

# THE EVACUATION OF CHILDREN IN WARTIME SCOTLAND: CULTURE, BEHAVIOUR AND POVERTY

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## **Introduction**

This article examines the experience of, outcomes of, and lessons drawn from the evacuation of Scottish schoolchildren during the early part of the Second World War. We begin by discussing the historiography of evacuation in Great Britain. The focus then shifts to the particular circumstances of Scotland. Here the mechanisms of evacuation were different from elsewhere in Britain in that children were evacuated in family rather than school class groups. This difference was attributed by contemporaries to the particularity of Scottish education and educational structures. We then examine three influential responses to evacuation in Scotland. As we show the tendency here, in contrast to England, was to blame the purportedly poor state of the evacuees on structural rather than behavioural or individual factors. In other words, the socio-economic environment rather than personal failings was fore-grounded, although this is not to say that Scottish analyses entirely eschewed what were seen as individual shortcomings. We conclude by assessing what the Scottish experience adds to our knowledge of evacuation and the extent to which it confirms or refutes 'revisionist' interpretations; and what implications this experience had for the subsequent development of Scottish welfare provision.

## **Evacuation and the Historians**

The evacuation of children from threatened urban areas has frequently been portrayed as a defining moment in modern British social history. James Hinton, for example, has recently suggested that the placement of often impoverished urban working class children in rural homes 'involved the negotiation of profound cultural differences, not only between town and country but also between class and class'. Discussing the attitudes of the important voluntary organisation, the

Women's Voluntary Service, he further maintains that the 'rifts and chasms of Britain's social fabric revealed by the early experiences of evacuation had long-term consequences for both working-class and middle-class perceptions of social inequality'.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Sonya Rose claims that evacuation 'produced a discourse concerning 'the social question' that underscored the dire consequences of urban poverty and brought national attention to its victims'. It also highlighted, she maintains, the 'focal point between what were imagined to be two opposing ways of life – urban and rural'.<sup>2</sup> The historian of childhood, Harry Hendrick, remarks that evacuation was 'one of those rare moments when prejudice, mainly shaped and articulated by sections of the rural and small-town middle class, unveils itself unashamedly'.<sup>3</sup>

What, though, did all this mean, particularly in terms of subsequent social policy formation and implementation? The most influential early interpretation was that of Richard Titmuss, in *Problems of Social Policy* (1950), who argued that evacuation, along with bombing, 'stimulated inquiry and proposals for reform long before victory was even thought possible'. During the War, Titmuss claimed, 'the pressures for a higher standard of welfare and a deeper comprehension of social justice steadily gained in strength', while despite limited resources 'a big expansion took place in the responsibilities accepted by the State for those in need'. Titmuss maintained that the enhancement of services such as school meals and milk demonstrated 'the unanimity underlying policy and the speed at which decisions were acted upon ... It was the universal character of these welfare policies which ensured their acceptance and success'. They were thus free of social discrimination and the indignities of the Poor Law.<sup>4</sup> Titmuss's interpretation long dominated accounts of evacuation and its impact. Its closeness to the events, both of the evacuation itself and the post-war creation of the 'welfare state', and extensive use of official sources, undoubtedly contributed strongly to its impact.

Nevertheless a revisionist interpretation began to emerge as the 'classic' welfare state itself came under threat in the 1980s. John Macnicol, in particular, argued that the term 'social change' was highly problematic, in that establishing a link between the intensity of a war and its effect on the social experiences and material conditions of a population was highly complex. Even more difficult, claimed Macnicol, was evaluating ideological and attitudinal change.

To summarise a complex argument, there were five main strands to the revisionist case. First, on the health and condition of the evacuees, Macnicol claimed the evidence was impressionistic and contradictory – there were no

<sup>1</sup> J. Hinton, *Women, Social Leadership, and the Second World War: Continuities of Class* (Oxford, 2002), 147–8.

<sup>2</sup> S. O. Rose, *Which People's War? National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain 1939–1945* (Oxford, 2003), 56, 208.

<sup>3</sup> H. Hendrick, *Child Welfare: Historical Dimensions, Contemporary Debate*, (Bristol, 2003), 124.

<sup>4</sup> R. M. Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy* (London, 1950), 507–8, 514. See also J. Welshman, 'The Unknown Titmuss', *Journal of Social Policy*, 33, 2 (2004).

medical inspections, for example, in the first wave which might have provided empirical data on health conditions. Second, the experience of evacuation itself was multifaceted and sometimes contradictory – for instance evidence indicated that evacuees did not necessarily gain weight in camp schools while those seeking to take positive lessons from the evacuation experience made much of the countryside's health-giving qualities. Third, within Whitehall there was a reluctance to accept the evidence of evacuation. Officials clung to entrenched attitudes, not least 'the time-honoured strategy of educating the parents into better habits rather than an acceptance of the need for a universalist Welfare State'.<sup>5</sup> Fourth, the wartime expansion of school meals and milk had in fact been planned before the War. This was part of a wider wartime food policy that stressed the efficiency and morale of the whole population. Fifth, evacuation served more generally to boost a conservative, behavioural interpretation of poverty which saw the children's condition as resulting from poor parenting and social inadequacy. This in turn fed into the postwar concept of the 'problem family' – that is a family whose problems derived from its alleged behavioural and psychological flaws and not primarily from socio-economic circumstances. Macnicol concluded that the debate on evacuation served to 'reinforce existing analyses of working-class poverty rather than to change them', and showed that the ideological consensus of wartime, so stressed by Titmuss and subsequent commentators, was 'something of a myth'.<sup>6</sup>

Challenges have, in turn, been made to revisionist interpretations. An investigation of the School Medical Service and four crucial aspects of child health concluded that while there was not unanimity on the need for reform, evacuation did lead to a reassessment of the effectiveness of health services for schoolchildren and to significant policy changes. So, for example, child guidance, the psychologically-based movement which sought to deal with children with behaviour 'problems' and which claimed empirical support from investigations of the emotional and psychological state of evacuees, expanded during the War and became embedded in the post-war welfare state. In official reports on the wartime experience, meanwhile, there was a new openness to ideas reflecting, in turn, a new awareness of certain aspects of social life by civil servants.<sup>7</sup> An exploration of the origins, content, and reception of one social survey produced by the Women's Group on Public Welfare – the *Our Towns* report (1943) – argued that it was precisely its contradictory nature that explains the report's powerful contemporary appeal. It echoed interwar debates about behaviour and citizenship, but also reflected some of the ideas that would shape the welfare state in the postwar period. Thus the report managed to generate an analysis that combined behavioural and

<sup>5</sup> J. Macnicol, 'The Evacuation of Schoolchildren', in H. L. Smith (ed.), *War and Social Change: British Society During the Second World War* (Manchester, 1986), 21.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 27–8.

<sup>7</sup> J. Welshman, 'Evacuation and Social Policy during the Second World War: Myth and Reality', *Twentieth Century British History*, 9, 1 (1998), 28–53.

structural interpretations of poverty and deprivation.<sup>8</sup> The impact of evacuation on one strand of 'conservative' opinion – middle-class voluntary organisations – was thus shown to be complex and nuanced and to complement the tensions found in more 'official' accounts.

In all the writing on the experience of evacuation, however, what has not been done to date is to attempt a regional or local study, and the importance of place has not been examined systematically. We know little about perceptions of poverty in particular cities that comprised Evacuation Areas in England and Wales, or about those rural counties that were chosen as Reception Areas.<sup>9</sup>

With the partial exception of scholars such as Lynn Abrams, the experience of evacuation in Scotland has generally been considered only in passing, with anecdotes in *Problems of Social Policy*; some reference to a survey on evacuation in Scotland; and some limited use of Scottish archival sources.<sup>10</sup> It is clear that evacuation in Scotland deserves much greater attention. This is important in its own right, but also for two other reasons. First, it throws up both comparisons and contrasts with evacuation in England. Second, the distinctiveness of the Scottish evacuation experience, and the responses to it, can be seen as a further example of the relative autonomy which Scotland enjoyed in social welfare even after the Union of 1707. This had two dimensions – evacuation in Scotland was carried out by specifically Scottish agencies; and attitudinally, both before and after evacuation, the Scots had rather different explanations for social phenomena such as poverty and deprivation. Evacuation in Scotland thus has to be seen as a constituent of a long, if as yet under-investigated, Scottish welfare history which currently manifests itself in major policy areas of the Scottish Parliament.<sup>11</sup>

This article analyses the Scottish experience of evacuation, focusing in particular on the first and main wave of evacuation in early September 1939. In doing so it throws further light on social change during the Second World War. We begin with an examination of planning for evacuation in Scotland before tracing the Scottish experience and perceptions of evacuation. It is then argued that evidence

<sup>8</sup> J. Welshman, 'Evacuation, Hygiene, and Social Policy: The *Our Towns* Report of 1943', *Historical Journal*, 42, 3 (1999), 781–807.

<sup>9</sup> See Susan Jane Hess, 'Civilian Evacuation to Devon in the Second World War' (University of Exeter PhD thesis, 2006).

<sup>10</sup> L. Abrams, *The Orphan Country: Children of Scotland's Broken Homes from 1845 to the Present Day* (Edinburgh, 1998), 170–7. Macnicol, 'The Evacuation of Schoolchildren', also utilises some Scottish material. More systematic, but as yet unpublished, analyses of the Scottish situation can be found in A. Smith, 'What Light do the Records of the Scottish Office Shed on the Planning and Implementation of the Evacuation of Women and Children in Scotland?' (University of Edinburgh MSc dissertation, 2002). We are grateful to Ms Smith for providing us with a copy of this dissertation and her other unpublished work on evacuation; and J. M. Lloyd, 'The Scottish School System and the Second World War: A Study in Central Policy and Administration' (University of Stirling, unpublished PhD thesis, 1979).

<sup>11</sup> For post-Devolution social welfare in its historical context, see J. Stewart, *Taking Stock: Scottish Social Welfare after Devolution* (Bristol, 2004); the classic statement on 'relative autonomy' can be found in L. Paterson, *The Autonomy of Modern Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1994).

of the health of the Scottish evacuees was impressionistic and contradictory; and that evidence of attitudinal change among officials is hard, although not impossible, to find. However, and in contrast to England, the 'problem family' concept was absent from the debate and there was an emphasis on structural rather behavioural causes of poverty and deprivation.

This more sympathetic approach may be attributed to, first, the particularly harsh socio-economic conditions of the inter-war period which exacerbated Scotland's notoriously bad housing conditions. Levels of overcrowding in urban slums allowed less purchase for behavioural explanations of the poor condition of many evacuees. Second, Scottish governance tended towards corporatism and consensus. One of the architects of this approach was Walter Elliot, a medically-trained Conservative with interventionist social welfare inclinations who was Secretary of State for Scotland in the 1930s and subsequently Minister of Health.<sup>12</sup> While corporatism and consensus of themselves do not preclude behavioural explanations of poor social and health conditions, they nonetheless tend to be more sympathetic to structural approaches. Third, and leading on from the previous two points, Morrice McCrae has recently shown how such approaches were deployed by Scottish civil servants in advancing the case, ahead of England and Wales, for a comprehensive state medical service.<sup>13</sup> We can thus see here further instances of the longstanding historical phenomenon noted above, Scotland's relative welfare autonomy.

### **Planning and Implementing Evacuation**

In 1936 a group charged with formulating policy for schools in the event of war had assumed that Scotland had no areas which would be subject to continuous bombing. The clear implication was that there would be no need for large scale evacuation.<sup>14</sup> However, in May 1938 the Scottish Education Department (SED) noted that some local authorities had arranged for the evacuation of their child populations, and elsewhere parents themselves might take or send their children into the surrounding countryside.<sup>15</sup> A departmental memorandum of September 1938 remarked that it was likely arrangements would be made for the partial evacuation of vulnerable areas and, 'if time permits', special arrangements might be made for the evacuation of schoolchildren.<sup>16</sup> Significantly, national planning for evacuation drew attention to Scottish housing. The Anderson Committee on

<sup>12</sup> R. Finlay, 'Scotland in the Twentieth Century: In Defence of Oligarchy?', *Scottish Historical Review*, LXXIII (1994).

<sup>13</sup> M. McCrae, *The National Health Service in Scotland: Origins and Ideals, 1900-1950* (East Linton, 2003).

<sup>14</sup> National Archives of Scotland (hereafter NAS) ED 24/1: Meeting of Representatives of the Home Office, the Board of Education, and the Scottish Office, 2 Nov. 1936.

<sup>15</sup> NAS ED 24/1: meeting at the Scottish Education Department, 12 May 1938.

<sup>16</sup> NAS ED 24/2: Scottish Education Department memorandum 16 Sept. 1938.

Evacuation observed in its 1938 report that overcrowding was a serious problem in Scotland. It would therefore be a matter of 'some difficulty to find enough accommodation in Scotland for an evacuation on a substantial scale from the larger cities'.<sup>17</sup> Once again, the poor state of Scottish housing had broader social implications.

From late September 1938 onwards, the Scottish Office began to take a more active, positive role. Initially, the SED was to be responsible for those children sent to the receiving areas without their parents, whereas accompanied children were to come under the aegis of the Department of Health.<sup>18</sup> Subsequently, the Department of Health was given responsibility for co-ordinating the scheme, and an Advisory Committee on Evacuation established.<sup>19</sup> Censuses were taken of surplus housing and school accommodation in the designated Reception Areas; and of the children, teachers, helpers, and mothers of pre-school children who wanted to be evacuated. Lanark County Council's Education Committee, for example, noted in January 1939 the Government's call for details of available accommodation in the County 'with special reference' to that for children.<sup>20</sup>

Also in January 1939 it was announced that Scotland would, for evacuation purposes, be divided into three areas. The first was the cities of Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Dundee from which it was anticipated evacuation would take place. The second was parts of the country excluded from being Reception Areas – Neutral Areas. These included large urban centres such as Paisley; and remoter areas such as most of the Western Isles. The remainder of the country was to constitute the Reception Areas.<sup>21</sup> A few days later, the Scottish Secretary of State, John Colville, noted that some 440,000 children might be evacuated (the scheme was, and remained, voluntary); and urged local authorities to participate in the national survey regarding Reception Areas.<sup>22</sup>

Local authorities did indeed investigate the implications of evacuation. Edinburgh Corporation, for instance, responded positively to a Department of Health circular in March 1939. The Corporation sought to establish, by way of letters to schoolchildren and School Attendance Officers and through advertisements in the local press, how many people were qualified to be, and wished to be, evacuated.<sup>23</sup> The city's Education Officer duly reported that some 37,000 people would have to be dealt with in the event of an emergency. He warned, however, that this was likely to be an underestimate and that should war come 'these numbers would be

<sup>17</sup> PP 1937–38, X, *Report of Committee on Evacuation* (Cmd. 5837), 14.

<sup>18</sup> NAS ED 24/3: Scottish Education Department letter, 29 Sept. 1938.

<sup>19</sup> NAS ED 24/5: minutes 8 Mar. 1939.

<sup>20</sup> Mitchell Library, Glasgow (hereafter Mitchell Library), Records of the County Council of Lanark, CO1/5/3/9, Minutes of the Attendance and Administration Sub-Committee of the Education Committee, 23 Jan. 1939.

<sup>21</sup> *The Scotsman*, 10 Jan. 1939.

<sup>22</sup> NAS ED 24/4: cuttings from *The Scotsman*, 14 Jan. 1939.

<sup>23</sup> Edinburgh City Archives, Edinburgh Corporation (hereafter, ECA), Minutes of Education Committee, meeting of a Special Sub-Committee on Air Raid Precautions in Schools, 3 Mar. 1939.

substantially increased'. Plans were thus being made to evacuate around 80% of those eligible, some 100,000 people. He concluded that '[t]imetables were being prepared with transport authorities on the foregoing basis'.<sup>24</sup> On 1 September 1939, *The Scotsman* reported that in Glasgow alone some 190,000 children were due to leave over the next three days.<sup>25</sup>

Transport was a problem in Scotland, as in England and Wales, because of the distances to be travelled; the frequency of halts to allow small numbers of evacuees to alight; and the importance of arriving before nightfall. However, compared to England and Wales the numbers were smaller, and there were not the same logistical problems in actually getting children to their designated destinations. The logbook for Maryhill Primary School, Glasgow, noted for 2 September 1939 that 'splendid arrangements...had been made' for the reception of its evacuees and that 'a meal was provided on arrival after which parents and children were accommodated in the villages and surrounding country, conveyed there in motor cars kindly provided'.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless problems did arise. In Kilmarnock, the Chief Reception Officer reported the non-arrival of trains from Glasgow and other delays.<sup>27</sup> As the *Our Scottish Towns* report commented, the 'journey conditions' – which were often appalling, with children arriving both exhausted and filthy – were 'undoubtedly' a contributory factor in the rapid return of many evacuees, having created 'an initial prejudice to the new environment'.<sup>28</sup>

Giving a precise number of evacuees was, and remains, difficult. The SED noted in its report for 1939–40 that in first few days of September 1939 some 101,774 schoolchildren, accompanied by teachers and helpers, were evacuated under the official scheme. Around 70% were from Glasgow with the remainder coming from Edinburgh, Dundee, and the shipyard and dockyard areas of Clydebank and Rosyth. Later in September, parents had a further opportunity to have their children evacuated, and about 6,000 took advantage of this scheme. Of the teachers who accompanied the children on their journey, about 3,366 remained in the Reception Areas to teach and supervise them.<sup>29</sup> The evacuation survey edited by William Boyd – discussed further below – claimed that 175,812 people were evacuated in Scotland in September 1939. The bulk of these (nearly 100,000) fell into the category of mothers and accompanied children. There were over 62,000 unaccompanied schoolchildren, with the balance being made up by groups such as 'helpers'. While this was a large number it fell below that actually registered for evacuation.<sup>30</sup> In Glasgow, some 30,000 people failed to report, and of 1,400

<sup>24</sup> ECA, Minutes of Education Committee, 24 Apr. 1939.

<sup>25</sup> *The Scotsman*, 1 Sept. 1939, 6.

<sup>26</sup> Mitchell Library, Glasgow City Archives, D-ED 7/139/3/2: Maryhill Primary School Log Book, entry 2 Sept. 1939.

<sup>27</sup> Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy*, 108.

<sup>28</sup> Scottish Women's Group on Public Welfare, *Our Scottish Towns: Evacuation and the Social Future* (Edinburgh, 1944), 7–8.

<sup>29</sup> Cited in *ibid.*, 4.

<sup>30</sup> W. Boyd (ed.), *Evacuation in Scotland: A Record of Events and Experiments* (Bickley, 1944), 31.

expected in Lanark, only 800 arrived – though, crucially, with more mothers than had been anticipated.<sup>31</sup>

Moreover the drift back from the evacuation areas was rapid, more so than south of the border. Knightswood Secondary School in Glasgow, for instance, noted in January 1940 that many evacuees had returned during the Christmas holidays, and that this included both participants in the official scheme and those who had gone ‘privately’. The number still evacuated was around 100, out of a school roll of over 1000, and this had fallen to 48 by September of the same year.<sup>32</sup> Such data implies a relatively small number evacuated in the first place and illustrates the speed of return to the city. In Lanarkshire, a Reception Area which took the bulk of its evacuees from Glasgow, the number of government scheme evacuees fell by almost 50% between September and December 1939, again an indicator of the scale and rapidity of the drift back.<sup>33</sup> To further complicate the picture there was the issue of those privately evacuated. Lanarkshire’s Education Committee noted in October 1939 that its schools were actually dealing with more privately evacuated children than those on the government scheme. The following month a further analysis revealed that of the remaining private evacuees, nearly 15% came from England.<sup>34</sup>

To compare, insofar as is possible, the data for Scotland and for England, Titmuss suggested that in Scotland some 38% of eligible children were evacuated compared with some 46% in England.<sup>35</sup> As in England and Wales, the actual evacuation experience was surprisingly brief. Titmuss pointed out that, by the summer of 1940, Scotland only had 27,000 evacuees still away out of the original exodus of 175,000 from Glasgow and other cities. At the time of heavy air raids on Glasgow and Clydeside in spring 1941, most of those evacuated in September 1939 had returned home – for example 90% Clydebank’s evacuees were back in the town by March 1941. Subsequent evacuation schemes also applied to Glasgow and Clydebank, and the burghs of Greenock, Port Glasgow, and Dumbarton were added to the list of areas to be evacuated. At the time of this second wave of evacuation, some 100,000 mothers, children, and other priority classes left Glasgow, 90,000 in assisted schemes. In July 1941, 142,000 from these areas were in the Scottish reception districts. As in England and Wales, there was a further wave of evacuation at the time of the V1 and V2 attacks in 1944. In March 1944, 26,000 evacuees were recorded as billeted, comparing with 120,000 in September

<sup>31</sup> *The Glasgow Herald*, 4 Sept. 1939, 12.

<sup>32</sup> Mitchell Library, Glasgow City Archives, D-ED 7/124/1/1, Knightswood Secondary School, Log Book 1929–1953, entries for 10 Jan. 1940, 25 Jan. 1940, and 6 Sept. 1940.

<sup>33</sup> Mitchell Library, Records of the County Council of Lanark, CO1/5/3/10, Education Committee, Minutes of the Attendance and Administration Sub-Committee, 10 Oct. 1939, Appendix IV, and Minutes of the Attendance and Administration Sub-Committee, 11 Jan. 1940, Appendix III.

<sup>34</sup> Mitchell Library, Records of the County Council of Lanark, CO1/5/3/10, Education Committee, Minutes of the Attendance and Administration Sub-Committee, 10 Oct. 1939, Appendix IV and Minutes of the Bursaries and Educational Endowments Sub-Committee, 17 Nov. 1939.

<sup>35</sup> Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy*, 103, 550–3, appendices 3 and 4.

1941, and 175,000 in September 1939. Finally, in September 1944, all the Scottish Evacuation Areas were re-designated 'go home areas'.<sup>36</sup> Titmuss's detailed analysis of the Scottish experience is important both as empirical evidence; and as part of his broader argument about the role of evacuation in formulating ideas for social reconstruction.

As noted, the Scottish scheme differed from that in England and Wales in that schoolchildren and mothers with pre-school children had simply reported to the nearest primary school. This meant that brothers and sisters, but not classmates, were evacuated together, a cause of some debate in official circles when the lessons of the first wave of evacuation were being drawn. Some argued that the Scottish scheme had been less successful than its southern counterpart because in the latter children had settled down more easily in the company of their schoolmates and with their own teachers. Others, however, defended the scheme as important in its own right and more suited to Scottish educational structures.<sup>37</sup> In any event, it was officially decided by April 1940 that any further scheme of evacuation would involve only classmates.<sup>38</sup> This clearly derived from the impact of the mothers evacuated in early September 1939 – the impact of Scottish mothers cannot be underestimated and is discussed further below – and demands that evacuees be medically inspected before leaving the Evacuation Areas.<sup>39</sup>

### Experiences of Evacuation

The actual experience of evacuation was as varied as in England and Wales. Certain newspaper reports highlighted evacuees' behaviour or their physical condition, and implicitly the threat they posed to health. In a leading article on 15 September 1939, *The Scotsman* argued that the 'real problem' was:

The attitude of the mothers. Many of them were discontented from the beginning, difficult to please, and unwilling to be helpful. They have returned to their homes in the city, and no mothers will be evacuated in the second exodus. That lesson, as well as the lesson of ensuring personal cleanliness and freedom from contagious disease has been learnt by experience ...<sup>40</sup>

*The Glasgow Herald* noted six days later that the evacuation of Glasgow children to Dumfriesshire had led to problems, with the local Education Committee claiming that a third of the children examined had to be excluded from school

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 357, 362, 426, note 1, 432.

<sup>37</sup> NAS ED 24/7: Minutes of the Fifteenth Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Evacuation, 2 Feb. 1940.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 'The Convention of Royal Burghs of Scotland: Memorandum to the Secretary of State for Scotland', 26 April 1940.

<sup>39</sup> On medical inspection see, for example, *The Scotsman*, 11 Sept. 1939, 4; and 16 Sept. 1939, 7.

<sup>40</sup> *The Scotsman*, 15 Sept. 1939, 6.

because of the presence of head lice or disease. Some householders were refusing to take evacuees, and 'the difficulty is increased by presence in the district of a large number of mothers with young children over whom the Education Committee have no control'.<sup>41</sup> The Committee Chairman had said there might be a revolution if some of those who had gone home returned. The *Perthshire Advertiser*, whose readership consisted primarily of those in one of the Reception Areas, asserted that from nearly all parts of the county 'complaints have been received concerning the verminous and filthy condition of the children' many of whom were, moreover, 'found to be suffering from infectious diseases such as diphtheria, impetigo, scabies and scarlet fever'.<sup>42</sup>

Such accusations were not passively accepted. The Labour Lord Provost of Glasgow – the formidable Patrick Dollan – explicitly countered claims that evacuee children were 'polluting' the countryside. Making a powerful political point, and offering a clear structural explanation of the children's condition, he pointed out that they came from 'houses which have been denied the amenities of modern civilisation'. These children were thus the 'victims of an environment' which would have ceased to exist if in the past emphasis had been placed on 'homes and families' and less on 'profits and dividends'.<sup>43</sup> Evacuees thus had advocates who sought to defend them from unwarranted scare and rumour mongering; and to present structural reasons for their condition.

Such arguments were undoubtedly necessary. During a Parliamentary debate on evacuation in June 1940 the member for Dumfries, Sir Henry Fildes, claimed that 'at the time of the evacuation in September venereal disease and other sorts of infectious diseases were introduced into the homes of the people of Scotland'. He further helpfully suggested that in 'a time of crisis like this we should stay at home and take the risks associated with the dangers that may beset us'.<sup>44</sup> In the same debate, though, Agnes Hardie, Labour MP for a working-class Glasgow constituency, argued that 'round about Perthshire the complaint was made that children were not welcomed, and that sometimes mothers and children were put into derelict cottages with no cooking provision'. This has been justified, she claimed, on the grounds that 'the mothers and children could not be expected to have anything better than they had at home', notwithstanding that they actually came from 'an estate where they were used to better things'.<sup>45</sup> Again, the role of Glasgow Labour politicians in countering anti-evacuee sentiment is notable here.

As to the evacuees and their hosts themselves, their respective perceptions and experiences also ranged widely. The story passed into popular folklore of the Glasgow mother who allegedly told her six-year-old child: 'You dirty thing

<sup>41</sup> *The Glasgow Herald*, 21 Sept. 1939, 8.

<sup>42</sup> *Perthshire Advertiser*, 20 Sept. 1939, cited in S. Robertson and L. Wilson, *Scotland's War* (Edinburgh, 1995), 16.

<sup>43</sup> Cited in Rose, *Which People's War?*, 59.

<sup>44</sup> Parliamentary Debates, 5th Series, 1939–40, vol. 362, col. 116.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 96.

messing the lady's carpet. Go and do it in the corner.'<sup>46</sup> The cultural gulf between those leaving the inner cities and their more suburban or rural hosts was recounted by Walter Gordon whose family lived in the comparatively comfortable Glasgow suburb of Whitecraigs. Preparing for their evacuees' arrival, Gordon's mother 'thought we had better give them a hot meal and I think she had mince or stew ready'. However, their enforced guests 'couldn't cope with that. My mother asked what they would eat and their mother said "Bread and jam". We realised we were in a world of jeely pieces.'<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, the *Our Scottish Towns* report, seeking to counteract the overly-negative impression of evacuation, made the reasonable point that 'normal healthy town children came to normal country homes and settled down happily, finding in this rural environment a new experience of rich educational content'.<sup>48</sup> As we shall see, the purported educational benefits of evacuation were also to be part of the official discourse.

### Official Responses to Evacuation

How, then, was Scottish evacuation perceived in official and semi-official circles? Revisionist historians have, as noted, argued that in the case of England and Wales evacuation may have led to an outcry at local level, but that the attitudes of officials towards poverty and the scope of health services remained remarkably unchanged.<sup>49</sup> On 7 September 1939, the Scottish Secretary of State answered questions in Parliament on the scheme's planning and implementation. Choosing his words carefully, Colville suggested that 'the scheme in general has worked smoothly'. There had been, he concluded, 'local difficulties which I am investigating and dealing with'. He could state, nonetheless, 'without qualification that the general effect of the scheme has been good'.<sup>50</sup> This positive view was also held by the local authorities in the Evacuation Areas.<sup>51</sup>

Colville's successor, Ernest Brown, told Parliament in June 1940 that the 'disturbance of evacuation on many pupils cannot be dismissed lightly'. He also pointed to the particularly Scottish problems associated with evacuation, not least the huge range in school size – clearly an issue when evacuees were placed in rural areas – and the fact that the 'normal school population of receiving areas, which is approximately 250,000, was swollen by evacuation by about 50%'. On the other hand, attendances after an initial slump in the Evacuation and Neutral areas had recovered well; there had been a 'steady and comprehensive effort to maintain the tradition of Scottish education on the fullest possible scale'; evacuated children

<sup>46</sup> Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy*, 122.

<sup>47</sup> Cited in Robertson and Wilson, *Scotland's War*, 17.

<sup>48</sup> Scottish Women's Group on Public Welfare, *Our Scottish Towns*, 2–3.

<sup>49</sup> Macnicol, 'The Evacuation of Schoolchildren', 20.

<sup>50</sup> Parliamentary Debates, 5th Series, 1939–40, vol. 351, cols 564–5.

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, ECA, Minutes of the Education Committee, Meeting of a Special Subcommittee of the Education Committee, 12 Sept. 1939.

had 'gained in health and have learned something of the country'; and 'country children have gained something from the quicker responses of the town children'. Overall, then, one 'broad effect' had been, for both teachers and pupils, the stimulating of individual initiative. Evacuation had evoked a 'great response and a readiness to improvise and experiment'. Brown was thus convinced that 'some of the results will have permanent value'.<sup>52</sup> In similar vein, the SED drew two particular lessons from evacuation. First, as a consequence of careful planning the 'educational interests' of the children had been 'conserved to a degree which, having regard to the difficult and unprecedented circumstances, must be regarded as gratifying'. Second, there had been 'distinct benefits' to the evacuees in the form of 'improved health, the joys of country life, and a general widening of outlook which itself constitutes education in the best sense'.<sup>53</sup>

Such reassuring public statements were, clearly, at odds with the experiences of some of the evacuees and their hosts. But they also masked anxieties, concerns, and criticisms held by politicians, civil servants, local government officials, and voluntary organisations. These were particularly apparent at the meetings of the Advisory Committee on Evacuation. This now consisted of civil servants and local government officials, along with representatives of the Women's Voluntary Service and the main Scottish teachers' union, the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), both of which were involved with accommodating the evacuees in the Reception Areas. At its tenth meeting, on 22 September 1939, the Chairman and Secretary of the Department of Health, W. R. Fraser, identified those aspects of the process which had most struck his Department. On the positive side, there had been no serious problems with the assembly and transportation of the evacuees. More problematic was the low percentage of 'priority classes' who had taken advantage of the scheme, and the 'tendency of evacuated persons to drift back'. The Reception Areas themselves were seen as having two main problems – first, the unexpectedly large number of mothers with families who had been evacuated, a function of the way in which the scheme was organised in Scotland. Second, and again as we have seen something at the heart of perceptions of the evacuation experience as a whole, 'the complaints which had been received about evacuated persons who were diseased and verminous and whose habits were objectionable'.<sup>54</sup>

At the Committee's next meeting, in November 1939, such sentiments were more forcefully expressed by some local authority representatives from the Reception Areas. Lord Provost Nimmo of Perth suggested that evacuation had resulted in the loss of goodwill of not only the 'householders in reception areas who had had unfortunate experiences' but also 'of everybody in the reception areas'. The Town Clerk of Ayr, Mr Thomson, maintained that if any future scheme

<sup>52</sup> Parliamentary Debates, 5th Series, 1939–40, vol. 362, cols 76, 73, 74.

<sup>53</sup> Scottish Education Department, *Summary Report on Education in Scotland for the years 1939 and 1940* (Cmd. 6317) (Edinburgh, 1941), 6–7.

<sup>54</sup> NAS ED 24/7, Minutes of Tenth Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Evacuation, 22 Sept. 1939.

was to have a chance of success 'the reception areas should have a guarantee that the children sent to them would be in a clean and healthy condition'. Nimmo and Thomson backed off somewhat when the Chairman asked 'whether it was the view of the Committee that there should be no more evacuation even in the event of intensive bombardment of the cities'.<sup>55</sup> Even so, the point had been made and the sentiments were no doubt genuinely felt, and subsequent meetings of this Committee paid much attention to such matters as medical inspection prior to evacuation and on arrival in the Reception Areas.

More broadly, civil servants in the wake of evacuation sought to draw positive lessons from the process which could be fed into the post-war reconstruction of the education system. Evacuation had appeared to demonstrate, for instance, the need for more child guidance clinics where emotional and mental health issues of difficult or even delinquent children could be addressed. Child guidance was another welfare field in which Scotland, prior to the War, had diverged in certain respects from England, a situation which was to persist in the post-war welfare state.<sup>56</sup> So in the early 1940s, an SED memorandum on education after the War argued that local authorities should be encouraged to set up child guidance clinics in order to deal with 'conduct defects'; and to assist children with learning difficulties. Residential schools, associated with these clinics, might play a role in reducing juvenile delinquency by treating children who could not be dealt with at home.<sup>57</sup> These comments are particularly significant in the light of the Boyd survey, discussed below.

### **Evacuation and Social Reconstruction**

Clearly there was a range of perceptions of the evacuation process. Equally, the problems of evacuation were attributed to a variety of factors. We now look in more detail at the condition and behaviour of the evacuees; the responses to these and their associated assumptions about urban working class life; and the ways in which the evacuation experience fed into debates over social reconstruction. We do this by focusing on three particular publications. It is not suggested that these were the sole responses to the evacuation experience nor that they embody the whole range of Scottish opinion. However, their importance lies precisely in the fact that they derive from exactly that section of society supposedly shocked into action by evacuation, the middle class, and in particular the professional middle class. In addition to the value judgements they undoubtedly contain, they provide

<sup>55</sup> NAS ED 24/7, Minutes of Eleventh Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Evacuation, 8 Nov. 1939.

<sup>56</sup> J. Stewart, 'Child Guidance in Inter-War Scotland: International Context and Domestic Concerns', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 80, 3, 2006.

<sup>57</sup> NAS ED 7/1/47, memorandum 'Proposals for the Development of the Education System', undated but 1940/41.

graphic interpretations of the condition of the Scottish urban working class in the period before the 'welfare state' and thereby, as some came to argue, the need for social reconstruction. Equally, it is in such documents that we can identify an emphasis – or more accurately a tendency – towards structural analyses.

Our first publication is a brief, but sociologically sophisticated, analysis which appeared in the *Aberdeen University Review* in mid-1940. The article was purportedly based on notes written up every Sunday during the first 30 weeks of the evacuation on 813 evacuated women and children brought from a Catholic school in a large Scottish city to a parish in the North East which had rural, industrial, and residential components. The author's wife had served as a Chief Billeting Officer. The article was in certain respects representative of a strand of middle-class Scottish opinion, sceptical about the urban working class, especially those of Irish Roman Catholic origin. On the other hand, the conclusions drawn were at least in some respects socially and politically radical.

The piece started off by highlighting the bodily condition of the individual evacuees:

Fifty per cent had dirty heads, 30% had impetigo, and 20% were incontinent in bed. Two diphtheria, two scabies, and five serious impetigo cases were sent on arrival direct to hospital; one expectant mother was sent to a maternity centre. Three congenital syphilitics were discovered; these were escorted home by a Public Health Nurse. Fleas were abundant and lively.<sup>58</sup>

Such was the amount of cleaning required the local reservoir fell, so it was claimed, four and a half feet in 20 hours, and the local chemist's shops sold out of disinfectants and small-toothed combs. Many evacuees had inadequate shoes and clothes, and many could not use knives and forks. The article argued that the evacuees had two main characteristics – they were 'inured to dependent pauperism ... Self-help and independence seemed unknown'; and they regularly made 'false statements'.<sup>59</sup> The author claimed that in his 'Protestant community respect for Catholicism has not been increased by evacuation'. Reflecting further on this, he commented that Irish immigration in the wake of industrialisation had, like 'rabbits in Australia', not been an 'unmixed blessing'. But in a remark which reveals both religious and ethnic prejudice and a potentially radical edge, the author further noted the impact of 'cheap strike-breaking Irish' on Scotland's industrial heartland.<sup>60</sup> The issue of religious sectarianism and ethnic division was an important framing device in the Scottish debate although usually more muted than here, at least in public.

<sup>58</sup> Anon., 'Our Evacuees: A social study by a Billeting Officer', *Aberdeen University Review*, vol. XXVII, no. 81 (1940), 243, 238.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 241, 245.

In addition, the article commented that 'the revelation of the gulf that separates two nations – slum dwellers and the well-to-do – shocked both nations, and where the social distance between evacuee adult and householder was widest, no billeting contact was possible'.<sup>61</sup> Elsewhere, it was argued that the habits of the evacuees at table and in bed made friendly contact between mothers and hosts impossible, and some wealthy householders had paid return fares to get rid of their guests. In Scotland, as elsewhere, the issue of bedwetting was particularly troublesome.

It was also suggested, though, that the initial situation was subject to change, especially in respect of the impact of country living. At Christmas, when two parties were given for the evacuees, the author failed to recognise them as the 'same miserable wretches that arrived on 1 September'. No impetigo was to be seen, and all had good overcoats, gloves, and slippers. The article commented: 'What a handsome testimonial to our working-class householders, and what an object lesson on the value of upbringing and environment! We could make decent citizens of 95% of them'.<sup>62</sup> It is especially notable here that the rural working class are credited with the transformation of their urban counterparts. This bears out the points made above by Hinton and Rose that evacuation was about rural/urban difference as well as social class. It is also worth placing the *Aberdeen University Review* author's comments in the context of the long, and particularly Scottish, practice of seeking to 'save' pauper children by removing them from urban slums and placing them in what was thought to be a regenerative rural environment.<sup>63</sup>

In terms of what had been learned from this 'ghastly experiment', adequate housing had to be provided after the War. Living in overcrowded conditions, the evacuees could not keep themselves clean, and the School Medical Service could not make up for the deficiency. Second, unemployment should be brought to an end by a scheme of public works. In language similar to that deployed by Glasgow's Lord Provost, it was suggested that industrialisation in Scotland had 'caused an upheaval of communal life, and preoccupied itself with material gain at the expense of degeneration and demoralisation of the masses'. Third, while 'parents long sunk in poverty and despair' could not be reformed, nonetheless 'their children can be guided aright, if within school we direct our efforts towards teaching a practical way of life, hygienic, decent, and moral'.<sup>64</sup> Here, then, was a report from the front line of evacuation. While engaging in somewhat predictable religious and cultural prejudices, it also sought to provide solutions to problems encountered. Crucially, these could not all be attributed to individual misbehaviour. Rather, the socio-economic environment had to be bettered, if not to the benefit of the current adult population then certainly to that of the future.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

<sup>63</sup> See H. J. MacDonald, 'Boarding Out and the Scottish Poor Law, 1845–1914', *Scottish Historical Review*, LXXV, 2, 1999. We are grateful to this journal's anonymous reviewer for reminding us of this point.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 245.

The second of our sources, the survey of evacuation in Scotland, was published in 1944. Its editor was William Boyd, one of the foremost Scottish educationalists with an international reputation in education and educational psychology. Boyd had been a key figure in Glasgow University's Education Department from the 1920s.<sup>65</sup> His study reported on three sociological studies carried out by his Department, two based on questionnaires to graduates and former students, and one based on interviews with children's parents. The evidence from the questionnaire survey suggested that 42% of the children had very good to adequate clothing; 19% had mixed good and bad clothing; and 39% had bad or deplorable clothing. On evacuees' health and cleanliness, it was thought the replies to the questionnaire were unreliable – preliminary medical inspections in the Reception Areas were perfunctory, and only a few kept statistics in the early days. The survey was methodologically sophisticated, and its findings were appropriately objective – similar in some ways to the survey by Susan Isaacs of children evacuated to Cambridge. Boyd concluded of head lice that 'the great majority of the children were reasonably clean in person' and that 'on the whole there appears to have been a considerable amount of exaggeration of the evil'. However, there also remained a 'hard core of dirty children'. In terms of the difficulties affecting householders, the most frequent responses were 'difficult evacuee mothers' (23); 'dirt, dirty habits and bad manners' (17); and 'visits from parents and friends' (15).<sup>66</sup>

The Boyd survey is also of interest regarding parents and evacuation. There seemed a consistent relationship between the size of the family and the proportion of those not evacuated – 'the smaller the family the tighter the grip the parents keep on the children'. Many only children stayed at home or were evacuated privately. Not surprisingly, the poorer the family the more ready the parents were to have their children evacuated under the official scheme; the better off the family, the more ready the parents were to keep them at home or evacuate them privately. It was the working-class evacuation group and the middle-class householders who found mutual adjustment most difficult. Overall difficulties were, though, much less serious than was usually suggested.<sup>67</sup>

The Boyd survey is of further interest in terms of the Nerston Residential Clinic, an experiment in child guidance. At the start of the War, Glasgow had four child guidance clinics. It was found in the Reception Areas that some children were not suitable for billeting in private houses or in ordinary hostels. A special hostel for these children was then first considered; however, it was not until 26 September 1940 that the Nerston Clinic was opened. All cases were regarded as having serious psychological problems. The success of the hostel meant it was

<sup>65</sup> On Boyd's standing in education, see L. Paterson, *Scottish Education in the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh, 2003), 47–8.

<sup>66</sup> Boyd (ed.), *Evacuation in Scotland*, 69. For the English equivalent see Susan Isaacs (ed.), *The Cambridge Evacuation Survey* (London, 1941).

<sup>67</sup> Boyd (ed.), *Evacuation in Scotland*, 84; Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy*, 104.

established as a permanent part of Glasgow's Child Guidance Service.<sup>68</sup> This underlines the importance of evacuation in providing a vehicle for experiments for smaller institutions, such as hostels, and in highlighting the psychological health of children in general. It was also an important victory for those, such as Boyd himself, who wanted Scottish child guidance to continue to be based on psychology and educational psychology rather than on psychiatry, as was the case in England.<sup>69</sup>

Our third source is *Our Scottish Towns: Evacuation and the Social Future*, produced by the Scottish Women's Group on Public Welfare and published in 1944. Three important contextual points need to be made. *Our Scottish Towns* was explicitly designed as a complement to *Our Towns: A Close Up*, produced by the Women's Group on Public Welfare, in association with the National Council for Social Service, and published in 1943. Second, it drew extensively on the work of Boyd and the *Aberdeen University Review* article.<sup>70</sup> Most of the Scottish material was based on the evacuations from Glasgow and Edinburgh. Third, the Editorial Committee was overwhelmingly comprised of representatives of the Scottish professional middle class.

Their report argued that if the challenges posed by evacuation were to be taken up then a 'searchlight' had to be 'brought to bear on the social conditions which made these things possible and on legislation which had failed to remedy them, if indeed legislation alone can'. It suggested that two features stood out – the young slum mother, and the slum child. Nevertheless, it was also stressed that there was a more optimistic aspect to the story – the educational impact of the new rural environment on urban children. The survey thought that the evacuees were of three types – some very poor from slum areas; some from re-housed districts; and others from well-to-do groups. Many householders were well-disposed towards their guests, in some cases buying complete outfits for the poorly clad. But there were also complaints. In a revealing remark the document commented that these were not confined to evacuees from impoverished inner-city environments since they 'also covered families from the new housing areas'. It was claimed, for example, that among many evacuated mothers a 'parasitic attitude of mind' was apparent and that 'this in itself was a repugnant feature to the average independent woman of the Scottish countryside'. Here there is an obvious parallel with the *Aberdeen University Review* article and further evidence of the urban/rural divide. Some large family groups seemed to expect that everything should be done for them. There was alleged to be much smoking, drinking, and obscene language, with the cinema and dance halls popular forms of escapism. All this, it was felt, indicated an 'appalling' home atmosphere. It was said of one group that the

<sup>68</sup> Boyd (ed.), *Evacuation in Scotland*, 170–89.

<sup>69</sup> Stewart, 'Child Guidance in Inter-War Scotland'.

<sup>70</sup> Scottish Women's Group on Public Welfare, *Our Scottish Towns*, Preface; Welshman, 'Evacuation, Hygiene, and Social Policy'.

mothers could not sew and threw away their clothes instead of repairing them.<sup>71</sup>

Of the mothers themselves it was suggested that many had 'bodily condition and habits' which were 'beyond description'. Control of children, furthermore, was 'either completely negative or exercised only to protect their offspring from any suggestion made by a hostess regarding a change of insanitary habits or the use of the sitting-room walls as scribbling blocks'. Many evacuee mothers allegedly knew little about cooking, preferring tea and fish and chips to soups and milk puddings. The report also claimed there were many women 'of low grade mentality' who had either escaped the attention of after-care committees, or who on account of giving birth to large numbers of children 'had ceased to battle against circumstances'. So far, then, the emphasis might be seen to be on individual behaviour. But the report also suggested that the questions raised by such filth and fecklessness were: 'What made them so? What adaptation of material environment was needed to reform them? What spiritual influence to redeem and recreate?'.<sup>72</sup> In terms of social reconstruction, the key was thus to influence behaviour through a combination of religious instruction and policies to deal with overcrowding.

Regarding the children, *Our Scottish Towns* found the 'bitterest complaint' of the Reception Areas was their 'uncleanliness, nits, bugs, scabies, enuresis and filthy habits, and the attitude of the children towards these conditions'. In short, many evacuated children were in poor health; wet beds and were unaware of proper toilet procedures; and generally were unused to the demands of 'normal' behaviour. Resentment caused by bedwetting was widespread, while juvenile delinquency, though not a new problem, took on new forms in the countryside. The development of child guidance was again suggested, on account of the presence of 'problem children'. The report suggested that a lack of contact with nature in the town child might be a cause of 'restlessness and instability of character', and a period of country schooling might be beneficial. More generally, it claimed that residential schools had a broader contribution to make, and should not be limited to the 'delinquent or handicapped'. *Our Scottish Towns* employed the phrase 'Living Below Standard' that had been used by its English counterpart, suggesting the main recommendations of *Our Towns* were applicable to Scotland. Once again, the main thrust of the argument here might be seen to point to behavioural issues.<sup>73</sup>

However, other points needed to be raised and stressed. First, was the theme of poverty. This is especially noteworthy in the light of the English document's stress on behavioural causes and their solutions. The Scottish document suggested that extreme poverty reacted 'in a deleterious manner on the character and morale of those subject to it for long periods', and moreover was 'cumulative from generation to generation'. It reflected on John Boyd Orr's 1936 report on poverty

<sup>71</sup> Scottish Women's Group on Public Welfare, *Our Scottish Towns*, 11.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 18, 11, 13, 14, 16.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

and income, arguing that these issues were central to reconstruction. Moreover it linked poverty with the nutrition of mothers, and to infant mortality. Related to poverty was unemployment. It was thus emphasised that

a major proportion of the degenerate women described in previous pages and, similarly, the mothers of the unaccompanied verminous and problem children, had suffered acutely from unemployment in their own childhood and subsequent married life.

To live constantly on a depressed standard of living, where life was a hand to mouth existence, was to experience 'the bitterness of defeat'.<sup>74</sup>

A third issue was accommodation. The 1935 housing survey had indicated that in Scotland the 22.6% of Scottish families lived in overcrowded circumstances, compared to 3.8 in England. Percentages were also, and unsurprisingly, high in the evacuation areas – 29.1% in Glasgow; 40.9% in Clydebank; 42.1% in Port Glasgow; and 17.2% in Edinburgh. The report recommended that housing schemes should be a prominent part of reconstruction plans, including experiments in property management under social visitors. Fourth, and crucial to the argument of this article, it was asserted that the Scottish 'approach to social problems and to schemes for social amelioration' differed 'in many ways' from that in England, and that this was 'well known to social workers'.<sup>75</sup> This was an important assertion of Scottish particularity of analysis and policy solution.

*Our Scottish Towns* undoubtedly did air some 'traditional' views and policy solutions. Nonetheless, what is particularly striking is that its English counterpart's prominent emphasis on the 'problem family' is entirely absent. This bears out our central argument about structural rather than behavioural emphases; and a self-consciously Scottish approach to certain social issues. Comparing the social problems and schemes for social amelioration in England and Scotland, the report noted 'there is no getting away from the stern facts of greater poverty, previous greater unemployment, with the seeds of degeneration thickly sown, higher infant mortality and a rising wave of juvenile delinquency'.<sup>76</sup> The survey concluded with the overtly structural assertion that 'improved social conditions are necessary to make better human beings' and on the rousing note that it had been written for 'the home-makers of Scotland, those key-workers in all citizenship' with the aim of inspiring them to 'magnify their office'. The 'rehabilitation' of the family was, it continued, the 'greatest factor in social reconstruction' as the family was 'the basis on which progress is founded: the family makes the State'.<sup>77</sup>

Despite the problems to which it had drawn attention, *Our Scottish Towns* clearly

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 24, 25.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

took a positive view of the potential of reconstruction to alter and improve the condition of the Scottish urban working class and the broad tendency of its approach was to prioritise the structural over the behavioural. Our argument therefore questions Rose's interpretation that the document stressed 'morality and education more than social conditions'.<sup>78</sup>

### Conclusion

Evacuation was an important episode in modern Scottish social history and thus worthy of attention in its own right. Analysis of this experience, moreover, adds a new dimension to the broader historiography on evacuation and its subsequent policy impact. Scottish evacuation shows both variation from the 'English' experience and, as a corollary, the ongoing autonomy of Scottish welfare practice and philosophy. In strictly educational terms – that is judging by subsequent educational attainment – the evacuation appears to have had no long term impact one way or another on the evacuees themselves.<sup>79</sup> But what it did was both to draw attention to the plight of Scotland's urban working class; and, thereby, to provide the opportunity for analysis of that situation, and proposals for its remedy which emphasised structural rather than behavioural factors.

How does the Scottish evidence map on to the main strands of the revisionist interpretation of evacuation? While the Scottish experience may have differed in some respects from that in England and Wales there was, as might be expected, still much in common. For one thing, the former reinforces the argument that evidence on evacuees' health and physical condition was impressionistic and contradictory; and the experience itself was an extremely complex one. On the question of the extent to which civil servants and other policy-makers accepted the evidence of evacuation, though, it can be argued that they did not cling unreservedly to entrenched attitudes, and this did feed through into policy reforms. The deliberations of the Advisory Committee on Evacuation provide illuminating insights in this respect, as do the positive proposals for the widening of the scope of post-war educational services, for example through more systematic use of child guidance.

Perhaps most importantly, there is no evidence that the Scottish experience of evacuation actually served to boost a conservative, behavioural interpretation of poverty which saw the condition of the children as resulting primarily from poor parenting and social inadequacy, reflected in the post-war concept of the 'problem family'. This concept was almost entirely absent from the debate, even in the 'conservative' passages of documents such as the *Aberdeen University Review* article and *Our Scottish Towns*. Such an approach almost certainly drew on existing Scottish tendency towards structural explanations of poverty and poor social

<sup>78</sup> Rose, *Which People's War?*, 60.

<sup>79</sup> Paterson, *Scottish Education in the Twentieth Century*, 105–6.

conditions. This is borne out by, for instance, the reception of the Boyd survey and *Our Scottish Towns* in *The Scotsman*. Of the former the paper noted that the 'greatest lesson' of evacuation was that many of the problems perceived were 'not truly evacuation problems at all, but simply the result of shortcomings in the social conditions of life'. This was a reasonable point, to which might be added the Boyd survey's observations on the exaggerated claims about the poor condition of many evacuees. Of the latter, reviewed a month later, it was observed that the pamphlet showed that 'the problems which arose in acute form ... are primarily those of upbringing'. However, this apparently moralistic and behavioural approach was significantly qualified when the reviewer noted that what the *Our Scottish Towns* report also showed was the way in which children were 'victims' not only of their upbringing, but also of their environment.<sup>80</sup>

In turn, this draws our attention to the particularity of the Scottish narrative, not simply in organisational terms, but also in analyses of evacuation and, in the longer term, in reinforcing the relative autonomy of Scottish welfare. As we have seen, this was something to which the *Our Scottish Towns* report explicitly drew attention and it clearly played itself out in the post-war era. So, for example, the Scottish evacuation experience was drawn upon by the Clyde Committee, a body set up in the mid-1940s to investigate the issue of homeless children in Scotland and whose findings and recommendations fed in to the 1948 Children Act.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, the Scottish version of child guidance was strengthened by its role in the evacuation experience and continued to dominate Scottish child guidance practice.<sup>82</sup> More generally, of course, Scottish child welfare and education policies took a different post-war trajectory from their southern counterparts, again building on both existing relative autonomy and wartime experience.<sup>83</sup>

It could be argued that in many respects the Scottish experience of evacuation was close to that of England and Wales. We would contend, however, that such differences as existed were significant in themselves; were rooted in different approaches to the question of poverty and social deprivation; and were part of Scotland's relative autonomy in welfare matters. In historiographical terms, we would further argue, the 'revisionist' case on evacuation needs to be amended in the light of Scotland's 'ghastly experiment'. Finally, more regional and local research is needed in order to establish a comprehensive account of what happened to evacuated children in the early part of the Second World War, and with what consequences.

<sup>80</sup> *Scotsman*, 31 Aug. 1944, 7; and 12 Sept. 1944, 4.

<sup>81</sup> J. Stewart, "'The Most Precious Possession of a Nation is its Children': The Clyde Committee on Homeless Children in Scotland", *Scottish Economic and Social History*, 21, 1 (2001).

<sup>82</sup> See, for example, G. Dell, 'Thirty Years of Child Guidance: The Development of the Glasgow Child Guidance Service', *Scottish Educational Studies*, 1, 3 (1969).

<sup>83</sup> K. Murray and M. Hill, 'The Recent History of Scottish Child Welfare', *Children and Society*, 5 (1991); for the historic roots of contemporary welfare policy in these and other areas see Stewart, *Taking Stock*, *passim*.

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