

Keeping Warm and Dry: The Policy Response to the Struggle for Shelter Among Canada's Homeless, 1900-1960

[Record]

John C. Bacher and J. David Hulchanski

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Abstract



During the first six decades of the 20th century, the social security safety net designed to protect Canadians from destitution has seen many holes. Despite the well documented extent of misery, conservative attitudes of prejudice against the poor through these years prevented the development of an effective community response to poverty and substandard housing conditions. This paper examines the evolution of the Canadian welfare state over three periods. It finds that while a social security system of old age pensions, family allowances and unemployment insurance had emerged by the end of the Second World War, its creation was due more to opportunistic political calculations, than a benevolent effort to reduce homelessness.

Résumé

Pendant les six premières décennies du 20^e siècle, le filet protecteur de la sécurité sociale mis en place pour protéger les Canadiens de l'indigence avait de nombreux

trous. Malgré le fait que l'ampleur de la misère ait été bien connue, les attitudes conservatrices affichant des préjugés à l'endroit des pauvres ont, tout au cours de ces années, empêché le développement d'une solution collective efficace aux problèmes de pauvreté et de conditions de logement inadéquates. Ce texte étudie l'évolution de l'État-providence au cours de trois périodes. Il permet de constater que, même si un système de sécurité sociale, de pensions de vieillesse, d'allocations familiales et d'assurance chômage était apparu à la fin de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, sa création résultait de calculs politiques opportunistes plutôt que d'un effort bienveillant pour réduire le nombre de sans-abri.

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