, the idea was quite new among certain groups.⁶⁴ Parents who were unaware of the value of education or the physical and moral vulnerability of their offspring were a rarity. Only two examples of this prototype figured in the administrative archives examined: a father who, for no apparent reason, was anxious to see his ten-year-old son start working, and another father who did not want to support his son much longer even though he was only eleven years old.⁶⁵

To say that parents welcomed the new child labour legislation does not mean that they accepted it without reservation. In certain conditions and given certain beliefs, some families pressured the state to mitigate, amend, or redirect the central cabinet objectives. The remaining part of this article

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attempts to demonstrate that certain democratic aims of the child labour laws were met due to the political action of parents, groups acting on their behalf, or civil servants concerned with their problems. This fact has often been overlooked by social policy historians, who describe the war and post-war years as a time of consensus. The notion of consensus needs to be used with care, the image of passive parents critically reviewed, and electoral issues examined in depth. At a basic level, the compliance of parents and children left off where their economic needs began. Moreover, the forms of protest changed as the construction of the welfare state progressed.

To assure the success of the new laws, the governments sought the consent of poor parents in many ways. The Department of Public Instruction attempted to implement new instruments to channel requests and questions from the public. A campaign conducted by school inspectors to persuade commissioners and teachers to form parents' associations complemented the promotion of compulsory attendance and attempted to impose new kinds of political relations in educational matters. In theory, the meetings were supposed to increase parents' interest in school. The meetings were characterized by children's talent shows and speeches delivered by teachers on the importance of regular attendance, which were intended more to create a show of consensus than to involve parents in school matters. Illiterate parents did, however, take advantage of such meetings to ask teachers to convey their dissatisfaction to the superintendent. Most parents disliked this kind of involvement in school affairs, and the movement dissolved after a brief success among the middle classes.⁶⁶ It was easy to blame the eventual failure of such associations on apathy, so that the illusion of parental assent could be maintained. The history of the family allowances appeal court followed the same lines. In the fifteen years following the first cheques, the Quebec court received no more than ten challenges to administrative decisions.⁶⁷

Letters from parents show that the superintendent of public instruction, Victor Doré, had difficulty securing parental approval. To prove that his intentions were democratic, he used radio broadcasts and press releases on the adoption of the Compulsory School Attendance Act to urge parents to write to him. He also insisted on centralizing applications for the extension of work permits in his department. In the five years following the passage of compulsory attendance, hundreds of parents took the superintendent at his word and, using the openness the government had displayed to foster the illusion of popular consent, voiced their discontent and their demands. Thus an ideological need gave family-state relations an unprecedented intensity.⁶⁸ In one sense, educational policy became temporarily more democratic during the centralization of educational affairs. The abrupt intervention of the central government briefly shed light on a whole aspect of social interaction, which just as quickly fell back into the shadows. The late passage of the legislation in Quebec has made the province an invaluable laboratory for studying the role of families in state formation and, conversely, the impact of state policy on families. By the mid-twentieth century, the literacy rate among the poorest parents was high enough for them to have the capability to write to public authorities.

This new level of openness was temporary, not only because it was orchestrated by the government, but also because parental protests gradually lost momentum as the local political tradition weakened due to the centralization of educational decisions.⁶⁹ Indeed, in an effort to influence educational policy, parents had long found ways of participating on local boards: petitions, representations at school board meetings, and protests to teachers.⁷⁰ Initially, the Compulsory School Attendance Act gave parents additional influence in these conflicts; taking advantage of the atmosphere of trust fostered by the superintendent, they sometimes pitted new provincial standards against local incompetence.⁷¹ However, under Victor Doré, the Department of Public Instruction did not use existing channels of school policy: the department paid little heed to the demands of school boards, and its ideal of a school trustee as a member of the enlightened elite betrayed a certain contempt for small-town and rural trustees.⁷² In short, the trend toward centralization, although temporarily liberating, was often alienating in the longer term.⁷³

The Family Allowances Act elicited similar correspondence between parents and civil servants, facilitated by the many occasions on which parents were obliged by law to write to the Quebec "regional" office. In addition, dozens of parents visited the office daily to settle their business in person. Unfortunately, the authorities' responses are more difficult to trace, since they only kept sample letters that were useful for ruling on the legality of borderline cases. Nonetheless, these letters illustrate the process whereby parents sometimes broadened the definition of who was considered eligible for benefits. For instance, for five years, lacking clear guidelines from Ottawa, the Quebec office agreed to send bonuses for children working in non-agricultural family businesses.⁷⁴ Besides pressures on civil servants, parents made demands to their MPs. "I receive many letters from my electorate asking me to help them continue getting family allowances for their children who are still in school," wrote the deputy of Rivière-du-Loup-Témiscouata.⁷⁵ Similarly, a powerful movement of petitions for the indexation of family allowances swept through Quebec in the early 1940s, culminating in a refusal by the King cabinet.

Some parents who took the new state-granted rights seriously protested against legislation that did not provide the means of achieving the ideals proclaimed by the politicians. They appropriated state rhetoric by invoking in their own interest the children's rights that had been used to justify state intervention for quite different motives. Universal education, many of them wrote, would be impossible unless it included free transportation; more and better qualified teachers; free schools, textbooks, and supplies; and money to buy clothing for the children. These individual demands converged at several points with the demands of unions and the professional associations that claimed to be speaking on their behalf. Sometimes parents even demanded replacement servants or farmhands. Moreover, they argued that the law discriminated against the rural population and was unfair to the poorest classes. Some parents argued that their positions—as father of a large family, land clearer, food producer, former teacher more qualified

than their children's current teacher—gave them a legitimate say in the management of public affairs and that their consent would not be automatic. When parents defined what they needed to secure their children's destiny, their demands were unlike anything the conservative clerical elites, which had championed these rights in political debates, had ever imagined. The beliefs of some of these elites, who had claimed that, once compulsory attendance was adopted, parents would lose interest in educational issues, often proved implausible.⁷⁶

Despite these criticisms, Adélar Godbout had enough confidence in the compulsory school attendance law to base the provincial election on his social legislation. Much remained to be done, he said, but the groundwork had been laid.⁷⁷ However, Maurice Duplessis, leader of the Union Nationale, set the agenda to his advantage, and the campaign revolved around conscription. To a massively anti-conscription electorate, he was able to portray his adversary as a national traitor, thereby winning a slim victory. Discontent stemming from the unfair enforcement of compulsory school attendance provided fodder for the opposition. The Bloc Populaire seized the opportunity to merge conscription and compulsory education, declaring that Godbout had unduly instituted "educational conscription."⁷⁸ The provincial government's orchestration of a "consensus" with respect to compulsory schooling may have added credit to the accusations thrown at Godbout. In 1945, the King government was more successful in diverting French Canadians' attention away from conscription and won their votes on the basis of social policy.⁷⁹

From 1944 onwards, Maurice Duplessis was able to handle the public's educational demands differently. It is difficult to pinpoint his intentions. Duplessis did not believe that it was up to the state to force children to attend school. He did nothing to facilitate enforcement of the Compulsory School Attendance Act and refused to co-operate with family allowance officials by reporting truant children. In 1949, relying on a stronger majority in the Quebec assembly than in 1944, he was able to abolish free education and to lower the provincial contribution to the purchase of school books.⁸⁰ Seemingly, he was afraid that enforcement of the law would rile parents and compromise his political interests.⁸¹ Thus, he managed to dissolve the bureaucratic elements of provincial centralism, but he could not completely ignore the compulsory School Attendance Act or abolish it, as his provincial secretary, Omer Coté, had initially anticipated.⁸² It was his turn to seduce property owners, school boards, Protestants, and public opinion. His major achievement was establishing an education fund in 1946, financed by new natural resource taxes. These taxes enabled him to assume all school board debts and triple the provincial education budget in one decade.⁸³ This, according to Omer Coté, was a more effective way of ensuring regular attendance than enforcement of the Compulsory School Attendance Act. For Godbout, educational progress had been contingent on the construction of a centralized bureaucratic system, whereas Duplessis focussed on the construction of buildings: the education fund was used to subsidize school boards primarily so that schools could be erected. In this sense, Duplessis'

law to ensure the progress of education probably had as much of an impact on the educational opportunities of children as did Godbout's compulsory schooling. However, the balance between partisanship and improved education that underlay the Duplessis legislation tipped in favour of the first motive, since the Union Nationale government dispensed the new public funds arbitrarily; after an initial spurt of enthusiasm for the policy of Duplessis, school trustees bitterly discovered that it was yet another form of centralism.

The legitimacy of the public authorities was threatened by parental demands regarding the material implications of democratic promises. The authorities were forced to choose between amending the application of the laws or removing certain families from their jurisdiction. Fear of having to spend too much tax money to guarantee the right to education frequently led officials to issue exemptions; added to this was the deeper fear of upsetting the balance of power between poor parents and the state. Similarly, the King government had to ward off heavy pressure for greater democratization of the family allowance program. Finally, the provincial government under Duplessis, when it replaced that of Godbout in the fall of 1944, countered with a vision of educational progress that restricted the right to a minimum education as well, but in a different way. In creating new discriminatory mechanisms, the three leaders helped to perpetuate socioeconomic hierarchies. The governments deprived hundreds of children of their rights: these children continued to work. In this light, the whole problem of non-enforcement takes on a new significance. Many historians have overlooked this active process of exclusion. A closer analysis of the exemptions, as this section seeks to show, reveals the limits of the governments' democratic commitments and of their determination to improve the quality of the work force.

Generally, political authorities evaded the economic problems that compelled families to send their children out to work. The federal authorities refused to admit that many families had no choice when it came to child labour, an attitude reflected in this extract from the popularized version of the family allowance regulation, *Speaking of Family Allowances*, which nimbly sidestepped the issue of child labour in the story of a model couple, the Archibalds: "It was pointed out that if a child . . . wanted to leave school in order to earn a wage or a salary, she would not get the allowance. (Mr. and Mrs. Archibald were a little amused at reading this as they looked at their week-old child! The idea of her prancing about earning her living seemed very remote.)"⁸⁴

Defining child labour such that certain tasks were denied the value of labour was another exclusionary mechanism. Certain occupations, insofar as they were "instructive," were acceptable in the eyes of family allowance officials. Thus the ideology of the educational and moral value of work, which had justified any type of child labour until the mid-nineteenth cen-

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tury, had simply narrowed its scope. The odd jobs children performed after school and on weekends to earn "pocket money" were acceptable, as were summer jobs. For instance, children could deliver newspapers or milk, run errands, cut grass, work as bootblacks or military cadets, or render "little services" in exchange for a small tip.⁸⁵ Moreover, the status of the entire part-time sector remained unclear throughout the period. Civil servants in charge of family allowances also avoided talking about "salary," to separate earnings from these acceptable jobs and wages for adult labour. It was even easier to turn a blind eye to the unpaid work performed by children. Similarly, the Industrial and Commercial Establishments Act excluded all "family shops that employ no outside workers, unless these shops are classified as dangerous, unhealthy, or uncomfortable." These semantic exercises theoretically excluded large sectors of child labour from the formal economy. Feminist literature has shown how such fictions obscure large sections of the work force in the calculation of national figures.⁸⁶

The state's greater intransigence with regard to industrial and commercial work reflected the fact that child labour in these sectors particularly incensed public opinion and pressure groups. The physical and moral vulnerability of children who performed difficult work aroused the pity of middle-class adults. In reformist imagery, the impersonal nature of labour relations in non-family businesses seemingly added to the stigma.⁸⁷ Moreover, these young workers were much more visible than children who worked at home or on farms. Governments were also sensitive to the pressure of workers' associations, which denounced industrial child labour because young workers competed with their members for jobs. In 1939, for instance, the *Coopération forestière d'accident du travail de Ste-Angèle-de-Mérici* invited inspectors to make a surprise visit to a miller. "He just has to look around and he will find many young people fourteen years old or even younger, and these employees are taking jobs away from men who are out of work."

In reality, the enforcement of child labour laws left off at the demand of market forces. Strictly prohibiting work for children under the age of fourteen, and limiting it for fourteen and fifteen year olds in sectors where there was a labour shortage, would have required the state to invest heavily in mothers' allowances, day care, or household help for the mothers of large families.

For children under fourteen years of age, this compliance with market forces was never more obvious than in the exemptions provided in the Compulsory School Attendance Act. In Montreal the new legislation was strictly implemented. In September 1943, the priests in charge of enumerating children under the jurisdiction of the Montreal Catholic School Commission (MCSC) found that 441 school-age children were working illegally outside the home; 18 of them were under thirteen years of age, 60 were thirteen, and 358 were fourteen. Legal exemptions were provided for children who had finished junior high school (Grade 7), but the rest had to go to school. Children who turned fourteen during the school year could apply for a permit to work outside the home during classroom hours, but these were much

more difficult to secure than permits to work at home. In principle, truant officers were only supposed to issue them to children with learning difficulties and children from the very poorest families.⁸⁸ The MCSC's school census in fall 1943 had revealed 420 girls and 56 boys of school age working illegally at home; the truant officers ordered them to return to school or apply for a permit. Parents automatically obtained these exemptions. Thus, the Montreal Protestant School Board authorized a thirteen-year-old child in Grade 6 to stay at home to help her father, a driver, because her mother had left home, and the MCSC issued a permit to a twelve-year-old girl from a family of nine children, whose father was a milkman, so that she could help her mother.⁸⁹ In many other cases, the truant officers did not enforce the law to the letter. Firstly, work permits were used to weed "slow" children under fourteen out of the school system; secondly, truant officers issued permits to work outside the home to poor children under fourteen, even though this was explicitly prohibited in the *Instructions concernant la loi de fréquentation scolaire obligatoire*.⁹⁰

Even the superintendent misused exemptions for families who needed their children on the farm or at home. He systematically granted extensions beyond the six-month legal limit, subdued overzealous truant officers and inspectors, and failed to establish legal mechanisms for instituting proceedings against delinquent parents or employers. Taking cover behind the rhetoric of respect for parents through gradual enforcement, the superintendent let disadvantaged parents vanish into the world of non-enforcement. This attitude was reflected in a changing technocratic vocabulary: in the roll books and truant officers' reports, "poverty" was moved from the category of "illegal absences" to "legal absences." It was this laxity that, together, the Congrès de l'Union des cultivateurs catholiques, the Cercles des fermières, and the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, were trying to stop when they enjoined the government to "publicize and enforce in rural areas the provincial law on compulsory school attendance until the age of fourteen."⁹¹

The limits of the provincial government's intentions also appear in the history of the enforcement of the Industrial and Commercial Establishments Act. Children under fourteen managed to work in companies covered by the law because the certification system for fourteen and fifteen year olds contained loopholes that were exploited by younger workers and employers. Certain employers managed to get around the law by knowingly hiding their illegal employees from work inspectors. At J.A.M. Coté Ltée in St-Hyacinthe, during a visit by M. Rivest, a Department of Labour inspector, "they took care to hide [a thirteen-year-old worker], and the young office girl also hid one or more time cards. . . . [The] manager . . . told me that he had been warned by telephone and that they had been careful to hide anything compromising before I arrived."⁹² Children were quick to falsify their birth certificates, present an older brother or sister's permit, or hide from inspectors to protect themselves. When she went to work in the Vitre Street munitions factory in Montreal during the Second World War, Mlle Mercier, who was thirteen but "looked old," said that she was sixteen years old.⁹³ Parents and children knew that they could count on the tacit co-operation of

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delinquent employers. Mme Méthot, for instance, was ten years old when she started working at Raymond confectioneries in Montreal in the 1940s. The business hired children after school and on Saturdays to hull strawberries. She too "looked older than her age." She knew that a certificate was required, but that in some places they did not ask for one.⁹⁴ In all, the Department of Labour never found more than twenty-five working children under the age of fourteen in each of the years under study.⁹⁵ Contemporary observers were quick to blame these oversights on the fact that money was short, there were not enough inspectors, and they had other duties to perform, such as inspecting plans and reviewing security measures.

In the case of the Compulsory School Attendance Act, short staffing was no excuse. An army of school board secretary-treasurers was available at little cost to become new "truant officers." Trustees were more than happy to offer the services of the secretary-treasurers, because, this way, they could supervise the main agents of a law whose centralizing implications they feared.⁹⁶ The post was usually poorly paid, and the position was seldom their only source of income, so it often happened that secretary-treasurers did not enforce the law systematically. But they were often the most educated individuals in their village or *rang*, as they were hired to take the minutes of board meetings. In addition, they were not necessarily among the richest members of their community, and their interest in maintaining or lowering the level of taxation may not have been as high as that of many trustees. Be that as it may, many secretary-treasurers who became truant officers fervently hoped to improve the educational prospects in their area. They demanded more coercive means to impose the new standards, and the superintendent's responses, calculated to dampen their ardour, provide a unique testament to the government's real intentions.⁹⁷ Although they were given huge prerogatives, the truant officers were ill-equipped to fill their role. Godbout had saddled them with most of the problems stemming from the democratic nature of the law without helping in any way to resolve them. "A vast field," the superintendent had announced in 1943, "lies before the conscientious truant officer who wants to improve the lot of children and the men of tomorrow." If an officer worked diligently, this modern-day hero "would save young people from ignorance."⁹⁸ In reality, to achieve these goals, school boards had to counter many messages coming from the central authorities and had to be able to afford the cost of the promotion of school attendance.

Unwilling to spend the material resources necessary to implement the law, the provincial Department of Public Instruction welcomed the federal family allowances of the summer of 1945 with relief. These payments would help families meet their new obligations. But the Family Allowances Office could only do so much to overcome provincial laxity; it had to submit to the verdict of truant officers and suspend bonuses only if the officers deemed that the families in question did not have to rely on child labour. While not the only factor, the termination of payments apparently had a significant effect in these cases. Between 1949 and 1960, when these figures are available, between 1000 and 2000 children in the province lost family allowance

benefits each year because they stopped attending school; each year, an equivalent number of children recovered the benefits by returning to the classroom.⁹⁹

This exclusion from state protection was even more blatant in the case of children aged fourteen and up. The provincial government had already expressed reservations when the Compulsory School Attendance Act was promulgated. Asked for more details by the Victoriaville School Board, which wanted to know "what boys and girls between fourteen and sixteen years old will do if they are required to work in factories," the department secretary replied that "we truly hope that most of these children will continue to attend school without being forced to do so. Also, it should be kept in mind that the proposed legislation can always be amended for the good of society."¹⁰⁰ In some cases, family allowances meant that a family no longer had to rely on the economic contribution of a child under the age of fourteen, but for fourteen and fifteen year olds suspension of the allowances for paid work had little effect. The contribution of these children could easily exceed the value of the monthly allowances of \$8 that parents received if their fourteen- and fifteen-year-old children did not work. Moreover, the allowances quickly declined in actual value once the fear of a postwar economic crisis died down. So it is not surprising that the removal of allowances did not lead to the withdrawal of children from the labour market. The amount that was restored after a child stopped working was in fact minimal. Of the 10 000 or more children in Quebec whose allowances were suspended each year by the Quebec Family Allowances Office, never more than 7000 recovered the payments by quitting their jobs.

For the federal government as well as the provincial Department of Public Instruction and the Department of Labour, immediate economic objectives overrode democratic intentions. Rigid standards meant that the very families who desperately needed extra income lost the allowance benefits. These families were doubly damned: the parents were poorly paid and the children were excluded from state protection. As a last resort, the civil servants reported these cases to private charitable organizations. Such recourse makes it necessary to adjust liberal histories of a gradual transition from private charity to the welfare state.¹⁰¹ Only families who could afford to meet the criteria of individual responsibility and the ideal of a single male breadwinner were the recipients of state generosity. The family allowance administrators often overlooked the people who failed to live up to the proper values by condemning the resource-pooling method of "imperfect" families.¹⁰²

The war brought the administrative weaknesses into even sharper relief, despite the improved regulation of industrial and commercial establishments. "Although there are no precise statistics on this subject, [the Department of Labour estimated that] 4000 to 5000 certificates were refused to children under the age of fourteen," even when parents, children, employers, prominent citizens, and priests wrote to the minister to request exceptions to the rule.¹⁰³ But the system of certificates, designed to curtail the work of fourteen and fifteen year olds, was futile in the face of the sky-

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rocketing demand for child labour. From the beginning of the program in 1919 until 1932, approximately 2000 fourteen- and fifteen-year-old Québécois had been issued certificates each year; thereafter, the annual number of certificates had waned even though commercial establishments had been included under the law in 1934. The surplus of adult factory workers during the Depression had probably been responsible for the decrease. But from 1940 onwards, the number of certificates issued annually escalated, reaching a peak of more than 20 000 during each of the last three years of the war; afterwards, it tapered off and stabilized at approximately 10 000 in 1950. These figures represented respectively 15 percent and 7 percent of all children in this age group in Quebec.¹⁰⁴ In Montreal, the Notre-Dame Street office where the children came to get their permits was swamped.¹⁰⁵ In 1942, the Ligue ouvrière catholique discovered a small Quebec town where "in eight local industries, there were 362 young boys working both night and day, including 55 thirteen year olds, 110 fourteen year olds, and 197 fifteen year olds. Before the war, there were no more than 30 boys aged fifteen working in these factories." Companies did everything in their power to recruit young workers. In December 1942, the JOC complained that, "in many places, [companies] offer these youngsters an attractive salary. In certain cities, they openly feed propaganda to school children to entice them into the factory. That's how they managed in one fell swoop last May to empty a Grade 9 class of boys in a small industrial town." In Montreal too, the higher grades were empty. The MCSC registered a sharp drop in attendance in the fall of 1942, at which point "there [were] approximately 5000 fewer children than last year."¹⁰⁶ Thus the goal of educating the work force retreated before immediate labour requirements. By issuing an enormous number of permits, the provincial government was condoning these business practices. The minister, Edgar Rochette, frankly admitted that the war had led to less stringent control of the juvenile work force.¹⁰⁷

The same submission to employers' demands held true for after-school jobs. Whether or not this sort of work was condemned often depended on economic conditions. In 1945, Deputy Minister of Labour Gérard Tremblay clearly concerned about the economic effects of the law at a time when labourers were at a premium, toned down the departmental directives on this type of work, explaining that "it would be difficult enough to take procedures [against the labour of young boys under fourteen years of age as newsboys or pin setters] when labourers are in very short supply and most boys between the ages of sixteen and eighteen are working in industry or commerce."¹⁰⁸

The warnings of Montreal reformers, civil servants, and the church were not enough to shake this passivity. Senior public servants were content to promise that regulations would be enforced more stringently after the war.¹⁰⁹ They also objected to children under sixteen being under the jurisdiction of the federal body in charge of conscripting the wartime labour force, the National Selective Service.¹¹⁰ After the war, the "certificate of age and education" became an instrument for the vocational guidance and protection of young workers.¹¹¹ This legislative and administrative tightening

up was all the more welcome because young workers were once again competing with adults. Indeed, the labour unions pressured the minister of labour to make the Industrial and Commercial Establishments Act more strict and, in doing so, they mingled corporatist and educational arguments. In November 1946, for instance, the secretary of the Conseil fédéré of the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada of Quebec and Lévis complained that "boys aged fourteen to sixteen are now living on the streets or working in industrial or commercial establishments when . . . they should be in school. We contend that the law is poorly enforced and that sixteen-year-old boys should not be allowed to work, given that the war is over and unemployment is rife in Quebec."¹¹²

Children continued to provide labour for such cheaply paid positions as delivery boy, errand boy, or bellhop, where adult competition did not exist. According to the Quebec minister of labour, prohibiting this would have been tantamount to giving more tolerant provinces a competitive edge.¹¹³ Beside these child labour ghettos in industry and commerce, there were still vast sectors of the work force to which child labour conventions did not apply, including farms, private homes, and family businesses. The child labour laws were thus part of a set of laws (minimum wage, industrial accident, and collective agreement legislation) segregating large sections of the economy that operated at a different rhythm. These enterprises could only exist outside the formal economy; a social agreement that few pressure groups disputed kept the regulatory state out.¹¹⁴ In short, the process of excluding many children from state protection helped to perpetuate several different categories of childhood even after children had been granted universal rights.

In contrast to the areas of weak regulation, there were sectors that were stringently enforced. These are worth discussing in order to pinpoint the main thrust of social policy. Once the Compulsory School Attendance Act was passed, the objectives that were best met had to do either with the administrative construction of a modern welfare state or with the control of Montreal delinquents. Firstly, Adélar Godbout's hopes to centralize and improve the management of educational affairs in Quebec had left teachers with a rationalized record-keeping system for absences and grades. In addition, by lightening their workload and increasing their pay, the superintendent of public instruction considerably improved the working conditions of school inspectors, true agents of the central state, who were situated throughout the province. At the end of this information-gathering chain, the Department of Public Instruction set up a statistical research department that broadened the knowledge base on the extent and causes of truancy. Secondly, while the public authorities were trying to minimize their democratic commitment with regard to young workers, they firmly enforced those aspects of the law that applied to urban social control. In Montreal, with the superintendent's approval, the Catholic School Commission, the Protestant School Board, and the juvenile delinquents court skirted the original meaning of the punitive clauses of the Compulsory School Attendance Act to strengthen their hold on Montreal delinquents. The law provided for

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fines or proceedings against remiss parents or employers, but it would seem that no employers and very few parents were affected by punitive dispositions. However, approximately one hundred children encountered the harshness of the state when they appeared in the Montreal juvenile delinquents court. For the most part, these were children whose behaviour threatened the authority of school principals or whose absence from school gave social workers a pretext to testify against what they considered an unsuitable family situation. For the dozens of delinquents who were sent to reform schools, work was the cure of choice. Ironically, a law that was supposed to curb child labour thereby thrust many children into the working world at a young age.

How did the juvenile workers view their own situation? Most of them knew that they were meeting the economic needs of their families. In 1941, the JOC asked 700 children aged sixteen and under why they had quit school. Half of the boys and 10 percent of the girls replied, "my family needed me"; 61 percent of the girls had dropped out because "my mother needed me."¹¹⁵ Most of these children regretted quitting but placed the needs of their families above their own desire to stay in school. Unravelling their motivations, the JOC observed that most of them were sorry to discontinue their schooling. Some of them had not dropped out; they were working to help pay for school.¹¹⁶ These children did not quit school on impulse, even less for pleasure, but simply of necessity, reported teacher Joseph Poulin after an investigation in a Montreal working-class neighbourhood where he had worked for twenty years.¹¹⁷ Many children seemed to accept their responsibilities, like the fifteen-year-old girl "who [was] ready to make a sacrifice for her parents and her brothers and sisters" or another child "who want[ed] to work to help her mother."¹¹⁸ At the opposite extreme, some children dropped out even though their parents did not ask or want them to; some Montreal children even appeared in court at the request of their parents who were, after all, the first truant officers.

Sharing economic responsibilities within the family could thus create tension between adults and children. A desire for money and independence prompted some children to work in secret, as their mothers sometimes found out in court.¹¹⁹ Tension could also arise when children were compelled to work against their will. They did not understand parental demands, like the thirteen-year-old boy who wished that he only had to work after school for his sick mother. Other children refused to hand over any of their earnings to their mothers, preferring to use the money for treats, horse rides, or, in the words of one twelve-year-old boy whose father was unemployed, "to forget."¹²⁰

Many children, especially boys, showed a strong desire to work. As a rule, these children disliked school and wanted to quit or felt that their education was finished.¹²¹ The people who had promised that school would be

so interesting that no one would want to miss it failed in this regard. Thus the young newspaper boys of Quebec showed a "real aversion for anything that reminded them of school."¹²² Of boys interviewed by the JOC in 1942, 28 percent were "fed up with school" and 1.5 percent did not get along with the teacher; for girls, the proportions were only 6 percent and 0.5 percent respectively. Furthermore, they wanted to "earn money."¹²³ The independence, freedom, and maturity associated with work attracted many a young worker. Eagerness to help out a father or work with him in the factory showed through in testimony at the social welfare court; civil servants at the Family Allowances Office met a girl who worked in a factory because she thought that she should be doing something useful and had asked her mother for permission.¹²⁴ Juvenile work also offered an alluring freedom of movement and time, and rare was the child who went back to school after a taste of this freedom.¹²⁵ A variant of this impatience to assume a place in society emerged during the war, when children showed a "true longing for participatory capitalism."¹²⁶ But for girls who left school to help their mothers, work did not necessarily imply freedom. Helping their mothers could be disheartening, and some turned to marriage as a quick way out. Thus an experience as ambivalent as that of the boys lay in store for them, according to sociologist Diana Gittins:

More is expected from daughters in family terms (not in terms of achievement of independence) throughout their lives. This may well be one reason why many women try to break free of these often heavy emotional and caring demands put on them by parents, and seek what they perceive to be independence by starting their own families and thus perpetuating the same cycle of problems and demands.¹²⁷

So although most children were driven into the labour market by similar family circumstances, their individual perceptions varied. Only children who disliked school, longed for independence and maturity, wanted to help their parents, or hoped to improve their material circumstances found temporary satisfaction, even though the wages for child labour offered a paltry independence.

Today children in Quebec are less likely to work at a young age than their parents or grandparents were, but this transformation was neither linear nor universal. The reasons have as much to do with economic and demographic changes as with the interplay of political forces, in which the families of young workers were instrumental. Thanks to the demands of poor families, legislative objectives related to the construction of the state or designed to help entrepreneurs did not entirely eclipse the democratic imperatives of disadvantaged groups. The Compulsory School Attendance Act and the Family Allowances Act ushered in a new era of universal rights for children, upsetting the political rules surrounding the economic status of children. The 1940s and 1950s saw the rise of new kinds of popular pressure and new ways of responding to it—or ignoring it—on the part of the public authorities.

1. Victrice Lessard, "L'enseignement obligatoire dans la province de Québec de 1875 à 1943" (PhD thesis, University of Ottawa, 1962); Louis-Phillipe Audet, *Histoire de l'enseignement au Québec*, vol. 2 (Montreal, 1971). For a more recent and more discerning explanation of divergences within the elites, see Ruby Heap, "L'Église, l'État et l'enseignement primaire catholique au Québec, 1897-1920" (PhD thesis, Université de Montréal, 1987), and "Urbanisation et éducation: la centralisation scolaire à Montréal au début de XXe siècle," *Communications historiques/Historical Papers* (1985): 132-55.
2. Neil Sutherland, *Children in English Canadian Society: Framing the Twentieth Century Consensus* (Toronto, 1976); P.T. Rooke and R.L. Schnell, *Discarding the Asylum: From Child Rescue to the Welfare State in Canada, 1800-1950* (Boston, 1983); Tamara Hareven, "An Ambiguous Alliance: Some Aspects of American Influences on Canadian Social Welfare," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 3 (1969); Susan E. Houston, "Social Reform and Education: The Issue of Compulsory Schooling, Toronto, 1851-1871" in *Egerton Ryerson and his Time*, ed. Neil McDonald and Alf Chaiton (Toronto, 1978), 254-76; Jeffrey S. Leon, "New and Old Themes in Canadian Juvenile Justice: The Origins of Delinquency Legislation and the Prospects for Recognition of Children's Rights" in *Children's Rights: Legal and Educational Issues*, ed. Heather Berkeley et al. (Toronto, 1978), 35-58.
3. Alison Prentice, *The School Promoters: Education and Social Class in Mid-Nineteenth Century Upper Canada* (Toronto, 1977); Michel Pelletier and Yves Vaillancourt, *Les politiques sociales et les travailleurs*, cahier 1, *Les années 1900 à 1929*, cahier 2, *Les années 1930* (Montreal, 1975).
4. Jacques Rouillard, *Les travailleurs du coton au Québec, 1900-1915* (Montreal, 1974), and *Les syndicals nationaux au Québec de 1900 à 1930* (Quebec, 1979); Fernand Harvey, *Révolution industrielle et travailleurs: Une enquête sur les rapports entre le capital et le travail au Québec à la fin du 19e siècle* (Montreal, 1978); Terry Copp, *Classe ouvrière et pauvreté: Les conditions de vie des travailleurs montréalais, 1897-1929* (Montreal, 1978); Thérèse Hamel, "L'obligation scolaire au Québec: lieu et enjeu de la lutte des classes" (PhD thesis, Paris V., René Descartes, 1981).
5. Horace Miner, *Saint-Denis: A French-Canadian Parish* (Chicago, 1963); Everett Hughes, *French Canada in Transition* (Chicago, 1943); Gérald Fortin, "Socio-cultural Changes in an Agricultural Parish" in *French-Canadian Society*, vol. 1, ed. Marcel Rioux and Yves Martin (Toronto, 1964), 86-105; Emily Nett, "Canadian Families in Social-Historical Perspectives," *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 6 (1981): 39-48.
6. Rebecca Coulter, "The Working Young of Edmonton, 1921-1931" in *Childhood and Family in Canadian History*, ed. Joy Parr (Toronto, 1982), 143-59; Gail Cuthbert Brandt, "Weaving it Together: Life Cycle and the Industrial Experience of Female Cotton Workers in Quebec, 1910-1950," *Labour/Le travailleur* 8/9 (1981): 113-26; Ian Davey, "The Rhythm of Work and the Rhythm of School" in *Egerton Ryerson*, 221-53; Michael Katz and Ian Davey, "Youth and Early Industrialization in a Canadian City" in *Turning Points: Historical and Sociological Essays on the Family*, ed. J. Demos and S.S. Boocock (Chicago, 1978), 81-119; and Bruno Ramirez, "Montreal's Italians and the Socioeconomy of Settlement: Some Historical Hypotheses," *Revue d'histoire urbaine/Urban History Review* 10 (1981): 39-48. For a classic article on twentieth-century New England, Tamara Hareven, "Family Time and Industrial Time: Family and Works in a Planned Corporation Town,

- 1900-1924" in *Family and Kin in Urban Communities: 1700-1930*, ed. Tamara Hareven (New York, 1977), 164-86.
7. We should, however, mention Joy Parr, *Labouring Children: British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada, 1869-1924* (London, 1974); Chad Gaffield, "Schooling, the Economy, and Rural Society in Nineteenth Century Ontario" in *Childhood and Family*, 69-92; Nicole Thivierge et al., "Les transformations de la participation des femmes à la pêche cotière" (paper presented at the Institut d'histoire de l'Amérique française congress, 1984); and John Bullen, "Hidden Workers: Child Labour and the Family Economy in late Nineteenth-Century Urban Ontario," *Labour/Le travail* 18 (1986): 163-88.
 8. Kenneth Finegold and Theda Skocpol, "State, Party and Industry: From Business Recovery to the Wagner Act in America's New Deal" in *State Making and Social Movements: Essays in History and Theory*, ed. C. Bright and S. Harding (Ann Arbor, 1984), 152-92; Leo Panitch, "The Role and Nature of the Canadian State: 1930-1980" in *The Canadian State: Political Economy and Political Power*, ed. Leo Panitch (Toronto, 1977), 3-28; and James Struthers, *No Fault of their Own: Unemployment and Canadian Welfare State, 1924-41* (Toronto, 1987).
 9. Jane Lewis, *The Politics of Motherhood: Child and Maternal Welfare in England, 1900-1939* (London, 1980).
 10. Philip Corrigan and Bruce Curtis, "Education, Inspection, and State Formation: A Preliminary Statement," *Communications historiques/Historical Papers* (1985): 156-71; Bruce Curtis, *Building the Educational State: Canada West, 1836-1871* (London, 1988); J.D. Wilson, "Some Observations on Recent Trends in Canadian Educational History" in *An Imperfect Past*, ed. J.D. Wilson (Vancouver, 1984), 7-29.
 11. Louise Tilly and Myriam Cohen, "Does the Family Have a History? A Review of Theory and Practice in Family History," *Social Science History* 6 (1982): 131-79; Linda Gordon, "Family Violence as History and Politics," *Radical American* 21, 4 (Sept. 1988): 21-32. At a basic level of influence, showing how families used an institution in a way the state had not anticipated, see Bettina Bradbury, "The Fragmented Family: Family Strategies in the Face of Death, Illness, and Poverty, Montreal, 1860-1885" in *Childhood and Family*, 109-28.
 12. Paul Thompson, "The War with Adults," *Oral History* 3 (1975); Stephen Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels? An Oral History of Working-Class Childhood and Youth 1889-1939* (Oxford, 1981); Tilly and Cohen, "Does the Family Have a History?"
 13. *Recensement du Canada, 1951*, vol. 4, table 3, 3-1-3-15.
 14. For children living in the country and on farms, see *Recensement du Canada, 1941*, vol. 2, table 21; *Recensement du Canada, 1951*, vol. 1, table 21.
 15. *Recensement du Canada, 1941*, vol. 7, table 3, 12-35; *Recensement du Canada, 1951*, vol. 4, table 3, 3-1-3-15.
 16. Quebec, département de l'Instruction Publique, *Instructions concernant la loi de fréquentation scolaire obligatoire* (Quebec, 1943), 12; "Loi concernant la fréquentation scolaire obligatoire," *Statuts du Québec*, 1943, 7 Geo. VI, c. 13 (hereafter LCFSO). See also "Loi concernant la gratuité de l'enseignement et des livres de classe dans certaines écoles publiques," 1944, 8 Geo. VI.
 17. *Rapport annuel du ministère du Travail du Québec, 1930-1931*, 67 (hereafter RAMTQ). See also Gérard Tremblay, deputy minister of labour, to Filteau, secretary of the département de l'Instruction publique, 26 Nov. 1943, Archives nationales du Québec à Québec (hereafter ANQQ), Ministère du Travail, E24, 222, A-8, Marie-Gérin Lajoie, for whom this measure "makes up here for compulsory attendance," *La Bonne Parole* 8 (1920): 6. Tremblay to Victor Doré, Superintendent of Public Education, 30 Oct. 1943, ANQQ, E24, 222, A-8.
 18. Wendy Johnston, "Keeping the Children in School: The Response of the Montreal Catholic School Commission to the Depression of the 1930s," *Communications historiques/Historical Papers* (1984): 193-217.
 19. Brooke Claxton, *Débats de la Chambre des communes, 1944* (hereafter *Débats*), 5593; "Les allocations familiales: Pour le bien du Canada," advertisement published in *La Terre de chez nous*, 20 June 1945.
 20. "Family Allowances Act," *Statutes of Canada, 1944-45*, 8 Geo. VI, c. 40, and Dominique Jean, "Les parents québécois et l'État canadien au début du programme des allocations familiales, 1945-1955," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* (hereafter RHAF) 40 (1986): 73-95.
 21. R.A. Fournier, head of the "Juvenile Labour" section, to Lionel Lafrance, Director of the Quebec Regional Office of Family Allowances, 12 Feb. 1949, Archives du bureau régional des allocations familiales du Québec (hereafter ABRQ), 7-6, "Travail," vol. 1.
 22. "Fréquentation scolaire obligatoire?" *Le Monde ouvrier*, 20 March 1943, 1; Alain Noël, "L'après guerre au Canada: politiques keynésiennes ou nouvelles formes de régulations?" (first draft, Colloque GRETSE/AEP, Université de Montréal, 1987).
 23. "Une loi progressive de l'hon. Godbout: l'instruction pour tous," *Le Monde ouvrier*, 20 Nov. 1943, 4.
 24. "Le Conseil législatif adopte la loi de l'instruction obligatoire," *Le Monde ouvrier*, 22 May 1943, 1.
 25. Brigitte Kitchen, "Wartime and Social Reform: The Introduction of Family Allowances," *Revue canadienne d'éducation en service social* 7 (1976): 29-54. Frank Breul, "The Genesis of Family Allowances in Canada," *Social Service Review* 27 (1953): 264-80.
 26. *Débats*, 1944, 5740, 5528, 5529, 5630.
 27. *Débats*, 1944, 27 July 1944, quoted by A.M. Willms, "Setting Up Family Allowances, 1944-45" (MA thesis, Carleton University, 1962), 14.
 28. Jeunesse ouvrière catholique (hereafter JOC), "Le problème des jeunes qui ne fréquentent plus l'école," *École sociale populaire* 351 (April 1943): 30.
 29. James Douglas Thwaites, "The Origins and the Development of the 'Fédération des commissions scolaires catholiques du Québec,' 1936-1963" (PhD thesis, Université Laval, 1975). See also Jean-Pierre Kesteman, *Histoire du syndicalisme agricole au Québec, UCC-UIPA 1924-1984* (Montreal, 1984), 174.
 30. Thérèse Casgrain, *Une femme chez les hommes* (Montreal, 1971), 124; *Historique du Congrès libéral de 1938, tenu à Québec les 10 et 11 juin*, 42. La Ligue des droits de la femme spoke in favour of compulsory school attendance at its April 1941 conference. National Archives of Canada (hereafter NAC), Thérèse Casgrain papers, MG32, C25, vol. 9, press clippings.
 31. Letter from the Archbishop of Montreal, Joseph Charbonneau, to the General Chaplain of the JOC, R.P. Villeneuve, o.m.i., 27 Oct. 1941, published in *Le Devoir*, 31 Oct. 1941, on the occasion of "Semaine du service domestique." Feminist thought on the education of poor girls deserves further attention.
 32. Mme Cora Casselman, *Débats*, 1944, 5554 recalled the demands of the Association canadienne des ouvrières du progrès social. See also Rob Watts, "Family Allowances in Canada and Australia 1940-1945: A Comparative Critical Case Study," *Journal of Social Policy* 16 (1987):

- 19-48. For a British parallel, see Jane Lewis, "The English Movement for Family Allowances, 1917-1945," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 22 (1978): 441-44. In Quebec, feminists had to fight harder than elsewhere to have the cheque paid to mothers: Casgrain, *Une femme*, 170-74. See also Collectif Clio, *L'histoire des femmes au Québec depuis quatre siècles* (Montreal, 1982), 373-76; Simone Monet-Chartrand, *Ma vie comme rivière*, vol. 1, 1939-1949 (Montreal, 1982), 256-58.
33. Godbout used the expression during the 1944 electoral campaign. Jean-Guy Genest, "Vie et oeuvre d'Adélar Godbout, 1892-1956" (PhD thesis, Université Laval, 1987). Since the beginning of the twentieth century, Quebec employers had not necessarily objected to compulsory schooling, but a study of their position remains to be done. For employers concerned with the quality of the work force, see Heap, "Urbanisation et éducation," 138; Lessard, "L'enseignement obligatoire," 54-55; Audet, *Histoire de l'enseignement*, 253, 263; Gilbert A. Latour, Montreal Chamber of Commerce, 4 June 1942, ANQQ, département de l'Instruction publique, E-13, C.r., 1942-294, box 2235. The Federation of Chambers of Commerce held a conference on compulsory school attendance in the fall of 1942, and half of them endorsed the principle: Genest, "Vie et oeuvre," 492. School Inspector J.-Ed. Boily reported that the Saguenay Chambers of Commerce held "Semaines de l'éducation" in 1946-47. *Rapport annuel du Surintendant de l'Instruction publique, 1946-1947*, 98-99 (hereafter RASIP). From this perspective, Thérèse Hamel's vision of the employers' interests seems simplistic: "Obligation scolaire et travail des enfants au Québec: 1900-1950," *RHAF* 38 (1984): 58.
34. Doug Owram, *The Government Generation: Canadian Intellectuals and the State, 1900-1945* (Toronto, 1986), 311, 314; Dennis Guest, "World War II and the Welfare State in Canada" in *The Benevolent State: The Growth of Welfare in Canada*, ed. Allan Moscovitch and Jim Albert (Toronto, 1986), 217.
35. Valère Massicotte, "La Délinquance juvénile et la guerre," *L'Oeuvre des Tracts* 298 (April 1944): 11.
36. See, for example, département de l'Instruction publique, *Instructions* 3-4; Procès-verbal du Comité catholique de l'Instruction publique (hereafter PVCCIP), 6 Nov. 1942, 24; *ibid.*, 2 Dec. 1942, 21; *ibid.*, 17 Dec. 1942, 5. On the Godbout government's vision of the state, see B.L. Vigod, "History According to the Boucher Report: Some Reflections on the State and Social Welfare in Quebec before the Quiet Revolution" in *The Benevolent State*, 182-83.
37. See, for example, Edmond Turcotte, "L'attitude du Dr Albiny Paquette," *Le Canada*, 1 May 1943, 4.
38. Hamel, "L'obligation scolaire," 266, 316.
39. Jean Gélinas to the ministère du Travail, March 1955, ANQQ, E24, 312, A-8. He enclosed a letter from the mayor and priest. Letter from the chaplain of Granby, 8 July 1940, ANQQ, E24, 180, A-8.
40. Mme O. Lussier to the office of the government of Quebec, June 1943, ANQQ, E24, 222; Tancrede Labbé, ministre d'État, for a family, to O'Connell Maher, 28 Aug. 1947, ANQQ, E24, 278; Jules Biron, attorney, for a family, to Barrette, 2 Aug. 1950, ANQQ, E24, 302.
41. Émilie Lacroix, "Le service domestique et la désertion des campagnes," *Le Devoir*, 5 Nov. 1941. We should mention that 28 percent of them started working at the age of 13, 14, or 15; 24 percent at 16; 13 percent at 17 or 18; and the rest when they were older.
42. George V. Haythorne and Leonard C. Marsh, *Land and Labour: A Social Survey of Agricultural Farm Labour Market in Central Canada* (Montreal, 1941), 211-12.
43. Émilie Lacroix, "Le service domestique. . .," 5 Nov. 1941. Twenty-eight percent of them started working under the age of 16. However, those who came from Gaspésie, for instance, had most commonly left at the age of 16.
44. Bernard Pinard, deputy of Drummond, to Quimper, 16 June 1955, ANQQ, E24, A-8.
45. Archives de la Cour du bien-être social, Centre de préarchivage judiciaire de Montréal (hereafter ACBES), 46-1830, 47-179. 30 April 1943, ANQQ, E24, 209, A-8; June 1943, E24, 222, A-8.
46. Bernard Pinard, deputy of Drummond, to Quimper, 16 June 1955, ANQQ, E24, A-8.
47. Claire Langlois, "L'Oeuvre des petits vendeurs de journaux et sa clientèle" (MA thesis, Université Laval, 1952), 108.
48. ACBES, 44-7659.
49. Ten Families Surveys, April 1947, no. 7, ABRQ, 40-20, vol. 1.
50. JOC, "Le problème," 351.
51. 18 Nov. 1940, in ANQQ, E24, 164, A-8.
52. *Ibid.*
53. Francine Barry, *Le travail de la femme au Québec: L'évolution de 1940 à 1970* (Sillery, 1977), 77.
54. Reported by Jacqueline Sirois, *Le Devoir*, 1 June 1942.
55. For statistics on women's labour, see Geneviève Auger and Raymonde Lamothe, *De la poêle à frire à la ligne de feu: La vie quotidienne des Québécoises pendant la guerre '39-'45* (Montreal, 1981), 160. For a description of the program, its implementation in Quebec and Ontario, and postwar pressure to preserve day care, see Ruth Roach Pierson, "They're Still Women After All": *The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood* (Toronto, 1986), 50-60, and Collectif Clio, *L'histoire*, 372-73.
56. Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd have drawn attention to this situation in *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture* (New York, 1956), 25-38.
57. Katharine Dupré and Dorothy Wolfe, *Child Workers in America* (New York, 1937), 162. M.O., from Drummondville, to the Minister of Labour, 10 Feb. 1944, ANQQ, E24, 222, A-8.
58. Lafrance to Curry, 22 July 1954, ABRQ, 7-6, vol. 2. Beaulac to Tremblay, 27 Aug. 1954, and Tremblay's reply, 30 Aug. 1954, ANQQ, E24, 312, A-8.
59. Horace Miner, *St-Denis*, 258-60, 267-68; Haythorne and Marsh, *Land and Labour*, 234.
60. JOC, "Le problème."
61. Public opinion surveys had already indicated this: according to a survey conducted by *Le Jour* in 1939, 90 percent of the electorate was in favour of compulsory school attendance: Victrice Lessard, "L'enseignement obligatoire," 202. The Canadian Institute of Public Opinion also revealed phenomenal approval of the family allowance program throughout the first decade of its existence: Canadian Institute of Public Opinion, "Gallup Poll of Canada. 90 p.c. in Canada in Favor of Family Allowances," *Toronto Star*, 12 March 1955.
62. On increased employer demands and benefits in times of crisis, see Delphine Périard, "Fréquentation scolaire en regard du milieu familial des parents" (MA thesis, Université de Montréal, 1952), 39-40; RASIP, 1945-46, 160; Marc-Adélar Tremblay, Gérald Fortin, and Marc Laplante, *Les comportements économiques de la famille salariée du Québec* (Quebec, 1964), 223. This survey was conducted in 1959, which is later than the period under study. For transformations in the nature of work, see Gérald Fortin, "Socio-cultural Changes," 105. For aspirations to upward social mobility, RASIP, 1949-1950, 209, and Périard. JOC, "Le problème," 30.

63. Two letters of complaint are eloquent on this subject: Mme M. to J. O'Connell Maher, assistant deputy minister, 27 July 1942, ANQQ, E24, 209, A-8, and an undated anonymous letter received in July 1942, *ibid.*
64. Thérèse Hamel has clearly described some of these variations in "L'obligation scolaire au Québec."
65. ACBES, 43-5930, 47-224.
66. The JOC had been requesting such associations since 1942, on the model of Canada West and Ontario: "Le problème," 1931. *RASIP*, 1946-1947, 81, 87, 298; *RASIP*, 1947-1948, 14, 72; *RASIP*, 1949, 1950, 106-8, 209.
67. NAC, Department of National Health and Welfare, RG 29, Acc. 82-83/152, box 25, 3430-2-3, part 1. From the time it was implemented in 1948 until 1955, the tribunal received six complaints. This court of appeal was provided for in the Family Allowances Act.
68. ANQQ, Centre de documents semi-actifs (hereafter CDSA), "Exemptions de fréquentations scolaire," 1943-1200, box 112 317, parts 1 to 6. I went through the first part, which covers the period July-Sept. 1943, 150 letters; a section of the fifth part, 50 letters dated Sept. 1945-Feb. 1949; and the last 50 letters, Sept.-Dec. 1949. I numbered the letters myself to condense the references.
69. It may also be that this impression of temporariness was falsely created by the management of the archives: after systematically preserving these letters for five years, perhaps to create precedents, the public servants decided to throw them out.
70. These considerations on local social policy are based on the archives of the rural and urban school boards of the Cap-de-la-Madeleine region, which are now grouped under the Commission scolaire des Vieilles-Forges, as well as the archives of the Montreal Catholic School Commission.
71. See, for example, CDSA 1943-1200, box 112 317, case no. 71.
72. Thwaites, "Origins," 37-50.
73. For a comparable hypothesis in another context, see Curtis, *Building the Educational State*, 67.
74. Lafrance to Curry, 22 July 1954, ABRQ, 7-6, vol. 2; Mathieu to Mailly, 6 July 1946, ABRQ, 8-0, vol. 1.2.
75. Antoine Fréchette to Lionel Lafrance, 15 Oct. 1959, ABRQ, 40-10, vol. 2.
76. Lessard, "L'instruction obligatoire," 83.
77. Platform of the 1944 Liberal Party, in Jean-Louis Roy, *Les programmes électoraux du Québec*, vol. 2, 1931-1966 (Montreal, 1971), 320.
78. Genest, "Vie et oeuvre," 573.
79. Vigod, "History According to the Boucher Report," 183.
80. "Loi concernant les livres de classe et la rétribution mensuelle dans certaines écoles publiques," 13 Geo. VI, c. 27, 10 March 1949.
81. McKinnon to Lafrance, 26 Oct. 1956, ABRQ, 8-0, vol. 2.
82. Omer Coté to Maurice Duplessis, 30 Jan. 1945, ASJCF, fonds P.f. Beaudoin papers, 126-6. Duplessis also abolished the Service de recherches statistiques set up by Victor Doré.
83. Audet, *Histoire de l'enseignement*, 220; James Ian Gow, *Histoire de l'administration publique québécoise 1867-1978* (Montreal, 1986), 186.
84. "Family Allowances Act," *Statutes of Canada*, 1944-1955, Geo. VI, c. 40, s. 2; Rough draft of the pamphlet on family allowances, April 1948, ABRQ, 40-13, vol. 1.
85. Fournier to Lafrance, "Interprétation des directives," 12 Feb. 1949; Fournier, "Directives," April 1948; N.A. Mathieu, head of the "Education" section, "Extraits du livre d'instructions concernant la fréquentation scolaire obligatoire pour régie interne de la section 'Education,'" undated; P.T. Légaré, "Notes sur le travail juvénile," 14 March 1949; J.A.M. Caron, "Directives et procédures spéciales à l'unité École," 11 March 1951; ABRQ, 7-6, vol. 1. See also Department of National Health and Welfare, Information Directorate, *You and Your Family* (Ottawa, 1949), 24-25.
86. Viviana Zelizer has showed how the same problems crop up when it comes to naming women's household money: paper presented at the congress of the Social Science History Association of 1986, St. Louis, entitled "Special Money: Allowances in the Domestic Economy, 1870-1930." She discusses the evolution of acceptable child labour in a chapter of *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (New York, 1985), 73-112.
87. W.L. Bogie to Hon. Hector Perrier, Secrétaire provincial, 26 June 1941, ANQQ, E24, 193, A-8. See also a mother's letter to the minister, March 1945, ANQQ, E24, 195 and 235, A-8.
88. Archives de la Commission des écoles catholiques de Montréal (hereafter ACECM), Service de l'informatique, Statistiques, Recensement scolaire, généralités, 1920-69; Québec, Département de l'Instruction publique, *Instructions*, 10, and LCFSSO, sec. 7, #290e; L.P. Lussier, 13/7/1944, ACECM, *Élèves, Contrôle des absences, Généralités, 1924-1960*; Fournier to Lafrance, 12 April 1950, ABRQ 42-14, 3-4; ACECM, Département de l'Instruction publique, Formule 3a, "Demande d'un permis d'absence-Enquête par l'école"; ACECM, *Élèves, Contrôle des absences, Formules 1941-1962*; enclosed letter from Guyon to Maher, 28 Oct. 1943, ANQQ, E24, 222, A-8.
89. Service de la statistique, Recensement 1943, ACECM, Service de l'informatique, Statistiques, Recense-
ment scolaire, généralités, 1920-1969; L.P. Lussier, truant officer's report, 13 July 1944, ACECM, *Élèves, contrôle des absences, Généralités 1924-1960*; ACBES, 47-223 and 47-1505. In the last case, it was the probation officer who suggested a link between the girl's housework and her poor school-work.
90. ACBES, probation officer's report, 8 April 1947, case 1946-902. According to Liesel Urtnowski, "giving work permits . . . makes it possible for the school to get rid of the small number of pupils who are a problem, without glutting the labour market with young workers or embarrassing itself through numerous failures": "Children and the Labour Market" in *Children and the State*, ed. James Albert (Ottawa, 1978), 108. *Instructions*, 12.
91. Quoted by Hamel, "L'obligation scolaire," 266, 375.
92. Filteau for Doré to Tremblay, 25 Nov. 1943; A. Rivest to Bernier, 26 Oct. 1944, ANQQ, E24, 235.
93. Interview with Mme Georgette Mercier, Montreal, 13 Nov. 1986. Report of the JOC, 5.
94. Bertheline Méthot, guide at the "Économusée de la maison du Fier-Monde," Montreal, 12 April 1987.
95. *Rapports généraux du ministère du Travail du Québec*, 1947-48 to 1955-56.
96. The provincial secretary, Hector Perrier, hesitated till the last minute to make the school boards responsible for appointing truant officers: Victor Doré to L. Pigeon, 5 March 1943, ANQQ, E13, C.r., 1942-99.
97. On requests for procedures from truant officers and Doré's reluctance to apply them, see section 4.1.4 of Jean, "Les familles québécoises."
98. *Instructions*, 10.
99. Statistics on suspensions by province are kept in the *Annual*

100. *Reports of the Department of National Health and Welfare.* School municipality of Victoriaville to the superintendent of public education, 26 Jan. 1943, and the department secretary to the municipality, 29 Jan. 1943, in ANQQ, E13, 1942-199, box 2223.
101. Senez, Conférence à la Commission scolaire de St-Hyacinthe, 26 Nov. 1956, ABRQ, Manuel de procédures, 42-45.
102. Jane Ursel, "The State and the Maintenance of Patriarchy: A Case Study of Family, Labour and Welfare Legislation in Canada" in *Family, Economy and the State*, ed. J. Dickinson and B. Russel (Toronto, 1986), 150-91.
103. Garneau, secretary of the service de l'inspection du ministère du Travail, 7 July 1944; Beaulac to Maher, 16 Aug. 1944, for an investigation of the CN Company, which employed children under the age of 14 to make ballast; A. Rivest, inspector in Bernier, 26 Oct. 1944, for a suit against a St-Hyacinthe company; Beaulac to Tremblay for requests for leave in Lévis shops, 4 May 1945; Tremblay to Beaulac, who was tipped off to the case of a utensil plant in Lévis that employed children under the age of 14, 31 Oct. 1945. ANQQ, E24, 209, 235, and 251, A-8; Bernier to Barrette, 31 March 1943, ANQQ, E24, 209, A-8; Guyon to Maher, 30 July 1942; Beaulac to a citizen of Nazareth, Rimouski county, 29 April 1943; J.O. Recard, Joliette school inspector, 29 July 1944; J.L. Blanchard, deputy of Terrebonne to Tremblay, 10 Oct. 1946; Paul Brien, secretary of the ministère du Travail in Beaulac, 2 Aug. 1949, and Martineau's response for Beaulac to Brien, 8 Aug. 1949; Jules Biron, Attorney to Barrette, 2 Aug. 1950, and Barrette's response, 9 Aug. 1950. ANQQ, E24, 209, 235, 263, 298, and 302, A-8. A citizen of Hull to Rochette, 21 Feb. 1944; Tremblay's response, 24 Feb. 1944. ANQQ, E24, 222, A-8.
104. *Rapports généraux du ministère des Travaux publics*, for the years 1919-20 to 1930-31. *Rapports généraux du ministère du Travail du Québec* for subsequent years. Statistiques Canada, *Estimations de la population selon l'âge et le sexe, Canada, provinces et territoires au 1 juin, 1921-1971*, undated.
105. "Industrial Establishments Act," R.S. 1921, c. 182, s. 4. RAMTQ, 1934-1935, 83. For the Depression, Jean Barman observed a similar phenomenon in Vancouver, "Youth, Class and Opportunity in Vancouver, 1921-1931" (unpublished paper, Simon Fraser University, 1983). Martial Renaud to the minister, July 1942. They then considered hiring a new employee and buying chairs so that the children could wait. Maher to Bernier, 31 July 1942. ANQQ, E24, 209, A-8. This trend is less familiar than the use of women as extra workers during the war. A comparable increase occurred in the United States and Ontario, but in Quebec, where there was a particularly strong ideological taboo against married women working, it is likely that pressure on young workers was stronger than elsewhere in North America. U.S. Children's Bureau, *War-time Employment of Boys and Girls under 18*, Pub. no. 289, Washington, DC, 1943, 445, quoted by Robert H. Bremner, ed., *Children and Youth in America: A Documentary History*, vol. 3, 1933-1973, parts 1-4, 358-59. See also Elizabeth S. Magee, "Impact of the War on Child Labor," *Annals of American Academy of Political and Social Science* 236 (1944): 101-8, re-examined in Bremner, *Children and Youth*, 360-62. In Ontario, "the number of certificates granted in 1940 had more than doubled since 1939—4871 in 1940 as opposed to 2146 in 1939." "Emploi des enfants et fréquentation scolaire au Canada," *La Gazette du Travail* 42 (1942): 57.
106. Report of the JOC, 4. Madeleine Maille, general propagandist of the JOC, "La semaine des jeunes: Problème des jeunes qui ne vont plus à la classe—Statistiques—Causes," *Le Devoir*, 10 Dec. 1942, 4. Circular of the Victoriaville Chamber of Commerce to all heads of families, 24 Oct. 1945, ANQQ, E24, Bureau de placement, 252. JOC, 4.
107. Rochette to Morris, archdeacon, Synod of the Montreal diocese, 18 June 1945. ANQQ, E24, 251, A-8. Beaulac to Tremblay, 4 May 1945. ANQQ, E24, 251, A-8. Many children were working without permits: in May 1945, for instance, in the shops of Lévis and Quebec alone, Department of Labour inspectors found 117 unlicensed employees aged 14 or 15, but we don't know if their numbers grew or diminished during the war.
108. Tremblay to Beaulac, 27 April 1945, ANQQ, E24, 235, A-8.
109. The archives of the ministère du Travail have kept the letters of three charitable organizations, four educational organizations, and three women's associations denouncing this wartime practice.
110. Macnamara to Tremblay, 1 July 1943, and Macnamara to Tremblay, 3 Feb. 1944, ANQQ, E24, 222, A-8; Macnamara to Tremblay, 3 Feb. 1944, and Tremblay to Macnamara, 7 Feb. 1944, ANQQ, E24, 222, A-8.
111. Tremblay to Phillips of the CNEA, 9 Dec. 1943, ANQQ, E24, 222, A-8; Maher to Bernier, 29 March 1945, ANQQ, E24, 235, A-8; Bernier to Barrette, following a meeting with the Youth Bureau, 5 April 1945, ANQQ, E24, 235, A-8; RAMTQ, 1944-45, 132; RAMTQ, 1945-46, 168-70, 211; RAMTQ, 1950-51, 254; RAMTQ, 1951-52, 297. See also Barrette informing Young of the Montreal Council of Social Agencies of the reform, 12 Dec. 1945, ANQQ, E24, 251, A-8; "Résumé des décisions arrêtées à la réunion tenue le 25 mars à Montréal," 29 March 1946, ANQQ, E24, 251, A-8; Crowe to Anatole Désy, chair of the Conseil supérieur du Travail, 23 March 1945, Bureau de placement provincial, 252, E. 4, Régie interne; Bernier to Barrette, 21 June 1954, ANQQ, E24, 312, A-8; Crowe to Barrette, 2 Dec. 1948, ANQQ, E24, 295, A-8.
112. Octave Guénette, corresponding secretary of the CMTC of Quebec and Lévis, to Barrette, 5 Nov. 1946, ANQQ, E24, 263, A-8. See also R.J. Lemire, Conseil central des SONC de Trois-Rivières to Bernier, 26 May 1948, ANQQ, E24, 295, A-8; Michel Chartrand, Agent d'affaire du Syndicat national des employés de la Wabasso Cotton to Barrette (CTCC), 21 Dec. 1951. See also Fleurette Dupont, Secretary of this union to Barrette, 12 Jan. 1952, ANQQ, E24, 309, A-8; Jean Marchand, Secretary General of the CTCC to Barrette, 21 Jan. 1952, ANQQ, E24, 309, A-8. Hamel, "L'obligation scolaire," 266-67 and 325-26.
113. Barrette to Brossard of the Unemployment Insurance Commission, who asked him to raise the working age, 10 Sept. 1945, ANQQ, E24, 251, A-8.
114. Joy Parr brought this fact to my attention.
115. JOC, "Le problème," 3, 26.
116. *Ibid.*, 12. A 13-year-old child to the Minister of Labour, 30 April 1943, ANQQ, E24, 209. See also JOC, 26: 1.5 percent of the boys had left school to learn a trade; 4 percent of the girls to take private courses. RAMTQ, 1949-50, 249.
117. J.-P. Poulin, instructor and member of the Comité d'Action Familiale and secretary general of the Comité permanent des familles, "A qui la faute? A l'école?" *Le Devoir*, 18 July 1942.
118. J.-L. Blanchard, deputy of Terrebonne to Antonio Barrette, minister of labour, ANQQ, E24, 309, A-8; ACBES, 47-251. This child did not work.
119. ACBES, 43-6209, 46-1634, 47-79, 47-630, 47-769. This practice was facilitated by employers who accepted

- children without the express approval of their parents.
120. ACBES, 47-179, 46-375, 46-902, 46-1634, 46-92.
121. Children in the files of the Cour du bien-être social, 47-72, 46-368, 47-81, 47-262 expressed a strong desire to work without justification. Elizabeth Boulé (15 years, 8 months) to Quimper, April 1953, ANQQ, E24, 310, A-8. JOC, 26.
122. Langlois, "L'Oeuvre des petits vendeurs," 89.
123. JOC, "Le problème," 26. ACBES, 47-72. Langlois, "L'Oeuvre des petits vendeurs," 16, 87, 52-60.
124. Langlois, *ibid.*, 30-37. See also ACBES, 47-81; Latulippe of Hull to Rochette, 21 Feb. 1944, ANQQ, E24, 222, A-8; "Témoignages II," undated study, Archives de la Société historique de la région de Terrebonne, 87; Fournier to Faguy, 23 Jan. 1947, ABRQ, 7-6, vol. 1.
125. Langlois, *ibid.*, 89. The Canada and Newfoundland Education Association, 6 Dec. 1943, ANQQ, E 24, 222, A-8. Using verbal interviews, Stephen Humphries elicited similar memories from British working-class children who lived between 1889 and 1939: *Hooligans or Rebels*, 55.
126. Paul Willis, *Learning to Labor: How Working-Class Kids Get Working-Class Jobs* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 120. Liesel Urtnowski also highlighted this contradiction for contemporary Canada in "Children and the Labour Market" in *Children and the State*, 112. Stephen Humphries pointed to the same phenomenon for England at the turn of the century, 58.
127. Diana Gittens, *The Family in Question: Changing Households and Family Ideologies* (London, 1985), 111.



THE LIMITS
OF REFORM
