THE RELIEF SCANDAL IN MONTREAL'S ITALIAN
COMMUNITY AND ITS POLITICAL BACKGROUND:
FASCIO, CONSULATE AND THE ROMAN CATHOLIC
PARISH OF THE CHURCH OF THE
MADONNA DELLA DIFESA, OCTOBER 1932-JULY 1933

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Summary: the following essay is divided into three inter-woven parts. The first deals with the ravage of the Great Depression in Canada; the second explores the Canadian clerical and secular establishment's view of fascism and its local Italian proponents; the last part unravels the cozy collaboration in Montreal among local Italian fascists, the Italian Consulate, the priests of the Italian Catholic Parish Madonna della Difesa and the Saint Vincent de Paul Society, which was in charge of assisting needy people across the city. In 1932, with the approval of the Parish priest, Zanobri Manfriani, the Society gave the task of dispensing relief to Catholic Italians of the Mile End district to the local Italian fascio Luporini and its leader Ottorino Incoronato. After a few months, Incoronato, to avoid being charged with fraud, left Canada in a hurry, for good.

The relief scandal in Montreal in 1932-1933, involving the secretary of the local Italian-based Fascio, Ottorino Incoronato, and indirectly the Italian consulate and the Italian Roman Catholic parish of the Church of the Madonna della Difesa in the city's Mile End district, pitted fascists and antifascists against each other.¹ To avoid being investigated for his handling of relief funds, Incoronato left the country in a hurry. Before his flight, however, Incoronato had been a leading figure in Montreal. He was the secretary of the Montreal Fascio and consequently in the good graces of the Roman Catholic hierarchy and a leader of the city's petit bourgeois Italians (grocers, merchants, travel agents, medical doctors, lawyers and others). Incoronato was highly respected and lavishly praised in the Italian-Canadian fascist newspapers including the weeklies L'Italia and l'Araldo, and the monthly Italia Gente. Indeed, he was one of a small number of important Italian fascists in North America.² The Madonna della Difesa

¹This article is a portion of Chapter 3 of my forthcoming book on the Italian-Canadian antifascist press.
²See Salvemini, Italian Fascist Activities in the United States, p.139.
relief scandal and its protagonist, Incoronato, have been ignored, however, as has the suffering of unemployed Italians and their families during the difficult years of the Great Depression.

As far as we know, the only published reference to the Depression's impact on Italians in Canada is a paragraph from Guglielmo Vangelisti:

In 1934 the Italians in Montreal were circa 24,000. Suddenly the Great Depression (la crisi economica) and there was no work. A large number of workers received relief, which barely allowed them to survive starvation. Lasting ten years, 1929-1939, the crisis was for many families truly a disaster, both economically and also spiritually. Some lost their homes because they could not pay the mortgage in time. Others, because they could not afford to pay taxes, lost valuable pieces of land, which they had owned for years. And, in such terrible economic circumstances, a certain number of our Catholic people, enticed by better assistance, became Protestants.3

Other authors, such as Filippo Salvatore, who published a collection of interviews with leading Italian-Canadian personalities of those years, mention neither the Great Depression nor the scandal in question.4 Not even Antonino Spada, the leading antifascist in Montreal and the major protagonist in the denunciation of the relief scandal, discussed the Depression in his volume *The Italians in Canada.*5 Given this lacuna in the available scholarship this study fills in a portion of the canvas depicting Italian-Canadian life between the two world wars.

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From our twenty-first century perspective, it is perhaps impossible to enter into the state of mind of the thousands of Italian Canadians, and millions of Canadians in general, who experienced the misery and deprivations of the Great Depression. In those years, conditions across Canada were so bad that “men and women and children were dying of starvation. I've seen them dead. Cause of Death? Malnutrition, starvation, no food, weakness, the inability to withstand the winter’s cold, and that was because they had no lodgings. Perhaps only a fire of packing cases burning under the

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4Salvatore, ed., *Le Fascisme et les Italiens à Montréal.*

5Spada, *The Italians in Canada.*
Georgia Viaduct or on the False Creek Flats." In the early 1930s, when the Depression was in its most acute stage, over one million men and women breadwinners were out of work in Canada: "From 16 per cent at the end of August [1931], the unemployment rate rose almost vertically to 25 per cent at the end of February [1932]... It continued to rise, almost unchecked until March 1933 when it reached the incredible level of 30 per cent." The unemployed and their families swelled the number of people in need of relief to over four million men, women, children and elderly: about 40% of the Canadian population.

A glimpse of Canadian conditions in those years is provided in the memoir of Hugh MacLennan, professor of literature at McGill University in Montreal and author of the acclaimed novel *Two Solitudes* and other books. Writing in the late 1960s, MacLennan recalled those lean years:

With a Princeton Ph. D. I was unemployed for five months before I got a school-teacher's job at $25 a week. My friend Blair Fraser, who died last spring after becoming perhaps Canada's best journalist, supported his wife and child by odd stevedoring and snow-shoveling. In 1934 a friend of mine who is now a vice-president in England and a millionaire in pounds, with a Toronto M.A. and a D. Phil in physical chemistry, earned at Oxford under Hinchelwood, became a day laborer, lunch pail in hand, at an oil refinery for $12.50 a week.

If men like MacLennan and his friends—highly educated and well connected within the Canadian establishment—had no choice but to take the few odd jobs available, one can appreciate the position in which workers like Italian immigrants (who had few marketable skills, knew very little English or French, and had no friends in high places) found themselves during those years when even their traditional, back-breaking jobs were taken by people with a Ph.D. in hand.

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7Struthers, p. 55.

The impact of the Depression on Italian Canadians, and particularly on Italians in Montreal, is reflected in the crisis that in the early 1930s invested the Order Sons of Italy, the largest mutual benefit association in the community.9 The order lost more than 30% of its membership because people could not afford to pay the 25 cents in monthly dues required to remain in good standing. A member in good standing was entitled to a premium of $250 in case of death and limited financial assistance to cover illness.10 The order was, and still is, a three-layer organization. At the bottom are the lodges; all the lodges of a province, in Canada, or of a state in the USA, form a grand lodge; and all the grand lodges of both the USA and Canada form the supreme lodge. At the head of this structure are the venerable, grand venerable and supreme venerable respectively. When in October 1933, Giovanni De Silvestro, supreme venerable, visited the Quebec grand lodge, the fascist weekly newspaper L’Italia11 ignored the actual condition of the order and titled an article, “Victorious March of the Order Sons of Italy.” This description was challenged in a report from Montreal to the socialist New York daily, La Stampa libera (The Free Press), which claimed that the order in Quebec had lost about 30 per cent of its membership over a two-year period. This happened, the report stated, despite the fact that in the same period five new lodges had been opened by the order. In strongly polemical language the article in La Stampa libera claimed that:

The weekly Italia, once a supporter of liberal [Italian] Prime Minister Francesco Saverio Nitti and now a champion of fascism, titled an article, ‘Victorious March of the Order Sons of Italy.’ Bravo, indeed a regressive march. Let us see the numbers. Lodge Piave has in a year lost 50 mem-

9 For an analysis of how fascists infiltrated and took over the Order Sons of Italy in Quebec and Ontario, see Principe, “The Difficult Years of the Order Sons of Italy (1920-1926),” pp. 104-116.

10 The Order Sons of Italy of Ontario (Mutual Benefit Society), Constitution and Bylaws, “Article 7. Sick Benefit: 1) Active members in good standing with the Sick Benefit Fund, are entitled to the following benefits: If a member is unable to work through illness or disability, he shall be entitled to $7.00 (seven dollars) per week for the second and subsequent four weeks—5 weeks all together. From the seventh week, he shall receive $5.00 (five dollars) per week for 13 more weeks. 2) The maximum to be paid to a member for Sick Benefit shall be $100.00 (one hundred dollars). Said amount may be exhausted by continuous withdrawals or by separate instalments, covering only one of several illnesses.”

11 For a detailed account of L’Italia’s editorial policy see Principe, The Darkest Side of the Fascist Years, pp. 63-85.
bers; Lodge *Gioventù Italica* from 250 has been reduced to only 70 members; Lodge *Monte Rosa* from 125 has now 54 members; the female lodge *Concordia* is decreasing in spite of the ongoing campaign for new members. In short, the Order, which counted about 1,000 members two years ago, today has less than 700 members. This after it has initiated five new lodges: *Gioventù Italica, Marche, Margherita di Savoia, Duca d'Aosta, and Elisabetta De Silvestro*. This is the victorious march of the Order Sons of Italy in Quebec.\(^\text{12}\)

The article called the local officers of the order “liars and hypocrites” and accused them of unlawfully sending money to the supreme lodge in the United States rather than helping indigent members.\(^\text{13}\) According to the laws governing the order in Canada, the Quebec Grand Lodge was under no obligation to pay a “head tax” to the Supreme Lodge. The report in *La Stampa libera* concluded that the “swindler” officers of the Grand Lodge of Quebec sent hundreds of dollar to the Supreme “boor” De Silvestro while brothers and sisters “suffer in misery.”\(^\text{14}\)

The Depression affected even the Ontario branch of the Order Sons of Italy. As in Quebec, the lodges in the province lost members because of the inability of the unemployed to pay monthly dues. To remedy this situation, the council of the Toronto Lodge Ontario, one of the largest lodges in the Province, agreed to an “amnesty” for new members who did not have enough money to join the brotherhood and those members who were in default. The officers of the lodge announced their decision in Toronto's weekly *Il Progresso italo-canadese*:

Last Sunday, the Lodge Ontario of the Order Sons of Italy met in its regular monthly meeting. Among the many items on the agenda, one was discussed and unanimously approved. It was about an amnesty for a six-month period. In order to increase the membership, the Lodge decided

\(^{12}\) *La Stampa libera*, “La vergognosa visita di De Silvestro a Montreal, Canada,” 1 November 1933, p. 2.

\(^{13}\) *La Stampa libera*, “La vergognosa visita di De Silvestro a Montreal, Canada,” 1 November 1933, p. 2. “In discussing the Order's legality with the Supreme Venerable of the order in America, the just and right man S.W. Sannizzaro, Grand Venerable of the Quebec Order, pointed out that the regulations of the Supreme Order were in contrast with the laws regulating the Grand Lodge of Quebec. What did the man of exemplary morality, De Silvestro, reply? I will tell you what he said to the Grand Venerable. He said these literal words: 'Don't worry about the regulation of the Supreme Lodge, observe the order of the State',”

\(^{14}\) *La Stampa libera*, “La vergognosa visita di De Silvestro a Montreal, Canada,” 1 November 1933, p. 2.
that the Italians who wish to be part of the great family of the Order Sons of Italy could do so by paying only one dollar as admission fee.

Commenting on this decision the paper added, “the officers of the Lodge Ontario have studied the present situation [author's emphasis] very well and came to a wise decision.”

The economic hardships experienced during the Great Depression challenged organizations such as the Order Sons of Italy and also increased the apprehension within the political, economic and financially empowered elites in the country that the Reds (meaning every one on the political left of centre who disagreed with the status quo) were fomenting unrest and turmoil. For example, in Hugh Garner’s novel, *Cabbagetown*, a fictional character, conservative MPP for Ontario Thomas Mundy, candidly states: “The unemployed, and those who claim to be but wouldn’t work if work was given them, are being enticed by foreign agitators into hunger marches and foolish demonstrations. A lot of them – not all, but a lot of them – should be thrown into prison.” And Irene Baird, in her masterly novel on the Depression in western Canada, *Waste Heritage*, castigates this smug attitude of the well to do in the following conversation:

Black-hair, [...] remarked broodingly, “I heard they got the Reds workin’ among those boys. Feller told me Reds was at the bottom of this whole trouble. [...] “I heard that Red story, too,” Tom said, “I heard it more places than one.” Old Man Morgan’s chin wagged in challenge. “So what? The Reds didn’t start nothin’, they just come in an’ took advantage of the set-up. The whole damn system is at the bottom of the trouble.”

Though these examples come from the mouths of fictional characters, they suggest the view of a sizable portion of the upper middle class in Canada during the Great Depression: foreign agitators, meaning communists or Reds, were behind the labour unrest, the rallies, and protest meetings and marches of unemployed people that occurred daily across the country.

This view prevailed also among the Italian-Canadian petit bourgeois sympathizers of fascism. It dominated particularly in Montreal where, after the Conciliation Pact of 1929 between the Italian kingdom and the Holy

See, proponent of fascism and the Roman Catholic clergy merged into a holy bond against communism and any social protest they believed was inspired by Godless people. In their opinion fascist Italy was blessed because State and Church worked harmoniously together; consequently, the Italian population was happy and the country was spared the turmoil agitating the rest of the world. A continuous stream of propaganda from Rome enforced this idea. Thus, local Italian-language newspapers both in Toronto and Montreal pointed out how Italy had changed for the better under fascism and its leader, Benito Mussolini. One example of this profound change was, according to the local press, the way Mussolini's Italy responded to the 1930 earthquake that destroyed large areas around Naples.

As soon as news of the earthquake reached Canada, Italian Canadians began, as they had done after previous disasters, to organize relief for the devastated areas where many of them had families, relatives, and friends. But the Italian consuls in Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto, acting on orders received from Rome, ordered them to desist. As minister of foreign affairs, Mussolini sent embassies and consulates abroad a telegram in which he ordered his subordinates to thank people for their generous initiatives but to decline any donation, emphatically stating that, "Italy is able to look after her citizens without handouts from abroad." The Toronto weekly Il Progresso italo-canadese published this and the following phonogram, which the Toronto vice-consul Ambrosi had received from the general consulate in Ottawa:

R. Consulate of Italy in Toronto.

According to telegraphic information reaching us from Rome, the earthquake, which has heavily hit the provinces of Benevento, Avellino and Foggia has caused heavy losses. However, figures published by newspapers are exaggerated.

His Excellency, the Head of the Government has clearly stated that eventual donations or initiatives aimed at bringing aid to the affected populations should be declined. The fascist Government has already taken all necessary measures.

Signed, G. C. Ferrante.

Elsewhere in the same issue Il Progresso italo-canadese published another letter from Ambrosi in which he reinforced the phonogram message.

18 On 8 February 1929, Mussolini and Cardinal Pietro Gasparri, the Vatican Secretary of State, signed the Conciliation Pact, which created the independent Vatican State and ended fifty years of enmity between the Roman Catholic Church and the Italian Kingdom.

19 L'Araldo del Canada (L'Araldo), 30 August 1930.

20 Il Progresso italo-canadese, 31 July 1930, "This Royal Consulate has appreciated
Amazed, the newspaper’s editor wrote, under a five-column title, “With generosity of means, the fascist government undertook all necessary measures to assist the populations affected by the tragic earthquake.”

The earthquake disaster had a rhetorical appendix in Montreal where the secretary of the Fascio (fascist club), the same Ottorino Incoronato presented above, used a cheque in the amount of $28.50 he had received as a donation for the earthquake victims as a symbol of the success of the fascist regime. The money had been donated by 16 immigrant workers in the small Italian colony of La Turque, Quebec. Incoronato asked Rome if such a donation could be accepted as a spontaneous initiative illustrating national solidarity. The answer was a decisive “No!” The Montreal Italian-language weekly L’Araldo, which at the time was the “official organ of the Montreal Fascio,” reported the decision on its front page with the following headline: “Fascist Hierarchy Reaffirms the Order to Courteously Decline Every Donation for the Earthquake Victims.” The accompanying editorial reported that:

Further proof of the devotion and love that Italian emigrants feel for the Motherland is the symbolic gift of $28.50 from the small Italian community of La Turque, Quebec. The money is for the victims of the

very much the noble initiative that associations, newspapers and prominent persons have undertaken to collect donations for the population affected by the earthquake. While inviting clubs and individuals to desist from such philanthropic initiative, the Royal Consulate expresses its sincere appreciation for the brotherly sentiments that united every Italian heart in helping brothers living in the earthquake areas of the Kingdom.”

Secondo notizie telegrafiche pervenute da Roma, terremoto che ha colpito grave fra Province Benevento, Avellino, Foggia ha causato sensibili perdite stop Cifre pubblicate da alcuni giornali sono tuttavia esagerate stop Per espressa disposizione S.E. Capo Governo debbono essere decline eventuali offerte e iniziative tendenti a recare soccorso popolazioni colpite, avendo già Governo Fascista preso tutti i provvedimenti necessary.
Signed, Ferrante.

earthquake that devastated four fine provinces in southern Italy.

The secretary of the Montreal Fascio who received the cheque was to send it to the competent Italian authorities. The offering was so spontaneous that the secretary (whose instruction from the Royal Consul was to politely decline any offering) felt compelled to inform the officers of the Fascist Party.

Signed by Commendatore Piero Parini, General Director of the Italians Abroad, the answer confirms the will of Il Duce not to accept any donations even if they are given spontaneously. The fascist state is capable of looking after all its citizens in any circumstance. Il Duce was, however, touched by the solidarity shown to the victims of the disaster by fascists and Italians living abroad.

Expressing his gratitude for their generous and patriotic initiative, the secretary has therefore sent the cheque back to the Italians of La Turque. He however encouraged them to keep alive their love for the land of their birth.23

One could easily understand the effect that fascist propaganda had on the Italian-Canadian population as a whole.24 Most had left Italy before the Great War and they had imprinted on their souls the misery and poverty

23 L’Araldo, 9 August 1930: “A dimostrare ancora una volta il legame di devozione e di amore che unisce gli emigrati italiani alla Madre Patria, è venuta questa settimana una simbolica offerta di $28.50 della piccola colonia italiana di La Turque, Que. a favore dei colpiti del recente terremoto che ha funestato quattro magnifiche province dell’Italia meridionale.

L’offerta è stata inviata al Segretario del Fascio di Montreal perché la trasmettesse alle competenti autorità in Italia ed è stata così spontanea e cordiale che il Segretario, che pur avendo ricevuto istruzioni dal Regio Consul di declinare tutte le eventuali offerte che fossero giunte al suo ufficio, ha sentiti [sic] la necessità di informarne le Autorità Gerarchiche del Partito Fascista.

La risposta pervenuta a firma del Comm. Piero Parini, Direttore Generale degli Italiani all’Estero, riconfermava la precisa volontà del Capo del Governo di non accettare offerte anche se spontanee, poiché lo Stato Fascista basta da solo a proteggere i cittadini in ogni circostanza, e si dichiarava sensibile alla solidarietà dei fascisti e degli italiani del Canada per la sciagura che ha colpito l’Italia.

Il Segretario del Fascio ha quindi restituito il Cheque agli italiani di La Turque esprimendo loro tutta la gratitudine del Partito per questo loro gesto generoso e patriottico ed esortandoli a continuare nel loro amore verso la terra che diede loro i natali.”

of their small villages. They also remembered how before Mussolini came to power they had always been encouraged to give what they could to help their brethren when a natural disaster occurred in Italy or also during the First World War.25 Now, they were told, their country of origin neither needed nor asked for help. Under fascism, they were assured, Italy had become a wealthy country; hence Mussolini proudly refused to accept even the spontaneous help proffered by Italians living abroad. While in Canada unemployment created distress and fear, in Italy the people stood peacefully behind their Duce whom they fully trusted because he had transformed the country for the better.

Moreover, local fascist newspapers both in Montreal and Toronto, to heighten the contrast with the idealized received image of Italy, regularly reported the soaring number of unemployed men and women in Canada and the United States, and the many strikes that devastated England and France where the price of bread would soon be beyond the workers’ reach: “In the United States with a population of 123 million, the unemployed are over 6 million; in Great Britain, with a population of 44 million, the unemployed are more than two million; in France strikes occur daily and as unemployment increases, the cost of living rises steadily: since July, the price of bread rose from 2 to 2.60 liras per Kg.”26 While turmoil shook the world, Italy was, according to the Italian-Canadian fascist press, a utopia. “At the present hour,” according to L’Araldo, “while the world is in distress caused by a crisis that makes people and governments sleepless, the calm of the Italian people standing behind its Duce has a universal significance.”27

Of course, the reality was that Italy was not exempt from the problems that the economic crisis had caused everywhere in the Western world. The official number of unemployed people in Italy rose to 693,256 in 1931; an

26 L’Araldo, 30 August 1930, “Lavoro.”
27 L’Araldo, 30 August 1930, “Lavoro”: “Nell’ora presente, mentre tutto il mondo si torce nel travaglio di una crisi che turba il sonno di tutti, popoli e governi, l’esempio dell’Italia fascista assurge a un significato immenso.

Non è il cartello-programma di un partito, non è la composizione di un disidio, ma sforzo concorde e compatto di tutto un popolo che, stretto attorno al suo Duce, ritrova dopo il travaglio di secoli e di lotte la propria unità non solo ethnografica ma soprattutto spirituale, procede sicuro verso la meta che ostacoli insidie e povertà non allontanano, ma avvicinano per l’accelerarsi del ritmo di Marcia sorto dalla certezza di una incrollabile volontà, di una sicura fede, di una severa disciplina.”
increase of 328,000 or almost 50% more than the total for previous year. Furthermore, in defiance of the fascist legislation that prohibited strikes, in 1931 alone the high unemployment triggered 172 strikes, euphemistically called workers’ “disturbances,” and 287 popular demonstrations.\(^{29}\) Officially, these 459 labour actions could not be called strikes because of government legislation, but as De Felice wrote: “while the different forms of strike or abstention from work reached their peak in the years 1930-31, remonstrations of unemployed people demanding either jobs or assistance or other economic aid reached their maximum the following year, 1932.\(^{30}\)

In Canada as in the United States, the view of Italy conveyed by fascist propaganda was reinforced by news from travelers, business people and scholars who visited Italy. In Toronto, for example, Lady Eaton spoke highly of Mussolini who, according to her, had “reinvigorated the Italian spirit.”\(^{31}\) Further, government officials and politicians in North America (and elsewhere) who agreed with Mussolini about how to deal with the Reds admired him. The fact that Mussolini had created a stable government, put an end to what on this side of the Atlantic Ocean was perceived as a state of anarchy, and more importantly smashed the Red threat, was welcomed by the governing conservative powers in Canada. That Mussolini had, at the same time, ended freedom and democracy in Italy was of little concern. Most people amongst the powerful supported Brigadier General Draper, the chief of police in Toronto, and Langvin, director of police in Montreal, who in their small way emulated the Italian dictator in their dealings with the Reds. Police jailed communists and harassed those who took part in marches and rallies of the unemployed.\(^{32}\) Canadian Prime Minister R.B.

\(^{28}\)The unemployed workers were distributed throughout Italy as follows: Piedmont, 70,038; Lombardy, 117,895; Emilia, 99,187; Campania, 39,026; Puglie, 45,600; Calabria, 28,277; and Sicily, 30,124. However, real unemployment exceeded the official figure, see Santarelli, *Storia del fascismo*, p. 230.


\(^{30}\)De Felice makes it clear, however, that the police made no distinction between a remonstration for economic reasons or a brawl among rival fans during a soccer game; De Felice, *Mussolini il duce*, pp. 77-78.

\(^{31}\)Bollettino italo-canadese, 1 Augst 1930, “Mussolini giudicato dalla Signora Eaton”.

Bennett (mirroring American President Herbert Hoover who deployed the army to deal with the “Bonus Army” veterans of World War I) called out tanks to confront a delegation of unemployed men and women who had convened on Parliament Hill in Ottawa.

A further example of how the establishment leaned toward fascism occurred in August 1934 when the University of Toronto administration refused the use of Convocation Hall to the Canadian Congress Against War and Fascism while only a few months before the same hall had been made available to an Italian fascist delegation for an entire week. The Canadian Congress secretary, E.A. Beder, denounced the University administration’s double standard in a letter to the Toronto Daily Star.

Since the Canadian establishment approved of fascism and its local proponents, the Italian-Canadian petit bourgeois in particular, longing for acceptance, were glad to follow in the footsteps of the Canadian elite. They too supported Bennett’s firm-hand policy against communists and the left

33 “The army, under General Douglas MacArthur, carried out its mission with few casualties, but with a thoroughness that the situation scarcely required. Four troops of cavalry with drawn sabers, six tanks, and a column of steel-helmeted infantry with fixed bayonets entered downtown Washington. After clearing the buildings on Pennsylvania Avenue, they crossed the Anacostia Bridge, thousands of veterans and their wives and children fleeing before them, rooted the bonusers from their crude home, hurled tear gas bombs into the colony, and set the shacks afire with their torches. That night, Washington was lit by the burning camps of Anacostia Flats,” cited in Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, p. 15.


35 The Toronto Daily Star, 16 August 1934, “Letters to the Editor”:

Sir,

In your report on the University refusal to grant Convocation Hall for the Bevan—Rosenfield meeting you quote the assistant superintendent as stating that the Hall was refused because the proper authorities were not here to pass upon it. In the letter to me however the reasons given are (1) That no silver collection can be made in the hall, and (2) That the hall is not available for political meetings.

The first reason is the purest form of snobbery since it means that only wealthy organizations or those influential enough to wheedle subsides from governing bodies can ever bring their speakers into this university forum. As for the second reason, it will be remembered that last winter Italian groups arriving here from Italy, that is to say Fascists, occupied this hall not for one night but for a full week. In the light of this I think one can fairly say that when Fascist organizations want Convocation Hall thus mission is looked as “educational” but when anti-Fascist bodies seek the same hall their purpose is immediately dubbed “political.”
in general. This, and the almost general acceptance of Mussolini and his regime, made possible the belief amongst prominent Italian Canadians that there was no contradiction in being both a member of the Italian Fascist Party and a loyal Canadian citizen. As had happened during the First World War, they felt that they were fighting a real and presumed-common enemy but in this case the enemy was not a member of the Entente but rather communism. Predictably, until Mussolini’s exploits in Ethiopia, Italian-Canadian fascists were perceived as a bulwark against communism; not to be dissuaded but rather encouraged and helped in their noxious activities.36 During the 1930s, “the Toronto Red squad relied on endorsement from social groups [including “respectable” Italians] to justify its heavy-handed approach against the Communist Party.”37 Even the government formed by the newly elected Liberal party, which won the federal election in October 1935, gave mixed signals regarding fascism. At the beginning of the Mussolini’s campaign in Ethiopia, Mackenzie King “disavowed” the Canadian delegate to the League of Nations who, being “without instruction,” had advanced the idea of imposing petroleum sanctions on Italy.38 This move would have aborted the Italian aggression against Ethiopia.39

36Principe, The Darkest Side of the Fascist Years, pp. 55-58.
38Lower, “The Great Debate of the 1930s,” p. 537. In fact, the Canadian delegate to the League of Nations in Geneva was ordered by then new Prime Minister Mackenzie King to return home, see Carter, “Canada and the Sanctions in the Italo-Ethiopian Conflict,” pp. 74-84: “Fu anche ipotizzato il blocco del petrolio che avrebbe potuto paralizzare le linee di trasporto e di rifornimento dell’esercito italiano, se applicato con prontezza, onde non consentire la necessaria accumulazione da parte italiana. Per alcune settimane sembrò che a Ginevra maturassero le condizioni per un’azione concertata, sotto la guida della Gran Bretagna, che avrebbe potuto avere esito determinante. In realtà, accanto agli sforzi di definire ed estendere l’azione collettiva, i governi francese e britannico continuavano parallelamente lo sforzo di conciliazione nei confronti di Mussolini fino a giungere alla formulazione del patto Hoare-Laval che concedeva all’Italia il controllo di fatto del territorio e dell’economia etiopica, di cui salvaguardava solo la sovranità in termini formali,” Migone, Gli Stati Uniti e il Fascismo, p. 313.
In the early 1930s, the overt sympathy of the Canadian political, business and financial establishment for Mussolini and his regime compounded with the misery of the Great Depression and the nostalgia for the world that immigrants had left behind, created in the minds of Italian Canadians, particularly among petit bourgeois men and women, a powerful psychological image of fascist Italy as a blessed land. This frame of mind helps to elucidate the reactions of Italian-Canadian leaders when antifascists soiled the bright image of Italy that was dear to their hearts. Further, Italian-Canadian antifascists forcefully denounced subterfuges, irregularities, and abuses carried out by local fascists who, in Montreal, under the supervision of Father Zanobri Manfriani, were in charge of distributing relief to unemployed Italians. Mussolini knighted Father Manfriani, the parish priest of the Church of the Madonna della Difesa of the Italian-Canadian settlement in the Mile End district in Montreal, for his patriotic merits.

In April 1932 in Montreal, an antifascist leaflet, or “libel” as it was described by fascists, soiled the utopian image of Mussolini’s Italy and tarnished the reputation of local fascist leaders. The leaflet angered fascists, prominent lay and religious Italian-Canadian leaders, and Italian Consul Massimo Zanotti-Bianco. A copy of the leaflet in question has not been located, but the reaction of prominent members of the community, led by Ottorino Incoronato, suggests its no-doubt scorching content. L’Araldo published a virulent indictment against the antifascist “scoundrels” that was signed by Incoronato. “This week,” he wrote, “a filthy group of subversives has attempted to disturb the serenity and harmony of our community by distributing through the mail an anonymous libel which attacks, calumniates and offends the honour of well-known co-nationals who are among the most devoted and sincere exponents of civil virtues. The persons responsible are clearly identified and reported to justice to brand them as delinquents.”

According to Incoronato, an important figure in Italian fascist and clerical circles in Canada and the United States, antifascists were trying to gain the lost trust of the community by slandering respectable fascist leaders:

Today, the Italian Canadians, being persuaded, convinced and grown in self-esteem, are making an effort to represent themselves as second to no other race. They love order; they are honest, progressive and hard working. They finally are united and on the way to a great future. This is why delinquents who ran away from Italy without a passport, those who

40 L’Araldo, 30 April 1932, “In Guardia Contro la Canaglia Sovversiva”.
41 Salvemini, Italian Fascist Activities in the United States, p. 139.
renounced their own Fatherland and were not able to acquire a new one, betray Canada by stirring agitations and preaching communist theories. In the attempt to bring confusion in our community, they have employed the weapon of cowards, slandering the best elements of the community, the fascists. This is their attempt to drive away from fascism the sound Italian people and to ensnare them in the resulting confusion.42

*L'Araldo* received several letters echoing these charges and expressing support for the Montreal *Fascio Luporini*, its leader Incoronato, and all his cohorts. As an introduction to these letters, *L'Araldo* added its own indictment: “The anonymous libel distributed by wicked individuals with the criminal aim of creating mistrust, confusion and alarm in our community has failed; the soul of our community is armoured and invulnerable. We could conscientiously affirm that instead of the effect intended by the evil doers, the community has compensated the slandered persons with support and trust of gigantic proportion.” *L'Araldo* continued with praise for Incoronato’s “denunciation of the slanderers” and according to the paper, he “attracted the attention of the community and, in response, both he and *L'Araldo* have received written and spoken expressions of solidarity for his clear words in this moment of confusion.”43

The most authoritative letter, denouncing antifascists, came from Consul General Massimo Zanotti-Bianco who accused the unknown individuals of trying to “spread mistrust and demoralization” among Italian Canadians. He invited “all our co-nationals to ignore the attacks against community leaders” and he also promised that, “Everything will be done to discover the guilty parties and bring them to justice.”44 The paper pub-

42Salvemini, *Italian Fascist Activities in the United States*, p. 139.
44*L'Araldo*, 7 May 1932, “L’autorità consolare e l’intera comunità condanna gli autori del libello”: “Vengo a conoscenza che alcuni anonimi individui cercano, a mezzo di fogli stampati alla macchia, di gettare, con la calunnia, discredito sulla nostra comunità e di portare la demoralizzazione in seno ad essa. La stessa forma criminale scelta per formulare le accuse, che anche questa volta vengono specialmente dirette contro alcuni dei migliori elementi della nostra colonia, toglie ad esse ogni credito

Qualche persona che dia loro il minimo peso si presta al gioco dei calunniatori, il cui movente è l’odio e il cui evidente scopo è quello di dissuadere, a mezzo dell’intimidazione a base di calunnia, i connazionali dal portare il loro patriottico contributo al progresso della colonia.

Desidero pertanto invitare tutti i connazionali a ignorare gli attacchi
lished three other letters supporting Incoronato. They were from Leone Gagliardi, member of the Quebec Liquor Control Board, Sergeant Nicola Germano, and Giulio Fantacci, editor of the monthly Italian-language magazine *Itala Gente*. Fantacci did not want to wait until his journal was published to declare his indignation against what he described as an “unspeakable anonymous little piece of paper.” According to Fantacci “the entire colony is nauseated and condemns the despicable act and brands its authors as delinquents.”

mossi contro di loro e dò nello stesso tempo formale assicurazione che nulla verrà risparmiato affinchè i colpevoli vengano individuati e assicurati alla giustizia.

Con distintissima considerazione
Il Reggio Console,
Massimo Zanotti-Bianco”.

45In June 1940, Giulio Fantacci and Nicola Germano were sent to Petawawa internment camp as active members of the Montreal Fascio Luporini. Ironically, Fantacci was under fascist police surveillance as an antifascist until 1938: before coming to Canada in 1930 he had been in Argentina where he worked for the antifascist newspaper, *La Patria degli Italiani*.

46Archivio Centrale dello Stato (ACS), EUR, Roma, Casellario Politico Centrale (CPC), b. 1945.

47Fantacci’s letter in the original reads:
Ten. Cav. O. Incoronato
Segretario del Fascio Italiano
Montreal
L’inqualificabile foglietto anonimo diramato giorni addietro nell’intento di colpire con basse malignità, falsificazioni meschine ed insulti plebei alcuni dei nostri connazionali più in vista, ha suscitato un unanime senso di indignazione e di protesta non solo da parte della stampa italiana di Montreal, ma anche della colonia che, presa di nausea, condanna l’atto ignominioso e bolla senz’altro chi ne è stato l’autore.
La rivista da me diretta, *Itala Gente*, per non attendere la pubblicazione del suo nuovo numero, si rivolge alla S. V. che tanto bene ha pubblicamente stigmatizzato siffatta sconcezza; e, mentre le esprime la propria solidarietà, si associa alla voce di biasimo levatasi tanto dal confratello *L’Araldo e L’Italia*, come dalla parte sana ed autorevole della comunità nostra.
Chi vive tra la melma non potrebbe tentare di colpire e di diffamarre altrui se non servendosi di ciò l’avvolge; e pertanto esso scaglia del fango. Tale fango però, come nel caso attuale, ricade quasi sempre su chi l’ha lanciato.
Auguriamoci che il responsabile, o i responsabili, presto o tardi possano essere scoperti e puniti. Ad ogni modo, essi una prima condanna l’hanno avuta, ed è, oltre all’unanime biasimo, il.... Titolo di delinguenti vili e spregevoli, che la pubblica opinione ha lor decretato.
Voglia gradire i miei migliori saluti e credermi
Dev.mo Suo
Giulio Fantacci
Of course the community’s solidarity and harmony existed only in the minds of the letter writers and in Incoronato’s rhetoric. In fact, in Montreal a fascist appeal to Italian business people to hire Italian workers to alleviate the misery of many families whose breadwinners were unemployed brought no results. The fascist appeal was repeated by the Italian consul, but produced only columns in the local Italian-language newspapers. Under the title “A Noble and Patriotic Initiative,” L’Araldo praised the fascio and its secretary lieutenant, Chevalier Ottorino Incoronato. “Some weeks ago”, the paper wrote, “we announced the initiative undertaken by the fascio to remedy the grave employment crisis by creating an office where our co-nationals who are out of work may find support.”

For this initiative, the accountant Filippo De Grande voluntarily and freely offered his service and his office. Consul Massimo Zanotti-Bianco sent a letter of approval, spurring Italian business people to hire Italian workers: “Italians, employers and unemployed, could turn to this office every time they either need workers or jobs respectively. This office would ensure that work seekers and job offers coincide.”48 As noted, this initiative bore no results. Italian businessmen, like their colleagues of every other nationality, hired those workers who could do the job required at the lowest wage. In his research on Italians and Ukrainians in Montreal Charles Bayley found that “in the three Italian owned manufacturing plants, La Gioconda, Tarsal Ease, and Prettynell companies, of their 165 employees only 66 were Italians,” in 1936.49

Italian workers, who were employed mostly in construction, railway maintenance, and in transportation, were accustomed to seasonal unemployment, but year-round unemployment was something with which they could not cope. Being idle for too long forced them “to draw on savings, mortgage or give up homes owned or being purchased, borrow from relatives and friends, obtain credit at corner grocers, and finally seek aid from organized relief and charitable agencies.”50 Prominent individuals in Montreal’s Italian community “estimated that at the peak of the depression seventy-five percent [of the Italian population] were on relief.”51 In his

48L’Araldo, 20 September 1930.
1935 study on European immigrants in Montreal, H.A. Gibbard “stated that 49.6 percent of his sample had received [relief] assistance.”52 An analysis in the records of the Montreal Relief Commission completed by Bayley revealed that in the week ending 7 May 1936 there were “1,084 cases, involving 4,293 Italians (adults and children) in receipt of assistance; 694 other cases representing 2,112 persons had at some time during the inception of the Commission received relief; another 607 applications were declared ineligible for assistance.” Bayley found that in Montreal in an Italian-origin population of 23,000, “18.7% was receiving relief, 27% would represent the study peak load if there were no cancellation in grants and 37% would have had dealings with the Commission.” More than one third of the Italians in Montreal had been negatively affected by the conditions experienced during the Depression.53

Since the federal government in Ottawa, like the provincial government in Quebec and other provinces “provided no funds for administration [of relief], municipalities had no incentive to hire competent personnel or to develop efficient structures for dispensing relief.”54 In Montreal the Saint Vincent de Paul Society was in charge of distributing relief with funds provided by municipal, provincial and federal authorities.55 The branch that looked after Italian Catholics living in the Mile End district and within the parish of the church of the Madonna della Difesa was at first headed by Mr. Materazzo, an Italian-Canadian businessman and philanthropist. After a year of Materazzo’s management, the relief fund was $8,000 in debt and the administration was plagued with irregularities: some people with jobs received relief while some who were unemployed did not; others received more than their entitlement, and some were given less than what they were supposed to receive.56 To find a remedy to these shortcomings the Church hierarchy, with the approval of the parish priest,


54Struthers, No Fault of Their Own, p. 48.

55In the distribution of relief, “Quebec developed rather differently [from the other Canadian provinces], with aid to the destitute primarily handled by the private sector, specifically by religious orders,” see Hobbs, “Gendering Work and Welfare,” p. 18.

56L’Araldo, 15 October 1932.
Chevalier Father Manfriani, decided to give the task of assisting Italian needy to the local Fascio Luporini. At the end of October 1932 Ottorino Incoronato, as secretary of the fascio and the top fascist official in Montreal, replaced Mr. Materazzo as head of relief distribution for the Mile End district.

This enhanced the prestige of the fascio in the community and revealed how closely the two institutions, the local fascio and the Church hierarchy, worked together in the Montreal Italian community and in Quebec in general. L'Araldo (8 October 1932) announced the news of the new arrangement as follows:

Next week the Saint Vincent de Paul Society will transfer to Chevalier Ottorino Incoronato, Secretary of the Montreal Fascio, the task of assisting Italian Catholics of Northern Montreal.

As is known, through this office the City assists over 500 Italian families and 150 single people. The Saint Vincent de Paul Society has for over a year been in charge of the mission but now the Society, being short of personnel, gives up the task.

With the consent of the parish priest of the Church Madonna della Difesa, Father Chevalier Manfriani, Father Chevalier Incoronato will take up the responsibility next week. He will reorganize the ways the relief is distributed, and he will make use of his wide experience to eliminate complaints and help unemployed people.

L'Araldo also published an interview with Incoronato, the newly appointed director of relief funds for Italian Catholics of Northern Montreal. “We asked Signor Incoronato,” the paper wrote, “if he would continue to use the same system as his predecessor in distributing relief. He answered negatively.” The paper continued, “At the beginning he would

57 Mussolini knighted Father Manfriani and Father Cheli of Ottawa for their patriotic contribution (meaning fascist work) among Italians in Canada.

58 La prossima settimana la Società Saint Vincent de Paul trasferirà al Cav. Ottorino Incoronato, Segretario del Fascio di Montreal, l'ufficio di Assistenza per gli italiani cattolici del Nord di Montreal.

Come si sa attraverso questo ufficio sono nutriti dalla città oltre cinquecento famiglie italiane e 150 celibi, tutti colpiti da disoccupazione. La Saint Vincent de Paul ha esplicato la missione per qualche anno e ora è obbligata a cederla per mancanza di personale.

Il Cav. Incoronato, che assumerà l’incarico d’accordo col parroco della chiesa della Difesa, Rev. Padre Cav. Manfriani, riorganizzerà completamente il metodo di distribuzione dei sussidi, e darà tutta la sua larga esperienza per eliminare i malcontenti e aiutare i disoccupati.
give weekly cheques and vouchers for bread and milk to each family. If he finds this inadequate, he will create a large food warehouse giving the unemployed the benefit of wholesale prices.” *L’Araldo* asked Incoronato, “Don’t you think that if people receive cash, they might spend the money on drinks and cigarettes rather than food?” He replied, “I have too much respect for and wide knowledge of Italians to believe that they would squander money that should be used to nourish their families.” Italians did not like their relief in kind. The reason was that with cash they would get the foods they liked and were used to, rather than having to eat what they were given. Further, relief agencies traditionally served people who, for psychological or other reasons, were unable to spend their money wisely. They were not prepared to deal with the mass of unemployed men and women who, unlike other recipients of relief, were mostly people who could manage their money responsibly.

The issue of relief in cash or in kind was strongly felt by Italian relief recipients not only in Montreal but also across the country. In fact, when in the summer of 1934 the Ontario Minister of Finance David Croll proposed cash for those on welfare rather than parcels of food, the Italian Canadian Ratepayers Association of Toronto, whose president was Francesco Napolitano, a Separate School Trustee, fully supported the Minister’s initiative. In a letter to the *Toronto Daily Star* Napolitano wrote:

Sir: at a meeting of the Italian Ratepayer Association, we unanimously endorsed the Hon. David A. Croll, Minister of finances, in his proposed program with respect to cash relief. We feel that the unemployed should not be considered less capable of managing his finances. If the Minister of well faire is successful in carrying out this program it will make many of our homes happier and change the mental attitude of all concerned. We, as an association interested in municipal matters particularly those, which are burden with tax, will give our hearty support.

F. Napolitano

President, Italian Ratepayers Association.59

So, Incoronato’s initial intention to give Montreal’s Italian relief recipients cash was justified. Further, he reported that he wished to avoid the mistakes of his predecessor and to do so he would ask all people who applied for assistance to sign a declaration regarding their financial condition. “Naturally those who lie will find themselves in trouble,” he told the newspaper. He added, “We will at once delete from the list those persons

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59 *Toronto Daily Star*, 22 August 1934, “Letters to the Editor.”
who either are employed or have enough money to provide for their needs and have up to now received relief." The following week, L'Araldo returned to the argument of the dole for Italians, describing the zealous activities of the people responsible for taking care of Italians who received public assistance. "Over 400 families, most of them large families, some with sixteen persons, are assisted by the Fascio. The four Italian men who are in charge of the complex task of registering and distributing vouchers for bread, milk and other foods are tireless. They are Messrs. Paolo Facella, Giulio Fantacci, Adone Pozza and Domenico Pirozzi."

While the Italian-language press that was subsidized by fascists praised Incoronato and his distribution of relief to needy families the antifascists were very critical of his use of public funds. In a report published in the socialist daily la Stampa libera, antifascists renewed their attack against the fascio and its secretary, pointing out the irregularities and favouritism in the distribution of relief to Italians. L'Araldo responded with a long note, calling the author of the report in question, "povero untorello" (miserable man). "The miserable man who sends from Montreal correspondences to Stampa libera with the purpose of slandering and belittling men who recognize fascism as a new and better system of life and thought doesn't get anything right." L'Araldo goes on to explain why the antifascist "untorello" was mistaken:

The Italian relief office is considered, in every sense, one of the best in the city of Montreal; its administration is up to date and perfectly kept. Because of this the Italian relief office has a privileged position among the 122 offices of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society of which it is a member. The fact that only the Italian office pays its suppliers every week while no other office is able to do this amazes the officers of the Saint Vincent Society who almost every week control and approve the balance for the assistance of the Italians.

Three months after this declaration of honesty, the man in charge of relief to Italian-Catholics, Lieutenant Ottorino Incoronato, secretary of the

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60 L'Araldo, 15 October 1932.
61 L'Araldo, 22 October 1932.
62 The author has not been able to locate this article.
63 The word "untorello" is a reference to Manzoni's, I promessi sposi, in which people, "untorelli", spread the pestilence. "Untore" and "untorello": the substantive form of the verb "ungere", meaning to oil, to grease or to anoint.
64 L'Araldo, 4 March 1933, "Note di risposta."

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Montreal Fascio Luporini and Chevalier of the Italian Crown, had to flee the country in a hurry to avoid being charged and possibly jailed for fraud and grave irregularities in the administration of the relief.

Questions about Incoronato’s honesty came to be asked because of an unrelated decision made by the Saint Vincent de Paul Society to give up responsibility for relief in Montreal and to close its 122 offices, one of which was headed by Incoronato. Municipal officers were to take over the relief administration. Father Manfriani, who was the supervisor of relief in his parish, asked Incoronato for the relief account books, which were to be handed to the new administrators. At this point a rather tragi-comic event occurred. The night before Incoronato was supposed to present the records to Father Manfriani unknown persons forced their way into the fascio premises, broke the clay bust of Mussolini and stole the account books for relief payments and distribution. The broken bust of Mussolini apparently was supposed to direct the blame for this act of vandalism and criminality towards “Bolsheviks,” but it did not succeed because nothing was missing except the relief books: either as a consequence of this turn of events or by simple coincidence, Incoronato nonetheless fled in a hurry.

This event received ample space in the very first issue of the socialist biweekly, *La voce operaia*, which appeared in Toronto on 29 July 1933. A long article written by Antonino Spada, Montreal correspondent for *La voce*, charged Incoronato of misappropriating for his own, and his fascist party’s gain, some of the money the city administration had given for the relief of unemployed and indigent Italians. We assume that Spada’s article was a synthesis of several leaflets, which had been written and distributed in the preceding months by antifascists in Montreal. The weekly *l’Italia* of that city challenged Spada to state publicly whether he was the author of the “libel” that been distributed in Montreal. In the article in question Spada admitted without hesitation that he was the author: “I, Antonino Spada, am the author of the leaflet that circulated in the Montreal Italian community. The leaflet is not a libel as charged by *l’Italia* because I am able to prove in a court of law: a) with documents; b) with witnesses; c) with circumstantial evidence that in Montreal as in Canada, fascism is an association of delinquents whose leaders are appointed by the Italian government.”

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65 He goes on to state: “The strength of our charge has two bases: 1) Statements of people who have been abused. 2) Relief employees, working for Incoronato in the Fascio, confirmed the charges, denouncing the cases to other people who are ready to sewer before a judge what they were told. Further these two sources are corroborated by the *curriculum vitae* of the charged people and confirmed by someone who knows and heard because he was in the presbytery of the Italian
With a wealth of details, Spada charged that the local fascio had swindled public funds and that money given by the municipality for the assistance of needy and unemployed Italians had been used for political and personal gains. La voce operaia introduced Spada's long piece with the following title and statement:

The Secretary of the Montreal Fascio has Disappeared: It is believed he has Fled the Country to France.

After the blackmailing case involving the fascist Tarossi in Toronto, a new scandal emerges in which Chevalier and Secretary of the Montreal fascio, Ottorino Incoronato, is personally involved. He attempted to use the same cheating methods that fascist hierarchs use in Italy. We doubt that he would get away with it. However, making use of the freedom that our adopted country grants us, it is our duty to openly denounce him to the public opinion.

After this short introduction, Spada's long article follows: “Because we trust the laws and justice of our great adopted patria, Canada, we would have kept silent about the shameful scandals in the distribution of relief (by the local fascio and its secretary and Chevalier Ottorino Incoronato, a barber and swineherd of Ururi) if two facts had not occurred: blackmailing and panic.”

“The most obvious characteristics of vulgar bandits,” Spada continued, “are indeed blackmailing and panic. The one and the other emerged in the very last days: blackmail disguised in the form of a telephone call by the Consul was used against Father Manfriani; and panic emerged in the burglary that occurred on the premises of the fascio, stealing documents and breaking Mussolini's bust.” Spada encouraged and challenged Father Manfriani to denounce the responsible people: “Father Manfriani … , we publicly ask you to find primordial courage, the essence of your mission, to denounce the guilty men: leave them to their evil fate. The innocent Italians, those who follow your way and listen to your councils, and we too, bless and praise your strength and upright holy name.” Spada ended his long, polemical article with ten questions to which fascists must answer before a judge:

Church of Mile End. These two men don't know that this individual, being very close, heard their words and he is willing to sew what he heard. He is a Canadian newspaperman who knows Italian very well.”
1) Is it true that for personal or [fascist] party gain, Incoronato paid for the shoes, which were distributed to the unemployed Italians, a very low price and then he charged the relief-fund almost double their cost?

2) We would like to know how many hundreds of dollars were paid out in fascio cheques though the money did not come from Mussolini, Incoronato or the fascist balls, but from the relief funds.

3) Where did the money to pay the teachers of the fascist school come from? And a priest asks: ‘Why did children attending fascist schools receive presents from the relief while children attending the Mile End parochial schools received nothing from the relief? Was Bonfante [the fascist teacher sent from Italy] allowed to do this? Was Incoronato?

4) Is it true or not that, with the permission of the debtor, a man from Incoronato’s hometown was paid a credit with relief vouchers? And when the creditor protested Incoronato threatened him with deportation as he had for revenge done to Dr. [Antonio] Sabetta [a Canadian citizen visiting Italy] who was arrested on the charge of being an antifascist: (Who denounced Sabetta: Bonfante or Incoronato? Scoundrels the one and the other.)

5) How many people were on the relief list and how many people truly received relief?

6) We would like to know if all those who were in the same condition were treated equally or if discrimination was practiced according to Italian politics.

7) We would like to know who were those who received two or more pairs of shoes (and sold them) while others received nothing?

8) We would like to know from Incoronato if one of his friends, a single man, received relief and why? And why could he do nothing for the other unmarried men?

9) We would like to know whom and why had suits made to measure while other Italians were without shoes and clothing?

10) We would like to know if the basement of a certain house was a grocery deposit or simply a private basement?

Tens of thousand of dollars have been depleted from relief by consular-fascist marauders; the deficit is very high (some people say $25,000, others $20,000). Fascists must give back the money they stole from Canada.

TO AVOID ANY EQUIVOCATION, ON BEHALF OF TWO DOZEN ITALIAN ASSOCIATIONS OF MONTREAL, I SIGN MY NAME, ANTONINO SPADA, A CANADIAN CITIZEN BY NATURALIZATION
Ironically, only a few months before, L’Araldo had published a profile of Incoronato lavishing praise on the fascist leader: “Among the men in our colony who command respect and boundless trust [is] the Secretary of the Fascio, Lieutenant Ottorino Incoronato … an open defender and an obstinate propagator of Fascism; a proud soldier of the fascist cause abroad, which needs purity of heart, honesty, frankness, and devotion in order to prevail and imprint its ideals on the soul of exiled (esuli) Italians.”

According to some sources this episode had an epilogue some years later when Incoronato approached young Canadian fascists who were in Italy at the annual fascist camp for Italian youth abroad. Even the Toronto fascist weekly Bollettino italo-canadese purportedly was indignant that such a man, having disgraced himself and fascism, had the impudence to approach and speak to young fascists from Canada.

All of this occurred about 70 years ago. Since then, the 1932-33 relief scandal that engulfed Italians in Montreal and Incoronato and his fascist cohorts has not been, intentionally or not, preserved in the Italian-Canadian collective memory. It is time to remember.

Toronto, Ontario

66 L’Araldo, 30 August 1930, for a profile of Incoronato.
67 Every year thousand of boys and girls from all over the world went to Italy as guests of Mussolini. They spent two weeks to a month camping in pleasant mountain or seashore areas. There, boys received military training and both genders were indoctrinated in the fascist ideals. For a sample of the impression that these fascist camping experiences left on the impressionable young minds, see L’Italia nuova letter written by Arsilia Sauro, one of the Canadian guests of Mussolini, printed in the Montreal fascist weekly, 15 October 1938; now translated and reprinted in Principe, The Darkest Side of the Fascist Years, pp. 222-223.
68 Besides the author’s incomplete collection, we have researched all the issues of the Bollettino italo-canadese available in the National Archives of Canada, Ottawa, and at the Multicultural History Society of Ontario, Toronto, but were unable to find this reference. The reader should note that as far as the author has been able to determine, no complete collection of this Italian-Canadian weekly survives.
69 Salvatore, Le Fascisme et les Italians à Montréal, de la province de Québec et Ottorino Incoronato en est devenu Grande Venerabile,” p. 29.
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