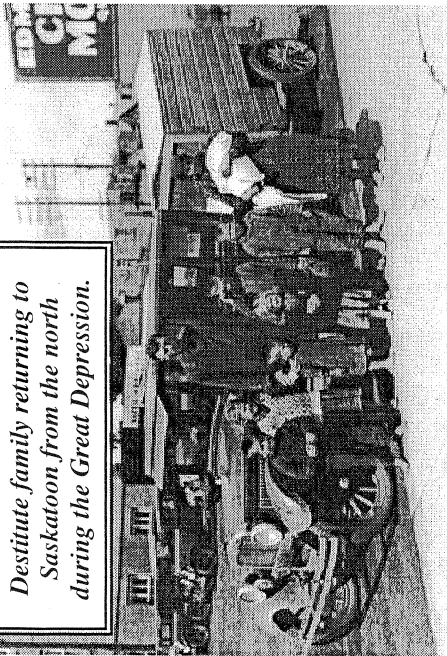


# THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT DURING THE DEPRESSION

*Destitute family returning to Saskatoon from the north during the Great Depression.*



*Men crowded in a room to sleep.*



## "Living in the Jungle"

I left home in 1932 and have never been back. I was really depressed before I left home. The 'farm' had turned into a desert and no amount of work would bring in a crop. Dust storms, prairie fires, hunger, and dirt were the only rewards received in the Palliser Triangle.

I am now living in a "jungle" outside a small town in British Columbia. There are about twenty of us living in tarpaper and cardboard shacks. There is no plumbing or heating but at least it's a place to stay. We live from day to day and never know when we will eat again.

The people from the town avoid us. Anything that goes wrong in the town is our fault. But the police don't come into the jungle because they're afraid. We are living in tough times and the needy people have become desperate.

In a few days, I'll hop on a freight train and move east. Just thinking of moving again brings fear and hope. Riding the roads is dangerous. I have learned to run beside the moving train at the right speed and to grab onto the ladder on the side of the car at the right moment. But I have seen terrible accidents. I have seen men fall under the wheels of the train when they lost their grip.

The best thing that could happen would be for all of us to find jobs and settle down. But there are no jobs available, except at the relief camps.

Recently I've become homesick. I want to go home and see my folks but I know that conditions at home are still bad. The drought is still going on and I would just be an extra mouth to feed. Sometimes I get the feeling that we are all being punished for something - but I don't know for what. I just hope that someday the rains will come to allow my family and myself to make a living. I want to get back my pride.

## "A Wanderer"

I never so much as stole a dime, a loaf of bread, a gallon of gas, but in those days I was treated like a criminal. It became a criminal act just to be poor.

I was not a hobo. A hobo, by definition, is a regular bum, a professional bum, and there probably were hoboes in the time of the Crusades and there are hoboes now. There always have been that kind of people, whether they are on the highways or in the slums, or in the Skid Roads living off their wife's inherited wealth. Hoboism is a state of mind.

I was, you could say, a wanderer. One of the unfortunates. A victim of the economic system? Perhaps. Certainly, most certainly a casualty in the battle between ignorant men who were running this country.