THE ORIGINS OF THE NPA:
A STUDY IN VANCOUVER POLITICS 1930-1940

by

ANDREA BARBARA SMITH
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Department of History

The University of British Columbia
2075 Wesbrook Place
Vancouver, Canada
V6T 1W5

Date March 19, 1981
This thesis attempts to explain the emergence and success of 'non-partisan' politics in Vancouver in the 1930s. It contends that the formation of the Non-Partisan Association in 1937 hinged on the structural change in municipal government from a ward system to an at-large system in 1935; and further, that the NPA was the defensive reaction of provincial Liberals and Conservatives to the success of the CCF in municipal politics under the new system.

This author proceeds from the premise that the 'non-partisan' nature of civic politics is a myth. In Chapter I the conservative ideological foundations of the 'non-partisan' philosophy are revealed in the alarmist response of the province's political and business elites to the depression. In Chapter II an examination of the origins of the change in the structure of Vancouver's government discloses the key role played by G.G. McGeer and other provincial politicians in the city's affairs. Chapter III examines the specific local developments that prompted the NPA's formation. The strength of the CCF in the city is assessed as well as the practical implications of the new at-large system for civic elections. Group biography confirms the partisan character of the NPA organization and reveals its provincial roots.

Finally, this thesis discusses the reasons for the
NPA's long term success and the implications for the city. An examination of the city's voting patterns in the 1930s reveals the effectiveness of the NPA's rhetoric and its organizational abilities under an at-large system.
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INTRODUCTION

At a meeting held November 3, 1937 at 4:30 in the office of J. MacPherson the following were present, Mr. J. MacPherson, Mr. Brenton S. Brown, Mr. S.S. McKeen, Mr. E.W. Rhodes, General Odlum, Mr. Rowe Holland, Mr. Drew Pratt, Mr. W. Lloyd Craig. Mr. W. Lloyd Craig was appointed secretary of the meeting. After considerable discussion the group present formed themselves into an association and on the motion of General Odlum seconded by S.S. McKeen the organization took on the name of "The Vancouver Non-Partisan Association." (1)

These few sentences are the only available minutes of the first meeting of the NPA. 2 Certainly, it would appear that this group of men had reached a consensus regarding the necessity and nature of the organization before they met. Yet, according to a later statement made by F. Drew Pratt, a founding member, there had been little preparation except for an exchange of phone calls between the men present. 3 Nine busy days later, on November 12, 1937, at a luncheon meeting in the Italian Room of the Hotel Vancouver, the group made its intentions known to the citizenry of Vancouver. The association, on the motion of Pratt, adopted its official platform:

To develop a proper sense of civic consciousness and a due sense of civic pride on the part of the electors to the end that worthy men and women shall be elected to the offices of mayor, aldermen, school board trustees and park commissioners and to oppose the introduction of party politics into Vancouver’s city administration. (4)

This thesis is concerned with the forces behind the rise of non-partisan philosophy in Vancouver, as embodied in the local political group, the Non-Partisan Association. The
NPA has been the major political force in the municipal history of the city. Its candidates dominated civic boards continuously from 1937 to 1972, and they returned to power in 1978. In order to understand the success of the NPA and the philosophy of the organization over the years, one must understand the circumstances in which the NPA was formed and the way in which the group gained its power. Consequently, the following chapters examine the origins, growth and significance of the NPA during its formative years.
NOTES

INTRODUCTION


2 The NPA is not willing to allow the public access to its minutes.

3 John Taylor, "How the NPA was Started and Why," Vancouver Sun, Vancouver, June 6, 1967.

4 "Non-Partisan Association 1937," November 12, 1937, Add. MSS. 54, vol. 13, File Associations #53, City Archives, Vancouver, B.C.
CHAPTER I

THE EARLY DEPRESSION AND THE
ATTITUDES OF BUSINESS

The Wall Street collapse, in the autumn of 1929, laid bare the extreme vulnerability of British Columbia's export economy based on a few staple products. Nowhere was this more obviously reflected than in the city of Vancouver, a city which housed over one-third of the province's population. Within months, timber, mineral, and fish production drastically declined and the construction industry virtually ground to a halt. Activity at the harbour slowed considerably as exports of grain fell off and incoming shipments from the prairies decreased substantially. The numbers of unemployed increased daily as did the length of the line outside of the City Relief Office. On December 18, 1929, the unemployed held their first demonstration in downtown Vancouver.

Unemployment in British Columbia was concentrated in Vancouver. As industries shut down and men were no longer needed in the mining and lumber camps, the number of jobless in the city expanded rapidly. A mild winter climate and the possibility of seasonal employment made Vancouver an attractive destination for many of the country's unemployed. By the end of December 1931, 7,818 persons were on Vancouver relief roles, a substantial number when one considers that the thirties opened with a relief list of 867 men.
Although the numbers of unemployed were not as high in Vancouver as in other major Canadian cities, their tendency to concentrate in one area of the city gave the group an extremely high profile. Vancouver's relief population grouped together and formed a visibly distinct class from the employed of the city. Concentration made them susceptible to organization that was most often initiated and directed by sympathetic left-wing leaders. As the thirties progressed the political potential of the organized unemployed became a major concern of local politicians and businessmen. However, at the outset of the depression, the first concern of the city's elites was how to administer relief. 3

Vancouver city council had little choice but to accept the immediate burden. Municipal responsibility for welfare was a deeply ingrained Canadian belief and Vancouver was no exception. 4 However, unlike eastern Canadian cities, Vancouver had acknowledged public responsibility for the unemployed during the pre-World War One depression. Moreover, the city's experience in the mid-twenties recession had demonstrated that municipalities alone were not financially able to bear the burden of relief. In 1930 civic relief officers demanded the renewal of the federal grants-in-aid policy in order to expand the existing relief apparatus. 5 The search for revenue for relief would overshadow all other city council activities during the decade.

Canada generally was not prepared for the welfare
problems that emerged in the 1930s. Of course, there had been unemployment before this period, but no legislation or programs existed to cope with a problem of this magnitude. The structure of Canadian federalism exacerbated the situation. Attempts to deal effectively with unemployment were thwarted by the entrenched division of powers and responsibilities devised at confederation. Constitutional responsibility rested with the province and its municipalities which did not possess the necessary revenue powers to institute comprehensive relief schemes. The Dominion, on the other hand, had the revenue but not the authority to initiate or administer relief programs. The solution, if it can be called a solution, took the form of grants-in-aid, whereby the Dominion allocated funds to the provinces; but there was no effort to co-ordinate relief operations on a nation-wide basis and no stated policy accompanying the grants. The federal government held that the province with its municipalities was constitutionally responsible for the unemployed and therefore should carry the burden of relief. The province, in turn, pushed the financial burden as far as possible onto the shoulders of the municipalities. As a result, both provinces and municipalities lived on the "edge of financial solvency" throughout the depression, and "some were pushed over and became bankrupt." Vancouver, like most other Canadian cities, was forced into this unwelcome predicament.

In the late 1920s the B.C. business community had recognized the precarious nature of its prosperity. Many
businessmen saw the vulnerability of a resource-based economy dependent on foreign markets. Their anxiety was reflected in the protective and conservative practices of local business elites, practices supported by the provincial Conservative government under the leadership of Simon Fraser Tolmie. The Conservatives had come to power in 1928 as a businessman's government, strongly supported by the Vancouver business community. Tolmie pledged his administration to a 'business government' philosophy and filled his cabinet with successful businessmen. A balanced budget that did not increase taxes or debt was necessary to ensure British Columbia's "international competitive position." Any expenditure on non-revenue producing undertakings was regarded as waste. In the early thirties, business and government openly worked hand-in-hand for the benefit of business.

Their close relationship was reinforced by the increased autonomy of the west coast business community and the provincial government. The opening of the Panama Canal made B.C.'s economy in the 1920s less dependent on Canadian development and national policies, and confirmed the existence of a "distinct, self-conscious" group of businessmen in the province. The increased powers of provincial governments in the twenties gave the province a more influential role in the daily lives of its citizens in the areas of welfare, education, and transportation. As a result, both big business and government had an increased sense of their independence and considered their "economic destiny" to be relatively
independent of the other provinces. However, as dependency on the Dominion declined and anxiety about the future intensified, the two looked even more to one another for co-operation and support. Cautious business and government officials agreed that the needs of industry should come before any other government activity in the province, especially with the uncertainty of world markets.\(^\text{12}\)

The same attitudes held true at the civic level of government. Civic aldermen, like their provincial counterparts, were pledged to thrift and balanced budgets and were outspokenly against any programs that might undermine individual initiative or the capitalist system. This "business mentality" had characterized Vancouver's civic government for years and naturally influenced council's response to depression problems.\(^\text{13}\) Borrowing was justified only if it encouraged "legitimate" development, a category that apparently did not include relief. In 1930, the municipal finance department warned city council several times that the continued "over-expenditure of the Relief Department" would cause a deficit at the end of the year.\(^\text{14}\) The council's solution included the appointment of a group of chartered accountants to investigate and report on the Relief Department. As a result of the investigation, two men were prosecuted for fraud related offences in the Criminal Courts and an attempted revision began immediately.\(^\text{15}\) Control systems were implemented to account for all meal and bed vouchers and payment to suppliers was made only after audit.\(^\text{16}\) This concern for tighter, more
centralized control was expressed again in 1932 when Mayor Louis D. Taylor called for reconsideration of the Accountant's Report\textsuperscript{17} and in 1935 when the Chairman of the Relief Department demanded a similar investigation.\textsuperscript{18} The grim possibility of a deficit or financial insolvency obsessed the cautious, business-minded councillors from the outset.

Scandal in 1930 and a preoccupation with efficiency only partially explain the council's constant suspicion of the abuse of relief funds from within and without the department. This suspicion was also a reflection of the council's belief that direct relief tended to undermine individual initiative. By July 1930 the city's revenues were nearly exhausted. Council decided that cash grants as a method of relief were no longer possible. Relief Officer H.W. Cooper rationalized the decision for the aldermen:

\ldots cash grants appeal especially to the man who is not over \textit{sic} persistent in seeking work and so discredit is thrown on the industrious citizen. (19)

Aldermen viewed work as essential for a man's good character and self-respect, as well as for the integrity of business government.

Not only did they view giving "something for nothing" as intrinsically wrong, but they also believed that direct relief threatened land ownership in the city. In 1931 the Mayors and Reeves of the cities and municipalities of the Lower Mainland resolved that they were:

\ldots unalterably opposed to any action which would be considered as the inauguration \textit{sic} of an unscientific dole scheme \ldots the carrying out of which would only lead to the confiscation of the property of citizens. (20)
These men believed that relief schemes, forced on civic governments by unfair provincial and federal policies, left them no choice but to increase property taxes. As a result, many good citizens who could not afford to pay their taxes would have their lands confiscated and put up for tax sale. Consequently, civic authorities blamed direct relief—not the problems of capitalist production—for the impending demise of private ownership of land. In many minds, relief was a cause of economic problems, not a symptom. It fostered idleness, undermined personal initiative, and ultimately threatened the capitalist system.

Efforts made by city council to alleviate unemployment during the first years of the depression further reveal the conservative attitude of its members. Most aldermen thought the depression, and therefore unemployment, was a temporary state of affairs that would eventually cure itself. Moreover, council always expected the "usual seasonal influx" of unemployed from November to March and continued to create relief work projects that ended in the spring. Finally, faced with a "January situation in July" council recognized the immensity of the problem but continued to implement stop-gap measures. The Mayor and aldermen blamed the provincial and federal governments for not shouldering their fair share of the relief burden. Programs like the reduction of wages and relief work hours, the removal of married women and Orientals from the labour market, and an "Employ Vancouver Citizens First" campaign demonstrated the council members'
belief that they were not responsible for the mass of unem-
ployed.23

As a result of this attitude and federal policy, Vancouver looked to the provincial government for relief from its unemployment problems. In March 1931, a desperate council discontinued relief to unemployed single men not continuously resident in the city for twelve months.24 That fall, in an effort to move unemployed transients out of the city, the province set up 237 relief camps, one-third of the total number in Canada. In Vancouver, only direct relief was available and council feared its payments would not last the year. An increasingly unpopular Conservative government continued to raise taxes but reduced grants to the municipalities in the province.25 To add to the tension, relief administrators at the provincial level were charged with corrupt use of relief funds.26 City council and the city's businessmen began to question the effectiveness and efficiency of the Tolmie administration.

A number of businessmen had offered their services and modest sums of money to the city. Like council, these men emphasized the efficiency of their programs and demonstrated little sense of social responsibility. Harold Brown, vice-president of the Board of Trade, proposed to council that a Citizen's Committee be formed to co-ordinate all social agencies on behalf of the unemployed "... so as to accomplish the maximum benefit of such voluntary effort."27 The new committee would ensure that provincial, municipal, and
private agencies worked together with the greatest possible efficiency.\textsuperscript{28} The Board of Trade also arranged for property owners to provide weekly employment for relief recipients doing odd jobs around their homes.\textsuperscript{29} But despite their close connections with city council through the Board of Trade's Civic Bureau and its members on council,\textsuperscript{30} businessmen felt they could do little at the local level without more revenue from the senior levels of government.\textsuperscript{31} With increased property taxes out of the question, aldermen and businessmen alike looked to a shaky provincial government for a solution.

By 1932, Vancouver could no longer afford to pay its share of direct relief and many unemployed, who had been promised subsistence in the city, were forced to go to the camps. Statistically, this was the worst year of the depression for city council with 10,000 men on its relief roles. Mass demonstrations took place in Vancouver under the direction of the Relief Camp Workers Union, an affiliate of the Communist Workers' Unity League. Over 15,000 people, representing 65 organizations staged a hunger march to protest the inadequacies of the relief program.\textsuperscript{32} Of their twelve demands, council entertained one—unemployment insurance—and only promised to ask the provincial government to consider it.\textsuperscript{33} The anger and frustration of labour, coupled with the continued reversion of lands to the city and the seeming inefficiency of the near bankrupt Tolmie government, prompted the business community to take direct political action. The capitalist system was under attack. It was up to the province's financial
leaders to vindicate themselves and their system.

An understanding of the response to B.C.'s financial leaders to the problems facing the provincial government in 1932 is essential to an understanding of later developments in Vancouver municipal politics. The structural reform of Vancouver's government in 1935 and the rise of 'non-partisan' politics that followed in 1937, stemmed from a basic set of beliefs about government. These beliefs were articulated by Vancouver businessmen in 1932, as a result of their disillusionment with the ability of the provincial government to manage economic affairs. While specific civic developments would prompt change in Vancouver, the ideological foundations were revealed much earlier in a businessman's critique of the provincial government.

In the spring of 1932, a concerned Vancouver business community began to push for a 'non-partisan' businessman's inquiry into the expenditures of the provincial government. H.R. MacMillan, the largest lumber exporter in B.C., led a group of businessmen to Victoria in April. Twenty-two organizations were represented, including the Canadian Manufacturer's Organization, the Vancouver Board of Trade, the Victoria Chamber of Commerce, and the entire Lower Mainland business world. Under this pressure Tolmie gave his consent to a Commission composed of five business executives: George Kidd, Vancouver chartered accountant and past president of B.C. Electric; W.L. Macken, Chilliwack financier and real estate agent; Austin Taylor, Vancouver financier; A.H. Douglas,
Vancouver lawyer; R.W. Mayhew, Victoria manufacturer. These men had access to government records and were to make recommendations concerning the use of public money for 'essential services.' The Kidd Report, as it was commonly called, was made public in August 1932.34

The Report was a business class analysis of the social and economic conditions of British Columbia and clearly revealed the attitude of Vancouver businessmen toward government in the thirties. Accordingly, if offered a businessman's solution to the problems of the depression: a balanced budget without increased taxation. In order to achieve this goal a six million dollar reduction in expenditures was necessary with major cutbacks in the areas of social services, education, and highway construction. The commissioners were highly critical of the provincial government's inefficiency, a direct result, they believed, of the party system. Party patronage, the inevitable outcome of a party system, was at the root of the province's overexpenditure and the multiplication of government positions. Their solution was 'non-partisan' politics or, in more practical terms, coalition government.35 A highly centralized 'non-partisan' government, the commissioners argued, would provide the efficient management needed in such desperate economic times.

As "the first step on the path of retrenchment" the Report advocated a reduction in the number of members in the Legislative Assembly from forty-eight to twenty-eight. Kidd and his associates argued that decision-making would be more
efficient in fewer hands and that great numbers of MLAs only encouraged "local selfish interests" who tended to think of their own area's needs and not the greater needs of the province as a whole. The Vancouver Province agreed. "An end to party politics" had been a prominent theme in the paper's editorials throughout 1932. The financial ills of the province were blamed on localism and the patronage needs of parties. One editorial stated:

If we had great and fundamental problems of deep and lasting divisions, we might have need of parties. But we have neither. Our problems are simple business problems.... A small board of capable, responsible directors is all we need for the carrying out of our business. (38)

The Kidd Committee and the Province pictured the ideal province as an extension of their business values. Efficiency, they argued, not politics, was important. These arguments would be applied to Vancouver's form of government and its civic politics within the year.

The idea that government should be 'non-partisan' for the sake of greater efficiency was not a new one to Canadians. Urban reformers had advocated an end to party politics since the turn of the century. Reform-minded business and professional elites had responded to the problems of urban growth with a plan that included the restructuring of "inefficient" civic government and the elimination of civic political parties. 'Reformers' blamed the ward system of election for corruption, inefficiency, and the perpetuation of partisan ideas and sought to replace it with a more centralized, at-large system. Like the Kidd commissioners, these men wanted to put decision-making
in fewer hands and proposed schemes like a Board of Control, Commission, or City Manager form of government to achieve this goal. The final and essential key to their success was the use of non-partisan rhetoric in their campaigns. The non-partisan label allowed 'reformers' to appeal to the electorate and to advance their programs to the city in the name of pure efficient government.

Historians who have studied 'non-partisan' politics generally agree upon the class and partisan bias inherent in the reforms advocated by local elites. Most so-called 'reformers' were overwhelmingly preoccupied with technical and business concerns and were not concerned with the ideals of democracy. The replacement of ward based elections with city-wide elections took powers away from the direct local control of the people. These changes disadvantaged independents and minority groups favouring incumbents and those who could afford the high cost of advertising. Attempts to introduce higher property qualifications for voters which would reduce the size of the electorate further demonstrated the 'reformers' intentions. In their efforts to rid the city of "the evils of party politics," reformers shifted the "social composition of civic representation heavily towards the middle and upper classes." 'Non-partisan' politics and at-large elections were the tools of urban elites.

Much of the same analysis can be applied to the Kidd commissioners and their recommendations. Like the urban reformers, the financial leaders of B.C. refused to recognize
divisions within society, in order to advance their own interests. Government, they argued, should concern itself with the interests of the province as a whole, not with the small-minded sectional concerns of areas or groups. This attitude stemmed from the basic belief that the province was a business whose success or failure hinged on the success or failure of its business and industry. Political parties were not necessary. In fact, they promoted inefficiency. The pre-occupation with business efficiency and the lack of concern for democratic principles that characterized the urban reformers and the Kidd commissioners set the tone for the political changes that occurred in Vancouver in the mid-thirties.

The release of the Kidd Report brought a storm of reaction from all sections of the community. Labour organizations denounced the committee's proposal to halt all further expenditure on state-supported social services. The educational recommendations, which suggested an end to free secondary school and the possible closing of the university, were criticized publicly by several U.B.C. professors. The composition of the committee also came under attack. No effort had been made to represent organized labour, ethnic minorities, teachers, social service workers, women or even economists. The Kidd proposals, explained Colin McDonald, President of the Vancouver, New Westminster, and District Trades and Labour Council, "... will in no way benefit the working class but are solely in the interests of the money lenders." Economist G.F. Drummond protested that business and government had little
in common. One supplied services for a whole community; the other made profits for a few. Provincial newspapers, with the exception of the Province, concurred. "Government is not a business proposition," asserted the Victoria Times. "Matters of public health, law and order, education, the protection of life and property, indeed the whole social order of things are things which cannot be envisioned in terms of money."

Nevertheless, provincial businessmen generally supported the report's recommendations and urged speedy implementation. Especially well-received in business circles was the report's critique of the party system, a critique that condemned all provincial parties including the Conservatives. The business press almost unanimously condoned a highly centralized 'non-partisan' administration with the B.C. Financial Times going so far as to advocate one man rule. As Robert Groves, a student of the Kidd Report and the Tolmie government, concluded:

Such suggestions for change in the structure of the government indicate that many members of the business community were thoroughly disillusioned with democracy as a means of coping with the economic exigencies of the modern world. (48)

Although the Tolmie administration was embarrassed by the critical tone of the report, the Conservatives agreed with the economic spirit of the recommendations. The majority of proposals, however, for political and practical reasons, were impossible to implement. A strong public outcry against the proposals regarding social legislation was the main deterrent. The Conservatives did respond to the businessmen's growing disenchantment with party politics. An increasingly unpopular
Tolmie administration proposed the formation of a Union government with the eventual reduction and redistribution of legislative seats. Tolmie approached both T. Dufferin Pattullo, the Liberal opposition leader, and W.J. Bowser, a discontented former leader of the Conservative party. Both men refused to form a coalition government. Nonetheless, these efforts pleased the business community and for a time the ties between it and the government remained close. Pattullo, by refusing to join in a coalition, reinforced the business belief that the Conservatives were much more likely to implement "business government" policies than the Liberals. The Vancouver Board of Trade agreed to Tolmie's request to set up a committee to promote the Union idea. Most important, publication of the report had created some popular support for their ideas of non-partisan politics and economical business administration. Prominent businessmen felt a certain satisfaction about their accomplishments.

The attitudes developed by the B.C. business community in the first three years of the depression were to characterize its actions throughout the decade. Big business felt strongly enough about the economic problems of the thirties to advocate extreme and in some cases absurd measures of retrenchment. The report demonstrated the alarmist nature of the group and their desire to take government into their own hands. Although the Conservatives would be defeated in the 1933 election, the ideas of non-partisan politics and the accompanying philosophy of business government would not be forgotten. The Conservative
party had given the business community the opportunity to articulate its feelings and to lay the ideological foundations for changes that were to occur in Vancouver in the next few years.
NOTES - CHAPTER I


2 All relief statistics, unless otherwise stated, are taken from City of Vancouver, Council Committee Minutes, RG2-B2, Relief and Employment Committee, vols. 61, 62, Social Services, vol. 64.


4 The Vancouver Charter, like those of other Canadian cities, stated that "It shall be the duty of the city to make provision for the poor and destitute." Statute of British Columbia, *Vancouver Charter*, 1953, c. 55, s. 183.


6 Cities had the power and limited revenues necessary to distribute limited amounts of relief.


8 See Robert Groves, "Business Government: Party Politics and the B.C. Business Community 1928-1933" (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1976), Chapter II. Groves illustrates the protective mentality of business with examples of the high level of concentration that existed in industry: the formation of new producer's marketing agencies such as the Fraser Valley Milk Producers' Association, the merger of large canneries to form B.C. Packers, the consolidation of retail outlets to form chain stores, and the fact that five mines accounted for 90% of the province's production. Producers, in the late twenties,
emphasized the need to encourage capital investment from sources outside the province.


13 See Taylor, "The Urban West," ad passim.

14 City of Vancouver, Council Minutes, RG2-B1, vol. 30, September 8, 1930, p. 585. City Archives, Vancouver, B.C.

15 Relief Officer G. Ireland was accused of accepting monetary donations over a period of years from the Log Cabin and Wonder Cafes. Relief Investigator C. Maxwell confessed to misappropriations of meal tickets amounting to a total of 100 dollars a week. Ibid., May 19, 1930, p. 170.

16 Ibid., vol. 31, December 31, 1930, p. 119.

17 Ibid., vol. 32, January 6, 1932, pp. 442-5.

18 MacDonald criticized the department for its lack of business sense: "No employer of labour under the circumstances involving the expenditure of millions of dollars per annum would have allowed such waste, inefficiency and extravagance to go on." Ibid., vol. 36, April 29, 1935, p. 170.


20 Ibid., vol. 31, June 25, 1931, p. 702.


22 Ibid., vol. 30, July 29, 1930, p. 446.
Civic employees and officials reduced their salaries. Ibid., vol. 32, November 30, 1931, p. 350. Relief work hours were reduced despite the protests of the Relief Workers' Organization that four day's work was not enough to support a married man. Council claimed the reduction was absolutely necessary owing to a lack of funds. But eight months later a suggestion that the work week be reduced from four to three days was rejected on the grounds that it would attract more unemployed to the city, thereby increasing investigative costs. One could easily infer that the real reason behind the shortened work week was a desire to save money, not provide jobs. Ibid., vol. 31, March 16, 1931, p. 366; Ibid., vol 32, November 30, 1931, p. 350. Council felt that married women whose husbands were earning good wages should not be employed, making way for those women who really needed the work. Ibid., vol. 30, June 14, 1930, p. 409. Employers were urged to hire local men before "aliens" and civic aldermen recommended that none of the city's meal ticket business be given to Chinese restaurants. Ibid., vol. 33, May 15, 1933, p. 212; Ibid., vol. 30, May 19, 1930, p. 208. In a community where jobs were scarce and 10% of its residents unemployed, city council urged that Vancouver homeowners be given preference over the "itinerant workman and the newcomer." Ibid., vol. 31, April 14, 1931, p. 446.

Ibid., vol. 31, March 2, 1931, p. 320.

Ormsby, *British Columbia*, p. 441.

Ibid., pp. 445-446.


Ibid., pp. 153-4.

Groves, "Business Government," p. 34.

W.H. Malkin, Mayor 1929-1930; J.J. McRae, Ward IX alderman 1930-1936; Fred Crone, Parks Board Member 1929-1936 and alderman 1937-1939; W.J. Lembke, alderman 1929-1932, 1935-1936; were members of the Board of Trade. Malkin was a former president.

No money by-laws had been carried for two years in the city. City of Vancouver, Record of Nominations and Elections 1924-1949, RG2-D1, 1931, 1932. City Archives, Vancouver.


In part, the local businessmen's desire to investigate government expenditures stemmed from the recent example in Britain: the May Commission of 1931. The Labour government had appointed an "independent, non-partisan, voluntary committee" for the same purpose, whose recommendations--large scale retrenchment and increased centralization--became a model for George Kidd and his committee. More generally, British Columbia's relationship with Britain and America was changing. The decline of American prestige following the 1929 stock market crash strengthened the ties between B.C. and England. Economically, the province had moved away from the U.S. The introduction of a 1932 lumber tax effectively ended southern trade, while lumber shipments to Great Britain rapidly increased. Philosophically, there was also a change. The pro-American liberal sentiments of government in the twenties were replaced with the pro-British sentiment and the conservative nature of the Tolmie administration. Attempts to purge schools of American textbooks and introduce large high school fees reflected the province's new politics. Business and government, alike, were affected by declining enthusiasm for American ideas and an increased pro-British orientation. The desire to present a report "similar in scope and object" to the May Commission exemplifies the rejuvenated attachment of B.C. to the old country.

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36 Ibid.
38 Vancouver Province, March 11, 1932.
39 Historians S.P. Hays, J.C. Weaver, A. Artibise, M. Gauvin, E.A. Rea, and J. Lorimer generally agree on this point. A few historians object to the interpretation of urban reform as elitist and anti-democratic. Nelles and Armstrong, the two most outspoken critics, argue that not all reformers supported highly centralized structural changes. Moreover, they argue
that in certain instances organized labour chose to support at-large elections and boards of control in the belief that working class representation would be increased not diminished. This author believes that although some reformers may have been well intentioned and some working class groups may have supported their reforms, the class and partisan bias cannot be overemphasized. See H.V. Nelles and C. Armstrong, "The Fight for Clean Government," Urban History Review 2 (October 1976): 56-7. The major Canadian exponent of the class conspiracy theory is J.C. Weaver. In a critique of urban historiography in Canada, Weaver objects to sympathetic accounts "of far-sighted men addressing urban crisis and working to save the Canadian city." By focussing on specific locals, Weaver demonstrates that reform was not the virtuous demonstration of civic patriotism that studies of key national figures and their rhetoric would have us believe. Following the lead of American historian, S.P. Hays, he points to the 'unprogressive' element in urban reform, self-interested businessmen and professionals. Hays argues that the impulse behind the reform movement was not the lower or middle classes but the new upper class. Weaver emphasizes the middle class nature of municipal reform in Canada. However, both historians agree that centralized decision-making changed the occupational and class composition of city government allowing business and professionals to apply their expertise to the city. See J.C. Weaver, "'Tomorrow's Metropolis' Revisited: A Critical Assessment of Urban Reform in Canada 1890-1920," in The Canadian City, eds., A. Artibise and G. Stelter (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), pp. 393-418; "Elitism and the Corporate Ideal: Businessmen and Boosters in Canadian Civic Reform 1890-1920," in Cities in the West: Papers of the Western Canadian History Conference, eds. A.R. McCormick and I. Macpherson (Winnipeg, October 1974), pp. 48-73; "Introduction: Approaches to the History of Urban Reform," Urban History Review 2 (October 1976):3-11; "The Modern City Realized: Toronto Civic Affairs, 1880-1915," in The Usable Urban Past, eds. A. Artibise and G. Stelter (Toronto: Macmillan, 1979), pp. 39-72. Also see: S.P. Hays, "Reform in Municipal Government," in The Urbanization of America, ed. A.M. Wakstein (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970), pp. 288-306; "The Changing Political Structure of the City in Industrial America," Journal of Urban Studies 1, No. 1 (November 1974):6-38.

40 Weaver, "Elitism," p. 58.


42 Groves, "Business Government," pp. 146-7; H.F. Angus, the most outspoken economics professor, argued that Kidd's suggestions "were devised to promote the establishment of a
semi-literate rural peasantry to serve as a pool of cheap docile labour in a businessman's paradise." G.M. Wier, Head of the Education department, condemned the report as a capitalistic effort to confine the youth of the province to intellectual serfdom.

43 Colin McDonald to Tolmie, September 9, 1932, S.F. Tolmie Papers, Box 7-11, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C.


45 "The Committee's Report," Victoria Daily Times, August 1932, Tolmie Papers, Box 16-6, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C.

46 Although a few business organizations, like the Canadian Manufacturer's Association, found the report's recommendations extreme in practise, all gave support in spirit. See Dunn and Jones, "Education," p. 18; Parker, "S.F. Tolmie," pp. 109-10.


48 Ibid., p. 148.

49 The government did print an Appendix to the report to point out the errors of fact and inconsistencies throughout. See British Columbia, Report of the Committee, Appendix.


51 The Conservative party was weak and internally divided, while the Liberals were growing stronger. Tolmie, like most premiers in Canada, was unpopular because he could not cure the depression. See Parker, "S.F. Tolmie," pp. 108-16.

52 Tolmie to General J.A. Clark, October 8, 1932, Tolmie Papers, Box 5-9, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C. According to Groves, "while metropolitan big business may have felt that the Conservatives could have done more to implement the Report's recommendations, the government's action was at least in line with what they had hoped would grow from their lobbying." City of Vancouver, Board of Trade, Special Committee Minutes, October 4, 1932, Add. MSS. 300, vol. 148, City Archives, Vancouver, B.C., cited by Groves, "Business Government," pp. 152-3.

53 Groves, "Business Government," p. 153. Prominent Liberals warned Pattullo that the electorate was disillusioned with party politics.
CHAPTER II

PROVINCIAL-MUNICIPAL RELATIONS AND
THE INTRODUCTION OF AT-LARGE ELECTIONS

Vancouver municipal politics in the mid-thirties were as much the outcome of provincial as they were of municipal activities and decisions. The new provincial Liberal administration under Pattullo was no more able to cure the depression than the Conservatives under Tolmie. Moreover, Pattullo reduced provincial grants to the city and refused to come to Vancouver's financial aid. By 1935, many Vancouver MLAs were alienated from a provincial government that was unwilling to save their city from bankruptcy. G.G. McGeer, Liberal MLA, Vancouver Mayor, and leader of a civic national protest, was the major spokesman for the group. McGeer demanded a number of economic reforms from the provincial government. Included in his demands was a proposal for a reduction in the number of aldermen on city council and the introduction of a new system of at-large elections for Vancouver. In the crisis atmosphere of 1935, Vancouver MLAs supported many of McGeer's economic proposals and helped initiate structural reforms for the city.

The Liberal party had captured a healthy majority in the 1933 provincial election, while the CCF with seven seats became the official opposition. The Conservative party was soundly defeated at the polls. Charles White, the former President of the Conservative Association, blamed Tolmie's proposals
for a Union government for the disaster. He explained:

While the results have been too sweeping they were anticipated to a certain extent as many old time Conservatives voted the straight Liberal ticket rather than accept the unknown and untried suggestions offered elsewhere. (1)

The Conservative party had splintered into three groups prior to the election. All three factions were poorly organized and found it difficult to get a hearing in the larger centres as the campaign developed into a Liberal-CCF contest. This fragmented opposition, coupled with the desertion of the business community to the Liberals in the face of the threat of socialism, gave Pattullo the advantage needed to virtually sweep the province. Vancouver businessmen realized that their ideas of 'non-partisan' politics and a 'business government' philosophy of administration as proposed in the Kidd Report, would have to be shelved temporarily until a more receptive forum could be found.

The city of Vancouver elected five Liberals and two CCF members to the new legislature in 1933; a turn around from the 1928 election when the Conservatives had filled the six possible seats. Pattullo acknowledged the support of old-time Conservatives in his acceptance speech. "I am aware that many of Conservative thought supported Liberal policies and candidates yesterday," he stated. "I interpret the sum total of the result as a desire for stable government and action." The Sun enthusiastically reported the pro-Liberal sentiments of Vancouver voters and condemned the role of both the CCF and the Conservatives in the election:
The people of B.C. have said once and for all that they believe in party governments. They have overwhelmingly rejected the demand of dilettante journalism that they elect 47 nondescript dictators without principle, without cohesion and without leadership. (6)

According to the paper the 1933 election results reflected a negative attitude towards 'non-partisan' politics or coalition government on the part of Vancouver voters and strong support for a Liberal administration in Victoria.

During the election, Pattullo's "work and wages" policies were popular among Liberal MLAs and their supporters in Vancouver. His policies included support for education programs, the creation of an Economic Council, and a vigorous public works program. The Premier even attempted to appease those who were opposed to party politics "by promising every member the freedom to vote as he wished in the House and only to consider the government obliged to resign when it had been beaten on a vote of non-confidence." However, Vancouver's support for a Liberal administration in Victoria did not improve the relationship between city council and the provincial government. In fact, the relationship steadily deteriorated throughout the decade. A personality conflict between MLA Gerry McGeer and the Premier, Pattullo's constant suspicion of the influence of big cities and big business on provincial politics, and the nature of the problems created by the depression ensured that the interests of Vancouver city council and Victoria provincial legislature would conflict.

The first rupture occurred when McGeer, a prominent Vancouver Liberal and well-established lawyer, was not included
in the provincial Cabinet. McGeer responded by publicly de­
nouncing the Liberal party, claiming that he had been promised
the position of Attorney-General. Unrewarded for his efforts
at the provincial level, but determined to make his voice heard,
McGeer turned his attention to Vancouver. In 1934, while still
an MLA, he was elected Mayor with the biggest landslide victory
in civic history.

McGeer played a key role in Vancouver municipal politics
in the mid-thirties. As Mayor and MLA, he was the major link
between provincial and civic governments. McGeer had made a
name for himself in the 1920s when he led B.C.'s case for
freight rate reform before the Board of Railway Commissioners.
In 1933, his popularity, or at least notoriety, increased
through his role as Trades and Labour spokesman at the Banking
Commission hearings. McGeer was outspokenly critical of the
private money system and large financiers like the Banking Com­
mission Chairman H.R. MacMillan. Armed with his own ideas
about a national banking system and a state planned and con­
trolled economy, and displaying an evangelistic style that
never failed to attract attention, McGeer emerged an extremely
popular figure in Vancouver. A son of the east side of the
city, his crusades against communism and organized labour won
him the support of the western downtown interests. However, he
was never completely accepted by the west because of his un­
orthodox, bombastic style of politicking and his bizarre views
on monetary change. McGeer was essentially a populist who
could draw on the support of voters from all sections of the
The man had an uncanny ability to take advantage of popular causes. As Mayor, McGeer found a cause even more popular than his critique of big business. In 1935, he initiated a Dominion-wide movement by mayors for constitutional change. This movement, which criticized both the provincial and federal governments' handling of the depression, would eventually attract the attention of the entire nation.

Pattullo's attitude toward the city and its business interests did nothing to alleviate the developing friction between himself and McGeer over constitutional issues. The Premier considered the push for 'non-party' administration during the 1933 campaign as an attempt by Vancouver business interests to head off an imminent Liberal victory. He had condemned the Kidd Report, arguing that the document was a one-sided and reactionary attempt by metropolitan forces to dominate provincial politics at the expense of rural interests. Pattullo had viewed the proposed reduction and redistribution of legislative seats as evidence of an urban conspiracy to weaken the rural voice in Victoria. Consequently, the Premier denounced the big business-government alliance of the previous Conservative administration and created a Cabinet "as independent as possible of the Vancouver party machine."

Personality conflicts and suspicions aside, the issues raised by the depression were enough in themselves to cause friction between Vancouver city council and the provincial government. In an effort to avoid provincial bankruptcy, Pattullo imposed new responsibility for social services on the
municipalities. The cities, in turn, refused to accept what they saw as the "consequences" of provincial arrangements with the federal government and insisted that legitimate representation to Dominion conferences could only be made by the city, not through the province. These reactions were common in larger Canadian cities and indicated the emergence of a new civic consciousness. McGeer's proposed plan for a nation-wide conference of mayors could not have been more timely.

The basis for a common front by municipalities lay in the fact that all were dependent on, and restricted to, the taxation of real property for revenue. The effects of the depression were such that property owners were no longer able to pay their taxes, and the municipalities' only recourse was to put the property up for tax sale. By 1934, the threat to private property was so great in the minds of Vancouver aldermen, that council voted to discontinue sales for tax arrears for at least one year. Throughout the Dominion, municipalities faced the prospect of "the wholesale reversion of real property to the municipalities for unpaid taxes." Canadian cities felt they were at the mercy of provincial as well as federal governments. Vancouver city council issued the following statement:

the point has now been reached where the very existence of Municipalities has been imperilled by failure to recognize and apply an equitable, stabilized and permanent basis of relationship between Provincial Governments and Municipalities, both as to duties, services, and revenues. (21)

Council members were not alone in their belief that the province was not giving the city a fair deal. Pattullo
had taken a very hard line on issues concerning Vancouver. The Premier stated unequivocally that if the city could not pay its interest it could default. Vancouver Liberal MLAs, led by Gordon Wismer, McGeer's former law partner, grouped together in March 1935 to protest the inaction of the government. Vancouver, Wismer declared, "must not be allowed 'to suffer the ignominy and the irreparable damage to prestige caused by bankruptcy.'" Wismer argued that the social services burden was too much for the city and it was the provincial government's duty to do something about it. Mayor McGeer requested several economic reforms. He asked the provincial government to suspend the sinking fund, reduce the city's interest payments, provide more loans for relief, review taxation structures, and authorize more baby bonds for the city to raise money for a new City Hall. Pattullo flatly refused. In response, Wismer recommended that Gerry McGeer be sent to Ottawa to do battle for the West. "In this fight for the welfare of Vancouver, Mayor McGeer and I are fighting together," he declared. Vancouver Liberals S.S. McKeen, Robert Wilkinson, Helen Smith, Gordon Sloan, and George Wier gave their unanimous support to McGeer. The welfare of Vancouver had become more important to some provincial politicians than the welfare of British Columbia or the Liberal government. The economic crisis created by the depression had focussed their attention on the city.

Pattullo's hard line approach to Vancouver's problems was supported by a financial survey of the city, released on
March 7, 1935, in the midst of the McGeer-Pattullo debate. Thomas Bradshaw, an eastern expert, had been commissioned by city council to investigate Vancouver's financial condition. Bradshaw reported that the city was well off compared to other Canadian cities and could afford mid-depression costs. In contrast, McGeer claimed that the city was going bankrupt and appointed his own experts—prominent local businessmen and public leaders—to substantiate his position. This difference of opinion reflected a larger problem. Bradshaw was a hard-nosed chartered accountant who recommended severe measures of retrenchment for the city. His report did not take into consideration the social and political anxiety generated by the large numbers of unemployed and Vancouver's growing debt. In 1935, Vancouver MLAs and city council shared a more subjective view of the city's problems that was totally justifiable from the perspective of the city's taxpayers.

The anxiety of Vancouver's local and provincial politicians over the growing debt and the increasing numbers of unemployed was heightened by the CCF's presence in the city. The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation first had become involved in civic politics in its founding year, 1933, but its municipal campaigns were weak and disorganized compared to its provincial activities. Under the ward system the party had been unable to gain any seats on council, with only occasional wins on the school and parks boards. However, the CCF press encouraged support for future municipal campaigns. Some party members argued that, in fact, the municipality was "the
logical unit for action, the logical nucleus for change."

The growing numbers of highly visible, discontented unemployed in the city, many of whom were affiliated with or at least sympathetic to the CCF, supported their arguments and worried McGeer and his supporters. Two provincial CCF members, Jack Price and Harold Winch, had won seats in East Vancouver, and it was only a matter of time before these working class wards also voted for socialist candidates in city council elections. Moreover, McGeer, who planned to run in the upcoming federal election in the Burrard riding, was being challenged by a popular CCFer, Arnold Webster. By the mid-thirties, the CCF appeared to be making substantial gains in public support in B.C. at all three levels of government.

Efforts had been made from the outset to discredit the entry of the CCF into the civic arena. The first was a newspaper campaign warning Vancouverites of the evils of party politics in civic affairs. Using the rhetoric of past urban reformers and the Kidd commissioners, one major Sun editorial in 1933 provoked a debate that continued for weeks. It argued that party politics was not necessary at the civic level and stood in the way of honest, efficient administration. Opponents of civic party politics used business analogies that emphasized efficiency to make their case. "To mix politics with civic affairs is the very worse kind of business," the paper editorialized. Party politics bred corruption as clearly demonstrated by the problems found in American cities like New York and Chicago. The most frightening image was
that of "a minature Tammany" in Vancouver; an inevitable result many argued, if the CCF entered local politics.  

However, not all readers were convinced that civic party politics led to inefficient and corrupt administration. Several commented on the newspaper's changing attitude toward 'non-partisan' politics, and suggested that the Sun was not being honest with its readers. One letter simply asked "if federal politics are clean, provincial politics are O.K. (according to the Sun) why should municipal politics be rotten?"  

Another pointed to the municipal election in Britain where an honest labour government was victorious, to counter claims that machine politics was the inevitable outcome of party politics in the city.  

Clearly, there were other reasons why the Sun and its supporters mounted an offensive against party politics. The most obvious was their fear of an organized socialist party gaining control of city hall. The election of two individual socialist candidates, Angus McInnis and Parm Pettipiece, in the twenties, had not provoked comment. But by the thirties, the economic crisis had created an atmosphere of political unrest. The emergence of a civic wing of the CCF which could mobilize the support of east side working class wards threatened, for the first time, to divide municipal politics along class lines.  

A newspaper like the Sun, which spoke for west side interests, recognized the political potential of east side voters and condemned the entry of the CCF into the civic arena.

In large part, fear of CCF success, prompted Gerry
McGeer to mount his own offensive. In a fanatical effort to discredit the party, he went out of his way to identify an essentially moderate CCF with communism, atheism, and the 'radicalism' of the unemployed. When Vancouver was occupied by 1,700 men from the relief camps in 1935, McGeer accused the CCF "of using camp strikers for political purposes" and implied that the party was behind the strike. McGeer was an impassioned orator and consequently, his true motivation is difficult to discern. However, as a master politician, he must have realized that it was the 'non-partisan' nature of local politics that strengthened city councils in their dealings with other levels of government. B. Hutchison, writing in the Province, predicted that the united voice of cities could affect the future policies of all political parties:

While provincial and federal politicians in the western provinces are divided by party labels, municipal leaders having no party interests to serve, can stand together as a unit. Their influence should be incalculable. (40)

The success of the CCF at the civic level could divide the city's voice when it was most important that the mayor be able to speak for the overall good of Vancouver.

McGeer also was obsessed with the idea that council in its present form was highly inefficient and corrupt. The relief department and the police commission were under constant investigation during McGeer's term of office. The Mayor was especially critical of the distribution of direct relief and frequently lectured his aldermen on the dangers of the system:
The fact that relief authorities have doled out the sum of $9,498,535.67 during the last five years without any attempt being made to secure anything in return surely offers an indication of the laxity and indifference that has prevailed with regard to the use of public moneys. Those on unemployment should be compelled to give fair and adequate service for all sums which they receive. (42)

Mayor McGeer was a self-styled reformer who made it his mission to clean up the city and city council at the same time.

Filled with reform zeal and anxious about his city's economic and political future, McGeer initiated a fundamental change in the structure of Vancouver's government. Since 1928, when Vancouver amalgamated with Point Grey and South Vancouver, the city had been divided into 12 wards each electing one alderman to council. McGeer proposed a new at-large system of elections for the city and a reduction in the number of aldermen from twelve to eight. According to the press, the idea had grown out of talks in the Legislature among those MLAs who were worried about a default by the city. As Mayor, McGeer had tried to introduce a motion for structural change into council. When city aldermen deferred any action on the proposal for at least one year, he turned to Liberal members of the provincial Private Bills Committee for support. A provincial amendment to the City Charter could force city council to accept the change or at least to hold a plebescite on the issue at the next civic election. 43

The House committee's desire to impose a new at-large system and a smaller council on the city stemmed, in part, from its impatience with the council's apparent inability to
decide on a site for the new City Hall. McGeer's plan to build the new Hall on the Strathcona Park site had been thwarted at every turn by local ratepayer's associations who labelled the Mayor a dictator. Several members saw the ward basis of council as too sectarian to decide the question and went on to suggest that the choice be left to experts like those men on the Town Planning Commission. McGeer, on the other hand, insisted that council alone should decide. Although the dispute was not resolved, House committee members all agreed with McGeer that an at-large system would be good for the city. A smaller, more centralized council would be able to look after the city's interests as a whole and not be held back by ward politics or sectional demands.

The issue of structural reform for the city was only one of several amendments to the Charter proposed by McGeer and discussed by the House in 1935. In the face of united pressure from Vancouver MLAs, Pattullo's attitude toward the city had softened, temporarily. The Premier had met with the Mayor's Advisory Committee, a special committee of local businessmen and public leaders appointed by council to advise it on taxation and fiscal problems. These men, who had prepared the financial report for McGeer in response to the Bradshaw findings, acted as intermediaries between McGeer and Pattullo. After a day of private meetings partial agreement was reached. The government would grant the city the authority to do away with sinking fund requirements, allow council to use unspent by-law balances as current revenues, and relieve the city's
budget of close to a million dollars in relief costs. Clearly, the provincial government had decided not to let the city default. 48

Vancouver MLAs were pleased with Pattullo's decision. Wismer introduced the Vancouver bill which quickly passed through the House. As part of the bill city council would be compelled to submit a plebiscite on the structural reform of government to the electorate in the next civic election. The plebiscite asked Vancouver voters to consider two changes in their electoral system:

Are you in favour of ending the ward system and electing aldermen at-large?
Are you in favour of reducing the number of aldermen from twelve to eight? (49)

McGeer and several provincial politicians were convinced that the new reforms, if implemented, would make council more efficient, put an end to sectional squabbling, and maintain a united voice for constitutional talks. So strong was their belief, that the House committee passed another amendment decreasing the percentage of voters required for approval from three-fifths to a simple majority. 50 The provincial government clearly preferred a smaller, more centralized form of government for Vancouver.

Vancouver aldermen, in contrast, failed to see the benefits of the structural changes. With the exception of Halford Wilson, city councillors loudly protested the "rather high-handed" action of the provincial government. Alderman Loat declared: "They are taking away our rights to attend to
our own affairs. If they cut their own body by half there would still be too many MLAs." Particularly insulting was the implication that council in its present form was at best, inefficient, if not inept and seriously corrupt. Recent investigation into the use of civic funds had given the aldermen months of bad press and they feared the loss of their jobs. Civic politicians recognized that they had nothing to gain and much to lose from the introduction of an at-large system and the attendant reduction in their numbers.

From the city's incorporation in 1886, Vancouver's wards had undergone many changes while retaining their basic neighbourhood character. All of this changed when Vancouver amalgamated with South Vancouver and Point Grey in 1928. The new city was divided into twelve wards. As the following map illustrates, the old neighbourhood wards, except for the four along Burrard Inlet, were broken up in order to introduce 'more efficient' narrow strip wards running north from the Fraser River. As a result each strip ward included a section from Vancouver and a section from one of the other municipalities. This completely ignored traditional neighbourhood boundaries (see Figure 1). An alderman would no longer represent an area with a distinct identity.

Consequently, by the mid-thirties there was considerable dissatisfaction with the existing ward system. Vancouverites in wards five to twelve could no longer identify their neighbourhood interests with ward interests. Moreover, by 1935 the number of eligible voters per ward varied widely.
FIGURE 1

Pre-1936 Vancouver Ward Map, 1928 - 1936

The most glaring discrepancy existed between the downtown district (wards one and two) and the southeastern working class areas of the city. Wards six and seven in the southeast had, respectively, three and four times the population of ward two, but each elected only one alderman. The ward system no longer satisfied neighbourhood sentiments or provided fair representation for all parts of the city. Vancouver voters were ready for a change in their form of government.

Yet these inadequacies were not the motivating force behind the efforts of Mayor McGeer, provincial politicians, or the Mayor's Advisory Committee to change the system. At no
time did these men raise the issue of fair representation. Problems with the ward system could have been remedied by the adjustment of ward boundaries but they proposed at-large elections. The Mayor's Advisory Committee had gone one step further and advocated a City Manager Plan, emphasizing its commitment to centralization and efficiency. Their principle motive was to create an efficient, businesslike administration that could better deal with depression problems as they saw them.

Paradoxically, the CCF also favoured structural reform for the city. At the provincial level, when Liberal MLA G. Wismer had called for a united front of Vancouver MLAs, CCF members rallied to the city's defense and helped initiate the proposed plebiscite. The civic arm of the party and the District Trades and Labour Council appear to have accepted the old urban reform argument that the abolition of corrupt ward interests would lead to better government. There were also important practical considerations. Under the ward system working class areas of the city were unfairly represented. City-wide elections offered the CCF an opportunity to draw on its growing east side support and make a consolidated bid for power. If east side voters exercised their franchise, a new at-large system could work to the party's advantage.

Curiously, the Vancouver business community was not solidly behind the proposed structural reforms. Representatives of the property owners and local businessmen on the Mayor's Advisory Committee endorsed the proposed changes,
but the Board of Trade made no statement in 1935. In 1936 the Civic Bureau executive recommended that the Board oppose the abolition of the ward system and the reduction in numbers of aldermen. However, in light of the overwhelming support for the changes in the December 1935 plebescite, the Board of Trade Council decided not to take any action. No doubt, the Board's relative indifference was a result of its more immediate concern over the economic amendments to the Charter.

In the end, there was no organized opposition to the proposed reforms from the business community in 1935 or 1936.

Public interest in the change was virtually non-existent. Local ratepayers' associations and ward aldermen, those who stood to lose power through election at-large, voiced their opposition but offered no sustained argument. The press favoured the reforms and consequently presented little debate. Most advocates of the new political machinery fell back on the arguments of American urban reformers to make their case (see Figure 2). The old system was condemned as "petty, small, obstructionist and reactionary," creating the "meanest kind of paternalism" in civic affairs. Newspaper editorials charged the ward system with the promotion of patronage and corruption, under which each alderman must become "a petty job seeker and fixer for all his constituents." Charges such as these were never substantiated and one would be hard pressed to find any major examples of graft or scandal in the wards in the 1930s. However, this line of argument did promote the view that Vancouver had an old-fashioned, anachronistic form of government.
Surplus "Aldermanic Crop" Reducing Plan?

DO YOU REALIZE YOU HAVE TO DECIDE NEXT WEEK?

PLEDGETES: ARE YOU IN FAVOR OF REDUCING CITY COUNCIL TO EIGHT MAN?

DO YOU FAVOR ABOLISHING THE WARD SYSTEM?

LEMMIE SEE NOW-GUESS IT WAS ONE OF THOSE NEW DEAL IDEAS IN THE STATES TO SOLVE THE SURPLUS COTTON PROBLEM BY PLoughING UNDER EVERY SECOND OR THIRD ROW OF COTTON...

"Ploughing Under" Every Third Alderman?

SOURCE: Vancouver Sun, December 5, 1935.

FIGURE 2

"Surplus 'Aldermanic Crop' Reducing Plan?"

Cartoonist: Callan.
The press emphasized that in this day and age, local government should work for the interests of the city as a whole. Vancouver needed "Big men who have the metropolitan viewpoint," not "little men who are big shots in little neighbourhoods." Voters were encouraged to compare their city council with councils in other Canadian and American cities and to consider the merits of political reform.  

Vancouver citizens voted in favour of change in December 1935. Turnout for the plebiscite was low—only 19 percent—but the average percentage of voters in favour varied little from ward to ward with a high city-wide average of 69 percent supporting the introduction of an at-large electoral system. In March 1936, the provincial government amended the Charter to abolish wards. The provincial press immediately began a newspaper campaign to promote business efficiency in government at the civic level. In one editorial, representative of many, the Province applauded the voter's decision to accept election at-large, but advised Vancouverites to adopt the proper outlook:  

The change of form of civic government is nothing in itself. There must go with it a fresh civic consciousness on the part of the individual citizen. What should be the nature of the fresh civic consciousness? Simply this: That the business of the city of Vancouver which is the biggest business in Vancouver is the business of every citizen of Vancouver. He profits or he loses just as a share holder in a private business profits or loses from the degree of efficiency thrown into the management of it. (66)  

Business government was what Vancouver needed and the News-Herald logically extended the analogy:
The City Council with the Mayor as chairman is in fact a board of directors chosen to supervise and regulate the affairs of the city. (67)

It followed that businessmen would make the best aldermen and mayors. More than ever before, experience in the Vancouver business community became an important criterion in selecting city officers. Fred Crone, an independent candidate in the 1936 election, campaigned as a "Vancouver Businessman for the Past 30 Years," while George A. Walkem proudly boasted that he was "the largest employer of labour of any candidate." Even those who lacked experience promoted "a more businesslike set-up" at City Hall in an attempt to capitalize on the current, popular theme: "Sane Businesslike Administration."

Acceptance of the at-large system made Vancouver ripe for acceptance of the non-partisan philosophy. At-large elections were most often found in cities that accepted non-partisan politics during the urban reform era. In Vancouver, civic non-partisanship had been promoted since the entry of the CCF into civic politics in 1933. With the introduction of at-large elections in 1936, the idea that the city was a business and businessmen made the best civic representatives attained even more popularity. Non-partisan attitudes stemmed from this fundamental belief. Provincial politicians, the press, letters to the editor, independent civic candidates and the Board of Trade strongly supported efficient businesslike politics at the civic level of government. The first at-large election in 1936 would reveal how many voters supported a business government philosophy of administration for their city. It would
also reveal that unexpected long-term consequences of the new reform institution.
NOTES - CHAPTER II

1 Vancouver Sun, November 4, 1933.

2 The unionists under Tolmie; a Liberal-Conservative alliance that sponsored 38 'non-partisan' candidates under Bowser; and the few remaining independents.

3 F.H. Soward, "British Columbia Goes Liberal," Canadian Forum XIV (December 1933):87; Sun, November 3, 1933.

4 Ian Parker, "Simon Fraser Tolmie," pp. 106-16; Sun, November 4, 1933.

5 Sun, November 3, 1933.

6 Ibid.; Ibid., November 18, 1933.


8 Angus MacInnis, "More About the British Columbia Election," Canadian Forum XIV (September 1934):170; Sun, November 21, 1933.


19. City of Vancouver, By-Laws, RG2-C1, vol. 55, November 15, 1934, p. 77, City Archives, Vancouver, B.C.


21. Ibid.


27. City of Vancouver, B.C. Taxation and Financial Survey of the City of Vancouver Compiled by a Select Committee at the Request of the Mayor, May 1, 1935.


29. CCF advertisements were virtually nonexistent in 1930-1935 civic campaigns. In at least two cases, nomination papers were filed incorrectly and the party did not run a full slate of candidates until the 1936 election.

Three CCF candidates were elected in the 1935 federal election. Webster and McGeer ran a close race, but McGeer emerged victorious.

Sun, November 17, 1933.

Ibid., November 21, 1933.

Ibid., November 28, 1933.

Ibid.


See Taylor, "Urban Social Organizations," for a comparative analysis of the impact of the depression on civic politics in Winnipeg, Edmonton, and Vancouver.


B. Hutchison, "Favour McGeer's New Monetary Credit Scheme," Province, January 29, 1935.

"At the City Hall," The Commonwealth, Vancouver, February 15, 1935. The relief department spent $4,000.00 a month on investigations. According to Alderman MacDonald, "the number of convictions did not begin to warrant such an expenditure."


Sun, March 13, 1935.

"Ratepayers Voice Opposition to City Hall Plan," The Commonwealth, June 28, 1935. The ratepayers also opposed the introduction of a system of at-large elections.

Sun, March 14, 1935.
Sun, March 14, 1935.

Sun, March 14, 1935. Committee members, J.P. Nicholls, J.C. MacPherson, T.S. Dixon, W. Wardhaugh were the major spokesmen for the group.

City of Vancouver, Record of Nominations and Elections 1924-1949, 1935 Plebiscite, RG2-D1, December 11, 1935, p. 209, City Archives, Vancouver, B.C.

British Columbia, Statutes of the Province of British Columbia, An Act to Amend the "Vancouver Incorporation Act, 1921," March 23, 1935, c. 92, sec. 3.


Province, February 8, 1935; Sun, December 3, 1935. City clerk, C. Jones and City Soliciter, J.B. Williams were dismissed for negligence in connection with the disqualification of R.P. Pettipiece as an aldermanic candidate. Charges of corruption were brought against Internal Auditor Frank Stead, City Clerk W.L. Woodford, and City Comptroller W. Wardhough.


The breakdown of neighbourhood wards fits the Hays pattern. See S.P. Hays, "Reform in Municipal Government."

Sun, December 6, 1935. The 1935 voters' list gives the following voting populations per ward:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wards</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Wards</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4,289</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12,972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3,437</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4,297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3,586</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6,945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6,935</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6,268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>6,217</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6,027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>9,720</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6,821</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

City of Vancouver, B.C. Taxation and Financial Survey of the City of Vancouver. Compiled by a Select Committee at the Request of his Worship the Mayor, May 1, 1935, pp. 13-4.

Sun, November 25, 1935; R.P. Pettipiece had advocated abolition of the ward system in 1933. Sun, December 8, 1933; Vancouver Commonwealth, May 31, 1934.

British Columbia Federationist, September 11, 1936; Ibid., October 29, 1936.

60 City of Vancouver, Board of Trade, Council Minutes, March 5, 1936, Add. MSS. 300, Vol. 13, p. 165. City Archives, Vancouver, B.C.


62 Sun, December 9, 1935.

63 Ibid.

64 Although turnout for non-mayoralty elections (held every two years) was generally low, City Clerk Fred Howlett reported in 1935 "that interest in the election seemed slacker than he had ever seen in his experience dating back to 1910, including 24 previous contests." Sun, December 11, 1935. City turn-out in 1937 was 35.3% and in 1939, 33.9%. Explanations offered; "no popular public issue" and "light rain."

65 British Columbia, Statutes of the Province of B.C., An Act to Amend the "Vancouver Incorporation Act 1921," April 1, 1936, c. 68, sec. 3.

66 Province, April 11, 1936.

67 Vancouver News-Herald, December 9, 1936.

68 Sun, December 8, 1936.

69 Ibid., December 9, 1936.

70 Ibid., December 8, 1936.
CHAPTER III

THE CIVIC CCF AND THE FORMATION
AND SUCCESS OF THE NON-PARTISAN ASSOCIATION

The civic elections in 1936 witnessed a vigorous campaign by the CCF. For the first time the party ran a full slate of candidates. The new at-large electoral system gave the CCF an advantage in the city. According to Regional Chairman A. Johnson, "no wards or ridings made possible a consolidation of efforts" not seen in previous elections. CCF clubs in Vancouver agreed to work together. The new system also gave the party an opportunity to consolidate its support. Working class areas of the city had not been fairly represented under the ward system. City-wide elections gave the party a new found strength if potential supporters on the east side exercised their franchise. Consequently, the CCF campaign emphasized the importance of voter turnout for their cause.

For their part, city aldermen, who had opposed the introduction of at-large elections, began to speculate on the effects of the new system. In 1935 Alderman Wilkinson had "expressed the fear that sectionalism and politics would creep in" once the ward system was abolished. Six months later, in an address to the Real Estate exchange, Alderman Kirk warned of the danger of one group gaining control of City Hall through a block vote. He advised that another method of election should be authorized by the Legislature in order to prevent
such a possibility. Liberal and Conservative aldermen, who liked to think of themselves as independents at the local level of government, realized that the new system gave an organized party like the CCF a distinct advantage in the coming election.

A special committee of Board of Trade members appointed by council to investigate "the civic elections situation" reached even more frightening conclusions: it was possible that only one section of the city could elect the entire board of aldermen. The problem for these men was that this power was in the hands of east side residents. According to C.A.A. Heeney, Chairman of the Advertising and Sales Bureau of the Board of Trade:

An analysis of the voting of the election two years ago showed conclusively that the strongest numerical vote was polled east of Oak Street and, further, that by no means a representative vote was cast, percentages showing that only 50% of the voters registered their franchise. (5)

The committee's report demonstrated its fear that the CCF could take advantage of the division within the city. The east side working class wards, which had been under represented under the ward system, and which had elected CCF MLAs in the 1933 provincial election, would in all likelihood give a large percentage of their vote to the civic CCF, who for the first time were running a full slate of candidates. (6)

The committee proposed a meeting with the Presidents of the Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions Clubs to consider what action should be taken. Heeney suggested the promotion of a slate of 'adequate' candidates representing business interests. (7) However, a closer look at the numbers and names of candidates
that had already entered the race convinced the committee that it was impossible to choose a particular slate at such a late date. Members were appointed to ask Mayor McGeer to reconsider running for a second term. He declined. With election less than a month away, the committee felt there was little else it could do.

Opposition to the CCF was never clearly expressed by council, 'independent' candidates, or the local press. However, all three groups campaigned for 'efficient businesslike' government for City Hall, strongly suggesting that local government and politics did not mix. In response, the Federationist, a CCF newspaper, promoted a teamlike image for its candidates. "The CCF does not ask support for its candidates as individuals," the paper told civic voters. "It seeks support for them as a body of socially conscious representatives." In 1936, the call for business government does not appear to have hurt the CCF. In fact, the CCF worked harder than ever before to present an organized, efficient image of itself to the electorate. At this stage, it appeared that Vancouver MLAs and certain businessmen had not thought through the consequences of the new reform institution.

Three of the eight aldermen elected to city council in 1936 were CCF candidates: A.M. Anderson, R. Parm Petti-piece, and Alfred Hurry. Approximately 24 percent of Vancouver citizenry gave their vote to the CCF. All incumbents except Halford Wilson were defeated. No doubt the numerous accusations of corruption levelled at council members during McGeer's
term played a part in their loss. However, more central to
their defeat was the fact that they had run as unaffiliated
independents who had to win the support of the city at-large.
Although the CCF did little advertising in the regular press,
their candidates had the advantage of being associated with
an identifiable group. The Federationist described the vic-
tory in the following terms:

It has broken the stranglehold of individualistic
capitalistic endeavors. This is a victory which if
not audible in Montreal, will be distinctly heard
in Victoria. (10)

Provincial and civic politicians were to hear more
from the civic arm of the party during their first year in
office. A March by-election kept the CCF name in the news.
CCFer Helena Gutteridge was easily elected alderman over two
experienced opponents, C. Jones and H.L. Corey, indicating
strong municipal support for the party.11 The CCF ran weekly
classes on civic affairs and encouraged supporters to get in-
volved in city politics in order to acquire more experience
and training. The Federationist always reported labour suc-
cesses in other Canadian cities and urged Vancouverites to
keep in step. Finally, the party never lost an opportunity
to emphasize the importance of a civic base in case of a CCF
majority in Victoria.12

The most threatening aspect of CCF civic success,
however, was their behavior as a party on council. Civic
representatives, like provincial MLAs, were bound by CCF
policy and the decisions of the regional committee. The three
aldermen were expected to vote together on all issues. The CCF's proposal that MLAs could not hold office as Vancouver aldermen, a policy of the CCF party, was one example of an attempt to impose party discipline on the council. More controversial was their refusal to accept half-way measures from the provincial government in the area of social services. R. Parm Pettipiece was the Chairman of the Social Services Committee and was bound by his membership in the CCF party to implement the party's policy of a minimum wage for the unemployed. In June, 1,500 unemployed men had landed in Vancouver from closed relief camps and provincial government projects. At this stage, most council members were prepared to accept any assistance the provincial legislature would offer, but Gutteridge and Hurry refused to accept any half-measures. Pettipiece wavered on the issue and the Sun immediately suggested division in the CCF ranks. The Federationist accused the Sun of trying to divide party members, while Pettipiece was quietly brought back into line.

These activities once again triggered a "no party politics" campaign. The Conservative News-Herald condemned the CCF for imposing party discipline upon elected members who did not follow party policy:

Now is the time to scotch the serpent of party politics before, having been warmed at the hearthside of our Council, it becomes aggressive and difficult to expel. (16)

Alderman Fred Crone and J.W. Cornett sponsored a motion in council "deprecating the introduction of party politics into civic affairs." This was an obvious attempt to discredit
the CCF members on council. Crone, a Liberal MLA, and Cornett, a former Conservative MLA, withdrew the motion in the face of CCF accusations that "old line political parties representative of a minority group of vested interests" had dominated City Hall in an "underground fashion" for years. Fires were fueled by the CCF decision to deny Pettipiece an endorsement for the 1937 election. The party was criticized for its Tammany Hall tactics; no party had the right to dictate the alderman's course of action. Letters to the editor reflected support for Pettipiece's decision to resign from the CCF and displayed a growing belief in the 'non-partisan' philosophy. In the words of one pioneer citizen:

Mr. Pettipiece is a very fine upstanding citizen. We do not want politics in our City Council. They [the councillors] are there for the best interests of the city at-large. (21)

There was only one viable answer to counter the threat posed by the CCF—a broader based, better organized entity to oppose it. The CCF's behavior on council had crystallized the need for such an organization. In the midst of the Pettipiece controversy a new civic political group, the Non-Partisan Association, was formed. Eight men met in a downtown office, only one month before the 1937 at-large election, to discuss their city's political future. The result was the formation of a new association dedicated to the elimination of party politics at the civic level of government. According to the founding members it was the duty of the Non-Partisan Association to protect the integrity of civic politics by endorsing candidates who had not pledged allegiance to any outside body.
To ensure its non-partisan character the NPA resolved not to recruit candidates; rather, its sole function would be to endorse them and then publicize its selection. Once elected, candidates would be under no obligation to the Non-Partisan Association and free to act according to their own consciences in the best interests of Vancouver.23

However, it was clear from the outset, that the Non-Partisan Association was a Liberal and Conservative reaction to the recent success of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation in municipal politics. To enter civic politics under Liberal and Conservative banners would split the non-socialist vote and increase the likelihood of a CCF majority. A Liberal-Conservative alliance was the only way to combat the growing socialist threat. Here, the philosophy of non-partisanship lent itself to their cause. Without directly attacking the CCF, the association could work towards the elimination of the CCF party at the civic level by attacking all partisan involvement. Once Liberals and Conservatives had amalgamated to form the NPA, the CCF would be the only party remaining at the civic level and therefore, by definition, the enemy.

The background and political affiliation of the founding members brings the non-partisan nature of the group immediately into question. All of them were successful, well-connected and established in the Vancouver community. G.V.W. Odlum was a newspaper publisher, D. Pratt and R. Holland were lawyers and E.W. Rhodes was a senior officer in the Canadian Bank of Commerce. The remaining four were important business
figures; B.S. Brown—an insurance agent; S.S. McKeen—president of his own large firm; J.C. MacPherson—a realty company owner; and L. Craig—a grain broker. The majority were members of the Board of Trade's Civic Bureau. Their political affiliations were even more revealing. Odlum and McKeen were former Liberal MLAs, Brown was provincial vice-president of the Liberal party, and Pratt was provincial secretary of the Conservative party. At the municipal level, Holland was chairman of the parksboard and Craig had been manager of two successful mayoralty campaigns—McGeer's in 1934 and Miller's in 1936—and had managed provincial Liberal campaigns. Clearly, these men had both the motive and the means to mount an anti-CCF offensive under the guise of the Non-Partisan Association.

The CCF lost no time whatever in attacking the 'non-partisan' character of the new organization. Through sharp political cartoons (see Figures 3 and 4) and editorials, the Federationist ridiculed "the hypocrisy of the 'no politics' smokescreen" used by the NPA. The paper editorialized:

The Non-Partisan Association is just as much a party as is the CCF. It is true that it has within its ranks Liberals and Conservatives. That does not make it Non-Partisan; it makes it Bi-Partisan. (28)

The first public meeting demonstrated who the NPA represented and to whom it appealed. The names in attendance represented some of the major business interests of the province, and almost to a man its supporters were closely affiliated with the old line provincial parties. Some had been suppor-
SOURCE: British Columbia Federationist, November 18, 1937.

FIGURE 3

"'Non-Partisan' Group Seen As Old Line Party Combination"

Reprinted by permission, the Democrat.
FIGURE 4

"Civic Election Cartoon"


Reprinted by permission, the Democrat.
ters of the **Kidd Report**. Austin Taylor, a member of the NPA's first finance committee, was one of the five contributors to the report that recommended an end to provincial party politics in 1933. Others like Mayor McGeer and several members of his Advisory Committee supported the new vehicle because it challenged the CCF. Still others like Alderman H.L. Corey realized the advantages of working with an organized group in a city-wide contest. It was clear to the CCF and to anyone who read the original membership roles that the NPA was, in the words of the **Federationist**:

>a combination of Liberals and Conservatives who are taking part in civic politics at this time because they feel that the special privileges on which they live and which they represent might be jeopardized by the election of CCF candidates. (32)

In contrast, the **Sun** and **Province** reported the NPA's birth with delight. Both papers carefully listed the "prominent citizens" in attendance and stated unequivocally that the association had been formed as a reaction to the entry of the CCF into the civic field. In the following weeks, editorials under such headings as "No Party Politics" and "No Politics in Civic Affairs" reflected these newspapers' favourable attitude towards the association's formation and philosophy. "The motive is a worthy one" declared the Conservative **Province**. "Party politics have no place in the civic field." The **Sun** was even more generous in its praise:

>It is . . . freedom from domination and perpetuation of sane independent thinking that the NPA aims to assure . . . . This movement is a gesture of pure democracy. (35)
Of course the Liberal Sun carefully explained that it did not question "the motives or sincerity of any political party that sought to gain control of Vancouver's civic affairs" but rather it would "deprecate very vigorously the consequences of such political control." 36

That the people of Vancouver generally agreed with the Sun and Province editorials was demonstrated to the papers' satisfaction one month later when the NPA won nine out of a possible eleven seats for council, parks board, and school board, while CCF representation was reduced to one. In the eyes of the Sun the reason for the NPA's success was obvious. "Vancouver's economic and political outlook was sharply altered on Wednesday," reported the paper. The large vote polled for NPA candidates was "an inferential decision on the part of Vancouver people that they will tolerate no party politics in their civic affairs." 37

Yet despite the media's claims that the election was a triumph of "democratic common sense," this was clearly not the case in 1937. On the contrary, election results demonstrate that the vote had divided between the CCF and the NPA. "We would have elected all our men if the vote had not been split," explained ex-mayor and NPAer Gerry McGeer. 38 In fact, the NPA received only 40 percent of the aldermanic vote, with the CCF polling 31.5 percent, but the 8.5 percent spread in aldermanic vote was sufficient to elect NPA candidates to three out of four available aldermanic seats. Overall, the association won a total of 81 percent of the vacancies. Its
strength was unquestionably on the west side. The NPA's support in every pre-1936 east side ward was lower than in every pre-1936 west side ward.\textsuperscript{39} As the following diagram (Figure 5) illustrates, the city was politically divided between east and west.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{pre-1936-ward-map.png}
\caption{Pre-1936 Ward Map: NPA Aldermanic Support 1937 Election}
\end{figure}

Clearly, the success of the NPA cannot be attributed to a sudden city-wide change in political outlook, as suggested in the \textit{Sun} and \textit{Province}. There simply was no sudden
shift of political allegiance. A more accurate conclusion is that these newspapers represented west side interests. Moreover, it would appear that the 'non-partisan' nature of the NPA had little to do with its success in 1937, except insofar as it provided an organization that would serve as an alternative to the CCF for the bloc of west side voters. The crucial factor was the replacement of the ward system with an at-large system. The NPA was a well-organized, moneyed group that could afford to advertise on a city-wide basis. More important, the basic mechanics of an "at-large" system allowed the largest bloc of voters to take everything. It was this "winner take all" aspect of the new system that made it possible for the NPA with only 40 percent of the aldermanic vote, drawn from only one side of the city, to dominate city politics.

A closer look at the candidates who ran in 1936 and 1937 reveals the importance of organizational support. West side voters generally supported a straight NPA ticket, regardless of the individuals endorsed by the association. Henry Lyman Corey who had represented Ward 12 in 1935 and had lost in the first at-large election, came back with the NPA in 1937 to top the polls. "I lost because there was no organization behind me," Corey told a reporter. "This year I got in. It goes to show that some organization is necessary if you are going to get anywhere." Even more revealing is the case of R. Parm Pettipiece. He campaigned under the CCF banner in 1936 and was elected. In 1937 he ran on the NPA ticket and
lost. While his support more than doubled in west side wards, he suffered substantial losses on the east side, indicating not so much support for the man but rather west side support for the ideology of the NPA. More difficult to determine is what the voter believed that ideology to be—non-party or non-socialist or both.

The advantage of an organized group over an individual candidate under an at-large system was further demonstrated in the case of Lillette Mahon. In 1936, Mahon was the strongest among independent candidates in the city. The formation of the NPA, which gave civic voters two identifiable groups to choose from, lessened her chances of success. While NPA and CCF candidates made substantial gains in 1937, her city-wide strength increased by only two percent—not enough to gain a seat.

The election in 1937 of three NPA candidates out of a possible four had little effect on the composition and character of a council of eight: the major change was the reduction of CCF representation to one alderman. The top four independent aldermen, who would run again in 1938 as NPA candidates, were elected in 1936 for two year terms. In their second year, 1937, they were joined by three NPAers: Kirk, Corey, and DeGraves, and CCFer Gutteridge. None of these successful candidates were new to council. All were familiar with the issues of the day. All had established attitudes which would not alter as a result of a new 'non-partisan' label.
The issues facing council had not changed and would not until the end of the thirties. The antagonism between civic and provincial governments resurfaced in 1938 when the Premier refused to come to Vancouver's aid during the May sit-down strike of relief camp men. The city council maintained its hardline policy of not granting assistance to single unemployed men. Pattullo's refusal to intervene and his reduction of municipal loans to cities throughout the province was greatly resented by Vancouver citizens. Alderman Crone, an NPAer and Liberal MLA, wrote to Pattullo in July warning him that Vancouver could not be treated like other municipalities. The city was one-third of the province's population and he believed Vancouver people to be very civic minded. Crone told the Premier: "The financial integrity of Vancouver is of just as much importance to me as the financial integrity of B.C." The majority of city councillors agreed. Vancouver aldermen in the 1930s were obsessed with the possibility of insolvency and were determined to protect their city from the loose spending policies of the CCF and the unfair relief programs of the provincial and federal governments.

The 1938 civic election reinforced both the greatest hopes and the gravest fears of these councillors and the provincial political elite that had engineered the formation of the NPA. The four conservative Non-Partisan Association candidates for city council were easily elected, but the results of the mayoralty election raised difficult questions. Dr. Lyle Telford, an outspoken CCF MLA elected in Vancouver
East, managed to squeeze in between the split vote for George Miller and Nelson Spencer and win the mayoralty. Both Miller and Spencer were wealthy Conservatives and influential members of the NPA. Miller, much to the chagrin of Spencer, was endorsed as the NPA mayoralty candidate. Spencer came out in favour of the City Manager plan and against the association which was, he alleged, "a self-appointed clique, directed and dominated by scheming politicians." He charged these politicians with "plotting through the Non-Partisan group to retain control over the city as they have done ever since I came here in 1921." According to Spencer's campaign manager, the NPA was not non-partisan: "it is a party working behind a smoke screen to control our city."

An examination of the NPA executive, of which Spencer was a member in 1938, tends to substantiate his charges. Of the association's founding members only Rhodes and Holland were absent. Joining the executive were the wealthiest men in Vancouver: Austin Taylor, Colonel Victor Spencer, W.C. Woodward, and H.L. Malkin. This group of men came from the west side of the city and their names dotted the elite membership roles of the Vancouver Club, the Terminal City Club, the Jericho Country Club, the Vancouver Yacht Club, the Shaughnessy Height's Golf Club, and the like. Ten were members of the Civic Bureau of the Board of Trade and at least as many were prominent figures in provincial Conservative and Liberal politics. In short, these men represented the city's business elite and the province's political elite and were
involved in civic politics to protect their own interests.

Telford's victory brought the NPA face to face with what it had hoped to avoid. Spencer's entry into the race had split the west side vote and enabled Telford to be successful. The following figures (see Table 1), apart from showing a near perfect east-west split, demonstrate how Telford was able to win.

**TABLE 1**

**VANCOUVER MAYORALTY ELECTION 1938**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent of Total Vote Received</th>
<th>Miller NPA</th>
<th>Telford CCF</th>
<th>Spencer City Manager Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WEST (Wards I, II, VIII-XII)</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAST (Wards III-VII)</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent Breakdown of Support by Area</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WEST</td>
<td>65.2</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>61.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAST</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>66.3</td>
<td>38.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If Spencer had not run, the great majority of his votes would have gone to Miller. Clearly, the NPA could not afford the luxury of a divided right in civic elections in the face of a solid bloc of support for the CCF. The association was not yet securely in control of City Hall.

In the 1940 mayoralty election, Jonathan Cornett, long-
standing NPA alderman, defeated the incumbent Telford. The campaign was remarkably like those in the recent past. Telford, like Spencer before him in 1938, lashed out at the so-called 'non-partisan' group and their campaign funds. He accused Drew Pratt and the Conservative party of "dirty government at City Hall," but lost the election with only 44.1 percent of the vote to Cornett's 55.2 percent. Telford had actually won in 24 out of 47 polling divisions but only on the east side and by very small margins. Cornett, on the other hand, while winning fewer polls, outpolled Telford by as much as nine to one in Shaughnessy district—the NPA stronghold. No poll was as favourable to Dr. Telford or the CCF. The News-Herald provided Vancouver citizens with a map of the city displaying the east-west split that had divided the city at every election since 1936 (see Figure 6).

However, the newspaper's claims that "the dividing line between rival strongholds was once again Ontario St.," was only valid insofar as the mayoralty election was concerned. A subtle shift in the voting pattern, virtually unnoticed by most observers, had given the NPA secure control of City Hall. Prior to the 1940 election, the NPA had managed to elect aldermen and dominate city council on the strength of solid west side support which effectively neutralized the block of east side support for the CCF. Indeed, after the election of Gutteridge in 1937, no CCF alderman was able to gain office. But it was a shaky domination as the mayoralty races of 1938 and 1940 had demonstrated. By 1940 the NPA,
"Better than words, this map tells the story of Alderman J.W. Cornett's successful campaign for the mayoralty. In black are the polling divisions taken by the alderman, shaded are the districts in which Mayor Telford held the margin of votes. As expected, the mayor swept the east end of the city, but failed to balance the Cornett tide that covered virtually every other district."

SOURCE: Vancouver News-Herald, December 12, 1940.

FIGURE 6

"Cornett Gains Sweeping Victory; Telford to Resign Post at Once"
in fact, had gained city-wide acceptance. Apart from the mayoralty election, no less than 40-50 percent of every ward voted in favour of Non-Partisan Association aldermanic candidates. Moreover, the NPA replaced the CCF as the dominant group in every ward on the east side. While the rise in support was less pronounced in the east than in the west, the important point is that NPA support rose in all wards and now NPA strength came from all parts of the city.

The most obvious reason for this change was the disappearance of strong independent candidates in both the aldermanic and mayoralty elections. Independents received 29.8 percent of the aldermanic vote in 1939 as compared to only 13.6 percent in 1940. The CCF remained constant in their support, with the result that NPA strength increased by 15.3 percent overall. By 1940, it was evident that the mechanics of the at-large system favoured identifiable groups, like the NPA and CCF, and made it difficult for independents to gain office. Voter turnout on the east and west sides was not a factor in NPA success. As the following figures (see Table 2) indicate, it remained constant throughout the 1937-1940 elections. The key to success was money and sophisticated organization--access to Liberal and Conservative voter's lists--which gave the NPA the edge in the battle with the CCF to win votes away from independents.51

A number of other factors must have played a role in the NPA sweep of 1940. The fact that two of the NPA aldermanic candidates and the mayoralty candidate lived on the east
TABLE 2
AVERAGE PERCENTAGE VOTER TURNOUT 1936-1940

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Eastern Wards</th>
<th>Western Wards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>48.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>35.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>52.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>40.9</td>
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side of the city may have added to NPA popularity in these wards. The personal support of the Chairman of the Vancouver and New Westminster Trades and Labour Council, for the NPA since 1938, no doubt influenced some members to vote for association nominees.52 The outbreak of war, an upsurge in the economy, and reduced unemployment also contributed to the association's success. It is probable that the patriotic citizenry of Vancouver under these conditions wanted stable, efficient, businesslike government and turned to the NPA as the exponent of these values.

Yet these factors alone cannot account for the overwhelming success of the organization. In theory at least, non-partisan politics provided a positive alternative for voters which must be weighed heavily in any consideration of NPA success. By 1940 NPA ideology had come to represent something more than a negative anti-CCF philosophy. Certainly, the men behind the formation of the organization were motivated by a 'red scare' and plainly understood that the
association was anything but non-partisan. However, many Vancouver citizens agreed with the NPA that the primary duty of good local government was to ensure good management. Party politics would only introduce corruption, divide candidates' loyalties, and do nothing to improve the quality of people elected. As a result of the NPA's arguments, many members, voters, and even candidates believed that the NPA stood for basic, honest administrative efficiency, unassociated with politics or any political party.

The philosophy of non-partisan politics had been gradually permeating Vancouver politics for years. It had its philosophical roots in its American counterparts and grew out of factors common in the rise of all North American cities: the growth and diversification of big business and the emergence of the board management concept. Acceptance of the at-large system, consideration of the City Manager plan and the general discussion of non-partisan ideas suggested an atmosphere of change in terms of modernization, rather than simply reactionary anti-socialism. Because of this atmosphere the NPA was able to represent itself, at least in theory, as much more than an anti-socialist crusade.

However, in practise, the election of a majority of NPA aldermen to city council had little effect on the city, except insofar as it headed off the election of CCF candidates. The composition and character of council did not really change over the decade. In fact, virtually all (ten out of thirteen) NPA candidates for alderman for the years 1937-1940 had served
on council before the formation of the NPA. These were not inexperienced men or unfamiliar faces that donned the neutral colours of 'non-partisanship.' At least seven had either held elective office or were members of the provincial Liberal or Conservative parties. Generally, they were over 50 years of age and the majority were businessmen like their counterparts for the earlier part of the decade. The formation of the NPA did not increase the number of businessmen on council; rather, its formation allowed businessmen to continue to dominate council after the entry of the CCF into the civic arena. The percentage of businessmen on council was remarkably constant throughout the decade. Perhaps the only surprising characteristic of the NPA group was that almost one-half of them lived on the east side of the city.

The NPA was not a reform group. Without question the association was a reaction to the CCF: a defensive coalition of Liberals, Conservatives, and other supporters of the status quo. The group had no stated policy other than to provide Vancouver citizens with honest, efficient business-like government in the midst of depression chaos and to oppose any political party at the civic level. However, its unstated policy was to defend the capitalist system and protect the business interests of the city which the association clearly identified with the public interest. From 1937 to 1940 there was no need to advance a more specific platform to the voters. The NPA could embody the community's aspirations by defending Vancouver's interests against the outside forces
of Victoria and Ottawa. There was enough partisanship in local loyalty in the 1930s for the NPA candidates to claim to be 'non-partisan' at the civic level while they were provincially or federally affiliated with a party that was committed to the defeat of socialism and the CCF.
NOTES - CHAPTER III

1. The Federationist, Vancouver, October 29, 1936.

2. "Greater potential voting population on east side of city," reported the Federationist, September 11, 1936.


5. City of Vancouver, Board of Trade, Special Committee Minutes, October 7, 1936, Add. MSS. 300, vol. 149, p. 78, City Archives, Vancouver, B.C.

6. Ibid.

7. City of Vancouver, Board of Trade, Council Minutes, September 10, 1936, Add. MSS. 300, vol. 14, p. 20, City Archives, Vancouver, B.C.

8. Ibid., September 10, 1936, pp. 34-5.


10. Ibid., December 10, 1936; December 17, 1936.

11. The by-election was held on March 24, 1937.

12. Federationist, September 11, 1936; August 19, 1937.


15. Ibid., June 24, 1937; June 30, 1937; August 19, 1937.


19 "Civic Convention," Federationist, October 14, 1937.

20 Federationist, November 11, 1937; "R.P. Pettipiece," December 6, 1937, Newspaper Clipping Docket R.P. Pettipiece, City Archives, Vancouver, B.C.

21 "R.P. Pettipiece," October 29, 1937, Newspaper Clipping Docket R.P. Pettipiece, City Archives, Vancouver, B.C.


23 Sun, November 13, 1937; December 4, 1937; November 25, 1838. See Fern Miller, "Vancouver Civic Political Parties: Developing Model of Party System Change and Stabilization," (Research paper prepared as part of Ph.D. comprehensive examination), Department of Political Science, Yale University, March 1972, pp. 6013.


25 City of Vancouver, Board of Trade, Civic Bureau Minutes, October 21, 1935- November 29, 1939, Add. MSS. 300, vol. 99, City Archives, Vancouver, B.C.

26 Brown demonstrated his fear of the CCF in a letter to Pattullo. He complained that most of the elected positions in the Police Commission were CCF or Tory. "The CCF should not be allowed to creep into offices of this kind," he warned the Premier. B.S. Brown to Pattullo, November 5, 1937, Pattullo Papers, Add. MSS. 3, Box 67, File 2, p. 2, Provincial Archives of British Columbia, Victoria, B.C.

27 "'Non-partison' Group seen as Old Line Party Combination," Federationist, November 18, 1937.

28 "The Civic Election," Ibid.

30. MacPherson, Martin, and Nicholls, members of the Mayor's Advisory Committee in 1935, attended the original meetings of the NPA. Mayor McGeer was also in attendance. T.S. Dixon and George Miller joined the group in the next two years.

31. Sun, December 9, 1937.


33. Sun, November 13, 1937.

34. Province, November 17, 1937.

35. Sun, December 4, 1937.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., December 9, 1937.

38. Ibid.

39. West = Wards I, II, VIII-XII; East = Wards III-VII.

40. Money and strong organization were more important factors in later campaigns.

41. Sun, December 9, 1937.

42. Crone to Pattullo, July 12, 1938, Pattullo Papers, Add. MSS. 3, Box 67, File 2, pp. 16-8; Crone to Pattullo, July 14, 1938, Add. MSS. 3, Box 67, File 2, p. 12, Provincial Archives of British Columbia, Victoria, B.C.

43. Sun, December 1, 1938; December 6, 1938.

44. Ibid., December 1, 1938.

45. C.D. Bruce was Spencer's campaign manager. Sun, December 9, 1938.

46. Recent membership rolls are not available. Consequently, only a spotty knowledge can be gained through The Canadian Who's Who, club minutes, annual reports, and provincial newspapers.

47. City of Vancouver, Board of Trade, Civic Bureau Minutes, October 21, 1935-November 29, 1939, Add. MSS. 300, vol. 99; Roberts and Tunnell, eds., The Canadian Who's Who 1936-1937; Newspaper Clipping Dockets, City Archives, Vancouver, B.C.
Telford resigned from his position as a CCF MLA before the 1938 civic election because of a party regulation that no member could hold two public offices. At the civic level, he ran as an independent with a 'socialist' platform because of a falling out with the party.

Sun, December 12, 1940.

Ibid.

The CCF press reported that an NPA candidate had appealed to a group of Liberals at a party meeting to vote for him because he was a Liberal. The CCF estimated that the NPA spent $20,000.00 on their 1937 campaign, while the CCF spent $300.00. Federationist, December 9, 1937; Poll 36, Shaughnessy, always unique in the degree of support given to the NPA, reported that 88% of its voters supported the NPA's aldermanic candidates while 89.5% (an unusually high figure) supported Cornett for Mayor in 1940.

Sun, December 12, 1938.

Successful NPA Candidates 1937-1940 and their occupations were: J.W. Cornett, Shoe Merchant; H.D. Wilson, Insurance Underwriter; Fred Crone, Storage Merchant; John Bennett, Estates Manager; H.L. Corey, Printer; T.H. Kirk, Manufacturer's Agent, Retired, (Laundry Store Owner); W.D. Greyell, Lumber Merchant; H.D. DeGraves, Publisher; George Miller, Manufacturer's Agent, Retired, (Electric Retail Business); Charles Jones, Retired, (Brickmaker, Butcher, Insurance Salesman); G.H. Worthington, Drug Store Merchant, Doctor. Unsuccessful NPA candidates 1937-40 and their occupations were: R.P. Pettipiece, Printer; Jack Price, Motorman.

Occupations and addresses were taken from City of Vancouver, Record of Nominations and Elections 1924-1949, RG2-D1, City Archives, Vancouver, B.C.
CONCLUSION

The Non-Partisan Association with little change in structure over the years has been remarkably successful. From 1937 to 1972, its candidates dominated civic boards without exception. After a brief period of conflict and competition with a new civic party, The Electors Action Movement, the NPA returned to power in 1978 with a majority on council, school board and parks board. For thirty-five years receiving the endorsement of the NPA was tantamount to being elected. Consequently, for thirty-five years the holders of civic office have reflected the beliefs and values of the NPA. The organization has never represented a wide variety of political philosophy and has always championed business values in government. Although NPA'ers have never had an official commitment to any particular political philosophy and have supposedly acted independently, their record clearly demonstrates a conservative outlook with emphasis on the development of a desirable climate for the city's business and industry.¹

Many of the beliefs and characteristics of the organization took shape in the NPA's formative years. From its inception in 1937, the NPA has argued that city council should be concerned with the larger interests of the whole city, not the small-minded concerns of particular areas. For the NPA, the most important at-large activity of council has been the successful development of the city's business and industry.
As a result, business experience, until recently, has been considered one of the main prerequisites to aldermanic office; the Board of Trade, although in reality an interest group, has been thought to speak for the whole city; and interest groups, with the exception of business lobbies, have been regarded with suspicion. The preoccupation with business efficiency that characterized the Kidd Report is still evident in the philosophy of the NPA today.

Moreover, the NPA since the thirties has made a virtue out of its claim to be 'non-partisan.' By labelling themselves and their programs non-partisan, NPA'ers have implied that they are a representative group of people working in the interests of all Vancouverites. The at-large system has deprived natural areas like neighbourhoods of a voice in city council. This factor, coupled with the non-partisan label, has inhibited criticism of the NPA and disadvantaged competitors. The NPA has not had to produce a definite program of development for the city beyond its original 1937 pledge of honest, administrative efficiency. Voters have continued to be influenced by the NPA argument that parties and politics should not be a part of civic affairs while clearly, in practise, they are.

In fact, the key to NPA success under an at-large system has been effective 'party' organization. The implementation of at-large elections in 1936 created the need for organization at the local level. Originally, the new system gave an advantage to the already organized CCF. The NPA was created in response to the city-wide success of the CCF. Only through
an organized effort could Liberal and Conservative politicians, local businessmen, and the city's professionals hope to compete with the CCF and maintain their control over City Hall.

Just as the at-large system played a key role in the group's creation, it has been instrumental in the NPA's long term success. City-wide elections have favoured organizations over independents and have given an advantage to the efficiently run NPA who can afford the high cost of advertising. The NPA has consistently opposed the introduction of wards. While this is in keeping with the NPA view of the city as a whole community that should avoid geographic division, there are serious practical considerations for the organization. Since the thirties, the number of NPA aldermen from the west side of the city has increased steadily. The introduction of a ward system would directly challenge their dominance on city council.

This has been a well known fact to both The Electors' Action Movement (TEAM) and the Committee of Progressive Electors (COPE), two new civic parties that emerged in the late sixties to successfully challenge the one-party dominance of the NPA. The majority of TEAM aldermen have been west side professionals who came to council favouring a partial ward system, but changed their minds once in office. The COPE organization has emerged as the defender of the underprivileged and east side interests and has consistently demanded a change to the ward system. With the disintegration of TEAM in 1980, Vancouver civic politics has polarized around two distinct
political organizations, if not 'parties,' COPE and the NPA. It remains to be seen how the NPA will respond to this challenge from the left.

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