

**Arthur Ross. *Communal Solidarity: Immigration, Settlement, and Social Welfare in Winnipeg's Jewish Community, 1882–1930* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2019), 336 pp., ISBN: 978-0-88755-837-5.**

Arthur Ross' book stands as a very important monograph on many levels. Based on thorough research, it provides the first scholarly narrative and analysis of the organizational behaviour of Winnipeg's Jews from the community's beginning until 1930. The closely written narrative highlights the activities and ideology of many communal activists, some of whom went on to play larger roles on the national Canadian Jewish stage in the Canadian Jewish Congress, Bnai Brith, or the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society. Ross' prodigious and careful research reflects an exemplary grasp of the primary sources that illuminate this time period. This study is also vital to our understanding of the influences that impelled organizational behaviour in the Jewish community between the wars. It also adds greatly to our knowledge of how the Winnipeg Jewish community interacted with other Jews in smaller rural and urban centres in the Prairie provinces and contributes to the literature on the growth of pan-Canadian Jewish organizations such as the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society, and the Zionist Organization of Canada.

The text begins with a lengthy and detailed history of Jewish life in the Russian Empire's Pale of Settlement in the 19th century. After a while, the author makes it clear that this milieu is vital to his observation that the experiences and models of communal organization acquired in the Pale were later deployed in Winnipeg when Russian Jewish emigres formed the vast majority of the community. Their key take-aways from their former homeland were that there were secular models of self-help, and also examples of Jewish political parties working to secure Jewish rights and, as an ultimate goal, the abrogation of the Pale of Settlement and its attendant restrictions on Jewish life. Based on the demography of Jewish immigration to Winnipeg before 1914, Ross emphasizes these secular forms of communal organization over the oft-cited traditional communal organizations led by religious leaders that were very visible in Montreal and Toronto in the same time period. This emphasis is seminal to his later discussions of communal development.

And what an interesting community it proved to be. Given its position on the frontier of Canadian settlement, it is not surprising that only 26 Jews lived in Winnipeg by 1881. But Russian pogroms that began that year triggered a flood of Jewish immigration; by 1914 the community had increased to 13,000, making it Canada's third largest Jewish community. More important, according to Ross, is that the majority of these post-1903 immigrants "had experienced the modernization of Jewish communal governance in the Pale of Settlement" (107) and would apply that model to orga-

nize their burgeoning community. This did not mean, stresses Ross, that the immigrants who used synagogues as their primary social organizations were in conflict with the newer wave of immigrants—they were content to cooperate with the larger secular organizations in most cases. It was a community largely bereft of severe conflicts on the macro level, possibly (though Ross does not comment on this) because the gap between the rich and poor was far smaller than in the Jewish communities of Montreal and Toronto.

One of the most striking facets of this book is Ross' consistent grounding of Jewish communal developments within the broader framework of Winnipeg's communal development. For example, rather than beginning with the rise of the North End as a Jewish immigrant neighbourhood in the late 1890s, Ross provides readers with the entire history of the North End's transformation from wealthy enclave to area of first settlement. His approach to the development of Jewish social institutions similarly traces their history within the larger urban context. While this approach might not suit readers who just want to know the "Jewish side" of things, it is highly useful for continually providing context and reminding readers and researchers that the development of Winnipeg's Jewish communal institutions, as in other North American urban centres, were often subtly but significantly impacted by the non-Jewish communal influences. This holistic approach often demands close reading but makes it clear to readers what influences affected decision making in the formation of Jewish communal institutions.

Ross also documents communal ability to overcome its differences quickly when needed quite early in its existence. For example, it took only five years to realize that two rival orphanages had to be consolidated even if that involved potentially alienating a large donor. The resulting erection of a magnificent state-of-the-art structure supported both by a united Jewish community and backed by a significant contribution from the Manitoba Government testified to a community that had taken significant steps towards unity by 1917. However, similar communal unity wasn't evident when the community was invited to join Winnipeg's Federated Budget Board in 1922. This agency attempted to consolidate fundraising for social welfare agencies across the city, eliminate overlapping services, and introduce proper budgeting guidelines. As Ross demonstrates in detail, the Jewish community's donations indicated a "disgraceful and embarrassing" refusal to contribute to a cause that generously allocated funds to Jewish organizations. This book makes novel contribution to our knowledge of Canadian Jewry's battle to keep the immigration gates open in the 1920s by detailing the permit system used by the Department of Immigration and the quota agreements of 1925 and 1926 between the Department and the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society of Canada. Ross also adds significantly to our knowledge of the intra-Jewish battles over the number of permits awarded to Winnipeg, Montreal, and Toronto that I have already documented and further fleshes out the narrative so cogently

argued by Professors Abella and Troper in *None is Too Many*.

One wishes that Professor Ross had added some thoughts comparing the organization of communal social services in Winnipeg to parallel narratives in Montreal and Toronto. He tantalizes readers by informing us that Winnipeg's Jews knew that their co-religionist had begun organizing welfare funds in Toronto and Montreal but says no more. He also notes that Winnipeg's Jewish institutions sought support from Jewish communities between Thunder Bay (as it is known now) as far away as Saskatchewan, but doesn't comment on the greater significance of Winnipeg as a hub for Western Jewish organizational affiliation. Similarly, while the text details communal contributions to the founding of the Canadian Jewish Congress in 1918–19, it doesn't discuss how some local leaders in philanthropic organization, such as Ben Sheps, used this as a stepping stone to the national scene. The role played by the Chicago Bnai Brith Lodge as a hub of expertise in crafting the home for the aged deserves more exploration as well. As many historians have noted, the north–south pull between the Prairies and their neighbours below the 45<sup>th</sup> parallel has considerable institutional resonance. In sum, Winnipeg is a confluence for both Canadian and American influences and one wonders about how this impacted the unique growth of the Winnipeg Jewish community. The study also fails to address the factors behind the relatively quick triumph of democratic and rationalized means of charitable organization over more traditional ones. The Winnipeg community reached a broad consensus on this with far less acrimony than in Toronto or Montreal. These questions need to be asked and answers proffered so that that Canadian Jewish Studies scholars can use Ross' work to assist a broader examination of the key similarities and differences between Canadian Jewish organizational behaviour and those of American and British Jews and the factors that best explain these. Attention also needs to be paid to intra–ethnic differences that played significant roles in the development of local Jewish communities. Even after reading this detailed and well–researched study, it is not clear to what extent or why Winnipeg Jewry's organizational pattern, history, and behaviour differ from Toronto, Montreal, or Chicago's. In sum, Ross' study is a vital and commendable addition to the corpus of knowledge about Canadian Jewish history while its omissions will hopefully catalyze further research using the excellent resources Ross has utilized and documented.

**Jack Lipinsky, Ph.D**

Associated Hebrew Schools