

MEMORANDUM ON WINNIPEG RELIEF SYSTEM

(Letter from A. MacNamara, Esq.,
Assistant Deputy Minister of
Public Works, Manitoba).

The memoranda of the Winnipeg Unemployment Advisory Board indicate that the Board have already made themselves acquainted with the most scientific and satisfactory investigations of standard relief budgets; and also that a group of competent persons have checked over these budgets and the actual schedules used in Winnipeg. The carefully prepared budgetary recommendations of the Montreal Federated Agencies and this examination undertaken at Winnipeg are the two outstanding scientific budgets in Canada. If the relief schedules in Winnipeg are directly influenced by these, as is the case, there is a primary presumption that they are adequate.

The food budget, varying for families of different size, - in which Mr. MacNamara is particularly interested - was very comprehensively examined by the Nutrition Committee of the Health Service of the Federated Agencies for Montreal; from the point of view of content in calciums, phosphates, etc., of calories, and vitamins.

It is, however, a minimum budget; and it is noteworthy therefore that the budgets of the Winnipeg Advisory Board and the City of Winnipeg are more generous as to range of commodities and to the allowance for sundries. The Nutrition Committee (of Montreal) would be themselves quite willing to recognise that the minimum budget does not contain commodities such as tea, coffee, soap, etc; that the variations in families specified are based on young children rather than adults; that there are always differences in individual requirements as to nutrition which do not run strictly according to average; and finally, that these budgets might not be entirely adequate if they are to be repeated over a long period. But quite apparently, the Montreal budgets have not been followed in Winnipeg in any rigid form.

In the other constituents of relief it would also seem that the Advisory Board, has, if I may say so, taken an enlightened view, e.g., with regard to rent.

There is of course a difference between the relief system from the point of view of its allowances (whether in quantities, or money), and the relief system from the point of view of its administration (e.g., the questions of food vouchers, municipal stores, leaving choice of groceries to the purchaser, and other questions). I do not feel, however, that on this latter aspect "an unbiased report from an authority of the high standing" is feasible without an analysis of all the other important existing systems of relief, which examination has not yet been adequately made.

On the other aspect, however, that of relief sufficiency, if Mr. MacNamara is still desirous of having some personal examination made I would suggest that he approach either of the two following persons, whose "I have discussed the matter with Dr. Fleming, who was Chairman of this Committee. (L.C.M.)"