THE COALITION OF PROGRESSIVE ELECTORS: A CASE STUDY IN POST-FORDIST COUNTER-HEGEMONIC POLITICS

by

DONNA VOGEL

B.A. (Hon.), The University of Saskatchewan, 1985
M.A., The University of Saskatchewan, 1991

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES SOCIOLOGY

We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

March, 1999

© Donna Vogel, 1999
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of Anthropology and Sociology

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date 25 March 1999

DE-6 (2/88)
ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a case study of The Coalition of Progressive Electors (COPE), a municipal political party in Vancouver, British Columbia. Founded in 1968, COPE claims to represent a coming together of "ordinary citizens" united around a programme of people's needs. In direct opposition to its chief political opponent, the corporate-sponsored Non-Partisan Association (NPA), COPE has attempted to articulate the diverse issues and objectives of progressive movements within the civic electoral arena.

Following a neo-Gramscian approach, the research highlights both the internal and external challenges confronting COPE throughout the party's long history in Vancouver politics.

A neo-Gramscian perspective emphasizes the process of coalition-formation—that is, the creation of a broadly inclusive and widely endorsed counter-hegemonic project. In the advanced capitalist democracies, the task of building electoral coalitions has generally been taken up by political parties that have either tried to gain the active support of social movements, or dismissed their concerns as unwelcome 'distractions' from the main goal of winning state power. However, as the limitations of conventional party politics became increasingly apparent, and as new social movements began to challenge established political boundaries, many experiments in constructing a "new" kind of party have taken place. I have examined COPE as an instance of a "new politics" or movement-oriented party. My research focuses on COPE's efforts to articulate the aims of "new" and "old" political agendas, and to adopt a new social movement style within the realm of electoral politics, thereby serving as a counter-hegemonic vehicle within the local political context.

The analysis begins with a review of the concrete practices and experiences of several exemplary movement-oriented parties in various political settings. Based on this literature, the conceptual framework of the study is narrowed to a focus on the content of political debate and the style of political action expected of a movement-party. The COPE
case study is also situated within the political-economic context of Vancouver's development as a post-Fordist "global city." Systematic examination of COPE's archival documents, observation of the group, and interviews with COPE members reveal that, in its present form, COPE does not rise to the status of a counter-hegemonic force in Vancouver politics, although its particular experience is instructive.

Analysis of COPE underscores the necessity of coalition-building around multiple issues and identities, and the need to reconceive the notion of politics to include both electoral and extra-parliamentary struggles. An examination of COPE's historical evolution also points to the need for a greater degree of political flexibility in order to effectively respond to the limits and possibilities presented by specific historical moments. In a post-Fordist era, COPE's electoral appeals to "working people" or "ordinary people" assume a homogeneity among progressive movements that is belied by interrelated processes of economic polarization and political demobilization/exclusion, as well as by the social diversity of the global city. A post-Fordist counter-hegemonic project requires a vision and a political strategy capable of bridging the gaps between disparate interests and movements.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Movements, Political Parties, and the Problem of Counter-hegemony</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Research Problem</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Marxism and Social Movements</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 New Social Movement Theory</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Hegemony and New Social Movements</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Conclusion</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The &quot;New Politics&quot; in Practice</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Introduction</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Old and New Social Movements in Coalition: Redefining the Political Agenda?</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 New Social Movements and Political Parties: A New Style of Politics?</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Summary</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Methods: Procedures and Considerations</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 COPE as a Case Study</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Observation</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Document Analysis</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Interviews</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Limitations of the Research</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 Studying Social Movements</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7 Summary</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Chapter Four: From Frontier Town to Global City: The Political Economy of Vancouver

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>City-building: 1886 to 1936</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>The Era of NPA Dominance: 1937 to 1967</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>The Era of Partisan Politics: 1968 to 1989</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Politics in the Global City</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chapter Five: A History of the Coalition of Progressive Electors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Objectives and Activities</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Key Moments</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Organizational Structure</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Constituency</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ratepayers' Organizations</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Vancouver and District Labour Council</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Communist Party of Canada</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Tenants Rights Action Coalition</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Downtown Eastside Residents' Association</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The New Democratic Party</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chapter Six: The Challenge of Solidarity: The "Old" and the "New" in COPE's Political Agenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>1968 to 1979: Party Building</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>1980 to 1989: COPE in Office</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>1990 to 1992: Blending &quot;Old&quot; and &quot;New&quot;</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>1993 to 1996: COPE's Political Decline</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chapter Seven: The Strategy of Imagination: Party and Movement in COPE's Political Style

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>1968 to 1979: Party Building</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>1980 to 1989: COPE in Office</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>1990 to 1992: Tentative Steps Beyond the &quot;Party Line&quot;</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>1993 to 1996: COPE's Political Decline</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Eight

Progressive Politics in a Post-Fordist Era

8.1 Introduction 200
8.2 Thematic Struggles and Their Irresolution 202
8.3 A Shifting Dualism 210
8.4 Prospects for a Counter-hegemonic Politics 212
8.5 Counter-hegemonic Politics at the Local Level and Beyond 217

Bibliography 224

Appendix I COPE: Key Events and Organizational Structure 239
Appendix II Interview Schedule for COPE Activists 241
Appendix III COPE Questionnaire 245
LIST OF TABLES

Table 8.1: "Content" and "Style" in COPE's Political History 209
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout the long process of researching and writing this dissertation, I have been an appreciative recipient of much advice and support. To begin, I am indebted to the members of the Coalition of Progressive Electors for so generously granting me access to the history and inner-workings of their organization, and for sharing with me their knowledge of COPE and Vancouver politics. I am grateful to Bob Ratner for assistance extending well beyond what is formally expected of a graduate supervisor. Bob has guided me through the various degree requirements, stimulated my intellectual development, provided me with much needed employment, made available an office complete with computer equipment, and, perhaps most importantly, mentored me in the ethics of academic life through his honourable example. Committee members Gillian Creese and Brian Elliott provided insightful comments on my research and analysis, from which the ultimate draft of the dissertation has greatly benefited. My colleagues in the graduate program were an invaluable source of support and encouragement. Special thanks go to Aaron Doyle for his help in the home stretch.

I would also like to express my gratitude to George Brandak, Manuscripts Curator at the Special Collections Division of UBC's Main Library, and Sue Baptie, Archivist at the Vancouver City Archives, for assisting me with the COPE archival project, the Boag Foundation for providing me with a grant to collect and organize the COPE archives, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council for funding my doctoral studies.

Finally, I would like to thank my friends for bearing with my emotional ups and downs, and long absences, over these years, and my family—Mom, Dad, Terry, and Grandmothers Cassie and Levina—for conferring on me some measure of their strength.

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Bruce Eriksen, long term COPE member and unrelenting crusader for social justice.
CHAPTER ONE
SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, POLITICAL PARTIES, AND THE PROBLEM OF COUNTER-HEGEMONY

1.1 Research Problem

Be it resolved that COPE change its name from the Committee of Progressive Electors to the Coalition of Progressive Electors.

—COPE AGM, April 4, 1993

In 1993 the Committee of Progressive Electors, a municipal political party in Vancouver, British Columbia, changed its name to the Coalition of Progressive Electors, marking a significant moment in the organization's history. While the familiar acronym—COPE—remains the same, the decision to replace "Committee" with "Coalition" reflected two key influences on the historical development and future prospects of the group. The first concerns the instrumental demands of electoral politics. 1993 was an election year in Vancouver and, in the interest of developing a unified campaign with the Civic New Democrats (CND), members of COPE agreed to change the name of the organization, while members of the CND consented to run candidates under the COPE banner. Given that COPE and the CND had previously competed with one another for left-of-centre support in Vancouver, achieving unity between the two groups was indeed a major accomplishment, with implications for both organizations. At the same time, the shift from "Committee" to "Coalition" was symbolic of another influence on the development of COPE as a progressive force on the local political scene. Beyond obvious electoral considerations, many COPE activists believed the term "Coalition" better reflected both the reality and objectives of an organization trying to represent a diverse variety of new political actors whose inclusion had broadened the organization beyond its traditional roots in the trade union movement and the Communist Party. As stated in the arguments supporting the resolution to change the name:
In support of this motion I will just say that COPE has already won the freely accorded respect of the community and we should honour in our constitution what we have already achieved in practice. The change of name will retain the same acronym of COPE. Since we all know that the NPA [Non-Partisan Association] is a coalition of everyone opposed to us, it is only common sense that we should present our coalition as everyone opposed to them and invite progressive organizations to rally under this umbrella and defeat the NPA.¹

Founded in Vancouver in 1968, COPE claims to represent a coming together of "ordinary citizens" united around a programme of people's needs as opposed to those of "special interests." In direct opposition to the corporate-sponsored Non-Partisan Association (NPA), COPE has attempted to articulate the diverse issues and objectives of progressive movements within the civic electoral arena. A 1973 COPE newsletter explains:

COPE fills an objective need in the Vancouver civic political scene. We have a sound program solidly based on the needs of the majority of the people of this city. We stick to the essential issues and are not given to opportunistic considerations of getting elected at any price. We fight on issues the year round—not just at election time. We endeavour to involve as many people and organizations as possible in activity around issues. We have close ties with the labour movement and regard it as a decisive force in civic politics. We stand for unity of all reform forces behind one program and one slate of candidates. No other group in Vancouver has this philosophy. That's why COPE is here to stay (cited in John Church et al., 1993: 29).

As this passage indicates, COPE was founded with the explicit intention of 'doing politics differently,' with strong support from organized labour in Vancouver. The Vancouver and District Labour Council (VDLC) was instrumental in the formation of the organization, and its union affiliates continue to be a key source of both financial support and individual activists. Questions arise, however, about COPE's ability to fulfill its commitment to an alternative project within the mainstream political context. On the one hand, the historical decline in the power and militancy of organized labour, coupled with

¹Minutes of COPE AGM, Apr. 4, 1993: 4.
the arrival of new progressive forces on the contemporary political scene, has been reflected in a number of disputes and changes within COPE, as a new generation of activists and issues gradually displace labour and "old left" political praxis from their previously unchallenged central position. On the other hand, COPE has consistently distinguished itself in both ideological and strategic terms from the provincial New Democratic Party while, at the request of the VDLC, and in the interest of appealing to the moderate left, mounting several joint election campaigns with the social democrats at the municipal level.

A study of COPE, including the group's formation and development, electoral successes and failures, as well as more recent attempts to include such "new" social movement concerns as ecology, feminism, lesbian and gay rights, and anti-racism within an electoral programme, provides an opportunity to examine contemporary encounters between, first, so-called "new" and "old" social movements and, second, political parties and social movements. In order to understand how these two analytical axes have manifested themselves in the historical evolution of COPE as a progressive political party, this thesis raises three central questions: (1) what kinds of internal disputes and struggles have arisen as a result of COPE's attempts to integrate diverse social movement concerns during different periods of the organization's development, and how have these struggles been resolved? (2) are the transformative goals and practices of new social movements compatible with the instrumental requisites of an electoral organization? and finally, (3) what are the future prospects for the convergence of diverse social movement goals and practices within a political party?

In addition to illuminating key aspects of COPE's evolution as a municipal "movement-party," these research questions are also indicative of contemporary theoretical debates concerning the nature of new social movements, and their implications for the social and political futures of Western capitalist democracies. In the remainder of this chapter, I outline the Marxist approach to social movements and political protest that
has, until recently, had a strong influence on progressive scholars and activists alike. I then discuss the central themes of the New Social Movement perspective that has emerged over the last three decades as a direct challenge to the Marxist theory of social change. While NSM theory makes several important contributions to the study of contemporary protest, the approach is, however, not without its own weaknesses. NSM theory tends to underestimate the continuing relevance of capitalist economic relations and state power to movement struggles and, consequently, overstates distinctions between old and new varieties of social movements, and between political parties and social movements. In place of these problematic dualisms, I present a neo-Gramscian theoretical approach that highlights the necessity of cultural transformation while, at the same time, addressing the persistent need for both material redistribution and a coherent left political strategy. I argue that a neo-Gramscian perspective permits a more thorough appreciation of both the internal and external challenges confronting an organization like COPE, as it attempts to advance the interests of socialists, trade unionists, feminists, environmentalists, lesbian and gay rights activists, anti-racism advocates, and others within an electoral programme.

1.2 Marxism and Social Movements

In order to fully appreciate the New Social Movement interpretation of collective protest in the West, it is useful to first recall the theory which, until recently, dominated both progressive analysis and activism—namely, Marxism. In orthodox Marxism, social conflict and change are conceived as reflections of the economic base or substructure, in which two classes exist in fundamental opposition to one another. In a capitalist society, this polarized notion of class is premised upon a contradiction in the objective material interests of the bourgeoisie and proletariat that would ultimately result in a revolutionary transformation to a new mode of production and, thus, a new kind of society. Class conflict, in this perspective, is the source of social change, with the working class inevitably becoming conscious of its role as the revolutionary agent in capitalist society.
On top of this theoretical foundation was built a political strategy emphasizing the achievement of working class unity, and the conquest of state power—through revolutionary or electoral means—in order to direct the transition from capitalism to socialism from above. As Carroll and Ratner (1994: 11-12) explain, "[p]olitics, in this account, is a struggle for power largely synonymous with the working class's epochal war against capital and the capitalist state." We are now, of course, quite familiar with the elitist, hierarchical, and bureaucratic manifestations of this strategy within Marxist movements and parties of both Leninist and social democratic stripes. Expressed as either revolutionary vanguardism or the reformist "parliamentary road to socialism," Marxist theory gave rise to an authoritarian statism neither emancipatory nor revolutionary in its effects (Boggs, 1986: 66). Moreover, conceptualizing social struggle and change as a war between capital and labour left little theoretical or strategic space in which to accommodate the nonclass social movements that, while always present, began to proliferate in the late 1960s and 1970s.

From a Marxist perspective social movements are, theoretically, class movements, while actually existing movements are evaluated in terms of their relationship to class struggle. This view also holds true of various "New Left" attempts to devise a more complex Marxist class analysis. Wright (1985), for example, adds to the orthodox framework a "new middle class," comprised of upper level management, technicians and intellectuals who, along with the traditional petty bourgeoisie, are located between labour and capital. New social movements in this scheme are primarily seen as products of the middle class and, as such, are addressed only with respect to the possibility they may take up the working class cause. If they fail to do so, their struggles and objectives are considered 'bourgeois' or counterrevolutionary. To the extent that actually existing social movements cannot be consigned to either pole of the capital/labour dichotomy, they are seen as epiphenomenal and inconsequential. Thus, as Cohen (1985: 668) concludes,
remaining committed to the notion of a totalizing working-class revolution, the "New Left" interpreted

the concerns of those most involved in contestation...in one of two distorted ways: either they came to be seen as bourgeois, to be subordinated to the needs of the proletariat or the 'third world;' or they were deemed legitimate only to the extent that they could be fit into the neo-Marxist framework fabricated to accommodate the New in Old Left terms—that is, new working class theory.

In the end, expanding the conceptualization of the class structure, while leaving the theoretical foundations of classical Marxism unchanged, merely reproduces class essentialism and economic reductionism. Evaluating the interests and revolutionary potential of existing movements in terms of their proximity to working class or socialist movements produces a strong temptation to return to the language of "false consciousness," in which objective location in the economic structure is considered more important for determining social movement identities and interests than is the self-understanding of social actors themselves (Scott, 1990: 2-3). Critics of essentialist versions of Marxism have shown that the connection between class position and the articulation of interests is far from automatic. The recognition of shared interests, and the construction of group solidarity are not simply reflective of objective conditions. The formation of group identity is, rather, an achievement that must be explained in its own right (Cohen 1985: 685; Aronowitz, 1992). Furthermore, theories that interpret new social movements solely in terms of class categories—however revised—also run into difficulty when confronted with evidence of the diverse class composition of contemporary social movements. Research has indicated that the environmental, feminist, and peace movements, for instance, draw upon a diverse base of supporters, rather than a discrete social group such as a class (Dalton and Kuechler, 1990: 12; Steinmetz, 1994: 183). Clearly, a theory that assumes a direct relationship between structural location and collective action is unable to grasp such dynamics. Moreover, the evidence also suggests
that the kinds of concerns expressed by new social movements reflect not instrumental self-interest, but the pursuit of collective goods that benefit members and non-members alike (Dalton and Kuechler, 1990: 12). Unthinkable from a Marxist perspective, this may be related to the relative classlessness of many modern forms of deprivation and domination. That is, as Steinmetz (1994: 184) explains, "most of the paradigmatically new grievances (nuclear power and energy, state penetration of civil society and the life-world) do not affect the new middle classes—or any other classes for that matter—disproportionately."

Since the late 1960s, new social movements taking up a diverse array of causes have been the impetus behind many important political struggles in Western democratic societies. At the same time, a growing body of analytical literature has emerged in order to gain an understanding of these new collective actors on their own terms—examining the *whys* and *hows* of movement activism, as well as the short and long term implications of the "new radicalism" for a revolutionary project. The emergence of new social movements in advanced capitalist societies has also presented a fundamental challenge to Marxism as a general social theory, and as a strategy for achieving social change. In New Social Movement theory, this challenge has been manifested as an abandonment or "transcendence" of much of the Marxist intellectual and political legacy.

1.3 New Social Movement Theory

While claims vary considerably with respect to just how, and in what ways, new social movements (NSMs) can be said to be "new," there are four general observations on which the New Social Movement (NSM) literature tends toward agreement. First, with respect to the *subject* of protest, most observers agree that NSMs are organized around and identify themselves by issues other than social class, setting them apart from such "old" movements as labour unions and working class parties. Over the past three decades working class identity has been systematically eroded while, at the same time, 'other'
subject positions—women, First Nations, people of colour, people with disabilities, lesbians and gays, environmentalists, pacifists, and so on—have come to occupy the space once held by class identity in the economic, political, and social landscapes (Aronowitz, 1992: 8).

The second general observation concerns the object of protest. NSMs encompass concerns that go beyond traditional political reforms and purely distributional issues. Simply stated, NSMs "not only want more; they want things to be different" (Hunter, 1995: 332). These groups struggle over interpretations of identity, culture and other issues that have generally been labeled 'private' and not, therefore, legitimate objects of public, or political, attention (Offé, 1985). Located primarily within civil society rather than the institutional realm of pluralist democracy, NSMs challenge the emphasis on economic growth and material well-being associated with both traditional left and right political actors, advocating in its place greater attention to cultural and quality of life issues, as well as expanded opportunities for participation and cooperation in decisions that affect people's lives (Dalton and Kuechler, 1990). In Melucci's terms (1989; 1995: 288-289), NSMs challenge the logic of 'complex society' on cultural rather than material grounds, questioning in particular the symbolic codes that organize the economy, politics, and everyday life.

A third distinguishing feature of NSMs concerns their organizational style. Old social movements were characterized by centralized and hierarchical organizations. In contrast, new social movements display an affinity towards a decentralized, open, and democratic organizational style that emphasizes participation over efficient mobilization and resource allocation (Dalton and Kuechler, 1990: 14). More significantly, NSMs consider alternative organizational forms and modes of participation as ends in themselves, as ways of redefining culture, consciousness, and identity, rather than merely as instruments for achieving specific social and political goals (Epstein, 1991). They seek to change the rules of the game, not just the distribution of relative advantage within a given
set of institutions (Hunter, 1995: 331). Instead of moving towards some utopian vision of
the future, participants in NSMs are "nomads of the present," operating as "signs" or
messages for the rest of society (Melucci, 1989).

Finally, drawing on postmodernist arguments, NSM theorists have taken the
proliferation of diverse and autonomous subjectivities as grounds on which to reject
appeals to 'grand narratives' including, of course, Marxism's faith in the fixed identity and
interests of the working class, and the inevitable transition from capitalism to socialism.
Grand narratives are replaced by 'small stories' based on the plurality of experiences of
heterogeneous individuals and social groups. NSM theory dismisses the notion that there
is (or should be) a transcendent unity or vision which binds all forms of protest in
contemporary society around common goals. Pointing to the variety of new movements,
NSM theorists reject the central place in political struggle that Marxism gives to the
working class—that is, the theory's class essentialism—as well as the very idea of a unified
social space or 'society,' conceived as a totality governed by a single basis of unity or logic
of consistency (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). In place of unity and cohesion, NSM theorists
stress the openness and indeterminacy of the social. We should no longer be concerned
with the creation of a broad, over-arching project to draw social movements together
around common issues and goals. For many NSM writers, such an effort would
undermine what is unique and potentially revolutionary about them—their ability to
"reopen political practices to a sort of exploration and innovation necessary for
fundamental change" (Magnusson and Walker, 1988: 59).

In strategic terms, NSM theory locates the transformative promise of new social
movements in their potential to create "new political spaces that transect and disrupt the
space established by bourgeois politics," including the state and established left-wing
political parties (ibid.: 67). In other words, NSM theory not only denies the working class
a place of privilege in revolutionary struggle, but also questions the political sense of
directing protest activities toward the realm of "normal politics." According to
Magnusson and Walker (ibid.: 63), "critical social movements" do not target the state, political parties or pressure groups in their struggles because they recognize "that the state is not the only holder of power" (ibid.: 63). Rather, critical social movements undertake small-scale actions linked to immediate conditions, and are satisfied with small victories. From this perspective, the internationalization of capital, technological change, and corresponding changes in the institutional forms of the state, have made control of the state as the object of political mobilization increasingly remote from (and perhaps irrelevant to) collective attempts to radically transform capitalist societies (Magnusson, 1996).

In sum, New Social Movement theory makes a strong case for opening the study of conflict and resistance in contemporary capitalist societies to collective identities and models of dissent outside the working class and conventional political channels. It is obvious that the exclusive focus on the state as the primary locus of political struggle, and the neglect of unequal relations structured on bases other than social class, have seriously limited the orthodox Marxist understanding of politics. However, in order to acknowledge these shortcomings, we need not discard everything we have learned about the significance of class and the state in contemporary capitalist societies. Doing so would result in an equally unbalanced (and strategically ineffective) account of political activity in contemporary capitalist societies. While useful with respect to highlighting the problems inherent in reductionist versions of Marxism, as a theory of conflict and social change the NSM analysis is also incomplete. On theoretical as well as practical levels, NSM writers have presented a one-sided image of dissent, particularly with respect to distinctions drawn between so-called "new" and "old" movements, and social movements and political parties.

Much of the theoretical literature on new social movements views them as relatively unique phenomena bearing the blueprints for a radical transformation of society, but this literature has generally paid little attention to the material limitations that constrain
the ability of social movements to engage in radical political projects in concrete and meaningful ways. As Epstein (1990: 53) observes of NSM theorizing, an over-emphasis on the construction of alternative identities and life-styles suggests that

there are no objective limits to politics, no structural framework that has to be taken into account in devising political action. It suggests that politics consists of the construction, and expression, of a collective vision...that imagining a better world, and collectively and symbolically acting upon that belief, is either the same thing as strategy or makes strategy unnecessary. This is the kind of magical thinking that leads people to believe that a large enough occupation will in itself lead to the closure of a nuclear power plant or arms facility, and to become disappointed and disillusioned when that does not happen.

To the extent that they hope to pursue a viable radical project, NSMs must confront the political institutions of contemporary capitalist societies. Furthermore, an investigation of "the real activities that people engage in" (Magnusson and Walker, 1988: 59) shows that the political struggles of social movements are, in fact, often directed at the state. It is clear that changing government policy commands a great deal of their time and resources (Hunter, 1995: 324; Howlett, 1989:46-47). Rather than simply being trapped inside "bourgeois containers," many participants in contemporary social movements recognize that, despite arguments of NSM theorists to the contrary, while capital does operate on an international scale, and nation states are somewhat diminished in their control over capital, the state retains a great deal of power within national boundaries with respect to subordinate classes and groups.

I am in agreement here with Boggs (1986), who welcomes social movement opposition to the statism and productivism of liberals and Marxists alike, while also underscoring the necessity of capturing and transforming the state, as well as democratizing capitalist property relations. Similarly, pointing to a long tradition of Marxist work on the global economy, Moores and Sears (1992) explain that the role of the state in the political economy of the nation has been maintained through, for instance, the manipulation of interest rates and the money supply, arms expenditures, tax reforms,
as well as attacks on working class living standards and collective rights. Carroll and Ratner (1994: 16) also note that, despite attempts by NSM theory to 'decentre' these institutions, the state and class remain significant as "weighty condensations of power."

Many of the issues taken up by social movements place them face to face with the power of the state, making the development of a concrete political strategy both essential and unavoidable. In this sense, the new movements are necessarily political as well as social phenomena (Scott, 1990).

As a political strategy, a singular focus on local autonomy and isolated goals is inadequate to the task of achieving and sustaining radical social change. On the one hand, local victories ring hollow when problems (i.e., the dumping of industrial waste) are simply transported to other, more vulnerable, locales (Boggs, 1995: 235-237). On the other hand, piecemeal reforms (i.e., equal rights legislation) are rather easily accommodated within existing economic and political institutions, leading more often towards the demobilization and deradicalization of protest than to fundamental systemic change (Adkin, 1992). Thus, "while a strictly electoral or institution-based strategy cannot go very far" in a political milieu that "excludes real alternatives from serious debate" (Boggs, 1995: 232), a purely local approach is also very problematic. As Carroll and Ratner (1994: 21) conclude, "a 'celebration of the fragments' cannot substitute for the crucial importance, if not centrality, of state power in the project of social change."

Nor, for that matter, can class or material issues be neglected in a revolutionary project. A number of writers have noted the intersection of working class and social movement issues and identities, as well as underscoring the need to build alliances between the working class and new social movements. Aronowitz (1992) maintains that, despite the apparent decline in the power of organized labour, reports about the death of the labour movement are greatly premature. Although he agrees that an irreducible "politics of identity" has displaced political struggle in which class was a central element, Aronowitz also notes that new "spaces of representation" based on race, gender and
ethnicity overlap with class issues. In this view, contemporary struggles and resistance based on gender, race, ethnic, or sexual identities are all textured by class, as is class by them. Class creates divisions within these identities in the same way that they have constituted divisions within the working class. Moreover, the NSM literature tends to underplay the economic implications of new social movement issues, including, for example, demands for equal pay and for affirmative action (Hunter, 1995: 325, n.13).

Recent empirical studies also indicate that "new social movements do not have a monopoly on progressive activism" in the West (Hunter, 1995: 325, n. 13). Numerous groups continue to mobilize working class and low income constituencies on economic as well as new social movement issues. Adam (1993) cites discussions of 'new issues' within such "old" movements as Nicaragua's Sandinistas and the African National Congress, as well as the working class constituents of many new social movements. Carroll and Ratner (1995) conclude from their research that the distinction between "old" and "new" social movements conceals the extent to which new social movements mount a resistance to capital, complementing and enhancing the struggles of organized labour, as well as the extent to which members of the working class participate in social movement politics and embrace NSM sensibilities.

In the main, however, NSM theory, in an attempt to avoid the problems of economic reductionism and class essentialism, leans toward a form of voluntaristic relativism that celebrates the fragmented and heterogeneous nature of new social movements. It argues, in essence, that there can be no single 'theory' of new social movements, nor a unified strategy for achieving social change. Offering "a kind of liberation from the demands of an integrated theory," NSM analysis, informed as it is by postmodernism, tends not to "question the kinds of resistance, or under what conditions" resistance takes place (Ray, 1993: x). We are left "without the ability to theorize for fear

---

2 Indeed, since classes are always gendered and racialized, theoretical distinctions between "old" class and "new" identities are untenable in practice. See Creese and Stasiulis (1996) and Bannerji (1993).

13
of 'totalizing'...without any indication of *how* to struggle" (Fields, 1988: 145). Thus the New Social Movement approach is limited in its ability to determine either the historical meaning of new social movements, or their potential to not only resist existing forms of domination and oppression in contemporary society, but also to devise a better alternative.

If, as Flacks (1995: 259) argues, the "political vacuum left by the decline of socialist organizations and social-democratic parties cannot be adequately filled by the politics of culture and identity," a theory of oppositional movements and social change must encompass the significance of cultural transformation and identity-based politics, while also attending to the persistent need to challenge economic and political power structures. Contemporary social movements "must embody material goals and debate strategies for achieving them, even as members engage in re-envisionings of the terms and meanings of their lives" (ibid.). New social movements suggest possibilities for overcoming the dilemmas associated with Marxist political theory, and raise many important issues that have until recently been marginal to revolutionary traditions (Hunter, 1995: 323). By overstating distinctions between, on the one hand, "old" and "new" movements, and, on the other hand, political and cultural transformation, the NSM approach inhibits "the kind of critical interrogation of current prospects for radical change that is needed" (ibid.). Social theory must place movements of both "new" and "old" varieties within the context of contemporary material relations while, at the same time, recognizing that power, domination, resistance, and struggle take multiple forms. As I argue below, a neo-Gramscian analysis provides the conceptual tools with which to do just that.

1.4 Hegemony and New Social Movements

A number of contemporary scholars have looked to writings of the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, in order to formulate a theoretical account of conflict and social change in late capitalist societies that overcomes the limitations of both orthodox Marxism and
NSM theory. Writing in the 1920s and 1930s, Gramsci reformulated traditional Marxist concepts and political strategies in response to changes he observed in the nature of capitalism. Gramsci argued that the shift in capitalist production from basic industry to mass consumer goods, and the corresponding need for a diverse and highly skilled workforce, was accompanied by a transformation in the form of social control from the use of force to the construction of consent. Consequently, the production and reproduction of culture and ideology through, for example, the education system and the mass media became central to left analysis. And, alongside the emergence of new forms of social control arose new sites of protest outside the working class, making the process of coalition-formation key to revolutionary politics (Epstein, 1991: 53).

Central to Gramsci's analysis of the new form of social control was the concept of hegemony—the process by which the moral and intellectual leadership of society is secured. Distinguishing between domination and leadership, Gramsci argued that a successful hegemonic project requires, first, that the particular interests, values, and beliefs of a class, or a fraction of a class, are presented as universal and, second, that the class or class fraction obtain the consent and cooperation of other classes and popular groups to its interests, that is, the formation of an "historic bloc" (Simon, 1991:22-9). Hegemony meant the "intellectual and moral leadership" that must be established before gaining state power, and maintained after power has been achieved (Gramsci, 1971: 57-8, my emphasis). In Gramsci's view, the left had no hope of winning power until it secured the support of the working class and other popular forces for an alternative worldview (Epstein, 1991: 18-19).

By introducing the concept of hegemony to a Marxist analysis, Gramsci replaced economic reductionism, including the exclusive focus on class agency, with an emphasis on the necessity of cultural transformation in all areas of capitalist society. Gramsci "broadens the meaning of politics beyond the immediate struggle for control of the means of coercion, to include the activities which organize (or disorganize) consent within the
economy, state and civil society" (Carroll, 1990: 393). In Gramsci's analysis, civil society was comprised of the "ensemble of organisms commonly called 'private'," to be distinguished from political society (the state) and the economic base (Gramsci, 1971: 12). Both the state and civil society are relatively autonomous from the economy. While the social relations of production and the state are distinct in that they possess a particular unity, the former based on the logic of capitalism, and the latter on its monopoly over the legitimate use of force, the social relations and practices of civil society are diverse and cannot be explained by the imperatives of the capitalist economy (Urry, 1981). Civil society consists of a wide range of identities and practices outside the relations of production and the state. As Carroll (1990: 392) explains:

many salient aspects of social and political identity—gender, consumerism, ethnicity—are primarily grounded neither in capitalist production as such nor in the state apparatus, but in the practices of civil society. Likewise, civil society is a field of interest articulation and social struggles which although shaped and constrained by economy and state has considerable autonomy from both. This imbles it with a range of possibilities for political mobilization and coalition formation.

In Gramscian theory, hegemony is linked to a successful strategy of economic development that provides the material basis for consent. The historical development of capitalism is conceptualized as a succession of different accumulation models, each accompanied by a corresponding hegemonic structure, comprised of specific "modes of regulation," or "particular institutional practices, norms, and behaviours" which contribute "to the stability and reproduction of this model for a certain period of capitalist history—as well as to its crisis" (Mayer and Roth, 1995: 306). After the Second World War, capitalist hegemony, or "Fordism," was accomplished through a combination of: (1) Taylorism, mass production, mass consumption, and an international division of labour; and (2) the development of the Keynesian security (welfare) state, and widespread popular agreement on the value of progress, equality, bureaucracy, and the exploitation of nature (Hirsch, 1988).
Under Fordism, overt class conflict was contained by an accord between capital and labour (and their political parties) that freed capital from the threat of labour radicalism in return for high wages and substantial benefits. The standard of living of organized (i.e., skilled, male, white) workers improved while, at the same time, the scope of labour’s demands shrank to narrowly defined distributive interests. The corporatist regulation strategy marginalized groups outside capital and organized labour, and was accompanied, under the auspices of the welfare state, by extended forms of surveillance and social control. It is out of this context—commodification of social relations, mass consumption and mass culture, overwhelming bureaucratization, the destruction of traditional communities and the environment (ibid.: 49)—that new forms of social and political dissent emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s. New social movements were both a symptom and a cause of the crisis of Fordism.

Throughout the capitalist West, the past three decades have been marked by the crisis of Fordism and attempts to construct a new, post-Fordist hegemonic order (Mayer and Roth, 1995: 306). In the struggle to work out a new hegemony, new social movements play, at once, a crucial and contradictory role (Hirsch, 1988; Mayer and Roth, 1995). While in many respects, new social movements represent novel and potentially emancipatory ways for people to relate to one another and the environment, their ambiguous ideological content and general neglect of strategic considerations also contributes to the possibility of being coopted into the neo-liberal agenda, with its emphasis on 'flexibility,' public/private 'partnerships,' and the downloading of central state responsibilities to the local level (Mayer, 1991).

The concept of hegemony—the fact that it is *constructed* on the basis of consent—also implies the possibility of a *counter*-hegemonic or alternative set of interests and values. By opposing oppressive systems of social relations, the activities of new social movements entail the disorganization of consent, or the disruption of hegemonic practices (Carroll and Ratner, 1994: 6). A Gramscian analysis does not, however,
establish *a priori* the historical meaning of either the working class or new social movements. Rather, the historic potential of a counter-hegemonic project is dependent on the formation of a "new historic bloc," comprised of a broad alliance of progressive forces. While Gramsci maintained that a counter-hegemonic project must be formulated under the leadership of the proletariat and its organic intellectuals, for neo-Gramscians such as Boggs (1986, 1995), Epstein (1990, 1991), and Carroll and Ratner (1994, 1995), the working class must be included in a new historic bloc, but need not be primary or central. Thus, from a neo-Gramscian perspective,

radical democratic insurgency cannot assume unilinear progress grounded primarily in labour struggles, but neither can the new social movements neglect to forge links with labour, lest they be reduced to marginal expressions of protest and block a full reconceptualization of the revolutionary process (Carroll and Ratner, 1994: 16).

A counter-hegemonic project demands more than the sum of particular constituencies and perspectives. It calls for a synthesis of movement aims and identities, and both cultural and structural transformation in economic, political, and everyday life. As Wallerstein (1990: 46-7) explains, there are two key aspects to this task. First, the various "antisystemic" movements (new and old) need to work together to define in concrete terms a shared vision of the future, a clear image of the kinds of institutions and relationships that would be required in a more equal and democratic world. The second crucial task is to devise a coherent political strategy capable of getting us from here to there. As I noted above, NSMs tend to favour local struggles around specific issues. The Gramscian approach also emphasizes the need to create instances of popular control through extra-parliamentary mobilization, but at the same time stresses the need to win state power. While obtaining state power is not the only aim, and may perhaps be secondary to the power struggle in the economic order and in civil society (ibid.: 47), it is nevertheless one important element in a counter-hegemonic strategy.
1.5 Conclusion

In modern history, the task of building political coalitions of social movements has "become the domain of political parties, which have attempted to mobilize diverse interests for the purpose of winning and exercising state power" (Boggs, 1995: 237). However, as Boggs (ibid.: 238) goes on to explain, "the history of relations between movements and parties has been a largely debilitating one for the movements; the parties have customarily taken control, especially where they succeeded in taking over state power." In the late 1990s the limitations of conventional political parties, and of "normal politics" more generally, as vehicles for progressive change are widely acknowledged. Yet the issue of political strategy remains crucial to a counter-hegemonic project, raising the question of whether a new unifying instrument—a new kind of party linking diverse movement constituencies around an alternative electoral agenda and strategy—is possible or desirable.

To return to COPE, my interest in this municipal social movement-cum-political party stems directly from questions about counter-hegemonic political strategy in late capitalist society. COPE grew out of old left communist and labour traditions but, in Vancouver's polarized political milieu, also attracted 'other' progressive activists whose increasing participation throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, coupled with the decline of the Communist Party of Canada, challenged the group's established political agenda and organizational practices. When I began attending COPE meetings in the summer of 1992, it seemed to me that many of the dilemmas of contemporary progressive politics were finding expression in the discussions and activities of the organization. In the auspicious lead-up to the 1993 election, it appeared as though the tensions would perhaps be resolved, and that COPE had worked out at least the beginnings of a viable model for left politics. My optimism proved to be highly premature as the period from 1993 to 1996 saw a dramatic downturn in COPE's prospects, both in electoral terms, and in terms of extra-parliamentary mobilization and support. Nevertheless, there are lessons to be
learned from failure as well as success. My current research explores COPE's struggles to articulate new and old movement concerns, to adopt a movement style in the realm of normal politics and, ultimately, to sustain itself as an effective vehicle for social change in Vancouver. My objective is not only to engage with contemporary theoretical debates about radical politics, but also to contribute to strategic discussions among social activists.

I begin, in Chapter Two, with a review of recent empirical studies of so-called "new politics" parties. Via an examination of the concrete practices and experiences of several exemplary movement-oriented political parties, the chapter narrows the neo-Gramscian conceptual framework to a focus on the content of political debate and the style of political action that could reasonably be expected of a movement-party. This review of literature also underscores the difficulties and tensions that have typically characterized movement-parties, further refining the analytical focus of the COPE case study. Chapter Three details the methodological procedures used to collect data for the case study, and examines the ethical and political considerations arising from the study of social movements. Chapter Four places the study in the context of Vancouver's political-economic development as a post-Fordist "global city." Drawing on primary and secondary source materials, Chapter Five presents a comprehensive historical description of the Coalition of Progressive Electors. Chapters Six and Seven discuss the substantive findings of the thesis with respect to, first, COPE's experiences in striving to advance an electoral agenda comprised of new and old movement issues and, second, attempts by COPE to adopt a new political style in Vancouver. On the basis of the case study analysis, Chapter Eight draws conclusions regarding COPE's future in Vancouver politics and, on a more general level, the implications of COPE's experience for the theory and practice of progressive politics in a post-Fordist era.
CHAPTER TWO
THE "NEW POLITICS" IN PRACTICE

2.1 Introduction

In Chapter One I argued that, from a Gramscian perspective, a counter-hegemonic project requires the formation of a broad alliance of working class and popular forces—a "new historic bloc"—and a coherent political strategy that, at least in part, includes an attempt to gain power within the state apparatus. This theoretical conclusion raises a set of empirical questions of particular relevance to a case study of COPE: that is, what actually happens when social movements with different interests, goals, and constituencies attempt to effect change through electoral competition? Following a brief review of the social and political context in which new social movements emerged, I pursue this line of inquiry through an examination of several exemplary instances of social movement participation in the formal political process. The purpose of this discussion is twofold. First, a review of the radical ideals of movement-oriented political parties serves to make more concrete the abstract theoretical questions posed in the previous chapter. Just how might we expect an electoral coalition of "old" and "new" movements, or a new kind of political party, to operate? Secondly, an assessment of the actual experiences of such groups will alert us to the difficulties and tensions that have accompanied attempts to put those ideals into practice. The themes that emerge out of this literature inform my subsequent analysis of COPE's development as a "movement-party."

The emergence of new social movements in the advanced capitalist West during the late 1960s and 1970s has been interpreted in part as a reaction to the apparent closure of the political system to issues and demands falling outside the narrow parameters of 'legitimate' public debate (Scott, 1990; Boggs, 1986: 23-28). In Offe's terms, the post-World War II Fordist era in the advanced capitalist democracies saw mainstream political actors united under an "old political paradigm" concerned primarily with issues of
economic growth, distribution and security (Offe, 1985). The legitimate collective actors were specialized, comprehensive, and institutionalized interest groups and political parties, while social and political conflict was resolved through the mechanisms of collective bargaining, party competition, and representative party government. The dominant political issues and strategies were endorsed by a "civic" culture that valued social mobility, private life, consumption, instrumental rationality, authority, and order, while de-emphasizing political participation.

In contrast, the "new political paradigm" that began to emerge in the early 1970s within the new social movements embraces issues that transcend the liberal distinction between "public" and "private" (ibid.). The diverse range of concerns taken up by the movements share a common set of values—autonomy, identity, and opposition to control, dependence, and bureaucratization—which, while not in themselves new, are given new emphases and a sense of urgency. The characteristic mode of action of the new paradigm is informal and egalitarian, involving protest over non-negotiable demands through unconventional means that are intended to encourage popular mobilization.

As bearers of a new political paradigm, new social movements seek to extend, deepen, and re-define democracy from limited political or economic forms to include the myriad social relations constitutive of civil society (Fuentes and Frank, 1989). In more concrete terms, movements have challenged the narrow range of issues on the public agenda—the content of political debate—and have criticized the hierarchical and formalized institutions and activities associated with liberal democracy—the style of political action. Although these two key political dimensions of new social movements are inseparable with respect to the activities and goals of social movement organizations, they can be analytically distinguished from one another. Thus in the literature review presented in this chapter I examine, first, the relationship between old and new social movements in terms of the substance of the political programmes advanced by electoral coalitions that attempt to articulate the concerns of both. In what ways does the electoral programme
advanced by new social movements differ from that of the so-called "old left parties?" In what ways, and with what results, have the demands of new and old social movements been combined within political parties? What lessons are there to be learned from electoral organizations that have attempted such a synthesis? Second, I explore the party/movement dynamic in terms of the organizational structures and political strategies of movement-oriented parties. How do new social movements redefine the democratic process? Have they been successful in translating their radical democratic ideals into practice within the mainstream political context? Finally, in the concluding section I draw out the implications of these examples for a case study of COPE.

2.2 Old and New Social Movements in Coalition: Redefining the Political Agenda?

Until the late-1960s, radical opposition in the Western liberal democracies was primarily expressed through the various socialist parties. Despite their significant strategic differences, both communist and social democratic parties framed their political programmes in economic and statist terms. These parties arose to represent the particular interests of the working class in its struggle against capital. Their goal was to transfer state power from the bourgeoisie to the proletarian majority in order to redistribute ownership and control of material resources and, ultimately, to bring about a classless society. The socialist tradition linked all forms of domination to the capitalist class structure. By eliminating the 'core' source of inequality, all forms of oppression would end.

The new radical paradigm has added a postmaterialist or cultural dimension to oppositional politics. As Boggs (1995: 212) states:

The complex and highly differentiated milieu of advanced industrial society has given rise to new modes of protest and revolt around plural forms of oppression, identities, and group interests; class forces no longer constitute a privileged agency of historical change.
The substantive goals of new social movements go beyond the redistribution of material resources to include (among others) an end to ecological destruction caused by the incessant pursuit of economic growth, the elimination of oppression and marginalization defined by cultural systems of patriarchy and racism, and autonomy and self-determination for indigenous peoples (Hunter, 1995: 325).

Established left parties have responded to the emergence of new social movements in one of two ways: either they are dismissive of, or hostile to, new concerns that—from their perspective—distract attention from crucial class issues, or they have attempted to coopt or pre-empt new social movement demands and activists in order to maintain popular support. Neither reaction is satisfactory from the point of view of new social movements, who refuse to subordinate their issues to the class dynamic, and for whom the traditional left shares with the right a misguided faith in technological progress and economic growth. 1

More promising with respect to placing new issues on the mainstream political agenda have been the political parties of more recent vintage that have been established with substantial input from the movements themselves. In Europe, the socialist parties of France, Spain, and Greece advanced from relative political obscurity to positions of national power in the early 1980s, largely due to the radical impetus of new social movements. Across the Atlantic, attempts to broaden the political agenda have been most evident at the local level. Frustrated in their efforts to forge a progressive coalition between New Deal working class representatives and new movement constituencies within

---

1 See Boggs (1986; 1995) for a comprehensive and insightful account of the political legacy of Leninism and social democracy. Tarrow (1990) documents the cooptation of new movement activists and issues by the fractured Italian left. Gleb (1990) examines the interaction of the contemporary women's movement and established parties in the United States, Britain, and Sweden. Pointing to the 'opportunism' of mass based political parties, she argues that feminist demands for affirmative action policies, for example, are more likely to be advanced by parties that need the electoral support the women's movement can 'deliver.' Laxer (1996), Watkins, et al. (1994), McLeod (1994), and Whitehorn (1992) discuss the rather disappointing record of the New Democratic Party with respect to taking up the causes of new (and old) social movements within the Canadian political system.
the Democratic Party, many radical activists in the United states turned their attention to
civic politics (Flacks, 1995: 252-4; Clavel, 1986). In the 1970s and 1980s, social
movement activists formed electoral coalitions in a number of American cities, and in
several instances won municipal power. Two of the most ambitious and successful
progressive urban coalitions emerged in San Francisco, California and Burlington,
Vermont. The experiences of the Mediterranean socialist parties and the locally-based
coalitions in San Francisco and Burlington provide important insights into the possibilities
and dilemmas associated with the formation of broad coalitions in the electoral arena.

**Eurosocialism**

In Europe, the revitalization of the socialist parties in France, Greece, and Spain in
the early 1980s has been credited to the rise of the new left, typified by the events of May,
1968, and the subsequent proliferation of feminist, ecology, peace, youth and urban
movements (Boggs, 1986: 89). The Eurosocialists proposed to follow a 'third road'
beyond, on the one hand, the thoroughly discredited Leninist model and, on the other
hand, social democracy, seen as fully absorbed within the logic of capital. Eurosocialism
rejected the singular dialectic of class struggle, viewed history as an open
field of forces, questioned the primacy of material conditions, and
dismissed prospects of an economic crisis leading to cataclysmic revolution
(ibid.: 90).

The socialist parties of France, Greece, and Spain experienced rapid growth in the
1970s, largely due to an influx of diverse social movement constituents. The Eurosocialist
political programme was comprised of four main themes: "democratization, non-
Keynesian economic restructuring, cultural renewal, and independent foreign policy"

---

2Urban movements (i.e., neighbourhood activists, housing and tenant groups, organizations of ethnic
minorities, etc.) are, of course, a significant component under the general rubric of 'new social
movements' (Boggs, 1986: 40). In fact, as Magnusson (1996: 284) explains: "The study of social
movements as an urban phenomenon predates the interest in 'new social movements' among critical
scholars in the 1980s." The work of Manual Castells (1979, 1983) has been central to this body of
literature.
The Eurosocialists were far more open to feminist issues (i.e., access to abortion and divorce, increased participation of women in politics, the elimination of sexist practices), ecological concerns (i.e., alternative power sources, reducing pollution, urban renewal), and cultural themes than were their social democratic counterparts in Northern and Central Europe (ibid.: 98-9). Cultural revitalization was to be supported by public subsidies for the arts, while secularization of the educational and legal systems would counter conservative religious traditions.

The Eurosocialists won decisive electoral victories in France, Spain, and Greece in the early 1980s. Almost immediately upon taking power, however, they were faced with a severe global economic downturn. In all three cases, as Boggs documents, a rather swift accommodation to the requirements of capital effectively stripped Eurosocialism of both its radical promise and its new base of support. Preoccupied with economic matters, the Eurosocialists "chose to defer their qualitative social and political goals" (ibid.: 106) and, as their programmatic commitments narrowed, they became indistinguishable from traditional social democratic parties in their concern with facilitating capitalist accumulation. After a brief period of post-election optimism, the Eurosocialist attempt to follow a 'third road' disintegrated into a "new phase of corporatism," accompanied by passivity, cynicism and, ultimately, demobilization on the part of popular oppositional movements. As Boggs (ibid.: 122) concludes:

It is difficult to resist the judgment that, whatever its claims or pretensions to the contrary, the Eurosocialist phenomenon represents not so much the subversion as the consolidation of bourgeois hegemony in those countries where it has governed and established its programs [emphasis in the original].

Predictably, economic restructuring and austerity measures overwhelmingly affected the old and new left constituencies that had brought the Eurosocialists to power.
The Slow-Growth Coalition

In San Francisco, a coalition of urban social movements united in an effort to improve the quality of urban life during a time of postindustrial urban redevelopment. The social milieu from which the "Slow-Growth Coalition" emerged was one of tremendous diversity and shifting political alliances (De Leon, 1992: 25-31; Castells, 1983: 99-105). On the one hand, the role of organized labour in civic politics had sharply declined. The transformation from a manufacturing and shipping to a service-based economy caused a drop in traditional blue-collar employment and a corresponding increase in middle-class service workers, including rising numbers of public-sector employees. In the late-1960s and early-1970s, the AFL-CIO labour council and affiliated unions responded defensively to the shrinking of their traditional membership base by backing a corporate "progrowth" development agenda.

On the other hand, social organization and political mobilization in San Francisco were increasingly defined in cross-class or non-class terms. Immigration and ethnic diversification throughout the postwar period gave rise to collective struggles by African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans for greater access to material resources and political power. The growth of a 'conservationist' neighbourhood movement added another dimension to progressive politics. Finally, San Francisco's sizable gay community "played the role of a social vanguard struggling to change the city, culturally, spatially, and politically" (Castells, 1983: 101). With no "natural majority" to appeal to, a viable oppositional political project in San Francisco was by necessity dependent on the process of coalition-building.

In the mid-1970s, the corporatist progrowth alliance of business interests and organized labour collapsed in the midst of federal cutbacks and rising wage demands. Progressive forces attempted to take advantage of the situation by building a new coalition comprising "neighbourhood associations, environmentalists, small businesses, political clubs, ethnic minority groups, gay and lesbian organizations, tenant groups, and labour
unions" (DeLeon, 1992: 58). They succeeded in electing George Moscone as mayor, as well as a number of progressive district supervisors, including Harvey Milk, the first openly gay politician to be elected to public office in North America. This shift in the balance of political power was, however, tragically brief. Mayor Moscone and Supervisor Milk were murdered by a conservative supervisor in November, 1978. The shock of the assassinations combined with the impact of federal austerity measures undermined the "unusual, loose, and personalized coalition" of progressive interests, allowing pro-growth forces to re-gain their influence in city government, although in a more limited sense owing to the durability of neighbourhood-based mobilization (Castells, 1983: 104-105).

A more cohesive slow-growth coalition emerged in 1986 in support of "Proposition M—The Accountable Planning Initiative" (DeLeon, 1992: 68). Taking their lessons from the isolated and transitory gains of the 1970s, the slow-growth activists of the 1980s realized that an effective campaign against the pro-growth corporate agenda would require a long-term strategy encompassing the full range of San Francisco's progressive communities while, at the same time, addressing the unique and sometimes contradictory concerns of each (ibid.: 52). Proposition M included annual limits on office construction in the city, provisions for increased citizen input into development decisions, and a number of "planning priorities"—maintaining the cultural and economic diversity of neighbourhoods, enhancing opportunities for local employment and ownership in the industrial and service sectors, improving the supply of affordable housing, preserving landmarks and historic buildings, and protecting the urban environment (ibid.: 69-70).

Proposition M passed, but only by narrow majority. In part, this was foreshadowed by a notable lack of participation by the Latino and Black communities, working-class home owners, and private-sector unions in either drafting the proposition or planning the campaign (ibid.: 68). A shrewd campaign by conservative opponents that

4In 1976 neighbourhood and left activists initiated and won a referendum to change the electoral system from city-wide to district elections. The decision was reversed by another referendum in 1980.
played on working class and ethnic minorities' fears that 'middle class' demands for limits
to growth and neighbourhood preservation would reduce job opportunities and block
revitalization efforts in poor neighbourhoods also weakened popular support for the
initiative (ibid.: 76-78). Thus, despite an inclusive campaign strategy that specifically
targeted working-class and ethnic minority constituencies, the traditional cleavage
between material and postmaterial demands, and the white middle-class face of the
coalition, undermined attempts to unify progressive forces behind the proposition.
Nevertheless, support for the slow-growth measure did increase somewhat among Blacks,
home owners, low income residents, and workers (ibid.: 80), leading to optimism that
their differences could be overcome in the future.

Approval of the planning initiative by the electorate was viewed as only a first step
to gaining effective popular control over the development process. Leaders of the slow-
growth coalition next set their sights on electing a progressive mayor to oversee
implementation of the new regulations and guidelines. In 1987, slow-growth activists
backed Art Agnos in the mayoral contest. Eschewing modern campaign technology,
Agnos ran an issue-focused grassroots campaign that relied on a citywide network of
volunteers, house meetings, and public rallies to directly communicate with voters (ibid.: 87).
Agnos' platform was a comprehensive blend of progressive issues.

As a liberal, he supported affirmative action programs for women and
ethnic minorities, comparable worth programs for city employees, vacancy
rent control, preservation of public housing, accelerated construction of
affordable housing, shelters and case management services for the
homeless, job creation for residents and ethnic minorities, and enhanced
educational services. As an environmentalist, he backed rigorous
enforcement of Proposition M growth-control guidelines, expanded
recycling programs, acquisition and preservation of parks and open space,
a 'no' vote on home-porting the USS Missouri, and promotion of regional
cooperation. As a populist, he supported district elections, neighbourhood
'Mayor's Stations', increased citizen participation in the development
planning process, promotion of small business, and preservation of
neighbourhood and cultural diversity (ibid.: 91).
Collective mobilization around the Agnos campaign reconstituted the electoral alliance that had been shattered by the Moscone and Milk assassinations and expanded it "to include more organizations representing the poor, the working class, and racial minorities" (ibid.: 90). Agnos won a landslide victory in 1987. Unfortunately, much like the Mediterranean Eurosocialists in a climate of fiscal restraint, Agnos' administration had difficulty translating the material/postmaterial synthesis into concrete policies. Agnos pursued the least threatening 'preservationist' elements of the postmaterialist agenda, while avoiding more proactive attempts to solve material problems like unemployment and poverty (ibid.: 137-149). The 'red-green' alliance that had been carefully forged during the mayoral campaign immediately began to dissolve, and Agnos lost his bid for re-election in 1991 to a 'centrist' candidate. As DeLeon (ibid.: 172) concludes, despite the difficult external pressures, an important factor in the Agnos defeat can be located within San Francisco's progressive movement itself:

the progressive movement has given lowest priority to the needs and concerns of working-class people and ethnic minorities. Since the passage of Proposition M in 1986, the movement's middle-class preservationists and environmentalists have become preoccupied with their own agendas and increasingly less sensitive to the plight of the poor, unemployed, and homeless. The progressives were firm and clear in telling Agnos what he could not do, but they offered little...in telling him what he should do to solve these real problems.

The Progressive Coalition

In Burlington, Vermont, self-proclaimed socialist Bernard Sanders held the mayor's seat from 1981 to 1989. Unlike San Francisco, Burlington had retained a substantial manufacturing sector with a relatively large and organized blue-collar work force (Clavel, 1986: 163). During the 1960s and 1970s, Burlington also experienced an influx of left activists from other parts of the country (ibid.: 164-165). The 1970s brought
an expansion in neighbourhood-level organizing based on issues ranging from peace and ecology to welfare and tenant rights (Clavel, 1986: 162-169).

In 1981, progressive activists took advantage of the political vulnerability of disorganized local Democratic and Republican organizations to make a successful debut on the electoral stage. Sanders was elected with the support of an informal "Progressive Coalition" comprised of "Burlington's feminists, gays, socialists, anarchists, elderly, Rainbow Coalition Democrats, and poor" (Conroy, 1990: 8). Sanders ran on a relatively moderate platform in 1981, hoping to gain credibility among 'average' citizens. His program opposed real estate developers' urban renewal schemes and objected to a property tax increase. Sanders supported tax reform, affordable housing and medical care for low- and middle-income residents, increased services for youth, and a pay raise for police officers, who had recently been involved in a series of labour disputes with the incumbent administration (Conroy, 1990: 6-7; Clavel, 1986: 169).

Sanders was elected along with two supportive aldermanic candidates. In the elections of the following year, the number of Progressives on the Aldermanic Board was increased to five, while the remaining seats were evenly split between Democrats and Republicans (Conroy, 1990: 9). With nine votes required to overturn the mayor's veto, Sanders' power was significantly enhanced, although the Progressive Coalition was never able to gain a working majority. As a result, the Sanders' administration was repeatedly frustrated in its attempts to enact progressive initiatives. While to a large degree the barriers to reform were constructed by the Democrat-Republican Aldermanic bloc and the superior powers of state and federal levels of government, struggles within Burlington's progressive community also limited the possibilities for change in the city (ibid.: 204). Trade union members clashed with peace activists over the issue of weapons production at

---

5 Two Democrats ran against the Democratic incumbent mayor, allowing Sanders to win by a very narrow margin of 10 votes.
6 Eight of the thirteen aldermanic positions were up for election in 1981.
Burlington's General Electric plant. Feminists seeking 'comparable worth' measures for civic employees met with resistance from blue-collar workers. A proposal to redevelop the waterfront was challenged by environmentalists. On all of these issues, Sanders and his administration took an economistic stand, giving priority to narrowly-defined working class interests over new social movement concerns.

As Conroy (ibid.: 177) points out, although its electoral success was based on a broad range of support, the primary focus of the Progressive Coalition in office was economic. Sanders' socialist ideology made him ambivalent to the goals of new social movements and, in most cases, movement demands took a back seat to economic priorities. Ironically though, while the Progressive Coalition's political agenda was overwhelmingly economic (ibid.: 205), Conroy finds that it was the NSM demands that were the most successful. In practice, the success or failure of specific measures depended to a large extent on whether or not they challenged private property rights. Demands by feminists for affirmative action, and by gays and lesbians for legal protection from discrimination were successful, while radical economic initiatives met with virulent opposition from the business community and, even when they managed to gain the approval of the local administration, were often overturned by higher levels of state authority.

Burlington's experiments with radical reform suggest that new social movement reforms may have a greater possibility for successful adoption than do most class-based proposals. With little or no opposition from local business and its allies, new social movement demands, which either had no economic component or had economic components that did not directly challenge capital accumulation, were most likely to be achieved in Burlington (ibid.: 31).

Despite Conroy's conflation of the liberal tendencies within most new social movements with the movements as a whole, his observations warrant serious consideration. The relative success of the least threatening of the new social movement demands, despite Sanders' overt emphasis on economic reform, suggests the possible
cooptation of the movements into a business agenda and underscores the importance of achieving an egalitarian synthesis of old and new constituencies to coalition unity.

The Challenge of Solidarity

The three cases described above represent recent attempts by political parties to synthesize new and old social movement issues within a common progressive agenda. The Eurosocialists, the San Francisco Slow-Growth Coalition, and Burlington's Progressive Coalition acknowledged the irreducibility of diverse movement constituencies and interests and the necessity of building strong and lasting bridges between them. That the three cases discussed above were able to win electoral victories is largely attributable to their success in gaining the support of a diverse range of movements. As we have seen, such alliances have been forged, if only in the limited context of an election campaign, and have been successful in implementing certain kinds of progressive reforms. And yet, in all three instances, the carefully crafted coalitions could not be sustained over time. Reacting to external pressures and internal tensions, coalition leaders and movement activists retreated to narrow and defensive agendas that undermined both coalition solidarity and electoral viability.

A brief reading of the history of progressive electoral coalitions suggests that much more needs to be done in terms of sharing experiences and understandings among diverse movements, and translating that diversity into a common framework, without threatening the autonomy of individual movements. An additive approach is obviously inadequate. As Carroll and Ratner (1995: 200) argue:

it is not merely a question of labour's willingness to form coalitions with popular movements and vice versa, but of the terms under which such articulation might occur, and whose voices are hegemonic within this articulatory process.

If more lasting coalitions are possible, they will have to attend more carefully to
building an inclusive radical vision that can withstand the external challenges and internal disagreements that will inevitably arise. Beyond developing a shared agenda, however, progressive coalitions must also formulate a common political strategy, a sustained way of organizing beyond specific oppressions and experiences. As Melucci (1995) explains, politics in contemporary society is not about resolving conflict 'once and for all,' but is rather about developing appropriate means through which to continuously reach decisions on contentious, contradictory, and possibly irresolvable issues. Such a view implies that the formation of a counter-hegemonic historic bloc will depend not only upon the integration of diverse interests and concerns, but also on the creation of new ways of 'doing politics.' It is to this aspect of social movement politics that the discussion now turns.

2.3 New Social Movements and Political Parties: A New Style of Politics?

Contemporary social movements challenge the established structures of interest mediation and representation in advanced capitalist democracies (Dalton and Kuechler, 1990). More specifically, new social movements have been very critical of the role of the conventional political parties in limiting the democratic process to formalized negotiations among elites. Political parties have, at least since the emergence of mass democracy at the turn of the century, exerted a great deal of control over the political process in Western societies.

According to Rohrschneider (1993: 158-9), parties have historically played three roles within the political system. First, parties recruit and train political leaders. The selection of candidates for office reflects a complex balance of various internal and external electoral constituencies, as well as ascriptive criteria, that is generally negotiated among the party elite. This system tends to favour "professional politicians with lifelong

---

7For classic statements on the role of political parties in liberal democracies, see Ostrogorski, M. (1964/1902), Michels (1962/1915), Duverger (1959), and King (1969).
party affiliation" (Kitschelt, 1988: 144). Second, political parties define the content of electoral campaigns and public policy debates. Parties are the primary agents of political representation, attempting to reflect citizens' interests—as they interpret and synthesize them—within their electoral programmes and, when elected to power, in their public policy initiatives. Finally, parties provide opportunities for people to participate in the political process, albeit in highly organized and predictable ways. Given these characteristics, parties on both the left and right of the political spectrum have been described as "mass integrative apparatuses," acting more as regulatory intermediaries between bureaucratic state apparatuses and the citizens subject to their policies than as avenues for political protest (Mayer, 1987: 349).

In contrast to the oligarchic tendencies of conventional political parties, movement activists favour a new style of politics that attempts to maximize opportunities for active participation in all aspects of the democratic process, while minimizing the role of leaders (Rohrschneider, 1993: 196). Generally speaking, with respect to organizational structure, movement-oriented parties can be expected to display an aversion to formal organization, elaborate rules concerning membership rights and duties, a clear hierarchy of authority and representation, and the professionalization of political leaders. They will build fluid, informal organizations without mass membership, rely on decentralized, nonhierarchical networks of communication which leave much freedom for the militants' expression of highly individualist political preferences, and emphasize amateurism in politics (Kitschelt, 1988: 129).

New social movement political practice differs from more conventional forms in the sense that it is the process itself, rather than electoral outcomes, that is emphasized. As Sandilands (1992: 163) observes, movements "seek to enter the political realm as it is

---

8 In the absence of modern mass communication technologies, mass parties developed hierarchical organizational structures in order to increase their visibility among the electorate and mobilize voters during elections. The result, as Michels (1962/1915) documented in his famous study of the German Social Democratic Party, was the development of a sharp distinction between expert party managers and passive rank and file members. Participation, in this context, is restricted to carrying out the directives of the party elite.
currently defined in order to change it—to show its limit as democratic practice—and to point the way toward alternative forms of political life in the public sphere." Non-instrumental forms of decision-making and decentralized organizational structures prefigure a participatory form of democracy in which power flows up from an active and informed grassroots base, rather than down from elites. The political innovations advanced by new social movements extend well beyond an egalitarian and participatory logic of party organization. The notion of participatory or direct democracy challenges traditional distinctions between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary activities. For "new politics" parties, participation in electoral politics is regarded as "merely one component of a broader ensemble of activities" (Boggs, 1986: 183). Movement-oriented parties attempt to synthesize party and movement by "combining a vocal presence in the legislative sphere with a steady base of democratic initiative in the community" (ibid.).

In sum, while mainstream political parties pursue an instrumentalized politics in which 'leaders' and professional 'experts' attempt to efficiently mobilize and deploy resources within the parliamentary arena, movement-oriented parties favour nonhierarchical and participatory structures, and engage in both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary activities. Recent evidence based on the experiences of "new politics" parties in Western Europe and North America suggests, however, that upon entering existing political structures, social movements must perform a difficult balancing act; that is, changing the very system they have joined. Beginning with the German Green Party and then moving to the North American municipal context, a review of the concrete electoral experience of such parties reveals that it is difficult indeed to resist pressures to conform with mainstream political practice.

---

9 That is, new parties that have been formed, at least in part, by new social movement activists in order to challenge dominant parties on both the left and the right.
The German Greens

In Western Europe, the new political style has been taken up to varying degrees by existing social democratic and socialist parties (Boggs, 1986), but the radical conception of democratic practice advanced by new social movements has been most evident in the new parties that have emerged out of the movements themselves, the most successful of which has been the German Green Party. The German Greens, formed in 1980 by a disparate group of peace, environmental, leftist, and other social movement organizations, have been viewed by many observers as the paradigmatic case of an "anti-party" or "new politics" party. At their founding convention, the Greens adopted a number of structural principles aimed at ensuring that the party would remain as nonhierarchical and decentralized as the movements whose electoral voice it claimed to be. The founders of the German Green Party were committed to following a grassroots democratic strategy in which party membership and meetings would be open to all interested individuals and groups, members would be encouraged to participate in all levels of party activity, social movement and community representatives would have the right to speak at party assemblies and submit resolutions, and decisions would be made on the basis of consensus (Scarf, 1994: 91; Boggs, 1986: 182-184; Ware, 1986: 122-3).

The German Green Party also instituted a number of mechanisms aimed at preventing the emergence of a cadre of 'professional politicians' who would be able to exert undue influence over the party. Party deputies and elected representatives were held directly accountable to the popular base through the mechanisms of imperative mandate, bi-annual rotation of elected representatives, and a ban on holding multiple offices within the party (Ware, 1986: 123). The Greens promoted the idea of "the citizen-politician".

---

10Within the Green Party parliamentarians are regarded as 'mandated agents' required to vote according to decisions taken at party assemblies, rather than as 'trustees' attempting to advance the interests of their constituents (as they see them), as is the norm under representative democracy (Ware, 1986: 123).
11Closer to home, the founders of the Canadian Greens also constituted themselves as an 'antiparty party.' Writing about the Ontario Green Party, Sandilands notes that "their structure is radically different from that of most political parties" (1992: 162). Following a highly decentralized organizational model, the
who serves in political office as an amateur during a short period of time and then returns to private life, as a remedy to old-style party politics" (Kitschelt, 1988: 144). Concern with avoiding the oligarchic tendencies associated with mainstream parties is explicitly stated in an early electoral slogan—"Now we elect ourselves!" (Roth, 1991: 80).

Finally, the German Greens' official programme made explicit the party's strategic intention to "walk on two legs" and, thus, to maintain an "organic relationship to emergent popular struggles" (Boggs, 1986: 178). The Party's federal program describes parliamentary activities as a necessary supplement to popular initiatives, the purpose of which is to "give their political alternatives 'publicity and meaning' within the parliamentary bodies" (Languuth, 1984: 70-1). This is a significant departure from conventional political actors, who tend to view extra-parliamentary activism as a distraction from electoral activities, or even as unwelcome competition (Epstein, 1991: 15).

Coupled with their decentralized and nonhierarchical organizational structure, the continuing focus on the grassroots as the primary site of the political represents a key element of the promise of the Greens with respect to redefining the meaning of democracy. As Sandilands (1992: 163-4) writes of the Canadian Green Party:

- the Greens' insistence on the grassroots as the locus of political will allows them to construct themselves as part of, rather than as the centre of, a continuing proliferation of points of antagonism; they form a subject-position for grassroots-controlled, state-directed action, one "leg" of democracy. By acting on this vision of grassroots empowerment as a party form, the Greens are able to define new limits to the state [emphasis in the original].

The Greens rapidly became a significant force in the German party system, winning seats in the Bundestag in the 1983 national election, and making significant showings in several local and state elections by the mid-1980s. The positive results of the Green Party's entry into German politics were readily apparent. Through their electoral

---

Ontario Greens have no 'leader' beyond the formal position required under the laws governing political parties, and are guided by the consensus decision-making of autonomous chapters that meet three times a year at various locations around the province.
platforms, the Greens were able to place a number of previously neglected issues—including, of course, ecology and peace, but also issues relating to women’s and minority rights and the shortcomings of the parliamentary system itself—on the mainstream political agenda (Scharf, 1994: 3). Further, participation in elections brought increased public attention and legitimacy to the extra-parliamentary movements the Greens sought to represent. As Roth notes (1991: 84), as an alternative electoral choice, the Greens "force the established parties to acknowledge and deal with the movements and the issues they raise." Finally, the Greens were able to use at least a portion of the resources made available to political parties in the German system to benefit the movements (ibid.).

However, participation in electoral politics also produced a number of unintended negative consequences for the Greens. Right from the beginning, reservations were expressed by both insiders and outside observers about the ability of the Green Party to maintain an oppositional identity while engaging in mainstream political activities. Internally, the German party suffered from bitter factional disputes between "realists" (Realos), who advocated ideological compromise and entering into coalitions with established political parties in order to successfully implement political reforms, and "fundamentalists" (Fundis), who refused to negotiate on matters of principle and rejected the idea of co-operating with mainstream parties (Scott, 1990: 85).\footnote{This split between party and movement factions was mirrored within the Ontario Greens (Sandilands, 1992: 169), as well as within the British Columbia and Vancouver Green Parties. The internal struggle in British Columbia resulted in the mass-exodus of process-oriented "idealists" from the BC Party, which now lies firmly under the control of the "pragmatist" wing.} Notwithstanding their own shortcomings with respect to devising a viable alternative to participating in the electoral arena, it would appear that the reservations of the fundamentalists were well founded. Upon entering the competitive electoral arena, the Greens began to drift from the party’s organizational innovations and unconventional political tactics toward more conventional structures and strategies.
The ideal of direct democracy has proven especially difficult to realize within the context of electoral competition. While the Greens had a relatively active membership base when they began, over time the same tendency for which the conventional parties were criticized has been observed within the "anti-party". That is, the number of members regularly attending party functions began to decline, leaving an elite minority of activists and elected representatives who are both willing and able to commit the time required for regular participation in an increasingly dominant position (Languuth, 1984: 75; Scharf, 1994: 104). The drop in active participation of the grassroots membership in the party led to an upward transfer of decision-making power to more centralized bodies and, ultimately, to the parliamentary representatives themselves (Ware, 1986: 124). The principle of office rotation became the subject of intense debate and was eventually abandoned in the interest of maintaining "continuity in Green representation" (Scharf, 1994: 91-2). The practice of holding open meetings was also discontinued shortly after Greens were elected to office because "it proved to be too time consuming and difficult" (Patterson, 1987: 174).

The tendency towards hierarchy and centralization was further reinforced by the institutional demands placed upon the Greens once they were elected to public office. Increasing administrative requirements, and the need to develop expertise in a wide variety of policy areas, required growing numbers of paid and specialized staff (ibid.: 101). Candidate recruitment began to favour individuals for whom politics was a professional activity over amateurs. Where once prior social movement activism and ascriptive criteria corresponding to groups traditionally underrepresented in the political system were the primary considerations in the nomination of electoral slates, the recruitment process began to reflect candidates' political positions, media profile, and performance within the party (Kitschelt, 1988: 147). In short, with respect to organizational structure and leadership recruitment, the Greens were beginning to behave much like a traditional political party.
With the 'rationalization' of the Greens' organizational structure, the second pillar of the radical democratic programme—the organic link between party and movement—also began to deteriorate. As Roth notes, as early as 1984 (a year after the Greens' historic breakthrough in the German national parliament) the negative effects of parliamentary participation were evident. In their own reports, Green Party officials expressed concern about the shift in emphasis from popular mobilization to participation in mainstream political institutions: "with the massive influx of Greens into positions on the local councils, the political activity of the Greens has become dominated by parliamentary affairs at the various levels" (cited in Roth, 1991: 84). Similarly, Scharf (1994) finds that, whether by accident or by design, the German Greens are now overwhelmingly preoccupied with mainstream politics, with electoral responsibilities overriding any preference the Greens may still have for extra-parliamentary activity.

Electoral success has, therefore, had an integrating and reforming effect on the Greens, as the attention and resources of core party activists are increasingly channeled into the various duties required of elected officials, leaving little time and energy for organizing, or even participating in, popular mobilization (ibid.: 244-5). While the election of Green representatives initially proved beneficial for their extra-parliamentary allies, the positive results were soon diminished. Internally, the Greens retrenched many of their innovative organizational principles, becoming a much more hierarchical, centralized, and professionalized party. Externally, party activists became increasingly preoccupied with parliamentary affairs and less concerned with pursuing an extra-parliamentary mandate.

In short, the experience of the German Green Party indicates that, once an electoral path is chosen, the pressures toward deradicalization and adaptation to conventional political styles are very difficult to resist. Once the bulk of the organization's human and material resources are devoted to parliamentary politics, the links between extra-parliamentary and mainstream politics become very difficult to sustain. Moreover,
this shift also has a demobilizing effect on the movements themselves, as Green politicians increasingly channeled movement initiatives into formal institutions. The growing distance between Green parliamentary representatives and their grassroots movement base prompted the following wry comment from one observer—"The message of the 1980s would seem to be clear: from movements to institutions (be they old or new)" (Roth, 1991: 86).

Santa Monicans for Renters' Rights

While the Greens have made significant electoral inroads at all political levels in Western Europe, in North America the "new politics" has largely been a phenomenon of the local political system. Movement-oriented political parties adopting the radical democratic ideals of new social movements have attempted, in some cases successfully, to capture positions of power in a number of urban centres. While progressive municipal parties are obviously more limited in their scope and political impact than the European Greens, their close connection with new social movements within the immediate local environment affords them, perhaps, a better chance at avoiding the tendency towards instrumentalism identified for parties with more expansive political aspirations. Furthermore, if successful, local struggles to change the way politics is done can act as a catalyst for change at other levels.

The case of the Santa Monicans For Renters' Rights (SMRR) coalition in Santa Monica, California is typical of the progressive electoral organizations that emerged in the United States in the late 1970s and early 1980s, except that this group was more successful for a longer period of time (Boggs, 1986: 143). Formed in 1978 by the Santa Monica chapter of the Campaign for Economic Democracy, the Santa Monica Fair Housing Alliance, and the Santa Monica Democratic Club, the SMRR coalition successfully initiated tough rent control measures in 1979, and then won a majority on city council in 1981 (Kann, 1986). SMRR's electoral programme advocated a broad
restructuring of municipal political institutions, including the formation of autonomous neighbourhood councils, supported the organization of conferences and public fora for grassroots political education and, more generally, called for greater accessibility and democracy in both their own organization and municipal institutions.

Like the German Green Party, the SMRR's internal organizational structure and political aims were based on the principles of participatory democracy and grassroots citizen empowerment. This radical democratic vision did not, however, easily co-exist with a pragmatic political strategy that embraced slick campaign tactics geared to winning votes. In practice, as Boggs notes (1986: 154), the "inherent tension between power and participation was rather quickly resolved in the direction of the former." Participatory objectives soon took second place to building an efficient electoral machine, while institutional politics took precedence over community-based activity. SMRR's campaign literature avoided 'complex' issues and arguments, focusing instead on simplistic emotional appeals. Although these materials may have been politically effective in terms of winning votes, they certainly did not stimulate public dialogue about alternative democratic processes or goals. Voter contact and fundraising were computerized, while links with community groups and unions were instrumentally conceived as a means to gain access to more campaign resources (Kann, 1986: 100).

As the SMRR campaigns became increasingly professionalized and 'managed,' the coalition itself evolved into a hierarchical organization requiring "discipline from the troops and professionalism from the generals" (Kann, 1986: 147). The candidate selection process was carefully orchestrated through a series of formalized rules and

---

13 One 1979 campaign postcard mailed to voters depicted an elderly couple who had been evicted from their apartment, while another quoted a terminally ill cancer patient who had suffered eviction and vowed to fight for rent control (Kann, 1986: 100).

14 In one incident documented by Kann (1986: 101), an activist quit the coalition and publicly denounced it shortly before the 1981 election, claiming that SMRR "had evolved into a political machine that traded patronage favours and practiced a 'democratic centralism' whereby the organization claimed the authority to clear all public statements made by its members."
procedures, with the SMRR leadership stressing the need for representatives of the
constituencies whose support the coalition hoped to attract, as well as 'trustworthy' and
experienced people who could be counted on to represent the SMRR's ideologies and
goals during the election campaign and after winning office.

The SMRR's sophisticated techniques achieved the primary goal of the campaign
organizers—getting out the vote for the coalition's candidates. But the grounds on which
the SMRR's electoral gains in 1981 could be considered a 'victory' had little to do with
alternative practices of democracy and visions of grassroots empowerment. As Kann
observes (1986: 148), success in the conventional political 'marketplace' comes with heavy
costs to the principle of participatory democracy.

Elections throughout the American political system generate a de facto
state of emergency that empowers campaign leaders and professionals to
speak for those with whom they have not had time to consult. In most
instances, a goal such as participatory democracy is put on the back burner,
at least until after the election is completed.

Once elected to office, however, the SMRR elite did not return to a more
participatory style. Rather, the leadership became even more concerned with maintaining
control over both the institutions of municipal government and the coalition itself (Boggs,
1986: 154-6). While the SMRR did follow through on its promise of initiating
neighbourhood councils, for example, these were never given more than advisory powers.
The proposed mechanisms for transforming popular political consciousness (e.g., public
fora, discussion groups) did not materialize. Internally, the SMRR was inactive between
elections, while democratic mechanisms for holding the leadership accountable to the
rank-and-file membership were virtually absent, particularly once those leaders became
elected city officials (Kann, 186: 103). Then, in the pressurized context of the next
election campaign, few questioned the jettisoning of participatory processes in the
reactivated organization, "lest they be accused of undermining coalition unity" (ibid.: 147).
The SMRR soon paid a price for the organization's growing distance from both its democratic principles and grassroots activism in Santa Monica. In the 1983 election, the SMRR's majority on council was reduced from 5-2 to 4-3. While SMRR politicians were quick to blame the loss on low voter turnout and a poorly conceived campaign—problems that could only be solved by becoming even more 'professional'—it was clear that the coalition's grassroots base of support, so crucial to its 1981 victory, was on the decline.

Was SMRR really a grassroots organization? The making of its 1983 campaign did not afford a positive answer. The coalition was moribund until just before the election. It did not serve as a forum for open discussions about which issues should be highlighted in the campaign, nor did it involve the general activist population in the process of sifting and winnowing a pool of potential candidates. The basic decisions came from the top (Kann, 1986: 202).

After the 1983 election, the criticisms of disenchanted activists were made public. In particular, they were concerned that the passionate democratic commitments of the early days of the coalition had disappeared, and many argued that the election losses indicated a pressing need for the SMRR to reconsider the relationship between its principles and its practices. More specifically, discussion came to focus on the need to broaden the SMRR's popular base of support by "rebuilding and reinvigorating the grassroots movement that had given birth to the coalition" (ibid.: 207). New activists and organizations should be invited to join the coalition, and debate over principles and policies welcomed. This impulse was stymied, however, by fears that "organizational growth might mean the admission of ideologically oriented groups that could fragment the coalition" (ibid.: 207).

Grassroots support for the coalition continued to wane, and some of the SMRR's core member organizations disbanded, leaving the SMRR councillors with little incentive

---

15 The SMRR leadership concluded that improvements could be made by hiring a year-round campaign organizer, and by pursuing various techniques for improving its public image, communicating its achievements in office to the public, and, most ironically, signaling its openness to different viewpoints (Kann, 1986: 201).
to deviate from their professional approach in the next election. The four incumbents campaigned on their records in office, while ignoring grassroots disenchantment and avoiding any discussion of empowerment, participatory democracy, or experiments in alternative forms of government (ibid.: 211). Such a strategy did little to either mobilize popular support, or distinguish the SMRR councillors from their conservative opponents. In the November, 1984 election, one of the SMRR incumbents failed in her bid for re-election, and the coalition lost its majority on council.

As this case makes clear, an exclusively instrumental approach to election campaigns is largely incompatible with radical democratic ideals. While the SMRR coalition may initially have had a commitment to fundamentally restructuring municipal politics in Santa Monica, its choice of electoral tactics placed the group on a trajectory that served to undermine rather than enhance the goals of accessibility and participatory democracy. Furthermore, having alienated or demobilized the coalition's grassroots base of support, SMRR was unable to maintain its position of power within the institutions of government. In effect, by prioritizing the goal of winning elections above all others, the "movement-party" suffered in both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary terms.

The Montreal Citizens' Movement

Moving to the Canadian context, the experience of the Montreal Citizens' Movement (MCM) provides additional grounds for concluding that an instrumental focus on success in the mainstream political arena undermines radical-democratic principles. Of the various reform-oriented parties that emerged in urban Canada in the 1960s and 1970s, the MCM was both the most preoccupied with the democratic process itself, and the most successful in electoral terms (Higgins, 1981: 89). However, like the SMRR coalition in

16In Canada, as Roussopoulos writes (1978b: 212), a broadly-based urban change movement emerged during the 1960s and 1970s "outside the mainstream institutions and the existing political parties of our society. On the whole this new consciousness has guarded its autonomy and independent development not
Santa Monica, the MCM’s bid for conventional political power cost dearly in terms of the organization’s radical-democratic programme.

The MCM was established in 1974 by former members of a short-lived radical political coalition called the Front d’Action Politique (FRAP), Communist Party of Quebec militants, members of Montreal’s labour movement, members of the provincial PartiQuébécois and the federal New Democratic Party, as well as progressive anglophone and francophone community activists (Schecter, 1978: 175; Raboy, 1978: 240). At its founding convention, the MCM adopted a comprehensive programme that decried the lack of basic democratic process at city hall, and proposed the formation of a system of neighbourhood councils as a mechanism both for decentralizing municipal power and for encouraging popular participation in civic affairs (Raboy, 1978: 240; Roussopoulos, 1978b: 213). The emphasis on mass participation in decision-making was equally applied to the internal functioning of the party (Raboy, 1978: 241). Thus, the MCM was itself decentralized among autonomous district committees, each of which sent delegates and resolutions to an annual general congress, which then elected an Executive Committee. The MCM programme also explicitly stated that, although constituting itself as an urban political party, the organization’s first priority was to be extra-parliamentary, grassroots organizing (ibid.: 235).

In the 1974 municipal election, the MCM won 44 percent of the popular vote and elected 18 candidates to the 55-member Montreal city council, none of whom had any previous political experience (Quesnel, 1994: 595; Lustiger-Thaler, 1993: 15). This early electoral success immediately exacerbated the conflict between movement and party that had been present within the MCM since its birth (Schecter, 1978: 176; Raboy, 1978: 241). The tension manifested itself as a split between the party (i.e., the executive, general

only because it was suspicious of the old institutions but also because it was distrustful of these political forms, whether old or rehashed."
council, local district associations, and active members) and the parliamentary 'caucus' (i.e., the 18 elected councillors) on the question of political style (Raboy: 241-245).

In response to difficulties encountered in its first post-election year, the MCM 1975 congress adopted a series of resolutions aimed at clarifying the group's political strategy, including: "a clear subordination of the caucus of City Councillors to the MCM General Council of district delegates" (Roussopoulos, 1978a: 164). The Congress also reaffirmed mobilization in the local districts as the political priority of the party, with electoral activity considered a secondary activity, placed the emphasis for the year ahead on political education of the membership, and encouraged the districts "to identify and conduct autonomous local political struggles in which they could clearly exercise political leadership in the name of the MCM" (cited in Raboy, 1978: 245-6).

Despite the apparent consensus achieved at the congress, persistent disagreements between the MCM's radical and moderate factions made it difficult to put these resolutions into practice. Extra-parliamentary initiatives either failed to materialize or, when they did, took on an electoralist flavour (e.g., lobbying municipal mayors for free public transit for seniors). While, to some extent, these problems reflected inadequate human resources, from the perspective of MCM's radical core "this lack itself pointed to a deeper problem: the weakness of the priority accorded to mobilization at the base and the direction of energies into maintaining a party apparatus which substituted for the politics of mobilization" (Schecter, 1978: 179).

The drift toward a more conventional political style proceeded further with each election. During its years in opposition the MCM had successfully pushed the conservative Drapeau administration to undertake a number of democratic reforms to the city's governance, but by the time the MCM won a landslide majority on the Montreal City Council in 1986, little remained of its radical-democratic intentions (Thomas, 1995: 48).

\footnote{In its first majority victory, the MCM won all but 3 seats on council.}
Within a year and a half of the election, dissident MCM councillors were publicly charging that "the party was becoming oligarchic at the expense of its 'movement' constituencies and was no longer the party it claimed to be" (ibid.: 124-5). The MCM council approved a number of development projects despite grassroots opposition and against the wishes of many long time supporters. The District Advisory Committees set up by the MCM city government had a very limited scope and no decision-making power, while the council executive committee implemented a series of rules aimed at silencing debate within the council caucus and preventing dissident councillors from rallying opposition among the general population or the MCM membership to specific policies (ibid., 127-8). In the words of one observer:

> the extent to which the party backpedaled on its political promises will most likely go down in the annals of urban politics as a worryingly quick confirmation of Roberto Michel's iron law of oligarchy. Most striking among those failed promises is the watering down of a central program that was closely identified with the party, the decentralization of municipal power. Once a forum for debate about the democratic empowerment of communities, the party now barely keeps up with the most modest demands of the Montreal citizenry" (Lustiger-Thaler, 1992: 183).

By the next municipal election in 1990, the MCM had to contend with two new parties—the Democratic Coalition of Montreal and Ecology Montreal\(^\text{18}\)—formed by disaffected social and political activists, and a number of independent candidates. Although the MCM retained its majority on council, it lost three councillors to the Democratic coalition, as well as the support of Montreal's urban social movements (Lustiger-Thaler, 1993: 15-6). The results of the 1994 elections were even more consequential for the MCM, and for the progressive left more generally (Reid, 1994).

After eight years in power, the MCM's incumbent mayor, Jean Dore, was soundly

\(^{18}\text{While the social-democratic Democratic Coalition of Montreal adopted a traditional 'representational' style, members of Ecology Montreal, following green philosophy, placed a great deal of emphasis on the democratic process and saw electoral achievement as secondary to broader ethical issues. EM has not, however, escaped the tension between movement and party that seems ubiquitous to green politics. See Lustiger-Thaler (1992) for a discussion of these developments on the Montreal political scene.}
defeated, while only 6 of 51 council seats were won by MCM candidates. The DC and Ecology Montreal, running a joint campaign, elected only two incumbent councillors.

Once again, the case of the MCM provides ample evidence that a strategic emphasis on the mainstream parliamentary arena has a detrimental effect on the ability of a political party to maintain a commitment to movement practices and principles. Early on, radical activists within the MCM attributed the party's lack of sufficient human resources to engage in extra-parliamentary activity to the prioritization of building an effective party apparatus. With each successive election, the MCM moved further in the direction of a conventional party, a process only exacerbated once the group won a majority on Council. And, much like the SMRR coalition, the MCM was then unable to sustain its electoral position without the support of grassroots social movements. Indeed, the entire progressive spectrum in Montreal paid a price for the growing distance between the MCM and its movement base when their electoral power was fragmented among new municipal competitors.

The Strategy of Imagination

Writing more than 80 years ago, Roberto Michels summarized (1962/1915: 365) the consequences of bureaucratic organization for the democratic aspirations of left political parties in his famous "iron law of oligarchy:"

It is organization which gives birth to the domination of the elected over the electors, of the mandataries over the mandators, of the delegates over the delegators. Who says organization, says oligarchy.

More than a half-century later, Piven and Cloward (1977) clarified the deradicalizing effects of "mass-based permanent organization" on the mid-20th century protest movements of the American lower-classes. Similarly, Rowbotham (1979: 146) argues that the social and cultural objectives of feminism cannot be pursued through socialist parties, for whom the means to achieve power have a utilitarian narrowness.
Other considerations consequently have to be deferred until the goal of socialism is reached. But socialist feminists and men who have been influenced by the women's movement and gay liberation have been saying that these are precisely the considerations that are inseparable from the making of socialism. These involve considerable disagreement about the meaning of socialist politics and what it means to be a socialist.

Benefiting from the lessons of past experience, contemporary social activists have attempted to confront the formal system of power in late capitalist societies in a way that differs from earlier left movements. Rather than trying to seize state power through established channels, the new social movements have entered the conventional political arena in an effort to make its flaws and weaknesses visible, while demonstrating through their concrete organizations and practices that an alternative egalitarian and participatory model of democracy is not only imaginable, but possible. The social movement vision of politics, as expressed by the new political parties they have formed, emphasizes active participation in all aspects of the democratic process, and favours nonhierarchical and decentralized organizational structures that minimize the role of leaders and "professional politicians." "New politics" parties also challenge the conventional distinction—and implicit hierarchy—between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary tactics. Seeing themselves as merely one part of a broad movement for social change, they attempt to combine electoral activities with popular mobilization. In the prefigurative politics of new social movements, it is the process itself, rather than election results, that is of value.

A review of the concrete experiences of "new politics" parties suggests, however, that they have a great deal of difficulty translating their radical democratic vision into practice. As we have seen, implementing the principle of participatory democracy has been very problematic, both in the "state of emergency" context of election campaigns, and once party members are elected to office. Perhaps even more troublesome has been the disruptive effect of electoral competition on the organic relationship between these parties and the grassroots movements they aspired to represent. Once the parties become absorbed in the business of government, they have little energy left for participation in the
extra-parliamentary arena. The institutionalization of the movement-parties also has a
deradicalizing effect on the movements from which they have emerged, as their demands
come to be expressed through "acceptable modes of participation" (Boggs, 1986: 147).

That there is an inherent tension within these parties between movement ideals and
political efficacy, as it is conventionally defined, has been clear from the beginning to both
observers and participants. What is more striking is the apparent speed with which they
have conformed with mainstream political practice, particularly in those instances where
they have gained substantial representation on elected bodies. The three cases related
above differ with respect to the political history and culture in which they emerged, the
degree to which they adopted radical democratic principles, and in the scope of their
political aspirations. Yet they all share similar trajectories in terms of shifting from
movement-oriented politics to more conventional styles. Evidently, a viable counter-
hegemonic strategy needs, at the very least, to be more diligent in terms of resisting the
'mainstreaming' effects of electoral politics.

2.4 Summary

In this chapter I have discussed the challenges presented by new social movements
to the content of political debate and the style of political action in Western democracies.
Through a review of the concrete experiences of a number of movement-parties in several
different settings, I have also underscored the tensions and difficulties associated with
attempts to translate the transformative aspects of new social movement goals and
practices into an electoral programme. On the one hand, the cases examined above reveal
the difficulties parties have had in moving beyond a tenuous additive approach to "old"
and "new" movement issues to an inclusive and enduring counter-hegemonic political
programme. On the other hand, an examination of the organizational structures and
strategies of "new politics" parties demonstrates the powerful deradicalizing influence on
social movements of participation in elections and mainstream political institutions. At
minimum, this literature has demonstrated that there are no easy solutions to the dilemmas posed by attempts to constitute a new kind of political party linking diverse movement constituencies around a progressive political agenda and strategy.

As I explained earlier, like the organizations described above, COPE also displays many of the characteristics of a movement-party. Originating in the old left political praxis of the Communist Party and the trade union movement, COPE has in recent years attracted the support of a sizable contingent of new social movement activists who have challenged the centrality of class and material issues on the party's political agenda, and questioned the hierarchical and centralized political style of the organization. In my analysis of COPE I examine the content of the group's political agenda and its political style, paying particular attention to how the problems identified above have worked themselves out within COPE, and with what effects in terms of its role as a counter-hegemonic vehicle. Before relating COPE's particular experience, however, I discuss the methodological procedures employed in the case study, as well as the ethical and political considerations arising from the study of progressive social movements.
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODS: PROCEDURES AND CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 COPE as a Case Study

In methodological terms, this dissertation is a "case study" of the Coalition of Progressive Electors. My analysis of COPE spans the 28 years from the party's formation in 1968 through the 1996 election. COPE was founded with the objectives of building a unified progressive coalition to contest civic elections in Vancouver and mobilizing Vancouverites on broadly-defined civic issues. Throughout its lengthy history as a municipal party, COPE has experienced electoral successes and failures, changes in its base of support, and internal debates reflective of key social, political and economic trends in late capitalist democracies. Three central research questions have guided my data collection and analysis:

1. What kinds of internal disputes and struggles have arisen as a result of COPE's attempts to integrate diverse social movement concerns during the different periods of the organization's development, and how have these been resolved?

2. Are the transformative goals and practices of new social movements compatible with the instrumental requisites of an electoral organization?

3. What are the future prospects for the convergence of diverse social movement goals and practices within a political party?

Based on a review of theoretical debates concerning the nature of new social movements and their implications for politics in the West (Chapter One) and an examination of the concrete experiences of "new politics" parties in several different contexts (Chapter Two), I have conceptualized the first and second of my research questions as two distinct analytical foci. The first question is examined in Chapter Six in terms of the content of COPE's political agenda, that is, the kinds of demands and proposals contained in COPE's electoral programmes. The second research question is
addressed in Chapter Seven with respect to COPE's style of political action, including both the organization's internal structure and operation and its role in parliamentary and extra-parliamentary mobilization. The third question, concerning the prospects of movement-parties, is taken up in the final chapter of the thesis by way of conclusions regarding COPE's future in Vancouver politics and, on a more general level, a discussion of the implications of COPE's experience for the theory and practice of contemporary counter-hegemonic politics. In the current chapter, I discuss the research methods used to address the questions posed above, as well as the ethical and political issues arising in a study of social movement activism.

3.2 Observation

The research process began with observation. I started attending monthly meetings of the COPE Executive Committee in July, 1992 as an openly identified research assistant on a study of social movements in the lower mainland area of British Columbia. Thus, my initial access to the group was obtained through my involvement in another research project, of which COPE was only a tangential component. After attending a few meetings it became clear to me that this organization was confronting, "before my eyes," many of the dilemmas and issues I had been encountering in the contemporary literature on social movements. Furthermore, on the eve of its 25th anniversary, COPE had never been studied in a comprehensive and systematic way and, with the aging of its central founding figures, crucial aspects of its early history were in danger of being lost. For

---

1 Undertaken by Dr. William Carroll (Sociology, University of Victoria) and Dr. R. S. Ratner (Sociology, University of British Columbia), this study was comprised of comparative case studies and in-depth interviews with activists involved in a number of social movement organizations.

2 The importance of documenting the organization's history was also recognized by COPE and in the same year several members undertook a "COPE history project" that resulted in the book 1968-1993, COPE: Working For Vancouver (John Church, Elaine Decker, Gary Onstad and Ben Swankey, 1993). This book has been a valuable resource for my research.
these reasons I decided that a case study of COPE had substantial academic merit and would also make a valuable contribution to Vancouver's historical record.

My next step was to gain permission from COPE to conduct a case study of the organization. I did this by, first, approaching the Table Officers with a formal request and, second, putting my request to the full Executive Committee. In my request for access I made several points: I thanked the group for allowing me to observe their meetings up to that point (by then I had been present for almost a year); I explained how essential their participation was to academic research on social movements and politics and my theoretical interest in conducting a case study of their organization; I outlined the procedures I would use for collecting data and emphasized that, as individuals or as a group, they were free to withdraw from the research at any time; and, finally, I told the group that, while there are certain guidelines to be followed in academic research, I was personally "on their side" in the sense of sharing their commitment to progressive social change. On this point, my credibility and legitimacy were enhanced by my own visible role as a social movement activist in Vancouver.

In addition to frequently encountering COPE members while wearing my "activist hat," I also live in the same neighbourhood (Grandview-Woodlands in East Vancouver) as many COPE members and frequently "ran into" people in various locations. On these occasions I often engaged in informal conversation that helped me to clarify the meaning of the issues, events, and debates I was observing within the organization. The personal commonalities I shared with COPE members minimized my "outsider status" and contributed a great deal to the warm reception and trust I received from the group throughout the research period. While I did not take an activist role in the group, it was obvious that I was a "sympathetic" observer.

While my personal biography granted me a high degree of access to the group, it also created some difficulties. Throughout the research process I found maintaining a critical distance from my research especially difficult. I developed personal relationships
with some of the members of the organization. These relationships were occasionally strained when COPE was experiencing internal conflict and I was pressured to support one "side" or another. While I did not openly favour a particular stance within the group over others, I did, however, often find myself speaking as COPE's defender to hostile or uninformed individuals I encountered in my daily life. Alternatively, I sometimes shared in the disappointment expressed by others about the group. Over time it became very clear to me that I would have to emotionally detach myself from both COPE as an organization and the individuals with whom I had become familiar in order to critically analyze the data I was collecting. I frequently had to remind myself of the specific reason why I had become connected with the group.

I continued to attend monthly meetings of the Executive Committee, as well as all other public meetings and events that I could until November, 1996. From December, 1996 to October, 1997 I attended only meetings addressing the 1996 election results and the 1997 Annual General Meeting. While my role was primarily one of passive observer, I found it impossible to simply sit on the sidelines through the entire research period. COPE is an activist organization that, like all others, can use all the human resources it can get. Particularly during election campaigns, passive observation became very uncomfortable and had the potential to jeopardize the very good relationship I had established with the group. Thus, on occasion I worked as a volunteer for COPE (e.g., updating memberships at annual meetings, canvassing for COPE during election campaigns). All of these volunteer activities kept me in the background while, at the same time, making my presence seem less "artificial" and enhancing my rapport with a sizable number of COPE members. My occasional active participation did, however, hinder my ability to observe the group. It is difficult to monitor an event or take notes while, for example, renewing membership cards. I also joined the group as a dues-paying member in order to have access to various mailings and other information to which members were regularly privy. I did not, however, exercise any other privileges of membership (e.g., voting or speaking
at meetings). Throughout the entire observation period all COPE members with whom I came into contact were fully aware of my role as an academic researcher.

I had two reasons for observing COPE's activities. First, I wanted to know what kinds of activities COPE was engaged in, how these were structured, and what issues and debates arose during the course of these activities. I recorded the proceedings, agendas, speakers' comments, and decisions made during all the COPE events I attended. Second, I wanted to gain a sense of who the COPE activists were, in terms of both demographic characteristics and my analytical categories of "old," "new," movement, and party. My extensive observation allowed me to identify sub-groups within the membership, and to target key individuals for in-depth interviews. Before undertaking interviews, however, I wanted to be sure that I was well informed about the key issues and events of COPE's history and to this end, as well as to add an historical dimension to my analysis, I examined COPE documents produced from 1968 through 1997.

3.3 Document Analysis

Methodologically speaking, documents are "any written materials that contain information about the phenomenon we wish to study (Bailey, 1987: 290). Primary documents are "accounts written by people who experienced the particular event or behaviour," while secondary documents or data are produced "by people who were not present on the scene but who received the information necessary to compile the document by interviewing eyewitnesses or by reading primary documents" (ibid.). The COPE documents I analyzed were generally of a primary nature, although I utilized secondary sources where substantial gaps in the primary material existed.

As Bailey (ibid.: 297) explains, there are two steps to document analysis: (1) gaining access to the documents; and (2) analyzing the documents. In my research, the first step was particularly laborious for the years 1968 to 1992; that is, prior to my observation phase when I was unable to collect documents as they were produced and
distributed to COPE members. When I inquired about access to earlier COPE materials, I learned that no archive existed. Rather, COPE’s archival materials were scattered about in various members’ homes and a number of disorganized boxes in a commercial storage locker. Wanting access to this vital source of data, I approached the COPE Executive with a mutually beneficial proposal whereby I would undertake a preliminary sorting and categorization of the archival materials contained in the storage locker, as well as those of members who wished to turn over their stores to a collective pool, in exchange for access to the documents for my research. The proposal was welcomed by the group, and I was encouraged to try to obtain funding to carry out the task and to look for an appropriate public venue to deposit the COPE archives. The Boag Foundation\(^3\) generously agreed to fund the project and COPE reached an agreement with the Vancouver City Archives for deposit of their materials.

With much appreciated guidance from George Brandak, Manuscripts Curator at the Special Collections Division of UBC’s Main Library, Sue Baptie, Archivist at the Vancouver City Archives, and interested members of the COPE Executive, I relocated a substantial amount of COPE material to my office and, over a five month period (January - May, 1996), sorted and filed the collection. The archival material that I subsequently delivered to the Vancouver City Archives spanned the years 1951 to 1994 and was organized into four broad categories:

1. **General**—three boxes of material relating to the ongoing operation of the organization, including minutes of Table Officers’ and Executive Committee meetings, correspondence, financial statements, Community Directions Conferences, Annual General Meetings, newsletters, policy, and relations with the Civic New Democrats, etc.

2. **Elections**—four boxes containing material from election campaigns, including campaign brochures, leaflets, and so on, policy statements, press releases, press clippings, candidate biographies, financial statements, post-election analysis,

\(^3\)Located in Burnaby, B.C., the Boag Foundation describes itself as a society that "encourages socialist education."
correspondence, coalition relations (particularly with the Vancouver and District Labour Council and the Civic New Democrats), etc.

3. Photographs—one box primarily consisting of election campaign-related photographs, contact sheets, and negatives, particularly of candidates for election, but also including some photographs of COPE events and supporters.

4. Miscellaneous—one box of "odds and ends," including flip chart notes, campaign buttons and bumper stickers, a T-shirt, posters, and computer diskettes from the COPE history project.

The COPE documents to which I ultimately had access did not represent a complete historical record of the organization. There were several gaps and many COPE members retain personal possession of the documents they have collected. Nevertheless, the current archive contains material spanning all years of the organization's history and all election campaigns. With some restrictions on public access to sensitive material, these materials are now publicly accessible at the Vancouver City Archives and COPE members may continue to donate articles to the collection at any time in the future.

Over the course of the archival project I developed an intimate knowledge of the COPE records and was able to "flag" several key documents, as well as gaining a general sense of the historical evolution of the organization. I was also able to identify central figures in the group's history whom I would later approach for an interview. More systematic content analysis of the documents was then undertaken. I read through the documents and took notes on both a chronological and thematic basis according to my two analytical foci (i.e., old/new, party/movement). Where significant gaps existed I was able to refer to secondary sources, including newspaper and magazine articles, articles concerning Vancouver politics published in academic journals, and COPE's own published history, Working for Vancouver.

3.4 Interviews

The next phase in the data collection for this case study involved in-depth interviews with COPE activists. An open-ended interview schedule was constructed with
the objective of gaining knowledge of the perceptions and opinions of the people who are, or who have been, actively involved in COPE. The interview addressed several areas of interest. I began by asking questions about the respondent's 'political biography,' including their role in COPE, how long they had been involved with the organization, why they joined COPE, what satisfactions and disappointments they had experienced during their involvement, and what other progressive groups they had been actively involved with. The next set of questions focused on the evolution of COPE as an organization. I asked respondents whether they perceived any significant changes in COPE and specifically solicited their views about the existence and effects of "old" and "new" movement activists and political 'styles' within the organization. I also inquired about what they considered to be the key events or turning points in COPE's history. The third section of the interview schedule addressed the relationship between COPE and the various social movements—including organized labour, the Communist Party, and new social movements—that have been/are active in Vancouver. In this section I also asked respondents for their views regarding common distinctions drawn between political parties and social movements, and where they would place COPE in terms of these distinctions. The fourth section of the interview focused on the relationship between COPE and the other progressive parties in Vancouver civic politics, paying specific attention to the New Democratic and Green parties and respondents' opinions regarding the desirability of forming a permanent coalition of left parties. The closing section of the interview schedule asked respondents to speculate about COPE's future prospects. I also obtained demographic data for each respondent which I recorded on a standardized questionnaire. The interview schedule was pre-tested with two former and one current member of COPE.

See Appendix B for the complete text of the interview schedule.
See Appendix C for a copy of this questionnaire.
In total, I interviewed 36 COPE members. I also interviewed two central members of the Vancouver Green Party about the objectives of their party in Vancouver civic politics and their perceptions of COPE. Of the COPE respondents, two were also Executive members of the Civic New Democrats. 28 of the interviews were conducted between June and September, 1996, prior to the civic election in that year. Unfortunately, I was unable to finish the interviews before the election campaign got underway and had to postpone completion of this phase until after the election was over.\(^6\) Eight COPE interviews and the two Green Party interviews were conducted in the first six months of 1997. Given the very disappointing outcome of the 1996 election, the comparability of interviews given before and after the campaign was obviously of concern. I attempted to ameliorate any discrepancies between the two sets of interviews by asking respondents to tell me whether or not their views on the questions I was asking had changed as a result of COPE's devastating election loss. In some cases they had but, generally speaking, most of the questions were of a broad enough nature to be relatively unaffected by this single event.

Based on the knowledge I had gained through prior observation and document analysis, I sought to interview a *purposive* sample of COPE members. Palys (1997: 137) defines purposive sampling as a nonprobabilistic method that intentionally seeks out locations or individuals "because they meet some criterion for inclusion in the study." I targeted COPE members who had particular attributes that I considered important to the research. The major limitation of this sampling procedure is that "identifying a target population invariably expresses the researcher's interests and objectives" and, thus "purposive choices may indirectly reaffirm rather than challenge" our preconceived understandings of the phenomenon under study (ibid.). I attempted to minimize this risk by applying several distinct but overlapping criteria in the selection of my sample of

\(^6\)Understandably, members were too busy to give interviews during the election campaign.
interview respondents. First, I wanted to interview COPE members who could be identified with either "old" or "new" subgroups within the organization. Second, I targeted individuals who had joined the organization in each of the three decades of its existence and had been active in the organization for at least the three years preceding the 1996 election (i.e. they had not simply joined the group in order to run for office on the COPE slate). Third, I selected individuals from across the broad age spectrum of COPE activists. Fourth, I interviewed almost equal numbers of men and women. Fifth, I purposely included in my sample some COPE members who differed from the predominantly white, European-background of the group's membership. Finally, I asked each of my interview respondents who they thought I should be interviewing and made sure that those individuals were included in my sample. By applying several distinct sampling criteria, I opened my analysis to the possibility that factors other than their origins in "old" and "new" social movements or political parties rather than social movements might be found to be as, or more, consequential to the views and perceptions of my interview respondents.7

Based on these selection criteria, my interview sample can be described as follows. Fourteen of my interview respondents can be identified with an "old" movement subgroup within COPE and 22 with a "new" movement sub-group. Nine respondents had current or former links to the Communist Party, while five were actively involved with the NDP. Thirteen of the interview respondents had, with the exception of their involvement with COPE, primarily been active in extraparliamentary social movement organizations. Nine interviews were conducted with individuals whose political activism had primarily taken place within COPE. Six of my interviews were done with individuals who had joined COPE in its founding year, four of whom were founders of the organization. Eleven of the respondents joined COPE in the 1970s, nine in the 1980s, and ten became

---

7It is important to note, however, that COPE remains a predominantly white organization and that the vast majority of its members are over 40 years of age.
active in COPE in the 1990s. The interviewees ranged in age from over 70 to under thirty, with the majority between the ages of 50 and 30. Nineteen interviews were done with men and seventeen with women.

The interviews lasted from one-and-a-half to two-and-a-half hours, and were conducted at a time and location convenient to the respondent. Given my high degree of familiarity with COPE activists, most of the individuals I approached for an interview readily consented. There were, however, a few exceptions where individuals were ill, too busy and/or were tired of being interviewed about their social activism by academic researchers.\(^8\) Prior to commencing the interview, respondents read and signed a consent form outlining the purposes of the study and ensuring both their right to stop the interview at any time and the anonymity of their responses. The interviews were tape recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. My analysis of the interview transcripts consists of a qualitative reading of responses to the various questions and comparison of responses on the basis of the different political and demographic characteristics of the activists.

3.5 Limitations of the Research

While each of the methodological procedures described above has its own unique strengths and weaknesses, in combination they generated a rich and multifaceted collection of empirical data with which to address the research questions of this case study. Observation provided an initial sense of the nature and identity of the group, knowledge of the key events and personalities in its past, and an understanding of the issues, debates, and sub-groups currently finding expression within the group. Document analysis provided an important historical dimension to the analysis, as well as complementing the other data sources in the analysis of the contemporary time period. The interviews elicited COPE activists' understandings of the history and present state of the organization.

\(^8\)I discuss this problem in more detail below.
Beyond the previously mentioned gaps in the document analysis and potential bias of the interview sample, the most serious limitations of this dissertation stem from its design as a case study. On the one hand, the case study strategy lends itself very well to investigations in which 'why' and 'how' questions are asked and is particularly well suited to research questions that are derived from theoretical propositions (Yin, 1994: 1). The unique strength of the case study in addressing these kinds of research questions is its ability to use multiple methods of data collection (ibid.: 8). On the other hand, however, case studies have been criticized with respect to the difficulty of achieving a scientifically rigorous analysis and problems associated with generalizing the findings of a single case study to a broader population (ibid.: 9).

On the question of scientific rigour, Yin maintains that such risks are common to all forms of research, be they quantitative or qualitative, although he concedes that "they may have been more frequently encountered and less frequently overcome" in case study research (ibid.: 10). The case study must, therefore, be diligent in its design, data collection, and analytical phases in order to minimize the effects of ambiguous or biased data and the researcher's own preconceptions. With respect to the generalizability of case study findings, Yin draws a distinction between statistical and analytic generalization. The case study, he argues "does not represent a 'sample,' and the investigator's goal is to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization)" (ibid.: 10). Individual case studies are not "sampling units" but, rather, are chosen for their unique or exemplary characteristics. The analytical framework of the case study is derived from theory, and the results of case study research are generalizable at the theoretical level (ibid.: 30).

This dissertation is a study of a single organization and, as such, the results cannot be viewed as representative of other existing groups, no matter how similar to COPE they may appear. Rather, the results of the case study are generalizable only on a theoretical level, where they contribute to contemporary thinking about counter-hegemonic politics.
and the prospects for progressive social change. Even at this level, however, the study has its limitations. As a case study of a social movement-cum-political party, this research has nothing to say about social movement activists who have not participated in progressive party politics at the civic level. Nor does the research examine in more than a preliminary way the motivations, concerns, and objectives of those movement activists who do engage in "normal" civic politics, but not with COPE. These questions remain to be addressed by further investigation.

Beyond the merits and drawbacks of the various methodological procedures used in this study, there are a number of ethical and political issues arising from the study of organizations engaged in struggle for social change that need to be explicitly addressed in order to convey a full sense of the research process. In the following section, I discuss the ethical implications of undertaking a case study of a relatively small and politically active group, the issue of partisanship in social research, and the role of social research in movement politics.

3.6 Studying Social Movements

The issue of privacy looms very large in a case study of a readily identifiable political organization such as COPE. COPE remains an active organization, and many of the group's key activists are well known to those familiar with Vancouver politics. While, as a political party, COPE's objectives and activities are obviously part of the public domain, intra-organizational conflicts, internal debates, and strategic plans are not. Nor are the personal reflections of individual COPE activists, where these are given under conditions of anonymity, part of the public record (Bouchier, 1986: 9). Although COPE consented to participate in this study, as a researcher I have an obligation to ensure that, to the best of my ability, the group and its individual members do not suffer negative
consequences as a result of their cooperation.  Bouchier (1986: 13-14) suggests the potential for harm can be minimized and the sociological value of the research maximized by following four basic ethical guidelines:

1. **Honesty**—of the researcher about her/his situation and motivation for undertaking the study.

2. **Autonomy**—people must "be treated as ends in themselves rather than as means to ends" (ibid.: 14). This requires respect for the meaning and integrity of the goals and beliefs of the research participants, and an empathetic point of view.

3. **Neutrality**—in legal terms, 'nonmaleficence,' or the absence of an intent to do harm.

4. **Justice**—as the positive side of "neutrality," justice demands a fair representation of competing beliefs and opinions, including those of the researcher: "The researcher has the same right as anyone to express preferences, but not in the disguise of 'sociological truth'" (ibid.).

In reporting the results of my observations and analysis of COPE, I have been diligent in applying these ethical guidelines and constantly sensitive to the possibility that my research could be used as ammunition against COPE by its political opponents, particularly in the context of an election campaign. I have been honest with COPE from the beginning about my position and the aims of my research, done my utmost to protect the identity of the individuals who participated in the research, and attempted to be as rigorous as possible in my analysis of internal conflicts and debates. An additional safeguard is the restriction of public access to politically sensitive components of the research until after the 1999 civic election, and I will discuss this option with the COPE Executive upon completion of the dissertation.

---

9Readers who are familiar with Vancouver politics will have by now detected minimal reference to specific—and in some cases very well known—individuals in my account of COPE. Because COPE remains politically active, and because the research examines sensitive and contentious inter-organizational issues, this level of anonymity was crucial to obtaining COPE's full cooperation in the research. Thus, except in instances where I draw upon public documents (i.e., published materials, campaign documents), I do not identify the 'voices' behind the various remarks, interpretations, and opinions cited in the dissertation.
Another consideration that must be kept in mind in terms of evaluating the methodology and analysis of this study is my own partisan position on the topics of social movements and social change. Although objectivity is an elusive goal for all scientific research, partisanship requires that special attention be paid to the role of the researcher's biography and interests in the research process. As Green (1993: 107) comments:

It is the task of every academic who sympathetically investigates...to justify and qualify his or her work with regard to the possibility of bias and distortion...There is certainly a case for examining the effect of a partisan researcher on the research situation. Does it, for instance, encourage or obscure certain responses that another political position might not have done?

Like Green, I am neither objective about nor detached from the subject-matter of this study (ibid.: 108). As I noted above, I have actively participated in social movement politics. My academic and political pursuits are driven by my hope for a more just and egalitarian society. My interest in COPE is derived from my desire both to understand how a viable counter-hegemonic project might be constructed in the contemporary era and to personally contribute to that project. Again, I subscribe to Green's view of her work on the 1984-1985 miners' strike in Britain (ibid.):

Socialist researchers are reminded by Marx that: 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it' (the eleventh 'Thesis on Feuerbach'). My concern to understand the consciousness of Nottinghamshire striking miners was, therefore, political as well as sociological—class consciousness being fundamental to bringing about such change.

I have attempted to minimize the effects of my partisanship by applying systematic guidelines to my data collection and analysis, by clearly describing my methodology and data sources, and by openly disclosing to both the participants in this study and the readers of this dissertation my political background and commitments. Generally speaking, I would argue that my own political sympathies facilitated the study. Many COPE members viewed me as a trustworthy ally and were therefore very comfortable about opening their
organization to my scrutiny and individually sharing their experiences and opinions with me.

A different but related set of considerations arises around the question of the role of the partisan academic in social movements. Although social movements are a 'hot topic' of current sociological research, social movement activists often question what tangible benefits they can expect in exchange for the time and knowledge they share with academics. Activist communities overlap, and in my investigation of COPE I interviewed a number of individuals who had already participated in social movement research and occasionally found it difficult to understand why they should "do another one."\(^{10}\) Although only one person specifically declined to be interviewed about COPE because of previous participation in a sociological study, it is nevertheless incumbent upon academic researchers to clearly explain to those who cooperate with us how our work can contribute to the struggle for social change and to do our utmost to make that contribution a reality. As I explain below, that contribution is of a particular kind.

I did not actively participate in COPE during the time period of my study in other than a very minimal way. I chose not to combine the roles of activist and researcher for two very specific reasons. First, I wanted to avoid any pretense to 'expert' status or, to use Melucci's terms, playing the role of intellectual-cum-enlightener "providing the actors with a consciousness which they are apparently not able to produce for themselves" (Melucci, 1996: 388). Second, the value of my research depended on my attempt to maintain a critical distance from the ongoing action in which COPE members were engaged, and on my ability to openly discuss my interests as a researcher with those involved in the action for different ends.

Melucci argues that we must acknowledge that actors are fully capable of understanding what they are doing without the evangelical intervention of a researcher.

---

\(^{10}\)In some cases I had personally interviewed individuals in my capacity as research assistant on another project.
However, while a self-reflective or analytical point of view is not inaccessible to the actor, "the latter cannot be simultaneously both an actor and an analyst of her/himself in that capacity" (ibid.: 390-391). Reflection requires a degree of distance and this is where social research derives its value. In Melucci's view, researchers and actors have distinct interests—the researchers' in gathering information, the actors' in increasing their capacity for action—which may at times converge, making dialogue between them possible (ibid.: 392). The contribution of social research to a social movement lies in a circular process of communication between actor and observer. The goal of social research is to understand the limits and possibilities of action. More specifically, for the partisan researcher it is to enhance the knowledge of the actors regarding the constraints and possibilities of their action and thus their capacity to act.

Knowledge on collective identity assumes a decisive role in rendering accessible a specific potential for action; it can function as a multiplier of processes for change because it gives the actors responsibility for the choices they make (ibid.: 391).

Scientific knowledge, "as a particular form of social action with a high self-reflective capacity," (ibid.: 394) does not represent the 'final word' on a topic or issue, but is rather a particular kind of contribution to the ongoing activities of a social movement. This role can only be realized, however, if the circular relationship of action and reflection is maintained through open and respectful communication between observer and observed.

3.7 Summary

In this chapter I have discussed the research methods used in this study. Within the context of a case study strategy, I observed COPE meetings and other public activities, examined COPE's documents, and interviewed a purposive sample of COPE activists. Taken together, these methodological procedures generated a substantial amount of data with which to examine "old" and "new" social movement and party/movement dynamics as they have worked themselves out through the history of this group. I have also outlined
the merits and limitations of the data collection procedures used in the research, and of the case study approach more generally. Finally, I have discussed the ethical and political considerations involved in a study of social activists. In the next chapter, I situate my case study of COPE within the broader context of Vancouver's changing political economy.
CHAPTER FOUR
FROM FRONTIER TOWN TO GLOBAL CITY: THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF VANCOUVER

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter One I argued that radical change in contemporary capitalist democracies requires the formation of a broad coalition of class and new social movement actors based on a shared counter-hegemonic project and the development of a coherent political strategy involving, at least in part, the struggle for state power. In Chapter Two, I examined several concrete instances in which "new politics" parties have attempted to articulate diverse social movement issues and introduce a more participatory style to the realm of normal politics, in the hope of instigating action on urgent issues and changing the very conception of democratic processes. This review underscored the difficulties associated with such efforts, but also pointed to the enduring potential, if not necessity, of devising a workable alternative to the status quo. In that chapter, I focused almost exclusively on the internal dynamics of the parties, accounting for their weaknesses in terms of missed opportunities or shifting priorities on the part of leaders and core activists. This is, of course, only part of the story. The purpose of this chapter is to place the "new politics" in a broader political-economic context.

In the era of globalization there have emerged two divergent perspectives on the fate of local politics, one pessimistic and the other optimistic (Andrew, 1997: 139). From a pessimistic reading of the impact of globalization, the sphere of local politics appears increasingly narrow and ineffectual. Teeple (1995: 103) argues, for example, that the restructuring of local governments from above (e.g., restrictive criteria tied to the allocation of federal or provincial funds, with reductions in grant funding to municipal governments) overrides local democratic initiatives in favour of the imperatives of the global 'free' market. Friskin (1997) also maintains that the greater freedom of municipal
institutions to set priorities and generate new revenue sources—a side-effect of the 'decentring' of the provincial state—has tended to produce conservative local responses to social and economic change. Citing the new-found economic preoccupations of municipal governments, Frisken concludes that, "[f]ar from benefiting those engaged in the pursuit of social objectives...a transfer of powers to local governments is likely to strengthen rather than counteract the pursuit of conservative political agendas" (ibid.: 169).

A more optimistic interpretation sees in the weakening of the nation state a spatial opening for autonomous local action that takes on an increasingly global dimension. Magnusson (1992, 1996) claims that, in the context of the global movement of capital and the transnational strategies of movements for local sovereignty, national politics lose their significance and relevance to progressive activism. Rather, contemporary politics has come to reside at the juncture between localities and (global) movements, pointing to the possibility of a revitalized city or region as the primary unit of politics. By virtue of their direct and multiple connections with daily life, municipalities are especially vulnerable to disruption by social movement challenges, and can also play a vital role in nurturing creative and critical social movements. In other words, "If national politics is no more sufficient unto itself than local politics, and if localities are where movements connect with and arise from everyday life, the municipality appears to be a privileged site for political activity" (1992: 88).

While informative with respect to highlighting some of the possible outcomes of globalization in the local realm, neither of the two views is entirely accurate. On the one hand, in his optimism, Magnusson tends to overstate the power of the local state with respect to higher levels of government, and with respect to the power of capital. Magnusson himself points to the capitulation of ostensibly progressive politicians in Montreal, Vancouver, and Toronto to the imperatives of capital (Magnusson, 1990b), and to the need for reform at the national level to expand the (constitutional) scope of municipal government (Magnusson, 1992). On the other hand, a pessimistic reading of
the impact of globalization on local politics underestimates the role of progressive movements as harbingers of creative responses to global restructuring. Hasson and Ley (1994), for instance, argue that while new "partnerships" between radical community organizations and the state involve very real dangers of cooptation for the community groups, such cooperative relationships can also have negative consequences for the state. Pointing to an instance in which a state-funded community organization effectively used its resources to undermine popular support for a local governing party, Hasson and Ley conclude that "[n]eocorporatism can be a two-way street, where the empowerment of the grassroots might even proceed at the cost of the local state" (ibid.: 204).

Evidently the effects of post-Fordist restructuring on local politics are more complex and ambiguous than indicated by either of the above scenarios. As Mayer (1991: 105) explains,

while global restructuring has certainly constrained local politics severely, it has also given a new importance to localities. Precisely because globalization throws economies and cultures into contact and competition with each other, it allows increased leverage for political action and local empowerment.

When placed in the context of recent shifts in economic activity and the exercise of political power, the contradictory implications of globalization for local politics are more readily apparent. As explained earlier, a Gramscian approach draws attention to historical variations in capitalist production and consumption and corresponding modes of social control or regulation which lend stability to the system. Social and political struggles play a pivotal role in both the reproduction and crises of particular accumulation regimes, as well as in the possible emergence of any new economic strategy. In the remainder of this chapter, I examine Vancouver's changing political economy in order to gain an understanding of the historical development of progressive politics in the city.

In 1996 the city of Vancouver had a population of approximately half a million people, in the heart of a metropolitan region of 1.85 million. Vancouver's political history
from the city's founding in 1886 until the late 1980s can be divided into three distinct periods (Gutstein, 1983a: 189-90; Tennant, 1981: 126). During the first phase, from 1886 to 1936, local government, comprised of representatives of the white-European business community, presided over rapid and largely unregulated growth in the city. The period from 1937 through 1967 saw the rise to dominance of a local free-enterprise coalition—the paradoxically-named Non-Partisan Association (NPA)—that 'managed' civic growth virtually without opposition for three decades. The third distinguishable phase in Vancouver's political history began in 1967 on the heels of an outburst of popular protest against unrestricted growth and the NPA's apparent unwillingness to address new issues of concern. Emerging on a wave of collective opposition to various 'urban renewal' projects, two new parties—The Electors Action Movement (TEAM) and the Committee of Progressive Electors (COPE)—formed to contest the NPA's hold on political power. More recent analysis suggests that the 1990s represent a fourth phase in Vancouver politics. As I explain below, given the economic and social impacts of global post-Fordist restructuring processes, political alignments in Vancouver no longer conform to the familiar patterns of earlier times. An examination of these changes reveals their implications for counter-hegemonic politics in Vancouver and, more specifically, for COPE as a progressive political party.

4.2 City-building: 1886 to 1936

Established in 1886 as the western end-point of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), Vancouver is located on land expropriated from the Musqueam and Squamish First Nations (Creese and Peterson, 1996: 119). Despite the fact that the British Columbia portion of the railway was built by thousands of indentured Chinese labourers, and thus a sizable number of Vancouver's first non-Aboriginal inhabitants were Chinese (ibid.: 119-120), Vancouver's European-origin majority was committed to creating a white British community (Abu-Laban, 1997: 82). Like the indigenous Nations who were
geographically, economically, and socially marginalized by the white colonizers, the Chinese were geographically confined to an area known as "Chinatown." Likewise, the pre-internment Japanese population was ghettoized in "Japantown." Full civic rights were restricted to a privileged constituency of ratepayers (i.e., homeowners), while tenants and racialized minorities enjoyed only limited entitlement (Hasson and Ley, 1994: 28-9).

The city's white founding fathers were also intent on turning a healthy profit by exploiting Vancouver's potential as a centre for trade between western Canada and international markets. Port and rail facilities, and a thriving resource processing and manufacturing sector linked to staples extraction in the provincial "hinterland," fueled the fast expansion of the urban economy (Hutton, 1994: 220). The CPR proceeded to develop the choice tracts of land given to the company as payment for completion of the transcontinental rail line, while unrestricted real estate speculation and almost non-existent land-use regulation added to the rapid growth of the "frontier boom town" (Ley, 1994: 28).

During the first fifty years of Vancouver's history, aldermen elected from wards focused on the provision of basic services to a city growing in both geographical area and population (Gutstein, 1983a: 189). With over half of the city's revenues derived from the property tax, and many members of City Council involved in real estate and utilities, Vancouver's early politicians were especially interested in land development. This concern with development was manifested in a consensus among elected officials, lasting well into the 1960s, that "the functions of municipal government were to ensure orderly physical growth and provide services to real property," both of which would increase land values (ibid.).

Vancouver's current boundaries were established in 1929 with the amalgamation of Vancouver and the municipalities of Point Grey and South Vancouver. The newly created city elected one alderman to City Council from each of twelve, and later eight, wards. In 1935, growing opposition to the ward system from business groups, labour unions, and
the local branch of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF)\(^1\) culminated in a plebiscite in which two-thirds of voters favoured abolishing wards and instituting an at-large electoral system for the 1936 civic election\(^2\) (Tennant, 1981: 128). Vancouver's first at-large election in 1936 brought the CCF three of eight Council seats, raising alarm among Vancouver's business leaders. They responded in 1937 with the formation of a free enterprise coalition—comprised of members of the provincial Liberal and Conservative parties, the Board of Trade, service organizations, the CPR, and BC Electric—intended to "keep the socialists out of city hall" (Gutstein, 1983a: 196; Miller, 1975: 4).

The Non-partisan Association (NPA) maintained that partisan politics had no place in running a city, and that local government should concern itself only with questions of a technical nature, that is, with ensuring the honest and efficient management of municipal services and resources (Miller, 1975: 14-15). From this point of view, political parties with interests beyond the civic level would "introduce graft, patronage, and friction with other levels of government," and "divide the candidates' loyalties between the party and the broader community, impairing the cooperative spirit of Council and blocking progress" (ibid.: 15).

The shift to at-large elections and the adoption of a "non-partisan" ideology had three significant effects on politics in Vancouver. First, the cost of running for office rose substantially, as candidates now had to campaign throughout the entire city. This constituted a significant deterrent to anyone who did not have a good deal of financial and organizational support. Second, like many American cities, Vancouver experienced a decline in political participation, particularly on the working class east side (Gutstein, 1983a: 197; Stewart, 1995). Over time, voting patterns came to reflect both geographical

---

\(^{1}\)Canada's social democratic party.

\(^{2}\)Vancouver is the only large city in Canada to elect its officials under an at-large system. Officials on City Council, School Board, and Parks Board are elected under a plurality or "first-past-the post" system, with each voter having as many votes as there are positions to be filled (Tennant, 1981: 128). The "wards question" continues to be a key source of debate among municipal activists.
location and social class, with the participation rate of the west side of the city, where middle class voters overwhelmingly supported the NPA, exceeding that of the east side by 15 to 20 percent (Tennant, 1981: 131). Finally, as a result of both of these developments, Vancouver experienced one-party rule by the NPA for the next three decades.

4.3 The Era of NPA Dominance: 1937 to 1967

In 1937, the CCF was reduced to one of eleven seats on Council—occupied by Helena Gutteridge, Vancouver's first woman alderman—and the left remained largely ineffective for many years to come (Gutstein, 1983a: 196). Although Dr. Lyle Telford, leader of the provincial CCF, won a term as Mayor in 1938, the CCF never recovered its former popularity, eventually folding as a civic organization (ibid.). The Civic Reform Party, founded by Effie Jones in 1947, came close to defeating the NPA's Mayoral candidate, but quickly fell into decline (Miller, 1975: 6). Not only did "non-partisan" beliefs serve, as the NPA hoped they would, as an effective barrier against left-wing groups, and other "special interests" in civic politics, but they also acted as a barrier to non-left opposition by setting strict limits on what these groups could do to differentiate themselves from NPA-established assumptions that "running a city was largely a matter of honest and efficient provision of services or that growth and development were unquestionable values" (ibid.: 15-16).

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, civic policy in Vancouver was guided by a pro-business, pro-development, and pro-growth ideology, coupled with a distaste for openly partisan political activity and limited avenues for citizen participation in decision-making (Tennant, 1981: 133). The typical NPA candidate was a middle-aged male of European ancestry (often British) who either owned or managed a private business (Easton and Tennant, 1969). By the mid-1960s, however, the apparent consensus on the unquestionable benefits of growth and development began to erode. Changes in economic
and social conditions stimulated new demands and heightened political awareness in the city (Miller, 1975: 16).

In the immediate post-War period, Vancouver's industrial production, especially in wood products, rose substantially (Hutton, 1997: 75). However, Vancouver's position at the core of the provincial staples economy meant that, notwithstanding growth in the manufacturing sector, "the configuration of the city's development was shaped by certain tertiary sector industries, notably control and distribution functions" (Hutton, 1997: 220-1). In the two decades following the Second World War, the service sector led the way in employment growth (Barnes et. al., 1992: 180). The establishment in downtown Vancouver of the headquarters of both private corporations and public institutions (i.e., government offices, health and education institutions) during the post-War boom encouraged the expansion of "ancillary business functions" ranging from accounting firms and law practices to hotels and restaurants (Barnes et al, 1992: 180-1). Through the 1960s, employment in transportation, communication and trade grew by more than 40 percent; in finance, insurance, and real estate by approximately 75 percent; and in community, business, and personal services by more than 80 percent (ibid.: 180).

Economic expansion and the rise of the service sector were accompanied by multifaceted social change. Vancouver's population doubled between 1936 and 1971, intensifying development pressures within a geographically limited land base. As employment in resource processing declined in relation to that in the services, the traditional blue-collar areas of east Vancouver began to show signs of gentrification, while the residential concentration of wood workers and their families in southeast Vancouver began to give way to growing numbers of Chinese and South Asian immigrants (Hutton, 1997: 203). Proposals for redevelopment threatened to displace the poor and ethnic minority residents of the inner city, while a growing number of young, highly educated professional men and women became increasingly concerned with preserving the "quality of life" in Vancouver (Miller, 1975: 16; Hasson and Ley, 1994: 30-31). A new generation
of ethnic associations emerged to press for both political empowerment and cultural affirmation (Hasson and Ley, 1994: 46). Spurred on by the second wave of the feminist movement and growing representation in the paid labour force, women also challenged their historical exclusion from the formal political sphere.

Rising population levels expanded the demand for basic services like policing, waste disposal, and transportation, while the changing composition of the population introduced new concerns to the municipal arena (Miller, 1975: 17). At the same time, competition among different sectors of Vancouver's population affected city government's regulatory function (ibid.: 18). Many of the most important political battles of this period occurred over land use and conflicting visions of the general pattern of development in the city. Civic officials, with the powers of zoning and building regulation, were often caught between the "quality of life" concerns of the growing number of middle class professionals and individual homeowners, on the one hand, and the development and real estate industries, on the other hand (ibid.).

As the social and environmental costs associated with rapid and largely unplanned urban growth became more apparent, organized opposition to an NPA that appeared unable or unwilling to deal with the new issues of concern to Vancouver's citizenry began to emerge. Signs of a new trend in Vancouver politics became noticeable as early as 1965, with the election of Bob Williams, a city planner and active New Democratic Party (NDP) member, to City Council (ibid.: 6). During his term on Council, Williams helped to politicize policy and planning issues among an increasingly dissatisfied electorate, and encouraged others to publicly enter the debate. In 1966, Williams helped to form a new group, Citizens for the Improvement of Vancouver (CIV), that ran a slate of four candidates, all of whom were NDP members, for City Council (ibid.). The explicit goal of the CIV was to "challenge the NPA contention that it was keeping politics out of city

---

3The NDP is the organizational successor to the CCF.
hall—a policy which amounted in fact, they maintained, to keeping other people's politics out of city hall" (ibid.: 6-7). Although the group failed to elect anyone, CIV candidates attracted more votes than most independents, benefited from some slate voting, and successfully appealed to the lower income, less educated voters who had historically been the most difficult to mobilize (ibid.: 7). Taken together, as Miller explains, "[t]hese results indicated that some form of organizational support was a great advantage in an at-large election and that an opening was developing for a policy-oriented, reformist party" (ibid.).

Another breakthrough for the emergent progressive opposition came in 1966 with the election of Harry Rankin as alderman following 13 previous attempts to win a seat on the School Board and City Council. With the support of the Central Council of Ratepayers, a group representing small homeowners concerned with issues affecting their neighbourhoods, the Vancouver and District Labour Council, and his own substantial "Harry Rankin Election Committee," the radical lawyer overcame years of red-baiting to place third on the ballot, and first in 46 of the 47 east-side polls (Church, et al., 1993: 4; Miller, 1975: 7). Commenting on his success, Rankin stated:

For the last few years before 1966 I had captured a large percentage of the Eastside vote but because Vancouver conducts elections at large, a candidate has to get city-wide support. It was much more difficult for me to get votes in Kitsilano, or Shaughnessy, or Dunbar, or Point Grey. But gradually the backwardness of the Non-Partisan Association program allowed my program to become more acceptable, and I started to pick up the vote of university professors and students and the young working people that now dominate the West End. But I believe the biggest factor in my program's acceptance was the growing political consciousness of our population. People nowadays accept certain left or so-called left wing ideas as very ordinary suggestions (cited in Municipal History Society, 1980: 51).

---

4 Rankin's appeals to the CIV for electoral cooperation had been rejected. Indeed, the four NDP-affiliated CIV candidates ran under the slogan "Vote Four — No More" (Church et al., 1993: 5). Rankin consistently topped the polls until he retired from city council in 1993.

5 These are middle-class neighbourhoods on the west side of Vancouver.
Following this early re-introduction of left-wing opposition to the civic scene, two events in 1967 propelled Vancouver into the third phase of its political history—the era of competitive party politics (Tennant, 1981: 135-6). The first event was the election of Tom Campbell as Mayor. Running as an independent but eventually joining the NPA, Campbell came to represent for disgruntled voters "everything a Mayor should not be: anti-intellectual, contemptuous of citizen participation, and committed to the private profit motive in civic development" (ibid.: 135). Campbell symbolized the unresponsiveness, even contempt, of officials at city hall to "the reformers and the real needs and interests of the people of Vancouver" (ibid.). The second event, known as "the great freeway debate," further heightened political awareness among the population and consolidated the pressure for change. A key component in the planned redevelopment of Vancouver was the construction of a system of freeways, including an east-west artery running through the inner city Strathcona area, home to Vancouver's Chinatown and many Chinese-origin residents. "Urban renewal" projects sponsored by the federal government had already displaced thousands of homeowners in this and other inner city neighbourhoods, and the proposed freeway served as a lightning rod for organized resistance by the poor, ethnic minorities, as well as middle class professionals, to both the kind of development taking place in Vancouver, and the undemocratic nature of civic decision-making (Ley, 1994: 59-60).

4.4 The Era of Partisan Politics: 1968 to 1989

The transition to a new phase of Vancouver politics culminated in 1968 with the formation of two new political parties—The Electors Action Movement (TEAM) and the Committee of Progressive Electors (COPE)—intent on challenging the NPA's grip on power. Primarily comprised of supporters of the Liberal Party, but also including a few trade unionists and NDP members, TEAM was a reform group.

---

6For an insightful discussion of the racist history of planning and development in Vancouver, including the freeway proposal, see Anderson (1990).
of the 'city beautiful' variety, seeking to change certain policies of the city, but essentially conservative in desiring to preserve and protect those features which they saw as making the city a beautiful and pleasant place in which to live, work and raise a family (Tennant, 1981: 137).

TEAM also attracted support from business interests who, while remaining in favour of growth and 'progress,' desired a more stable environment for investment than the NPA was providing (Gutstein, 1983a: 206). Additional support later came from NPA supporters who feared left-wing gains in the city in the wake of the NDP's unprecedented provincial election victory in the fall of 1972 (ibid.).

After achieving steady gains, TEAM made electoral history in 1972 with the election of Art Phillips as Mayor, eight TEAM aldermen, and majorities on both the School and Parks and Recreation Boards. The 30 year rule of the NPA was over. According to North and Hardwick (1992: 209), recognizing that Vancouver was emerging as post-industrial city less and less dependent on port-related and industrial activities, TEAM sought to make the city more attractive to a workforce engaged in management and service employment. Elected on a platform emphasizing public participation and consultation in city planning, a partial ward system, and a moderated rate of growth, the TEAM Council reduced allowable building heights and densities, discouraged traffic in the downtown core, rezoned the lands around the central waterfront and False Creek from industry to housing, and co-operated with the federal Liberal government in the re-development of Granville Island, a decayed industrial area that has since become a major tourist attraction (Magnusson, 1990a: 179; North and Hardwick, 1992: 209).

The TEAM majority made some effort to restructure City Hall in order to make it more responsive to democratic input. Decision-making power was taken out of the hands of civic bureaucrats, information was made publicly available, meetings of City Council were made more accessible, and some steps were taken towards decentralizing city

---

7For a thorough account of the formation and electoral experience of TEAM by one of the party's founders, see Tennant (1981).
planning functions to neighbourhood-based organizations (Hasson and Ley, 1994: 31). TEAM also helped to advance somewhat the participation of women in mainstream municipal politics by running several female candidates—a noteworthy improvement over the NPA's consistently all-male slates. Representation for Vancouver's ethnic minorities did not, however, enjoy similar gains.

Although TEAM presented itself as a centrist party, it was unable to sustain a broad and cohesive base of support. The majority of its leaders were liberal professionals living on Vancouver's west side, while only a very small fraction had links to organized labour or held blue collar jobs (Easton and Tennant, 1969). Even the party's middle-class majority failed to agree on a vision for the city. TEAM soon fell victim to a split between its conservative and reform factions. As Gutstein notes, the conservatives, led by Phillips (and later Jack Volrich), saw the need for changes so that the development process could work more smoothly and thus avoid citizen opposition. The reformers, led by aldermen Mike Harcourt and Darlene Marzari, wanted to make the city more livable, particularly for the lower income and disadvantaged populations (1983a: 208).

TEAM's hold on power immediately started to decline. Three incumbents did not run for re-election in 1974, and their seats were recaptured by the NPA. TEAM moved further to the right in 1975 and 1976, dropping more of its reform platform, including support for a ward system and increased public housing (ibid.: 209). Both Marzari and Harcourt resigned from the party to run as independents. With Jack Volrich as their Mayoral candidate, the NPA regained a majority on Council in 1978, while TEAM was reduced to one alderman and no seats on the School or Parks Boards. Vancouver did not, however, simply drift back into its "non-partisan" past. Political parties, albeit of an explicitly local variety, had become an accepted and enduring feature of the city's

---

electoral system (Tennant, 1981: 145-6). Rather than returning to one-party rule, the municipal arena became increasingly polarized, with supporters of free enterprise moving back to the NPA, while individuals and groups seeking progressive change in the city rallied around an informal left alliance comprised of Harcourt and his NDP-backed "Civic Independents" and the Committee of Progressive Electors.9

COPE's supporters had claimed from the beginning that TEAM was simply a reincarnation of the NPA with little interest in real change. Thus, they sought to unify progressive constituencies under a single electoral umbrella capable of winning power in Vancouver. Writing in the Pacific Tribune.10 Alderman Harry Rankin explained that

there's only one way labour and other progressive forces can elect a majority to Vancouver City Council, School Board and the Parks Board. That's by a coalition of all people's organizations seeking genuine reform at City Hall. No single group—labour, the NDP, or ratepayers—can do it alone. To think otherwise is to kid ourselves; to act otherwise is to mislead electors who want a real change (Rankin, 1968: 2).

The founding meeting of the Committee of Progressive Electors was attended by 125 people representing 18 organizations, including trade unions, ratepayers groups, tenant organizations, student organizations, and many individuals with an interest in municipal issues (Municipal History Society, 1980: 51).11 With one noteworthy exception, all those in attendance agreed with Frank Kennedy of the Vancouver and District Labour Council on "the necessity of having a broad, united committee entering a full slate of candidates, in order to defeat the NPA and TEAM" (Pacific Tribune, Aug. 9, 1968: 4). The lone dissenter was the representative from the NDP, who spoke out against the proposed unified slate of candidates, claiming that, in his opinion, "candidates should

---

9Tennant and Easton (1969) examined the backgrounds, attitudes, and provincial and federal political affiliations of leaders of the NPA, TEAM, and COPE. Based on questionnaire responses, the results on all indicators placed NPA leaders on the far right of the political spectrum, COPE leaders on the far left, and TEAM in the middle.


11See also VDLC, "Re: Committee of Progressive Electors," 1968: 1.
first be members of the NDP rather than being sponsored by a committee such as was being proposed" (ibid.).

At a conference held in October, 1968, COPE developed a detailed program for Council, School Board, and Parks Board, including proposals for progressive tax reform, affordable housing, tenant protection, public control of utilities, low fare rapid transit, pollution control, civic electoral reform, and a master plan for development in the city.  

By the December 1968 civic election, COPE had more than 600 individual members, and full support from the Vancouver and District Labour Council, which had kick-started the campaign with a $1,000 donation and a rally at the Pender Auditorium on December 8 (Church, et al., 1993: 17; Pacific Tribune, Nov. 22: 12). In total, COPE raised over $7,000 for the campaign from individual donations, contributions from small businesses and unions, and several fundraising events (Church et al., 1993: 18). Relying on the efforts of hundreds of volunteer workers, COPE distributed over 140,000 copies of its election platform and thousands of leaflets profiling individual candidates (ibid.: 17). COPE candidates spoke at "All Candidates" meetings, COPE lawn signs were distributed throughout the city, and COPE advertisements were published in community newspapers (ibid.: 18). Enthusiasm ran high that the vote would be split between the NPA and TEAM, allowing the left to make electoral gains.

In its first election campaign, COPE ran 14 of 27 possible candidates (3 women and 11 men, all of European background)—six for City Council, and four each for the School and the Parks Boards. COPE's candidates were described as "representative of labour, ratepayers, tenants, professional circles and young people" (Pacific Tribune, Nov. 22, 1968: 2). With 13 percent of the popular vote, COPE elected only one candidate,

---

12Joyce and Hossé (1970: 100-104) provide the full text of COPE's 1968 programme; see also Church et al. (1993: 13-17) and Pacific Tribune (Nov. 1, 1968: 2; Nov. 22, 1968: 2).

13This was, however, a very small sum in comparison to TEAM, which reportedly spent $70,000 in the 1968 election campaign, and the NPA, estimated to have spent about $700,000 (Church et al., 1993: 18).
incumbent Harry Rankin, who placed fourth on City Council with 52,000 votes. Jim MacFarlan, an incumbent running for a position on the School Board, was not re-elected (Church et al.: 1993: 18). The remaining members of the COPE slate placed well below the number of votes required for election (ibid.).

COPE was also unsuccessful in gaining the endorsement of the NDP in the 1968 election. Despite the aim of its founders that COPE "would act as an umbrella uniting all civic reform groups," Vancouver New Democrats divided their support between TEAM and COPE (Church et al.: 1993: 18). Media reports following the election indicated that 11 of the 26 TEAM candidates, and 6 of the 14 person COPE slate were NDP members (ibid.). As explained below, COPE's relationship with the NDP has been a source of persistent frustration, requiring much attention and careful negotiation throughout the organization's history.

During the 1970s, COPE continued to campaign on a platform of tax reform, affordable housing, regulation of development and developers, public transit, tenant rights, a comprehensive plan for future growth and development, and increased citizen participation and representation through a ward system. In 1970, COPE ran its first Mayoral candidate, Angie Dennis, a First Nations woman and civil rights activist who taught school in Burnaby. Dennis personally identified with the concerns of the city's low income voters:

If you're an Indian, you're bound to become involved in politics. It's the only way to fight for yourself. I don't own a car so I know about the transit system. I don't own a house and I know what it's like to look for decent housing at a price you can afford and not find it (cited in Church et al., 1993: 25).

While the group's share of the popular vote increased from 13 percent in 1968 to 25 percent in 1978, Rankin remained the sole COPE candidate to hold civic office.

---

15Ibid.
However, benefiting from the decline in support for TEAM and the dissolution of the NDP Area Council in 1976, COPE made a long-awaited electoral breakthrough in 1980, winning 34 percent of the popular vote, three Council seats, two positions on the Parks Board, and an historic majority of five on the School Board.\textsuperscript{16} Michael Harcourt, running as an independent but endorsed by the NDP, COPE, and the Vancouver and District Labour Council, was elected Mayor.

COPE's 1980 campaign focused on implementing a ward system, affordable housing and tenant rights, construction of a light rapid transit system, limiting the city's contribution to private development projects, tax reform, and job protection.\textsuperscript{17} The addition of 34,000 tenants to the voters list enhanced COPE's potential support while, for the first time, the election was held on a Saturday, making voting more accessible for working people (Church et al., 1993: 61; Gutstein, 1983a: 210). Although the NPA retained its majority on City Council, TEAM was reduced to two aldermen and was shut out of the School and Parks Boards. Under pressure from the VDLC, which financed and provided organizational support to both campaigns, COPE and Harcourt struck an informal alliance (Church, 1993: 59; Gutstein, 1983b: 12).

In 1982, progressive candidates won a majority on Council, with COPE electing four aldermen and 'independent' New Democrats two, including Harcourt as Mayor (Gutstein, 1983b: 15). Although its share of the popular vote remained the same, COPE lost its majority on the School Board because two-thirds of the vote that had previously gone to TEAM had shifted to the NPA (ibid.: 15). The results of the election of 1984 were similar to those of 1982, with Harcourt re-elected for a third term as Mayor, along with one independent NDP and four COPE aldermen (Tindal and Tindal, 1995: 255). COPE also elected five school trustees, another majority, and three of seven seats on the

\textsuperscript{16}See Church et al. for names of candidates and elected officials from 1968 to 1990.
\textsuperscript{17}COPE, "Policies of a COPE City Council," 1980.
Parks Board, including Sue Harris, the first successful openly lesbian candidate in Vancouver's electoral history.

Losing the tenth spot on Council to COPE's Bruce Yorke by 220 votes, the NPA and its eleventh placed candidate, Philip Owen, launched a legal challenge of the election results. A B.C. Supreme Court judge ruled in favour of the NPA's argument that a number of voters had been improperly registered on election day, and ordered that a by-election be held. Partly as an expression of widespread anger against the provincial Social Credit government and Bill Vander Zalm, the provincial Social Credit minister of municipal affairs who had entered the Mayoral contest at the last minute for the NPA, an impressively unified left re-elected Yorke in February, 1985, this time with a 2,500 vote margin of victory over Owen (Gutstein, 1985: 12).

It is important to note that the Harcourt-COPE majority was elected to City Council in the midst of a severe economic recession and a political climate of "fiscal restraint." In the mid-1970s the federal government had adopted a monetarist economic policy and began to retrench its liberal welfare state commitments to social housing and urban renewal. Vancouver was thus left at the mercy of the provincial Social Credit Party which, regaining power after a one-term NDP government, was arguably much more enamoured of neoconservative restraint policies than its federal counterpart (Magnusson, 1990a: 177). The Socreds quickly rescinded the NDP's attempts to decentralize some public responsibility to regional bodies and municipalities, including the elected community resources boards that had been given some control over the provision of social services in

---

18Owen has been the mayor of Vancouver since 1993.  
19As Gutstein reports, "[t]he NPA challenged a new voting procedure which allowed eligible but unregistered voters (mainly tenants) to swear an affidavit at the polling place that they were eligible to vote and thus have their votes counted. The judge ruled that Yorke's election was invalid because 6,000 'affidavit voters' should have verbally sworn an oath as well as signed an affidavit (1985: 12).  
20The 1985 by-election produced one of the highest voter turnouts for a by-election in Vancouver's history, shortly following the November, 1984 election which saw a 49 percent turnout, the highest rate since 1946. Primarily reflecting an increase in east side voters, high voter turnout is closely linked to electoral success for the left (Gutstein, 1985: 12).
Vancouver, while at the same time introducing severe budget cuts. During the period from 1981 to 1986, British Columbia experienced the worst economic recession since the 1930s (Hutton, 1994: 224). Triggered by a drop in world commodity prices, the downturn was felt very strongly in Vancouver. As Magnusson (1990a: 172-3) notes, official unemployment doubled in metropolitan Vancouver during the first year of the recession, and peaked at 15 percent in the winter of 1984-85. Poverty increased, while the appearance of food banks was a novel indication of the level of economic hardship in Vancouver.

As part of a strategy for economic renewal, the province undertook a series of "megadevelopment" projects in Vancouver, including a large stadium and convention complex at "B.C. Place," a bid for the 1986 World's Fair, and construction of an expensive and controversial rapid transit system ("Skytrain"), all aimed at securing a place for Vancouver among an emerging network of world cities. Although the progressive majority on Council was largely powerless to resist the provincial government's plans for the city, several goals were achieved. A Council-appointed commission co-coordinated a programme focusing on peace and labour for the city's centennial celebration in 1986, grants to community groups were increased by nine percent, city service levels were sustained with no layoffs or cutbacks despite the restraint policies of the provincial government, a fair wage policy was implemented requiring employers entering into contracts with the city to pay union wages, an equal opportunity employment policy for visible minorities, women, and people with disabilities was adopted, and the city maintained its triple A credit rating, proving that the left could hold power without automatically bringing financial ruin (Church et al., 1993: 72-74).

---

21See Magnusson et al. (1986) for a discussion of the rise of neoconservatism in British Columbia.  
22Ironically, the provincial government, following a severe restraint program, lost its triple A credit rating.
Mayor Harcourt managed to allay business concerns by emphasizing the mutual interests and need for cooperation between Vancouver's business community and organized labour in order to maintain a stable climate for investment in Vancouver. High levels of public expenditure and employment were linked to Vancouver's enviable "quality of life," which, he argued, was highly attractive to corporate headquarters operations (Magnusson, 1990a: 182). Like his TEAM predecessors, Harcourt favoured the development of a post-industrial, business service economy for Vancouver (Magnusson, 1990b: 189). His initiatives included the promotion of Vancouver as a key financial and communications centre linking North America with the Pacific Rim, and programs to increase tourism, none of which were "at odds with the ambitions of the local business community. Indeed, most of it was complementary to the initiatives of the federal and provincial governments" (Magnusson, 1990a.: 183). What was distinctive and much less popular with government officials in Victoria and Ottawa about Harcourt's approach was his insistence that "interests other than business had a legitimate role in the development of economic policy, and that economic success did not depend on slashing public spending" (ibid.).

The COPE dominated School Board was much more openly defiant of the provincial restraint program during the 1984-1986 period. Elected on a platform demanding "No More Cuts," to provincial education funding, the entire board was fired by the provincial government in 1985 when it refused to implement further reductions to the school budget (Church et al., 1993: 109-112).23 Voters again expressed their support for COPE's resistance to the provincial government in a January, 1986 School Board by-election, this time delivering all nine seats to COPE candidates (ibid.: 120). Among the initiatives taken by the COPE School Board in 1986 was the introduction of a teaching unit on poverty, designed by the British Columbia Teacher's Federation to counter the

---

23See Killian (1985) for a detailed record and analysis of the "school wars."
"propaganda" introduced by the provincial government in the pre-Expo '86 period (ibid.: 125-6).

The November, 1986 civic election brought a dramatic shift, returning the NPA to power with a new Mayor, Gordon Campbell, 24 eight of ten seats on Council, eight of nine seats on the School Board, and a complete sweep of the Parks Board (Gutstein, 1986: 30). Social Credit had just won a large majority government in the October, 1986 provincial elections and, with Harcourt leaving the municipal scene to run successfully for the provincial New Democrats, COPE seemed to err in running Harry Rankin for Mayor. While Rankin had topped the polls in election after election, symbolizing for left, right, and middle of the road voters alike the 'conscience of City Council,' the vast majority were unwilling to support the outspoken socialist for Mayor. Presenting an image of youth and moderation, and an international outlook well suited to an emerging world city, Campbell successfully captured the middle ground (ibid.; Ley et al., 1992: 265). 25 During his first term in office, Campbell rescinded the city's fair wage policy, cut spending on municipal services, and restructured Council procedures so that most matters were discussed in daytime committee meetings, with Council convening only briefly to approve committee recommendations (Church et al., 1993: 79). Campbell also allowed many of Harcourt's local economic initiatives to atrophy, placing Vancouver back in "the service of land development" (Magnusson, 1990a: 183, 185).

In the wake of the disappointing results of the 1986 election, Vancouver New Democrats decided the time was ripe for them to re-enter the local political arena. In 1988, after lengthy and fractious talks, with the VDLC again acting as mediator, COPE and the Civic New Democrats agreed to run a joint slate of candidates for Council, School, and Parks Boards, and to endorse anti-poverty activist Jean Swanson as a

24 Now the leader of the provincial opposition Liberal party.
25 This was no small accomplishment since, as Gutstein (1986: 30) notes, Campbell had the most right-wing, pro-developer, and anti-citizen voting record on council.
"neutral" (i.e., neither COPE nor NDP) Mayoralty candidate (Church et al., 1993: 82). COPE's campaign focused on restoring services and access to city hall to pre-Campbell levels, as well as preserving the "livability" of Vancouver by improving pollution controls, waste management (including a curbside recycling program), and public transit, providing more affordable housing, and instituting progressive employment practices in the city, including employment and pay equity (ibid.). Coming two days after the 1988 federal election, the 1988 municipal elections received little attention, while the local left channeled most of its human and financial resources into the federal, anti-free trade campaign (ibid.: 83). The results were predictable. Campbell was returned to office, along with a majority of NPA Councilors, COPE won three Council seats, and one seat each on the School and Parks Boards. The Civic New Democrats elected only one School Board trustee.

Looking back on Vancouver's development through the 1980s, Ley et al. (1992: 239) see in Expo '86 three central themes of the decade: privatization, polarization, and internationalization. Privatization was reflected the "free market" ideology of, first, the provincial government and, later, the Campbell administration. Polarization increasingly characterized the social structure of the city, as the trend to a service-dominated economy proceeded, while renewed development pressures displaced low income inner city residents. Internationalization was epitomized by shifting investment, trade and migration patterns. As we shall see, these interconnected tendencies have had a significant impact on the contemporary political landscape in Vancouver.

4.5 Politics in the Global City

By the end of the 1980s, Vancouver had entered an integrated global urban hierarchy as Canada's "gateway" to the Pacific Rim (Barnes et al., 1992: 190). Signs of post-Fordist restructuring, less visible than in cities with a more significant industrial base, were nonetheless evident in Vancouver's economy. Trade and investment links with the
Asia-Pacific region expanded significantly, while those with the rest of the province were on the decline (Ibid.; Davis, 1993). Employment in the producer services (i.e., corporate law and accountancy, management consulting, consulting engineers, finance, insurance, and real estate) had increased by more than 90 percent between 1971 and 1986, with over 70 percent of all producer services in the metropolitan area located in downtown Vancouver (Barnes et al., 1992: 185, 187). Consumer services increased by more than 160 percent over the same time period, with tourism matching mining as Vancouver's second largest industry (Ibid.: 188). Although public sector employment in health, welfare, and education also grew rapidly during the period from 1961 to 1992, it had begun to decline due to cutbacks in state funding (Hutton, 1994: 223). The proportion of Vancouver's labour force employed in primary and secondary industry was also on the decline. In short, as Hutton (1994: 224) argues, Vancouver represented "something of a prototype for the evolution of a highly-tertiarized urban society, with services increasingly prominent...against a backdrop of a truncated and shrinking manufacturing sector."

The benefits of Vancouver's expanded and diversified service sector have not, however, been evenly distributed. Barnes et al. (1992: 188) find clear signs of a dual labour market in Vancouver, with highly educated professional workers comprising the core group, while those in unskilled, low paid, part-time and/or temporary jobs occupy the periphery. Throughout the 1980s, workers in accommodation and food services earned just over a third of those in producer services, while those in amusement and recreation earned just over half (ibid.). The polarization of income has been accompanied by a persistently high unemployment level and a serious problem of housing affordability (Hutton, 1994: 231).

Vancouver was also a much more culturally diverse city at the end of the 1980s. As Abu-Laban (1997: 83) explains, "[g]lobal cities serve as preferred magnets for immigrants, whose occupations range from capital investors, to managers of multinational corporations, to those in less well paid jobs in services." Thus, while in the 1960s
Vancouver remained a predominantly "white" city, with almost two-thirds of the population claiming British or French heritage, and a further 28 percent of European origin, the 1967 liberalization of federal legislation brought a rise in immigration from Africa, Latin America and, most significantly, Asia (Ley et al., 1992: 249-50). From 1971 to 1986, the Chinese-Canadian population in metropolitan Vancouver tripled (in comparison with a total population growth of 30 percent), while those of Indo-Canadian origin increased five-fold (Hiebert, forthcoming: 8).

By 1990, 70 percent of all new immigrants to British Columbia (the vast majority of whom settled in the greater Vancouver area) were from Asia. From 1991 to 1996 the number of immigrants living in metropolitan Vancouver grew by 30 percent, in comparison with a total population increase of 13.2 percent (Hiebert, forthcoming: 14). Once again, the vast majority of these immigrants came from Asia. The significance of changing immigration patterns for Vancouver is summarized by Hiebert:

...among Canadian metropolitan centres, Vancouver attracted the highest proportion of immigrants from Asian countries (80 percent of landed immigrants to the CMA in the 1990s have been from Asia). By 1996, nearly 365,000 residents of the metropolitan area were born in Asia (roughly equivalent to the total immigrant population just 10 years earlier) and Hong Kong had replaced the United Kingdom as the single most important place of birth among immigrants living in Vancouver (ibid.: 13).

As the source countries of Vancouver's immigrant population has changed over recent decades, so too has economic status of the newcomers. The "point system" of assessing occupational and educational skills, and the addition in the early 1980s of the immigrant investor programme, have meant that "the traditionally marginalized class position of incoming immigrants" has been fundamentally altered (Abu-Laban, 1997: 79; Hiebert, forthcoming). These changes in the ethnic composition of Vancouver, and in the class composition of new immigrants, have added to the overall transformation of Vancouver, and to the tensions and conflicts associated with it.
Vancouver has had a long and well documented history of racism, particularly against people of Chinese origin (Mitchell, 1993: 265), and many of the negative impacts of globalization in the city have been racialized. In particular, concern with housing affordability and the preservation of the traditional aesthetic styles in established neighbourhoods have often been linked to the arrival of wealthy Asian immigrants. The rise in non-European immigration to Vancouver has also placed a new range of issues on the political agenda, including increased need for settlement services such as English-language training, the persistence of discrimination against visible minorities regardless of the class background or length of residence in the city, and the underrepresentation of ethnic minorities in formal positions of power (Abu-Laban, 1997).

Growing conflict over the pace and nature of change in Vancouver was clearly expressed in the 1990 civic election. Housing prices had risen dramatically, while a new round of demolitions and re-development projects raised widespread concern about housing affordability and neighbourhood protection (Ley, 1994: 34; Magnusson, 1990a: 184). In combination with the NPA's "back room" style of decision-making, the pressures of rapid urban growth were once again manifested in neighbourhood-level resistance. Building on the growing popular dissent, COPE's 1990 civic campaign pledged "A New Era of Participatory Neighbourhood Planning in Vancouver," with well-known community activist Jim ("the neighbourhood") Green running for Mayor (Church et al., 1993: 85-88).

COPE made significant gains in this election, while Green gave Gordon Campbell a close race, taking 46 percent of the vote (Gerecke, 1991: 4). COPE elected nine out of fourteen candidates—five out of five to Council, and two each to the School and Parks Boards (Church et al., 1993: 90). The Civic New Democrats, who had again participated

26As president of the Downtown Eastside Resident's Association, Green had built hundreds of units of affordable and social housing in the low income neighbourhood. See Hasson and Ley (1994, Chapter Six) for a thorough discussion of both DERA and Green.
in a VDLC sanctioned "unity" campaign with COPE, succeeded in electing only two School trustees and one Parks commissioner, leading to speculation that, had COPE been able to run more than five candidates, it might have achieved a majority on Council (ibid.).

The 1990 election also brought increased support for the Vancouver Green Party. Although the Greens had been running in municipal elections since 1984, the group's strong showing in the 1990 campaign for the Parks Board raised their profile significantly. Two Green Party candidates, one for Council and one for the Parks Board, ran on a platform very similar to that of COPE, including community democracy, global and ecological concerns, and affordable housing (City Magazine, 1990: 11). With a total campaign budget of just $500, the Green candidate for Council finished in 23rd place with 16,737 votes, while the Parks Board candidate placed above both NPA and Civic New Democrat candidates with 33,515 votes (Gerecke, 1991: 5).

In June, 1992, long-serving COPE Councilor Bruce Yorke was forced to resign his seat because of ill health. In an October by-election recording a very low voter turnout of 10.2 percent, COPE lost Yorke's seat to the NPA, reducing the party's number on Council to four. The by-election outcome proved to be a sign of things to come. In another dramatic sweep of the civic elections, the NPA emerged in 1993 with Mayor Philip Owen, nine of ten Council positions, seven of nine School Board seats, and five of seven Parks Board commissioners. COPE was reduced to a single voice on Council, and two positions on each of the other boards. The 1993 election had seen the first fully unified campaign between COPE and the Civic New Democrats, with all candidates running under the COPE banner. However, with popular Councilor Libby Davies running for Mayor, Yorke's resignation, the retirement of Harry Rankin and Bruce Eriksen, and Pat Wilson's decision not to stand for re-election, COPE entered the race for Council with no incumbents, a significant handicap in the at-large system where name recognition is

27The returning officer did not send voters a notice of election (Church et al., 1993: 91).
crucial. Low voter turnout (Reid, 1993: 7-8) and voter dissatisfaction with the provincial New Democratic government (Palmer, Nov. 22, 1993) were also cited as contributing factors in the COPE/Civic New Democrat defeat.

The results of the 1996 election were even worse for COPE. After nearly two and a half decades of overtly partisan politics in City Hall, Vancouver was returned to one-party rule by the NPA. COPE failed to elect a single candidate to any of the 27 available positions on Council, School Board, and Parks Board. In this campaign, the COPE/CND "unity Slate" had to compete with not only the Vancouver Green Party, which ran more candidates than in any previous election, including well known ecological activist and Greenpeace co-founder Paul Watson for Mayor, but also with two new electoral organizations—the Labour Welfare Party (LWP), self-designated advocate for Vancouver's unemployed and working poor, and the Vancouver Organized Independent Civic Electors (VOICE), co-founded by a former NPA Councilor and an ex-COPE member whose husband, the venerable Harry Rankin, publicly endorsed the group. In combination, the percentage of votes cast for COPE (30 percent), VOICE (10 percent), the Green Party (9 percent), and LWP (2 percent) exceeded that of the NPA by 4 percent (West and Tennant, 1998).

In the aftermath of a second crushing defeat, progressive municipal activists inside and outside COPE speculated on the future prospects of the party, and of partisan politics in Vancouver more generally. Three potential scenarios emerged in post-election discussions. One possible outcome would find Vancouver voters once again living under 'one-party rule' by the "Non-Partisan" Association, which maintains its claim to efficiently manage civic services and resources in the interests of the whole city. Another possibility

---

28Writing in the Vancouver Sun, Priest (Dec. 1, 1993: A15) reports that 34.7 percent of eligible voters cast ballots in the election, a significant drop from the 51.7 percent turnout in 1990, and the largest decrease from one election to another since 1972 (from 45 to 30 percent). Turnout also varied widely across the city, with polls in the east and north reporting much lower numbers than the overall average, while those in the west and south had levels well above the average.
would see COPE recover enough organizational strength and support, as it did following the defeat in 1986, to once again mount a viable challenge to the NPA. Finally, a third scenario for the future would have COPE replaced by a new organization more capable of drawing Vancouver's progressive communities together into an electoral coalition.

4.6 Conclusion

Of the three scenarios outlined above, only the second and third hold any promise as avenues for progressive intervention at the civic level. However, given the advent of a post-Fordist era in Vancouver, neither path will be followed without difficulty. Among the numerous consequences of post-Fordism, Mayer (1991) underscores two in particular as especially significant for local politics. First, economic restructuring has created an increasingly polarized labour force. Second, in an emerging global urban hierarchy, cities compete with one another for capital investment on the basis of not only the quantitative cost of doing business, but also on a host of factors affecting the overall "quality of life." On the one hand, competition among world cities has increased the significance of local political struggles while, on the other hand, economic polarization problematizes traditional political alignments.

The signs of post-Fordist restructuring in Vancouver have been well documented. Increasing interaction with the Pacific Rim has cast Vancouver onto the global stage as a world city. "Quality of life" has become a prime impetus for economic growth in Vancouver (North and Hardwick, 1992: 231). The past three decades have also brought dramatic growth in the service industry and a corresponding erosion of the manufacturing sector (Hutton, 1994). Further, there has been increasing polarization of the labour force (Barnes et al., 1992), growing poverty, and a longstanding concern with the negative effects of rapid growth, particularly with respect to housing affordability and neighbourhood preservation. To these concerns must be added the growing salience of
issues of environmental sustainability, multiculturalism, and racism in a rapidly growing, internationally-oriented city (Hutton, 1994; Abu-Laban, 1997; Elliott et al., 1999).

Vancouver politics has historically been polarized on a traditional left/right basis (Ley, 1994: 65-6). As we have seen, in only one brief period over the course of more than a century did Vancouver support a centrist party. For the vast proportion of Vancouver’s history, political parties derived their principal support from, on the one hand, the business community and, on the other hand, unionized labour. Candidates for political office have overwhelmingly been involved in private enterprise, employed in professional occupations, or trade union activists. As Ley (ibid.: 61) notes, "[L]ower socioeconomic groups, including service workers and especially those not in the labour force...remain heavily underrepresented on election slates." The results of the last two civic elections seem to indicate, however, that familiar patterns of political representation are no longer providing adequate expression to the social cleavages in Vancouver. More specifically, the party of the left—COPE—has seen its base of support fragmented among new electoral rivals.

When placed against the backdrop of post-Fordist restructuring processes, COPE's recent electoral decline becomes more understandable. As I explain below, while not unaware of the changing nature of politics in the global city, COPE has had a great deal of difficulty reformulating its political project to better reflect the issues and desires of contemporary social movements. The tensions and conflicts marking COPE's long history begin to be revealed in the next chapter via an examination of COPE's evolution as an electoral vehicle in Vancouver.
CHAPTER FIVE
A HISTORY OF THE COALITION OF PROGRESSIVE ELECTORS

5.1 Introduction
The Coalition of Progressive Electors (COPE) is a municipal political party in Vancouver, British Columbia. Over the course of its 30 year history, COPE has been successful in electing representatives to Vancouver City Council, School Board, and Parks and Recreation Board, as well as significantly shaping Vancouver's political landscape. In this chapter, I examine COPE's evolution as an organization, paying particular attention to the party's objectives and activities, key moments in the group's history, COPE's organizational structure, and its electoral constituency. This historical review is based on a self-published COPE history (Church et al., 1993), newspaper accounts, original documents from the COPE archives, as well as my own observational and interview data.

5.2 Objectives and Activities
COPE was founded—as the Committee of Progressive Electors—in July, 1968, at a meeting called by the Vancouver and District Labour Council (VDLC). Following discussions between Frank Kennedy, chair of the Metropolitan Advisory Committee of the VDLC, Harry Rankin, whose 260 member "Harry Rankin Election Committee" had elected their candidate to city council in 1966, and Ben Swankey, a left organizer and writer who had managed Rankin's break-through campaign, the VDLC stated its intention to "urge the New Democratic Party to work with the labour movement, ratepayer associations, and other interested groups, with a view to presenting a united slate to offer as an alternative to the voters of Vancouver." Support for the formation of an electoral coalition also came from left-wing members of the New Democratic Party (NDP) and

---

1See Appendix A for a chronology of key events and organizational restructuring in COPE's history.
2VDLC, "Progression of Events Leading to the Formation of COPE." 1.
ratepayer groups "motivated by the idea of one organization uniting civic reform groups" (Church et al., 1993: 10).

As discussed above, by the mid-1960s the virtues of unlimited growth and development in Vancouver were being questioned by many segments of the population. In response to the governing Non-Partisan Association's apparent unwillingness to address new issues and concerns, two rival political parties were formed—The Electors' Action Movement (TEAM) and COPE. Both TEAM and COPE called for increased participation by Vancouver's citizens in decision-making at City Hall, but the two differed considerably with respect to their social base of support. While TEAM primarily represented a growing urban middle class concerned with preserving its enviable quality of life, COPE identified very closely with Vancouver's working class and low income citizens, for whom issues such as housing affordability, public transportation, and equitable access to civic services were most pressing. From the point of view of those who founded COPE, Vancouver had historically been run in the interests of capital or, more specifically, real estate developers, with little regard for the needs of the people who worked and lived in the city. COPE called for a fundamental redistribution of power and resources from the business elite to Vancouver's citizens. As stated in the party's inaugural campaign leaflet: "COPE will restore control at City Hall to the people. It will end the practice of using Council to serve real estate and big business interests at the expense of working people's needs."3

Unlike the NPA, which tended to appear on the political scene only during the few months preceding an election, the new party of the left wanted to establish an organization that was active on a year-round basis. COPE's original mandate was to "achieve a progressive orientation in Vancouver's civic life by continuous campaigning and by nominating and electing candidates to office."4 COPE's constitutional mandate was

3COPE, "What is COPE?"
amended in the 1970s to underscore the organization's links with the labour movement, its
desire to incorporate members of the New Democratic Party, and its intention to mobilize
Vancouverites on civic issues throughout the year. In the 1976 Constitution, for example,
COPE added the following sentences to its stated "Aims and Objectives:"

COPE is based on the labour movement and was initiated by the
Vancouver and District Labour Council in July, 1968. COPE strives to
unite all progressive and reform organizations concerned with civic affairs
around one program and one slate of candidates. COPE membership is
open to all individuals and groups who support its program. COPE is
primarily an action organization, striving to involve citizens and civic
groups in public actions around their needs and the best interests of
Vancouver.5

Today COPE's objectives remain generally similar. Its current Constitution
describes COPE as

a civic reform organization, which unites individuals and groups seeking a
progressive orientation in Vancouver's civic life, by means of continuous
organizing and campaigning around issues affecting the people of
Vancouver, and by nominating and electing candidates to civic office.6

In addition to recruiting candidates to run for civic office, COPE has formulated
policy on a wide variety of issues over the years. In the 1970s, tax reform, tenant rights,
affordable housing, transportation, and public transit were high on the agenda. The 1980s
saw the addition of jobs, world peace, and the environment to COPE's political agenda.
Neighbourhood planning and public safety were included among COPE's areas of concern
in the 1990s. Support for civic workers, making civic government more open and
accessible, and electoral reform through the institution of a ward system have been
constant themes throughout COPE's history.

COPE has also publicly supported the activities of the various social movements
that have been active in the local context. Foremost among COPE's social movement
allies has been organized labour. COPE has also had a close relationship with groups

advocating tenant and housing rights, and has supported the aspirations of the women's movement, the peace movement, neighbourhood activists, the anti-racism movement, and environmentalists. COPE has participated in events organized by social movement organizations, and has solicited their input into policy development. In 1984, COPE initiated what became a regular pre-election event—the "Community Directions Conference"—to formally invite the participation of interested groups and individuals in determining the party's political priorities.

COPE's activities have been accomplished almost entirely through the volunteer labour of core activists. Paid staff are employed only during election campaigns, while year-round organizing and planning are the responsibility of the COPE Executive and various sub-committees. While substantive committees tend to come and go as issues and priorities change, COPE's Education Committee has remained active throughout the organization's history. Functioning as either an advocacy group or an advisory committee to COPE school trustees, depending on election outcomes, "COPE Ed." pioneered a number of progressive initiatives in Vancouver's public school system, including improved support for inner city schools, policies aimed at eliminating sexism and racism in the schools, and programmes for First Nations students.

5.3 Key Moments

COPE's long history of participation in Vancouver politics has been marked by several key events and moments. The earliest milestone cited by COPE members predates the party's formation. The November, 1966 election of Harry Rankin to City Council is viewed as the precursor to COPE's founding in 1968. The next significant moment in the party's history occurred in 1980, with the electoral breakthrough that brought COPE two Councillors (Bruce Eriksen and Bruce Yorke) in addition to Rankin, two Parks Board Commissioners, and a majority of five Trustees on the School Board. Next, the successful 1985 by-election pitting COPE's Bruce Yorke against the NPA's
Philip Owen is seen as the outcome of an unprecedented unity of the left in Vancouver. On a less positive note, the election of 1986, in which COPE ran Councillor Rankin for mayor, was a devastating defeat for the party. After making steady gains from 1980 to 1985, COPE's official representation fell from four Councillors, five School Trustees, and three Parks Commissioners to two members on City Council and one School Trustee.

The next significant moment in COPE's historical evolution came in the early 1990s, as a bitter debate within the Communist Party of Canada sent reverberations through the COPE membership. Many of COPE's long-time supporters ceased to be active in the organization at this time and, in some cases, openly attacked COPE's new generation of leaders for what they perceived as a move to the political centre. This criticism was voiced most strongly following the formation of a COPE-NDP coalition in the 1993 election campaign.

1993 marked the beginning of an electoral decline for COPE. Following significant improvements in the elections of 1988 and 1990, COPE was reduced from five Councillors, two School Trustees, and two Parks Commissioners, to one Councillor, two School Trustees and two Parks Commissioners. 1993 saw the retirement of long-time Councillors Harry Rankin, Bruce Yorke, and Bruce Eriksen, and popular Councillor Libby Davies' move from Council to the mayoralty contest. Entering the election without council incumbents put COPE at a disadvantage, while public criticism of COPE's close relationship with the Civic New Democrats undermined the group's claims to independence from the NDP government in Victoria. The party was unable to reconstitute its electoral support and, in 1996, was totally shut out of Vancouver's elected institutions. At present, COPE is struggling to redefine its mission and identity in light of these defeats.
5.4 Organizational Structure

COPE's original organizational structure was comprised of three tiers: the membership, a Steering Committee, and an Executive.7 At the broadest level, COPE's general membership consisted of both individual members and affiliated organizations. Rights of individual members and organizational delegates included voting at annual membership meetings on civic issues and policy matters, electing members to the Executive, and attending Steering Committee meetings. COPE members were also entitled to nominate or run as candidates for civic office, to vote for a slate of civic candidates based on the recommendations of the Steering Committee, and to attend the policy conferences held prior to each civic election during which COPE's electoral programme was discussed and adopted.

The Steering Committee was comprised of all members of the Executive, one representative from each affiliated organization, and one representative each from the Aldermanic, Parks Board, and School Board electoral slates. Meeting at least 10 times a year and more frequently during election campaigns, the Steering Committee was responsible for overseeing all COPE activities within the guidelines formulated by membership meetings and by the Steering Committee itself, including the appointment of members to Standing Committees on finance, publicity, and membership, and to ad hoc Working Committees formed to develop programs and initiate actions on a variety of civic issues. In election years, the Steering Committee was also charged with determining the number of candidates to run, recommending to the general membership which nominees should be chosen to run on the COPE slate, and overseeing all campaign-related activities.

The uppermost tier of COPE's organizational structure was the Executive, the role of which was to co-ordinate all Standing and Working committees, and to implement policies determined by general membership and Steering Committee meetings. Elected at

---

the annual membership meeting, the Executive was comprised of the President, who acted as the main spokesperson for COPE, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Publicity Director, as well as all COPE candidates elected to office.⁸

In the early 1970s, COPE's organizational structure was changed to include "Area Committees," established at the request of COPE members living in a particular neighbourhood of the city, and responsible for bringing local issues to COPE, as well as for building COPE's visibility and profile in the daily lives of the citizens of Vancouver's different communities.⁹ More generally, in providing a "close to home" opportunity for individual involvement in COPE, it was hoped that the formation of Area Committees would lead to an increase in year-round COPE activism.¹⁰ Membership in an Area Committee consisted of all COPE members living in the local area, with each organization electing its own officers, including one member with both voice and vote on the COPE Executive.

The 1970s also saw COPE flatten its organizational structure and broaden its leadership by combining the Executive and Steering Committee into one expanded Executive which met once a month (May 31, 1976).¹¹ The Executive consisted of a President, who remained the main spokesperson for the organization, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Second and Third Vice-presidents, as many as 12 additional members elected at annual meetings, all COPE candidates elected to office, one delegate from each affiliated group, and one delegate from each COPE Area Committee. The Chairs of Standing Committees on finance, public social functions, membership, and publicity and research were welcome to attend Executive meetings, but were unable to vote. In addition, the 1976 COPE Constitution stipulated that meetings of the entire membership would be held at least four times a year, one of which would elect the

---

⁸Until 1980, alderman Harry Rankin was the only COPE elected official.
Executive, consider amendments to the constitution, and establish objectives for the coming year. COPE also continued to hold Policy and Nominating Conferences before each civic election, with the Executive recommending a slate of candidates from the pool of nominees.

COPE's structure has continued to evolve over time. In the early 1990s, for instance, membership continued to consist of individuals and affiliated organizations, but the organization had been restructured back to its original form, with a large Executive, comprised of Table Officers, all COPE candidates elected to office, one delegate from each affiliated organization and each area committee, and a flexible number of members-at-large to be determined at annual general meetings, and a smaller group of Table Officers, including President, First and Second Vice-presidents, Secretary, Treasurer, and all elected officials, empowered to act on behalf of the Executive in between Executive meetings. Unlike the earlier period, however, while affiliated organizations were still entitled to send voting delegates to general meetings, they no longer have a vote on the COPE Executive. Only one general membership meeting per year was now required. Finally, although the Executive retained the power to make recommendations to the membership at the Nominating Convention about the best qualified candidates, it no longer necessarily did so.

In 1994, the COPE Executive proposed to change the Executive from what had become as many as 40 members-at-large, to a committee structure, with a number of specifically designated positions: Table Officers, elected officials, and one representative from each of a variety of committees, including Council, Parks, Education, Finance, Communications, Social, and other issue or task-based Working Committees to be formed as needed. Table Officers, empowered to act on behalf of COPE between Executive

\[13\] Ibid.: 4.
\[14\] "COPE Newsletter," April, 1994: 3.
meetings, would consist of two Co-chairs, one responsible for internal tasks, and the other for external activities, including representing COPE to the public and liaising with the Vancouver and District Labour Council and the Civic New Democrats, Recording Secretary, Corresponding Secretary, Treasurer, Fundraiser, and elected officials. It was also proposed that a minimum of three membership meetings be held each year "for the Executive and the Committees to engage the membership in meaningful participation in the business, political direction, and policy development of COPE." At the same time, a further constitutional amendment was proposed that would restrict COPE membership to residents of Vancouver.

The rationale underlying the proposed restructuring was that more of COPE's substantive political analysis and activities would be attended to on an on-going basis by the Committees, leaving only decision-making and overarching direction to the monthly Executive meetings. Since Area Committees had long since ceased to function, it was hoped that, provided with new opportunities to work on specific issues of concern to them, and no longer having to deal with the day-to-day matters of sustaining the organization, COPE's membership would become more actively involved and that, as a result, COPE would be able to fulfill its aims and objectives more efficiently and effectively. After some debate, the restructuring, with the addition of four member-at-large positions, was approved and used as the basis for electing the Executive at the 1995 annual membership meeting.

Unfortunately, the new structure did not produce the expected results. On the one hand, several long-standing COPE members with connections to the Communist Party and the Vancouver and District Labour Council interpreted the restructuring and residency proposals as covert attempts by new social movement and NDP activists to curtail their influence within the group. Upon adoption of the new structure, many of these members

16Ibid.
left the organization. On the other hand, the anticipated increase in active involvement in COPE's ongoing political work failed to materialize. While the Education Committee continues to hold regular meetings, as it has since COPE was founded, and Council and Parks Committees have met to discuss issues and develop policy for City Council and the Parks Board, many committees never made it off the ground. Likewise, the additional membership meetings included in the restructuring proposal have not taken place.

In short, COPE's active membership has been on the decline for the past several years, as many long-term members have retired or dropped out of the party without sufficient numbers of new recruits coming in to take their place. As a result, instead of becoming a more participatory and efficient organization, COPE's on-going functions tend to be carried out by a small core of individuals, most of whom are Table Officers. At the October, 1997 Annual General Meeting, COPE members approved an Executive resolution to hire a full-time organizer and open a permanent store-front office as another means to try to renew visibility and support for the organization. This resolution has yet to be implemented.

5.5 Constituency

Over the years, COPE has drawn electoral support from a left-leaning working and middle class constituency living primarily on the East side of Vancouver, in the West End of the downtown peninsula, and in the West side neighbourhood of Kitsilano. Particularly after TEAM's collapse, COPE has attracted the support of activists involved in periodic, neighbourhood-level mobilization. A more constant source of core membership and electoral candidates has come from political activists involved in a number of closely aligned and overlapping organizations including, most significantly, the Vancouver and District Labour Council and its affiliated civic unions, the Vancouver committee of the Communist Party of Canada, the Tenants Rights Action Coalition, the Downtown Eastside Residents Association, and, more recently, the Vancouver civic wing of the New
Democratic Party (the CND). In addition, early support for COPE came from Ratepayers' organizations and the "Harry Rankin Election Committee," organized to elect Rankin to office, and subsumed under COPE when it was founded.

Ratepayers' Organizations

Ratepayers' organizations representing largely working class homeowners were active in Vancouver civic affairs from 1905 until the mid-1970s (Church et al., 1993: 4). Coming together in 1955 to form the Central Council of Ratepayers, with Harry Rankin as their Vice-President, and another early COPE candidate, Alice Mackenzie, as Secretary, Ratepayers' groups focused on the municipal services that their members paid taxes for—transit service, street lighting, parks, community centres, and so on—but were often dissatisfied with (ibid.). Generally, individual groups mobilized around a particular concern or problem, and faded away after their objectives had been met (Municipal History Society, 1980: 14). Ratepayers' organizations also worked to support sympathetic candidates during civic election campaigns, the most famous of whom was Effie Jones, whose strident 1947 campaign on transit fares almost toppled the Non-Partisan Association's incumbent Mayor (ibid.).17 Vancouver's ratepayers' organizations were gradually replaced by various neighbourhood associations and area councils representing both renters and single family homeowners.

The Vancouver and District Labour Council

As mentioned earlier, a major impetus for the formation of COPE came from the Vancouver and District Labour Council (VDLC). Established in 1889 as an umbrella organization promoting solidarity among unions at the municipal level, the VDLC has taken up a variety of issues of concern to workers in Vancouver. The VDLC is comprised

17His surname was also Jones, and the colourful mayoral contest became known as "Low Fare Jones versus High Fare Jones."
of more than 100 local unions, branches of national and international unions, and regional and provincial unions, representing approximately 45,000 individual members. Among the organization's multifaceted objectives, the VDLC includes the following:

While preserving the independence of the labour movement from political control, to encourage workers to vote, to exercise their full rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and to perform their rightful part in the political life of the municipal, provincial, and federal governments (VDLC, 1989: 5).

Prior to 1968, the Vancouver and District Labour Council lent support to individual left-wing civic candidates, usually members of trade unions, the CCF and, later, the NDP (Municipal History Society, 1980: 16). However, as Miller (1975: 6) notes, "[w]hile they had some successes over the years, they found their activities costly—both financially and in terms of the internal unity of the labour movement itself." Affiliates of the VDLC also found that their financial strength was often diffused, as resources were channeled to individuals or organizations who, under the at-large electoral system, ultimately competed with one another for the left-wing vote. It is likely, therefore, that it was with these problems in mind that the VDLC sponsored the April, 1968, conference at which the decision was taken to form a single party to unite the left in municipal politics.

It would be difficult to overstate the historical relationship between COPE and the trade union movement in Vancouver. As expressed in a letter from COPE's president to labour supporters:

The participation of the labour movement made COPE's creation possible. It made our growth possible...The support we have received from the labour movement has taken several forms. The most crucial of all is through the active participation of labour within the COPE organization, and a direct labour hand in formulating COPE policy and programmes.\(^\text{18}\)

Frank Kennedy, chair of the Metropolitan Advisory Committee and later Secretary-Treasurer of the VDLC, served as COPE's first President. Until the recent

\(^{18}\)COPE, open letter to trade union supporters, June, 1981.
structural changes outlined above, the position of second Vice-President of COPE had traditionally been reserved for a representative of the VDLC. In every election campaign since COPE was founded, the VDLC has made financial contributions to COPE, produced poll cards endorsing COPE candidates, advertised in local newspapers, organized public meetings, and made its offices available to COPE election workers (Church et al., 1993: 5). Many of the VDLC's affiliated unions, particularly those whose members are civic employees, have also made substantial monetary donations to, and released members to work on, COPE election campaigns. Until 1995, when space restrictions made the arrangement unworkable, the VDLC also contributed to the on-going operations of COPE by providing a rent-free space within its offices at the Maritime Labour Centre. Finally, as explained below, the VDLC has played a crucial role in negotiating "unity campaigns" between COPE and the Civic New Democrats. At present, many of COPE's core constituents are active trade unionists, but the involvement of the trade union movement more generally has diminished in recent years. Although COPE continues to rely heavily on the VDLC and its affiliates for financial support in election campaigns, unions no longer play as significant a role in the on-going strategic and substantive development of the organization.

The Communist Party of Canada

Beyond support for the organization's electoral aspirations, the VDLC has also shared with COPE substantial involvement by members of the Communist Party of Canada (Carroll and Ratner, 1995: 203). Membership in, or sympathy for, the Communist Party is, in fact, a common thread linking the leadership of the VDLC, Harry Rankin, and others responsible for the formation of COPE. Members of the Communist Party (CP) have historically played a very active role in Vancouver's left movements. Writing before the substantial weakening of the Canadian CP in the early 1990s, Palmer (1987: 29) explained that Vancouver
is the one city in Canada where the Communist Party has significant influence in the trade unions, popular movements, and municipal politics. The party plays vital roles in the meatcutters, longshoremen, fishermen, carpenters and joiners, the Action Caucus of the BCFL [BC Federation of Labour], and the VDLC. The End the Arms Race Coalition, which has mounted marches of 60,000 to 80,000 people, is decisively controlled by the CP. The influential COPE is a social-democratic-Communist Party bloc against the right in civic politics.

COPE is much less explicit about its links to the CP than it is about any of the other organizations with which it has been closely aligned. In the party's self-published history (Church et al., 1993), COPE does not acknowledge the Communist Party as one of the groups with which it has been affiliated. Among COPE leaders and candidates for office, only Bruce Yorke, long time COPE President, Treasurer, and City Councillor, openly identified himself as a member of the Communist Party of Canada. Placed in the context of the largely negative view of communism within Canadian society, and a long history of red-baiting, imprisonment, and other forms of harassment of known or suspected communists, that COPE is relatively silent about the role played by communists in the organization is not surprising. However, notwithstanding the obvious logic of this decision, the formation, development, and electoral experience of COPE cannot be fully understood without a discussion of the CP. Indeed, two key elements of CP political strategy—the popular front tactic and involvement in both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary activities—are particularly relevant to an account of COPE.

Founded in 1921, the Communist Party of Canada was aligned with Leninism (and later Stalin's interpretation of Leninism), the Communist International, and the Soviet Union, which was viewed as a universal model for the revolutionary left (Penner, 1977: 168). The early CP emphasized radical action, adopting the "class against class" tactic of the united front, "in which the Communists sought to ally with other currents in the workers movement in pursuit of common goals, while maintaining full freedom to criticize

19 See Scher (1992) for an account of Canada's 'blacklist era.'
and oppose the overall programs of those currents" (Angus, 1981: 317). Assuming that capitalism was in crisis and the revolution was just around the corner, communist parties were to prepare themselves to assume power. The Party was to organize its own unions, and "to lead all struggles with a revolutionary flair" (Penner, 1988: 289). In practice, as Angus explains, the united front policy meant, first, working to unify the working class against capital and, second, maintaining an independent political position for the Communist Party (1981: 329).

However, in 1935, with the prospects for revolution on the decline and fascism on the rise in Europe, the Communist International called for a tactical shift from the united front strategy to the formation of a popular front, or a broadly-based, cross-class alliance of 'progressive forces' united in defense of democratic rights, and in struggle for immediate social reforms (ibid.: 21-23). Under the popular front strategy,

the Communists were to subordinate their own program to the programs of their hoped-for bourgeois and petty-bourgeois allies, and fight for a 'minimum program' that did not challenge capitalist property relations or pose the need for socialist revolution" (Angus, 1981: 318).

Rather than attempting to develop broad unity among working class forces against the capitalist class, the Communist Party now "promoted 'progressive' unity against 'reaction' (ibid.: 329).

Except for the period between 1939 and 1941, when a non-aggression pact between the Soviet Union and Germany prevailed, all Western Communist Parties adopted some form of popular front strategy (Penner, 1988: 23). Thus, during the war years, the Communist Party of Canada called for the

election of a government based upon a coalition of democratic forces—uniting the mass support of the CCF, the Labour-Progressive party (the CP), the progressive farm organizations, with the trade union movement and the progressive reform Liberals who supported Mackenzie King (cited in Angus, 1981: 322).
Similarly, during the 1960s the CP strongly opposed a move by trade unions to form a new working class party, the New Democratic Party, arguing instead for the formation of a "parliamentary united front of Canadians...from different economic and social groups who unite around the need for a mass parliamentary party to defeat monopoly and its parties" (ibid.). Both of these statements are remarkably similar to accounts of the 1968 emergence of COPE and, clearly, the formation of a popular front at the local level is what the Communists had in mind when they participated in the formation of a progressive electoral coalition in Vancouver. As Maurice Rush, retired leader of the Communist Party in British Columbia, explains:

When I came back from overseas in 1945, Vancouver politics...was dominated by a coalition of the Tories and the Liberals. The Non-Partisan Association (NPA) came to power, and the opposition to them was negligible. In the process of that struggle for civic reform, we put forward the idea that what was needed in Vancouver was to build a coalition of all those forces that want to end the domination of city hall by the NPA (Pacific Tribune, April 30, 1990: 27).

In addition to attempting to build a popular front in the parliamentary realm, the CP also engaged in a wide variety of extraparliamentary activities. In fact, as Whitehorn (1996: 367) argues, "in many respects, the CPC's performance in the latter realm is more significant." Extraparliamentary activities were seen as a means both to expand the Party's influence beyond its small numbers, and to attract new members. As Avakumovic (1975: 274) notes, the CP

realized that however great the emphasis on electioneering, that alone would not bring about the desired end. They knew from their own experience that the CPC could only broaden its narrow popular base by displaying great drive and imagination in the 'day-to-day struggles of the masses.'

Party members were encouraged, if not required, to become actively involved in community affairs and non-communist organizations. In Vancouver, such activities took a variety of forms. As Fred Wilson, former chair of the Vancouver East Communist Club
and paid organizer for the party commented to a Vancouver journalist, the Party's 38 clubs in B.C. were "not just talking-shops." Rather, Communists were active participants in COPE, the local peace movement, the B.C. Federation of Labour and many labour councils and unions, the Vancouver Unemployment Action Centre, as well as publishing a weekly newspaper, the Pacific Tribune (Ward, 1985: A1, A12). In addition to attending two meetings a month and paying dues, every party member had "a political assignment, whether it's to a trade union, civic politics, or the peace movement" (ibid.: A12).

In private, COPE activists, past and present, acknowledge the key role played by members of the CP in the formation and ongoing activities of COPE. On occasion some members of the CP have also been quite open about the role of the Party in Vancouver civic politics. In Fred Wilson's estimation, the 600-member party's discipline gave it "an influence far beyond its numbers" and, further, he expected that influence to grow following "Communist Bruce Yorke's 1984 'landmark' election to Vancouver city council" (ibid.: A1). COPE was clearly one of the CP's key bases of organizational influence. In another public statement, Wilson explained that he joined the CP specifically because it was an activist organization, and was then "assigned to work in COPE" (Persky, 1985: 23). Asked how influential the CP was within COPE, Wilson responded that "[t]he CP's leadership in COPE is undisputed by the CP or the NDP" (ibid.: 24).

In his published memoirs, retired British Columbia CP leader Maurice Rush devotes a section to "Vancouver's Civic Fighters," in which he documents the centrality of local action addressing "the immediate needs of daily life" to "working-class political activity" (Rush, 1996: 173). Beginning with Vancouver's first civic election in 1886, which "saw mill owner R.H. Alexander pitted against a former carpenter, Malcom McLean" in the mayoral contest, through Effie Jones' electoral efforts and the selection of Harry Rankin as the new "spokesperson for the rising anti-NPA forces," Rush recalls the

20 COPE Councillor Harry Rankin published a regular column about civic issues in the Pacific Tribune.
dedication of the CP to local politics (ibid.: 173-7). About COPE, Rush explains that "the Committee of Progressive Electors (COPE), founded in 1968, was a broad coalition of labour, ratepayer, community and social organizations, along with the Communist Party and NDP members" (ibid.: 174), and that "many Vancouver Communists participated in the work of COPE" (ibid.: 180).

This influence has diminished considerably in the 1990s. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the subsequent loss of intellectual, organizational, and financial support from Moscow (Whitehorn, 1996: 370), the Communist Party of Canada was torn apart by an internal debate between, on the one hand, hardliners who wanted the party to remain faithful to its orthodox Stalinist roots and, on the other hand, reformers who wanted to re-shape the CP both ideologically and organizationally to bring it more in line with contemporary circumstances (ibid.; van Houten, 1992: 8-10). By 1992, with the hardliners in control, the Communist Party of Canada had lost most of its membership (van Houten, 1992: 10).21

Vancouver members of the Communist Party of Canada undoubtedly played a key role in the formation and development of COPE. The CP was highly disciplined and organized, and its popular front tactics, links to a number of progressive groups in the city, and the sheer dedication of its membership were valuable assets for COPE. The CP influence is also evident in COPE's electoral programmes, and in the group's early intention to engage in year-round activity. At the same time, however, the CP's steadfast orthodoxy in the face of a great deal of change has also proven to be a liability for COPE. Many new social movement activists and NDP supporters were reluctant to join COPE as long as the organization maintained close ties to the CP, while the bitter split in the CP was painfully felt within COPE, as many of COPE's elders, including Harry Rankin,

21For an account of the debate and eventual split in the CP, see Goldstick (1993), as well as various issues of the Pacific Tribune from January, 1990 to August, 1992.
publicly withdrew their moral and material support for what they now consider to be a social democratic party lacking in firm principles.

The Tenants Rights Action Coalition

COPE has also maintained a close relationship with the Tenants Rights Action Coalition, another local group that has its roots in the activities of the Communist Party of Canada. Vancouver's first tenant organization, The Vancouver Tenants Council, was established in 1968 on the initiative of Bruce Yorke in order to fight a rent increase at a Kitsilano apartment building (Church et al., 1993: 191). The group quickly expanded its mandate to include campaigns to force the city to implement rental regulations, to extend the municipal franchise to tenants, for enforcement of the municipal building code, and for changes to provincial legislation affecting tenants (ibid.: 192).

The Tenants Rights Action Coalition is comprised of a broad range of representatives from tenant and other organizations based throughout the Lower Mainland of B.C., including End Legislated Poverty, the Downtown Eastside Residents' Association, and the Canadian Federation of Students, as well as five individuals who hold at-large positions on the Board of Directors (ibid.: 197). Formed in 1983 to resist the provincial Social Credit government's gutting of the Residential Tenancy Act that had been implemented by the New Democrats in 1975, TRAC also helps groups of tenants to organize resistance to demolition and evictions. The Coalition's current mandate includes "providing legal assistance to tenants, conducting legal education workshops for tenants, researching housing issues which affect tenants and developing legislative recommendations to improve tenants' security of tenure" (ibid.: 198). TRAC also operates a toll-free phone line offering advice to tenants from around the province.

Affordable housing and the concerns of tenants and low income residents of Vancouver have always been central to COPE's political programme. COPE's 1968 election platform included a programme to build low rental housing units, and rental
regulation to protect tenants (Pacific Tribune, Nov. 22, 1968: 2). In the 1990s, COPE continued to advocate for tenant rights and affordable housing in Vancouver. COPE has also benefited from the active involvement of tenant's rights activists. Beginning with Bruce Yorke, a number of TRAC representatives have held positions on the COPE Executive, and have run for civic office under the COPE banner.

The Downtown Eastside Residents' Association

The Downtown Eastside Resident's Association (DERA) has been another very important source of support and core activists for COPE. Formed in 1973 by residents of Vancouver's poorest neighbourhood, DERA struggled to transform public perception of the area from 'skid road' to a neighbourhood, the Downtown Eastside, with the same rights and needs as any other in the city (Municipal History Society, 1980: 47; Hasson and Ley, 1994). Using a variety of direct action tactics, DERA mobilized residents of the Downtown Eastside to fight for "decent and affordable housing, jobs and livable incomes, community and recreational facilities, park space, safer streets (curbing knives and the sale of alcohol substitutes), and community-based neighbourhood planning" (cited in Church et al., 1993: 186).

DERA's early leaders—Bruce Eriksen, Libby Davies, and Jean Swanson—realized very quickly that "the political deck was stacked against DERA" (Hasson and Ley, 1994: 188). Part of DERA's strategy thus became the election of city politicians who could be counted on to bring about change. The three joined COPE in 1974, with Eriksen running for a seat on city council. Davies ran for a council seat with COPE in 1976, while Swanson joined her two colleagues in the election of 1978. Eriksen and Davies were both elected to office in 1980, and were re-elected in every election until 1993, when Eriksen retired and Davies gave up her council seat to run as COPE's mayoralty candidate. Swanson also ran for mayor in 1988, followed in 1990 by Jim Green, DERA's leader.
following the departure of Eriksen, Davies and Swanson. In the 1990s, Davies assumed a leadership role in COPE, and was elected COPE President from 1994 through 1996.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, DERA achieved a number of victories and, as a successful organization with increased access to government resources, gradually became less confrontational in its approach. However, as Hasson and Ley (1994: 204) argue, entering into a co-operative relationship with the state has had its costs. DERA has experienced a series of internal struggles in recent years, ranging from labour disputes to charges that the organization has lost touch with its grassroots constituency, while the claim to represent the Downtown Eastside has been fractured among several new service agencies. DERA has also curtailed its partisan activities, and COPE no longer benefits as it once did from the experience and support networks of DERA organizers.

The New Democratic Party

Compared with the organizational allies discussed so far, COPE's alliance with the New Democratic Party (NDP) on a civic level is of a relatively recent vintage. As mentioned earlier, despite the intention of COPE's founding members that the new organization would unite all groups seeking civic reform, the NDP did not officially endorse the group. Instead, Vancouver New Democrats divided their support between COPE, TEAM and, briefly, the NDP itself. For roughly a 25 year period, COPE's relationship with the NDP oscillated between open hostility and grudging co-operation at the behest of the VDLC. In 1993, COPE scored either a major success or entered into a fatal alliance—depending on which side of the internal debate is used as a reference point—when it negotiated an agreement to run a unified campaign with Civic New Democrats under the COPE banner.

Vancouver has long rejected the participation of provincial and federal political parties in civic affairs. Nevertheless, the NDP attempted on two occasions—from 1968-1976 and 1988-1990—to enter Vancouver politics under its own name. The reasons
given for the action in 1968 were to provide Vancouverites with better government, and to increase the NDP's chances of getting elected at the provincial and federal levels.

An NDP slate, democratically elected by a conference of NDPers and trade unionists, would give the working people of Vancouver a realistic and viable alternative to the big business TEAM and NPA outfits. An NDP civic government in Vancouver would mark a big step towards the election of NDP governments in Victoria and Ottawa. An NDP slate allows for the participation of those groups and individuals who are presently backing COPE to the extent that the labour movement genuinely fashions the NDP into labour's party. Organizations such as COPE...are no substitute for the real thing—labour's party, the NDP.22

There was an additional, less explicit but equally compelling, reason for the NDP's refusal to officially join COPE. For many in the NDP, the prominent role of Communists in COPE precluded their involvement in the organization. The Communist Party had never been an ally of the NDP, nor of its predecessor, the CCF. Indeed, the CP was often more scathing in its attacks on social democrats than it was on the so-called 'bourgeois' parties. While inviting social democrats to participate in an electoral coalition under the COPE banner may have been consistent with the Communist Party's popular front strategy, for the NDP the request was highly suspect. In a 1973 letter addressed to COPE and copied to the VDLC, for example, the President of the NDP Vancouver Area Council stated that:

The recurrent attempts of COPE to work with the NDP are not based on any conception of unity but rather seek to exploit the broad base of NDP support for what is essentially a populist political organization. Community groups have become increasingly skeptical, as they should be, of political groups which seek to dominate and manipulate them in the name of unity.23

For its part, COPE was equally dismissive of the Vancouver Area Council's call for COPE members to join the NDP in the civic arena. COPE viewed such an appeal as entirely disingenuous since membership in the NDP was "specifically restricted to those

22Vancouver NDP Civic Committee, "For An NDP Slate in '68," 1968.
who support the national and provincial policies of the NDP, and are not members of any other political party as such."\(^{24}\) As an independent civic organization, COPE had no such restrictions.

The Vancouver Area Council of the NDP ran a partial slate of candidates in the 1970 and 1974 civic elections, and in 1972 fielded a full roster of candidates in direct competition with COPE and its single incumbent, Harry Rankin. The NDP's "go it alone" policy proved to be ineffective. No NDP candidates were elected during this period and, following harsh criticism by the provincial leadership of the party, the Area Council was disbanded in 1976 (Tennant, 1981: 137).

In the 1980s, NDPers remained reluctant to work with COPE, preferring instead to run as independents. As Mike Harcourt, Vancouver's Mayor from 1980 to 1986, commented in the Vancouver Sun:

> For many years, the Communist Party of Canada exerted a fair degree of influence over COPE. That combined with a party structure that was viewed in some quarters as less than totally democratic, kept many NDP supporters from joining COPE" (cited in Baldrey, 1993).

Nevertheless, in 1980, 1982, and 1984, COPE endorsed Harcourt's candidacy for Mayor, and opted to run less than ten council candidates in order to leave room for Harcourt's running mates. While Harcourt and his colleagues did not officially endorse COPE, elected officials from COPE and the NDP developed a de facto alliance during this period. Lending support to COPE and the Labour Council's persistent claims that only a unified left would be capable of winning power in Vancouver, progressive candidates won a majority of council seats in 1982 and 1984.

Harcourt's bid for leadership of the provincial New Democrats in 1986 marked an end to this period of co-operation between COPE and the NDP. Following the return of an NPA majority to city council, Vancouver members of the NDP decided to re-enter civic

politics as the Civic New Democrats (CND). This time the leadership of the CND agreed to "field unity slates" with COPE "under the sponsorship of the VDLC" (Church et al., 1993: 81). In 1988 and 1990, COPE and the CND each ran half-slates of candidates and, along with the VDLC, endorsed mutual mayoral candidates. Unity did not, however, extend far beyond formalities. The two groups ran separate campaigns, and COPE and CND representatives elected to the School and Parks Boards engaged in a series of embarrassing public disputes. Moreover, as COPE supporters were quick to point out, with no Civic New Democrats elected to council in either year, the rationale for running NDP candidates in the civic arena remained rather dubious. Many Vancouver members of the NDP agreed and, after gaining control of the CND Executive in 1993, a sympathetic group began negotiations with COPE to run a joint election campaign under the banner of "COPE '93." The 1992 split in the Communist Party also helped to assuage the fears of those NDPers who still perceived COPE as a CP front organization. As Mike Harcourt noted following announcement of the joint campaign,

COPE has undergone a transformation that should make it more appealing to New Democrats. I think there's a genuine desire now among people to bring about some real meaningful changes at the Vancouver civic level. I think COPE has changed its structure to become more democratic, and I think the party is now more broadly based and closer to the political mainstream than it has been in the past (cited in Baldrey, 1993).

The subsequent "unity campaign," following unprecedented joint nominating and policy meetings, prompted cries of "take over" on both sides. Nonetheless, the majority of COPE and CND activists, along with the VDLC, viewed the prospects of the new coalition with cautious optimism. That those hopes were so severely dashed in the elections of 1993 and 1996 raises questions about whether, in its unwavering pursuit of unity with the NDP, COPE was distracted from a more pressing need to re-examine its own mandate and base of support.
5.6 Conclusion

While for the past 30 years COPE has steadfastly championed the concerns of "ordinary" people in Vancouver, apparent shifts in the party's electoral constituency, as well as changes in the broader political-economic context in which COPE is located, have left the group at an impasse. As I explained above, contemporary restructuring processes driven by globalization have rendered familiar political alignments highly problematic, if not obsolete. Recognizing the decline of its traditional sources of organizational support, COPE has recently tried to attract new constituencies through two somewhat contradictory strategies: by attempting to increase the representation of locally-based new social movements within the party, and by establishing a closer relationship with Vancouver's social democrats.

As will become clear in the analysis presented in the next two chapters, neither of these strategies has proven to be terribly fruitful. Much like the cases discussed in Chapter Two, in both its internal structure and its electoral tactics, COPE has had difficulty articulating the postmaterial concerns of "new" movements with persistent "old" material needs and objectives. Moreover, COPE's entry into a formal coalition with the NDP at the local level has had a 'mainstreaming' effect that serves to increase the distance between the party and its actual or, more importantly, potential movement support. It is presently unclear whether or not COPE will be able to reformulate its project on the new political terrain where it now finds itself.
CHAPTER SIX
THE CHALLENGE OF SOLIDARITY: THE "OLD" AND THE "NEW" IN COPE'S POLITICAL PROGRAMME

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter Two I explained that the "new political paradigm" associated with the rise of new social movements challenges the narrow range of issues on the mainstream political agenda—the content of political debate. In this chapter I explore the content of COPE's political agenda—the kinds of demands and policy proposals advanced by COPE over the years. I also pay close attention to the constituencies that COPE has attempted to represent over the course of the organization's history. Further, I investigate the substantive evolution of COPE's political programme in light of inter-organizational conflicts between "old" and "new" visions and activists. The discussion proceeds chronologically in correspondence with the distinct phases of Vancouver's political history identified in Chapter Four, as well as the key moments and events in COPE's development denoted in Chapter Five.

6.2 1968 to 1979: Party Building

Throughout the early years of the group's history, COPE's political programme was consistent in its emphasis economic issues, while organized labour was clearly the primary constituency it hoped to attract and represent. Although COPE made some attempt to incorporate "new" social movement concerns and constituencies during this phase—notably ethnic minorities, women, and environmentalists—such overtures were largely overshadowed by the obvious centrality of economic development, material redistribution, and the working class in the organization's political vision.

1The documents cited in this and the next chapter are located in the COPE collection at the Vancouver City Archives. All are COPE documents unless otherwise indicated.
As I explained above, Harry Rankin's election to Vancouver City Council in 1966 is seen as an important precursor to the 1968 founding of the Committee of Progressive Electors. In his early "A Program for Vancouver," Alderman Rankin denounced the material inequalities that cast a blight on the natural beauty of the city, the absence of a comprehensive plan for development in Vancouver, and the links between the governing Non-partisan Association and corporate interests who sought to exploit the city's resources for private gain. According to Rankin:

Many of our citizens are painfully aware that Vancouver is still far from the thriving and beautiful city it could be. Plenty of things need correcting. Unemployment, slums, a desperate housing shortage, low wages and actual poverty engulf far too many of our citizens. Rising rents and increasing home taxes hit all of us. The city itself has no overall plan for growth and improvement...The Non-partisan Association (NPA)...has a policy which is to serve special interests, the real estate promoters, the CPR and other big corporations.²

In Rankin's estimation, the lives of the majority of Vancouverites would be improved through tax reform measures designed to shift the municipal tax burden from homeowners and small businesses to large corporations and higher levels of government, increasing the supply of publicly funded affordable housing, providing legal protection for tenants, municipal ownership of public utilities, the public provision of low-fare rapid transit, and stronger pollution controls. Rankin also called for the expansion of Vancouver's port facilities as a means to maintain and create working class jobs. Finally, Rankin's programme called for a "master plan" for future development of the city, prepared and approved via democratic procedures.

Not surprisingly, COPE's early policy platforms closely mirrored Rankin's emphasis on material redistribution and the working class. In the 1968 campaign, COPE championed the causes of tax reform, affordable housing, tenant protection, rapid transit, public health care, municipal governance of public utilities, pollution controls, and civic

²"A Program for Vancouver" by Harry Rankin, 1968: 2-3.
control over the Pacific National Exhibition lands in East Vancouver. One significant addition took COPE's vision beyond Harry Rankin's "Program"—a promise that a COPE city council would do something to improve day care facilities to meet the needs of "working mothers." In 1970, COPE policy continued to focus on issues related to tax reform, housing, transit, port development, adequate welfare benefits for those in need, and so on, but in this year, along with the day care proposal COPE added a call for the formation of a civic "youth commission" to address the needs of Vancouver's young people. It is notable, however, that, unlike the numerous other policy proposals, COPE did not present details of the day care plan or the youth commission to the electorate for consideration, indicating that these planks in the platform had likely not received the same kind of attention from the group's policy-makers as had the others.

Following the 1970 election, which saw only Rankin re-elected to Council, COPE's campaign manager offered his reflections on the campaign. Along with concrete tactical suggestions for candidates, he emphasized that, while COPE was formed "to include all progressive forces...who seek to replace the Establishment," the trade union movement had a pivotal role to play.

Efforts must be made to involve trade unions and all their members in civic electoral activity...Labour is the backbone of the progressive forces...Such labour involvement will undoubtedly result in much more active support for progressive candidates at election time and also ensure that leading trade unionists become candidates.

Appeals to unions for support were, in fact, quite frequent in COPE's early documents. As the following statement clearly indicates, organized "workers" were a key target constituency for COPE.

...[COPE] was created by the VDLC [Vancouver and District Labour Council]...It was formed because the working people who attend the labour council understood the need for an organization to sponsor

---

candidates in civic elections who represent workers, old age pensioners and all ordinary citizens of the city of Vancouver...Harry Rankin...has a well-earned reputation as a fighter for the ordinary citizen, the working man...the best interests of Vancouver's working people...  

At the same time, early election campaigns also made some attempt to reach beyond organized labour to appeal to feminists, young social activists, environmentalists, and members of Vancouver's diverse ethnic communities. In 1972, COPE ran Angie Denis as its first Mayoralty candidate. Denis was a First Nations woman who claimed to be well prepared to "look after the needs of average people...[h]omeowners and tenants and senior citizens" because "she knew first hand the problems of ordinary people." In their post-election analysis, COPE candidates argued for the need to direct more attention towards making and maintaining contact with "ethnic groups" and gaining a better understanding of their unique issues of concern.

The School Board and Parks Board platforms went much further in their appeals to constituencies beyond Vancouver's organized labour movement. With respect to the education system, COPE School Board candidates indicated their desire to work towards a classless society through the public school system, but also stressed the goals of "cultural" and gender equality, as well as pledging to more adequately meet the special needs of students with learning disabilities. They promised to implement changes in the schools to "give students from all cultural and social groups an understanding and pride in their past and present social role, with special emphasis being given to redress past discrimination against native people, women, and minority groups." Similarly, the Parks Board slate promised to function as an "ecological and recreational watchdog," and to expand day care, nursery school, and latch-key programs for children.

---

8"Vancouver Civic Election Campaign" by Margaret Chun, Dec. 1972: 1; Election Analysis by Irene Foulks, 1972: 2.
As genuine as these appeals and promises may have been, they were nevertheless overshadowed by an apparent preoccupation with the working class and economic issues. For instance, in a 1972 statement on growth in Vancouver, COPE includes a provision that development must improve the "quality of life," but goes on to define this as ensuring that the material benefits of development would be more broadly and equitably distributed. In the same statement, COPE explicitly refers to the need for representation by trade unionists in planning growth in Vancouver. No other constituency is mentioned. That COPE was not fully supportive of the environmental movement at this time is directly expressed by COPE's leading spokesperson, Harry Rankin.

Those who, in the name of progress or of protecting the environment, advocate putting the brakes on growth and development are talking a lot of nonsense... Growth and change are an essential part of nature and life... Admittedly, growth and development, especially in our free enterprise society, have caused problems. But the way to tackle those problems is not by trying to stop development but by directing and controlling it [through]... planning and guidelines.

While evidently making some attempt to include issues and attract constituencies other than material redistribution and "workers," COPE was not evolving fast enough to suit some new members who had joined the organization with the intention of expanding the COPE "coalition." While undoubtedly having some influence on the 1972 election platform, they quickly became dissatisfied with the pace of change. Late in 1973, a group of young activists resigned from the COPE executive, claiming in their letter of resignation that

...It was clear and agreeable to us that we had been approached to work in the organization on the basis that we could help bring into the united front our constituency in the community, which had not to date been represented. This included in part student elements, unorganized young workers and professionals, community organizations especially in the social service sphere, and the women's movement... it was clear to us that it was

not just a matter of making COPE more attractive, but of making COPE policies and campaigns truly representative, from their initial stages, of as many progressive forces as possible...COPE must anticipate the areas that need discussion and actively seek out the communities' opinions on these questions...

In a rather blunt response, the COPE leadership countered that COPE already has within its ranks students, unorganized young workers and professionals, community organizations and women. It becomes clear, therefore, that their "constituency" is a group with a certain ideological outlook which had not previously been associated with COPE, an ideology at variance with that of COPE...COPE is based on the labour movement...The labour movement is its main source of strength and inspiration. COPE will not be diverted to base itself on any group of social activists of ultra left orientation or otherwise."

As the 1970s proceeded, COPE's School Board policy continued to reflect very progressive and broadly inclusive goals. In 1974, the agenda for the Vancouver public school system focused on eliminating class and gender inequality (including the provision of day care facilities), fighting racism, self-determination for Quebec, world peace, and ecology and the environment. The 1976 "School Board Education Platform" called for improved language assistance for students with English as a second language and far-reaching curriculum revision aimed at valuing cultural diversity, eliminating "ethnic bias" in textbooks and, ultimately, the "elimination of the causes of prejudice and discrimination." In contrast, the Parks Board slate primarily stressed the material inequities inherent in Vancouver's public parks and recreation facilities. COPE candidates claimed that the Parks Board has, "for the most part, catered to the elite of Vancouver" and argued that, as a result, "Vancouver is now faced with an underdeveloped and inequitable system of community recreation." More specifically, COPE Parks Board candidates decried the fact

14"COPE Statement on the Resignation of the Chud-Smith Group:" 1.
that, due to the NPA’s control over decision-making, "lavish tourist attractions are enthusiastically developed to the detriment of a well balanced system of mass recreation for Vancouver taxpayers."

For its part, the higher profile City Council slate tackled the fractious 'jobs versus the environment' debate, explaining that, on the matter of waterfront development, both the environment and jobs must be taken into consideration. In the event that integration of the two could not be achieved, COPE argued that, "at this time, economic interests should be set aside." The depth of COPE's commitment to prioritizing the environment over jobs is questionable, however, given the many references to economic issues and a core working class constituency evident in COPE's campaign materials. Later in the same document, for example, yet another proclamation of the central role of organized labour in COPE appears: "The Committee of Progressive Electors was initiated by the VDLC...it was born out of labour's need to find an alternative to the control of City Hall by the developers and big business represented by the NPA and TEAM." In the same campaign, Harry Rankin reiterated that "COPE candidates have shown by their civic and community activities between elections that they are staunch fighters for the needs of the working people of this city." Following the 1974 election, COPE worried that the organization still did "not yet have a mass base in the labour movement." In response, it was argued that COPE should further play up issues of concern to labour—housing, transportation, taxation, and development. In particular, COPE "must develop the theme that Vancouver must show its relationship to basic industry rather than the executive city concept—the sea, the forest, the mines, etc. as opposed to stark office towers."
In 1976 COPE released a "Position on Issues that Affect Women in Vancouver." An obvious appeal both to feminists within the group and to potential voters, the paper detailed a number of substantive areas in which the institutions of civic government could be used to improve the lives of women and "other minority groups," including employment equity, childcare, housing, transportation, policing, funding for women's organizations, eliminating sexism in the schools, and equality of access to public recreation. This paper marked a significant expansion of COPE's political programme, yet such cross-class issues were still eclipsed by economic considerations and the material needs of "the majority of Vancouver's citizens," described as "tenants, homeowners, workers and small businessmen."24

After another campaign in which COPE was unable to elect any candidates to join Harry Rankin in civic office, the campaign manager offered his analysis for consideration by the COPE executive and candidates. Among his lengthy comments, he observed that COPE needed to pay more attention to attracting young activists to the organization. He advised that, ideally, slates of candidates should "aim for a balance between younger energetic and older more experienced campaigners."25 The campaign manager then went on to make suggestions about the most appropriate substantive issues to be foregrounded in the two years leading up to the next election campaign, none of which expanded upon COPE's traditional material/class focus.

The basic question seems to be whether there will be a deepening of the economic depression—within which COPE has to show leadership, not just negative criticism—and related issues such as unemployment, evictions, foreclosures, inability to afford housing while other housing stands empty...standards of maintenance, landlord-tenant legislation, rent controls...and other housing-related issues continue to be important. Neighbourhood improvement will continue to be an issue. On the larger front, the convention centre, airport expansion, port and waterfront

development, public transit and further fare increases are likely to be important issues that have a clear class basis.\textsuperscript{26}

COPE leaders appear to have agreed with this forecast of voters' concerns. At a 1978 membership meeting, COPE adopted a policy statement committing the group to conduct vigorous campaigns around the main issues being faced by Vancouver citizens—lay-offs and unemployment, rising costs for essential goods and services, housing and transportation inadequacies...In the final analysis it is the solution of these problems that is paramount...\textsuperscript{27}

When COPE was founded, Vancouver was experiencing a phase of rapid economic expansion, raising concerns among a growing urban middle class about the "quality of life" in the city. At the same time, throughout the advanced capitalist west, new social movements were mobilizing around postmaterial or cultural values and identities. At minimum, the emerging urban reform movement and social movements such as environmentalism and feminism called for an expansion of the political agenda beyond narrowly conceived material and redistributive issues. In different ways, they called into question the ideology that equated economic growth with social progress, and challenged the centrality of the working class within a broadly-conceived counter-hegemonic project. As we have seen, although in its early years COPE made some overtures to new social movement constituencies, such attempts were overwhelmed by a preoccupation with economic development, redistribution of material resources, and appeals to the working class via the trade union movement.

With the onset of a global recession in the mid-1970s, accompanied by rising unemployment and poverty in Vancouver, COPE continued to champion the causes of "working people" and to frame the organization's policy proposals around material needs and redistributive issues. In the context of an economic downturn, this emphasis seems entirely understandable and reasonable. However, given COPE's failure throughout the 1970's to increase the group's presence in civic office, it would appear as though COPE's

\textsuperscript{26}ibid.: 7.

agenda remained too narrow to attract a base of support sufficient to achieve electoral success. While COPE’s ongoing concerns about appealing to organized labour indicates that it had not, in fact, been as successful as it would have liked in attracting working class votes, TEAM and, intermittently, the Vancouver Area Council of the NDP, presented electoral options for disenchanted middle class voters and new social movement activists. The resignation of a group of self-identified new social movement representatives, along with a campaign manager’s explicit observation that COPE needed to attract more young candidates further indicates that, during its formative period, the organization was largely confined to an "old political paradigm." As we will see in the next section, while throughout the 1980s COPE's political agenda continued to reflect a strong materialist focus, additional interests and concerns achieved increasing prominence.

6.3 1980 to 1989: COPE in Office

In 1980, COPE made a political breakthrough, electing three candidates to Council, two to the Parks Board, and a majority of five to the School Board. The de facto coalition comprised of COPE, Mayor Mike Harcourt, and his Civic Independent running mates was immediately confronted with the effects of the provincial Social Credit government's policies of fiscal restraint and the 1981-1983 economic recession. COPE campaigned in the 1980 election on a platform centred around resistance to the Socred and civic NPA's neo-conservative restructuring programmes. In addition to the traditional emphasis on affordable housing, public transit, "people-oriented" development, and tax reform, the group promised that a COPE city council would implement a job protection strategy by preserving "what is left of the Burrard Inlet waterfront for shipping and related industries," restricting "contracting out of civic work," and restoring the "Equal Opportunities Program" at City Hall.28

COPE's commitment to resist the Socred restraint initiatives was reaffirmed in subsequent elections. The major substantive focus of COPE's agenda for City Council during the early to mid-1980s was maintaining civic services and jobs in Vancouver, while the organization also continued to acknowledge the centrality of its labour constituency. In a pre-election 1982 newsletter, COPE credited the VDLC with the recent electoral success of progressive candidates, claiming that, by endorsing Harcourt and COPE, "the labour movement provided the people of Vancouver a united reform alternative...[the] gains made...were the result of the united effort of COPE, the Harcourt campaign, and the labour movement."29

Two years later, a joint appeal to trade unionists by the Presidents of COPE and CUPE Local 1004 (the union representing municipal workers), and the Chair of COPE's Labour Committee reminded labour of COPE's record in office.

Let us recall some of the actions COPE has taken during the past three years:
- We championed the 1983 Vancouver budget which provided for no cut-backs, no lay-offs, no reduction in services, and we successfully turned back the most recent attempt to reverse this policy for 1984;
- We defeated the motion to contract out municipal garbage collections;
- We voted for the big union contracts...
- We voted to hear the Fishermen, and supported them...
- We supported the retention of the fireboat;
- We vigorously opposed attempted cuts in health, library and parks board positions;
- We helped the civic unions defeat contracting out of food services at the PNE...30

COPE policy during this period prioritized economic recovery. The group's 1984 "Action Plan for Vancouver" called, first and foremost, for "relevant, progressive civic government, no cutbacks or layoffs, "jobs and economic development," and affordable

30"COPE—Working with Labour for the People of Vancouver; an open letter to trade unionists," no date (late 1983 or early 1984).
COPE's "Strategy for Jobs and Development," presented in a discussion paper prepared for the group's first "Community Directions Conference," pointed to the devastating effects of the recession on forestry, construction, and public services, and asked:

Can Vancouver prosper on the basis of finance, real estate markets, high technology research, and tourism? These activities distribute wealth rather than creating new wealth in the productive process, and the low incomes usually associated with these sectors often makes for the distribution of poverty. A truly prosperous Vancouver must draw on BC's rich resources and skilled labour in a strong, secondary manufacturing and processing sector...Vancouver council can be an important leadership body in redirecting economic strategy towards full employment and production to meet social needs...The protection and enhancement of industrial land in Vancouver should be a primary focus of land use planning linked to the fulfillment of the city's economic strategy...32

In 1986, jobs and services were again "the first priority." In a background paper prepared for the 1986 Community Directions Conference, COPE explained that "[f]or four consecutive years, maintaining jobs and services at the municipal level has been a cornerstone of COPE policy on City Council."33 In a similar vein, the Parks Board slate pledged to be responsive to the accessibility concerns of the citizens of Vancouver as opposed to the priorities of the tourism industry, and to improve labour relations by restricting contracting out and making local jobs a priority in awarding contracts.34

COPE's School Board slate engaged in perhaps the most overt resistance to Socred and NPA budget cutbacks while, at the same time, continuing to advance a broadly progressive agenda, including calls for the elimination of racism, sexism, and "overt political biases" from all aspects of the school system, and the provision of "teaching and instructional materials on topics such as world peace, family life (including birth control, 


Despite the organization's prioritization of economic recovery, job creation, and general resistance to Social Credit's restraint agenda, COPE did make some attempts to reflect the interests and concerns of constituencies other than its traditional allies in organized labour. As the decade proceeded, COPE began to pay significantly more attention to combating sexism, racism, and other forms of cross-class oppression, as well as to maintaining the "quality of life" in the city. In 1984, COPE proudly proclaimed the organization's support for Operation Solidarity and the Solidarity Coalition, the Peace Movement, and "all the people's movements." COPE Council policy promised to ensure that municipal government functioned as a "progressive employer," particularly by pushing the Greater Vancouver Regional District to negotiate equal pay for work of equal value with female employees, and by dealing with issues of specific concern to the women's movement—employment equity, equal pay, child care, the impact of technological change on women, pornography, prostitution, and support services to women and children—as well as examining the unique needs of women and children in the areas of housing, schools, and parks and recreation. In addition, COPE pledged to ensure that the municipal "equal opportunity program" resulted in a "civic workforce [that] reflects the community at large."

36Recall that the School Board was fired by the provincial government in 1985, and that COPE candidates were elected to all nine seats in a 1986 by-election.
37"COPE—Working with Labour for the People of Vancouver; an open letter to trade unionists," no date (late 1983 or early 1984).
COPE was closely aligned with the peace movement and, more specifically, with the End the Arms Race Coalition, the organization responsible for Vancouver's massive annual "Peace Walks." As stated in the 1984 "Action Plan for Vancouver," "COPE has led the fight to make peace and an end to the arms race the first priority of civic government...COPE will continue to do its part, working with the peace movement, to keep Vancouver speaking out for peace." 41

COPE also took up the issue of human rights, arguing that

Vancouver's minorities are rightfully concerned with the abolition of the BC Human Rights Commission and the invitation to discriminate indicated by the repeal of legislation which previously prohibited discrimination without reasonable cause...Vancouver can set an important political precedent and lead by example in the fight against racism and discrimination...including protection...[regarding] age, family composition, income, political beliefs, mother tongue, sexual orientation...42

In the late 1980s, COPE policy continued to address the effects of the recession, although an economic upswing had also renewed concern among municipal and neighbourhood activists about preserving Vancouver's "livability" in the face of significant development pressures. COPE's 1988 election campaign was built around the slogan "For a Just and Livable City." 43 "Justice" was conceived as ensuring "that the growth and development of Vancouver improves the quality of life for all people, not just the developers and the wealthy," while "livability" expressed COPE's long-term support for "progressive civic policies that seek equality and inclusion for all people in housing, jobs, and civic services." 44 "Inclusion," a novel concept in COPE election and policy materials, implied acknowledgment that racism, sexism, and ageism intersected with social class as independent bases of inequality. COPE promised to "continue to work for the development of social and economic policies that promote jobs, fair wages, racial equality,

44ibid.: 1 (my emphasis).
equality for women and minorities, community services for women, seniors, and the disadvantaged, and an end to poverty."45

Environmental issues became a major focus in 1989. In that year, COPE devoted a substantial amount of resources to hosting a public meeting on the urban environment which featured "[p]rominent environmentalist Dr. David Suzuki and City of Vancouver Medical Health Officer Dr. John Blatherwick"46 responding to a report released by the City Health Department on the disposal of PCBs on the Expo site. COPE's position was that "moneys need to be spent on education, housing and social services—that has been our main program all along. But to counterpose these expenditures to expenditures on environmental protection, as the report does, is wrong."47

In summary, COPE entered the 1980s on the heels of an electoral breakthrough and proceeded through the mid-1980s to stress material issues and alternative economic policies intended to redress the negative effects of the recession and provincial restraint policy. However, economic recovery did not command all of COPE's attention. In comparison with the 'party-building' phase, COPE devoted considerably more attention to postmaterial issues and concerns that cut across class boundaries. Campaign and policy-related materials openly acknowledged the organization's links with and support for the broadly-based Solidarity movement and the peace movement in addition to labour, while concrete proposals reflected to some degree the objectives of feminists, anti-racism activists and, to a lesser extent, sexual minorities and seniors. The School Board slate in particular maintained its broadly progressive campaign to improve the public school system throughout this period.

By the late-1980's, with the beginnings of a new development boom in Vancouver, COPE began to attend more closely to "quality of life" issues and to cross-class forms of

45ibid.
inequality and oppression. While repairing the damage done by the recession and fiscal restraint to the city's economically vulnerable populations remained a top priority, "livability," "environmental issues," and "inclusion," received some prominence on the group's political agenda as well. Nevertheless, COPE's economic strategy was premised upon a productivist growth model that depended on the continued exploitation of British Columbia's natural resources and the expansion of secondary manufacturing and processing industries. Such economic policies have tended to disproportionately reward "traditional" workers (i.e., white, male), as well as having negative implications for the natural environment. Thus, although there were signs in the late-1980s of a shift towards postmaterial and "identity issues," COPE continued to promote an economic programme that, while benefiting the group's trade union allies, would also have made it difficult to follow through on the organization's nascent new social movement commitments. In effect, although COPE's political agenda became significantly broader throughout the 1980s, the trade union movement and material issues remained central, while elements of the "new political paradigm" were still fairly marginal.

As we will see in the next section, in the early 1990s, COPE engaged in a much more concerted effort to make the organization and its political programme more inclusive of, and attractive to, a wider range of political issues and social identities. Efforts to build a genuine coalition of the full range of progressive actors in Vancouver were stymied, however, by COPE's 1993 entry into a formal alliance with the Civic New Democrats. New social movement sentiments were once again marginalized, this time by a mainstream political agenda which, in sharp contrast with COPE's earlier campaign platforms, failed to give a clear indication of either COPE's vision of the city, or the constituencies whom the group sought to represent.
6.4 1990 to 1992: Blending "Old" and "New"

Like the preceding phase in the organization's history, COPE began the decade of the 1990s with a substantial electoral gain. In the 1990 election, Jim Green, the Mayoralty candidate backed by COPE, the VDLC, and the Civic New Democrats, came within five percentage points of defeating the NPA candidate. COPE elected nine of 14 candidates to office—five to Council, two to the School Board, and two to the Parks Board. Green's strong showing and the success of COPE's candidates were signs of renewed urban dissent in a context of economic growth and the NPA's apparent lack of regard for democratic procedures. Neighbourhood activists were particularly concerned with housing affordability and a rash of demolitions in long-established communities. Women and people of colour also had reason for dissatisfaction with a local government that remained male-dominated and overwhelmingly white.

Early in 1990, COPE initiated a "Task Force on the Urban Environment," an independent forum through which COPE sought input from environmental activists into the development of concrete policy proposals that could be enacted by municipal government. COPE then hosted its largest Community Directions Conference to date. In a noteworthy departure from the usual formulations, COPE was described in the conference's promotional document as "a community coalition of progressive groups and individuals," with no additional reference to the role of the Vancouver and District Labour Council or the labour movement. It would appear as though organizers of the 1990 conference were intent on drawing in new constituencies on more equal terms than had been the case in the past. The conference agenda also seems to reflect such an objective.

The Friday evening through Saturday event featured Toronto councillor Jack Layton and Toronto School Board Trustee Olivia Chow as guest speakers, as well as

---

48 As in 1988, in this election the 'progressive slate' was equally shared by COPE and the Civic New Democrats.

49 Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, Feb. 21, 1990; Minutes of Meeting of the Task Force on the Urban Environment, Mar. 29, 1990.
entertainment and social time, and a number of workshops in which the approximately 200 participants were asked to reflect on four broad themes—Why Growth?; The Inclusive City Concept; Municipal Autonomy; and the Urban Environment—that were later taken up in COPE's platform for the 1990 civic election. In that year, COPE policy called for the creation of "healthy, livable, and democratic cities" capable of addressing "the environmental and social problems of our era," including commitments "to environmentalism, equality for women and all people, and the equitable sharing of resources, and "local action for peace and social justice on a global basis." COPE also supported equitable and managed growth "based on agreed social objectives," "affordable, quality housing," a "green city" which would reduce automobile and industrial pollution while promoting public transit and bicycles, protecting and planting trees, expanding recycling programmes, and improving sewage treatment. Finally, COPE demanded "leadership and integrity" from local government: "COPE is a coalition of community voices...COPE stands for an inclusive city where the public interest will take priority over private interests, but the special needs of all communities and groups will be public goals.

Comments made by members and candidates following the election indicate, however, that COPE was itself was having some difficulty achieving the stated goal of inclusion. A number of COPE members criticized the group for failing to reflect the diversity of Vancouverites on the 1990 slate of candidates, particularly with respect to people of colour, Chinese Canadians, and gays and lesbians. The agenda of the 1991 Annual General Meeting provides further evidence of a growing concern with attracting and adequately representing new constituencies of support. In this instance, it was

---

50 "Community Directions," 1990.
52 ibid.: 1-2.
53 ibid.: 2.
suggested that COPE needed to be more vocal on issues of importance to the various "communities," including discrimination, social services, education, justice, and hiring practices.55 These criticisms and strategic suggestions mark the beginning of a lengthy internal debate among core COPE activists about the identity of the organization and who in Vancouver the group could claim to, or desired to, represent.

In 1992 COPE's 'identity crisis' intensified. The bitter split that resulted in disappearance of the Communist Party of Canada as a force in Vancouver politics pitted key COPE supporters against one another while, at the same time, making the organization appear more open and attractive to participation by new social movement activists and social democrats. As explained by one long-term COPE member,

[There was] a constructive and positive energy which meant that you reached out, you worked, you were really visible in communities, you worked in coalitions, you created coalitions. Once that was gone, it became more mushy, the issues were not—are not—as clear today. We're trying to...invent a new way to deal with things. The old solutions just don't work anymore.56

At the nominating meeting for the 1992 civic by-election to fill the Council seat vacated by Bruce Yorke, COPE's candidate Mel Lehan stated his intention to engage in a campaign "about our neighbourhoods, our community, our city," while also stressing the "inclusive city" concept as a means to neighbourhood empowerment and more equitable representation of the diverse communities in the city. Speeches by various COPE members focused on their sense that people in Vancouver were yearning for a sense of community and community empowerment, the need to address manifestations of sexism and racism in Vancouver, support for the trade union movement and for gays and lesbians, the need to reach out to people of colour, the shortage of affordable housing in the city, as well as reform of the institutions of civic government.57

56 COPE interview C37.
Later, at a special meeting of the COPE Executive Committee, discussion centred around which, if any, of a multitude of possible issues should be highlighted in the upcoming by-election. Citing recent poll results indicating that voters were more concerned with personalities than with issues, the Executive Committee made an unusual decision that COPE should base the campaign on the personal attributes of their candidate, on Lehan's particular background and strengths. However, at the next regular meeting of the Executive, a lengthy debate ensued about whether or not COPE should release a policy statement on "Community Policing," a topic receiving considerable media attention at the time. This debate warrants close examination, as it exposes quite clearly the various factions that had begun to emerge within the organization.

Disagreement over the idea of releasing a COPE policy on community policing prior to the by-election came from three different points of view. First, some members of the COPE Executive Committee questioned whether or not it was appropriate to quickly put together a policy statement before election day, reasoning that, without enough time to do a proper job, COPE could elicit negative public reaction and, therefore, damage the campaign. Second, others complained that there had been neither input into the policy from concerned groups (i.e., gays and lesbians, women, youth) nor direction from the COPE membership. Finally, some Executive members argued that COPE's position on policing should be discussed in terms of a broader vision, and that efforts should be made to draw out the connections between the effective delivery of police services and the workings of civic government, notions of participatory democracy, and decentralization.

In short, the dissenters—who were in a majority—felt that releasing a "half-baked" policy solely in order to garner media attention was highly inappropriate for COPE, that the issue had not received the amount of discussion necessary to formulate a COPE policy, and that, in order to avoid jumping on the reactionary 'law and order bandwagon,'

COPE needed to frame the issue of policing within a broader context. Although some members of the Executive Committee continued to raise concerns about getting media attention for COPE's candidate during the by-election campaign, the debate concluded with a compromise decision that, while it was premature for COPE to issue a policy on community policing, COPE could take a stand based on the organization's broader commitment to decentralization and local control of civic services. Thus, in addition to focusing on the candidate, COPE's by-election platform continued along the trajectory that had been set in 1990.

...Mel has lived on both sides of the city, joining with his neighbours in successful projects which have improved their neighbourhoods. That gives Mel unmatched experience in dealing with the challenges facing the people of Vancouver, from increased density and traffic to demands for more green space and community services...For Mel Lehan and for COPE, our urban environment is a priority...Mel will fight for an integrated transportation system to make our streets safe and our air clean...Mel will work with the other COPE councillors to protect and improve housing in local communities...Mel believes City Council must take a strong stand against racism, sexism and homophobia. As a start, to make our streets safer for everyone, he would call for responsive, community-based policing...60

Following Lehan's defeat to the NPA's candidate, COPE engaged in another round of critical self-evaluation. As in 1990, prominent among the problems cited was the lack of diversity evident in COPE's 'public face.'61 In the words of one of COPE's "new generation" of leaders, COPE needed to identify "who we are and what we are" or the organization would continue to be in trouble. The same person felt this had been the worst election in terms of inter-organizational divisions, hostility, and undercurrents, and argued forcefully that these internal disputes had to be set aside—that COPE had to accept that there were different generations and points of view within the organization.

---

61 Executive Committee Meeting, Oct. 14, 1992. Much was made of the fact that Lynne Kennedy, the victor, was the only woman among the 15 candidates in the by-election.
Another Executive member who was a self-identified advocate for a "new" movement constituency observed that COPE seemed "to have a fear of people from the outside" and, further, that new people who did not feel welcome within the organization could not be expected to lend their support during election campaigns. COPE, in this and several other members' estimation, was not only inadequately representative, but was no longer even very well known among the population of Vancouver. The meeting closed with a general consensus that COPE must redouble its efforts to improve the gender and ethnic balance within the organization itself, as well as in election platforms and slates of candidates. It was also agreed that COPE could no longer assume that Vancouver voter's were familiar with the organization's policies and record in office and, thus, that an effort must also be made to enhance the group's visibility and broaden its appeal to young people and those new to Vancouver.

At the same meeting, a second topic arose that was to become another subject of intense and enduring debate within COPE in the years to come. The fall, 1991 election of an NDP government in Victoria added a new dimension to long-standing tensions in the three-way relationship between COPE, the Vancouver and District Labour Council, and the NDP. On the one hand, the NDP's electoral success gave cause for optimism about what might be achieved at the local level with a sympathetic party in power provincially. On the other hand, the NDP's rise to power also created misgivings about COPE's ability to maintain its independent role as defender of Vancouver's interests. By the fall of 1992, it had become apparent that the provincial New Democrats intended to stay in power by attempting to maintain business confidence while also trying not to alienate key bases of support, the most important of which was organized labour. On issues of the environment and support for the poor and unemployed, the NDP had already disappointed many of those responsible for putting the party in government.

This situation placed COPE in an uncomfortable position within the Vancouver political scene. While there were many factors placing the COPE-labour-NDP alliance in
sharper relief—including blame attributed to COPE in some quarters for the decision of the International Woodworkers of America to leave the VDLC (COPE councillors had voted to support a ban on watershed logging)—the question of COPE's autonomy was central. Some within COPE argued that, with the NDP in power provincially, and obviously on a rightward track, COPE would have to be very cautious about the positions it took, and would perhaps have to make certain compromises lest the organization raise the ire of the NDP and, thus, jeopardize crucial electoral support in the Vancouver Constituency Associations and in the trade unions. As expressed by a prominent member of the "older generation" of leaders, the question was how was COPE to accommodate them—that is, move to the right—or lose them. COPE, this speaker argued, must have some scope to be different, but must also recognize that a certain degree of "obedience" was expected in return for support.

Others in COPE argued with equal conviction that maintaining the support of labour and NDP activists—by whatever means—was not going to do COPE any good if the organization did not continue to grow and make links with new constituencies.\textsuperscript{62} They were convinced that COPE needed a new set of alliances because current allies (particularly labour, and the Downtown Eastside Residents' Association) were weak and did not reflect what was happening on the political scene. Contemporary movements, they argued, were not made up of people who identified themselves as working class in a traditional sense. COPE should, therefore, re-evaluate its relationship with these movements and must broaden its scope to include new movements and new issues, hopefully without alienating the group's traditional base.\textsuperscript{63} Planning for the 1993 election gave every indication that COPE had opted for the latter strategy. However, the very poor electoral results seem to have exacerbated tensions within the group, leading

\textsuperscript{62}ibid.
\textsuperscript{63}COPE Executive Committee Workshop, Jan. 24, 1993.
ultimately to the adoption of an uncharacteristically mainstream political agenda for the next election.

6.5 1993 to 1996: COPE's Political Decline

In the lead-up to the 1993 civic election, COPE attempted in various ways to address internal tensions arising from questions about COPE's political identity and its relationship with the NDP. While many of these efforts were structural in nature and are thus examined in more detail in Chapter Seven where I discuss COPE's political style, they also had significant consequences for the substantive content of the group's electoral agenda, as well as for its relationship with various constituencies of support. With the retirement or disaffection of a number of the organization's 'elders,' COPE began a major "outreach" effort aimed at ensuring that both the organization's Executive Committee and its next slate of civic candidates better reflected the demographic composition of the city and the social groups active within it. While individuals drew on personal and organizational contacts to identify potential new Executive members and civic candidates, on a formal level COPE changed its name from the "Committee" to the "Coalition" of Progressive Electors, entered into negotiations with the Civic New Democrats to develop an electoral alliance that would see all candidates running under a single banner and, finally, staged an unprecedented joint nominating meeting with the CND.

At the first meeting after the 1993 AGM, it was apparent that COPE had been fairly successful in encouraging new members to take positions on the Executive. In a round of introductions several individuals identified themselves as activists affiliated with the women's movement and feminism, the anti-racism movement, environmentalism, and the gay and lesbian rights movement. Some of the new Executive members were also representatives from the Civic New Democrats—in some cases expressing a dual

---

64Executive Committee Meeting, May 12, 1993.
movement/party identity. While this meeting was to have dealt with fine-tuning the political strategy for the upcoming election, the new members quickly protested that a substantive discussion of "what we stand for" was also required. Furthermore, hope was expressed that achieving meaningful levels of "inclusion" in COPE policy and practices would now be less difficult for women, people of colour, and gays and lesbians than it had been in the past.

The 1993 Community Directions Conference—entitled "Building a Compassionate and Inclusive City"—was, in fact, very promising in this regard. A four-page preamble to the conference contained a careful blend of "old" and "new" issues—the changing economy and the polarization of incomes in Vancouver, cultural diversity, ecology, social issues, housing, planning and development, public services—as well as an unprecedented public admission of COPE's need for change.65 The preamble begins with a description of COPE's formation in 1968 and its 25 year struggle for progressive social change in Vancouver.

...COPE is a community based organization that takes pride in Vancouver's communities and neighbourhoods...The VDLC sponsored COPE's beginning, and throughout its history COPE has sought close working relationships with labour and the NDP. However, COPE's success results from its inclusiveness of individuals and groups from many social movements and community causes...Vancouver in the 1990's faces issues which make it more essential than ever to have a civic organization with the qualities of COPE. At the same time, the changing face of Vancouver makes COPE's work more complex and challenges COPE to adapt and change.66

Paradoxically, simultaneous with planning and carrying out this conference, COPE was putting a great deal of effort into negotiating an electoral alliance with the CND. That the relationship with the CND, rather than the formation of a broader alliance, was the group's foremost priority became clear with the lack of discussion of "Community

65"COPE - Meeting Vancouver's Challenges in the 1990s. Welcome to Community Directions IV," 1993.
66ibid.: 1.
Directions" in the remainder of the pre-election period.\textsuperscript{67} Thus, while the "coalition" may be said to have broadened beyond its traditional base, "meaningful inclusion" does not appear to have been as equally distributed as COPE's new social movement activists had wished.

"COPE '93" emerged from the joint COPE/CND nomination meeting with the most diverse electoral slate ever seen in Vancouver. Half of the candidates were women, many were vocal members of visible minority communities, while still others were well known activists from gay and lesbian, feminist, environmentalist, and arts communities. The campaign platform focused on a variety of issues ranging from such familiar matters as fair taxation, economic development, affordable housing, and the state of the urban environment to more recent concerns with ending homelessness, making Vancouver "a safer place for families, for women, for people of colour, for First Nations people, for gay men, and for lesbians," a "commitment to end sexism, racism, and homophobia which contribute greatly to violence in the city," and a pledge to "support the provincial government in its opposition to the FTA and NAFTA."\textsuperscript{68}

The excitement generated by this campaign was palpable. For many, COPE had finally made the necessary transition into a progressive organization for the 1990s, and expectations for the election ran high. COPE '93 did not, however, meet with a great deal of electoral success. Only one candidate made it to City Council, while two candidates were elected to each of the School and Parks Boards. What followed this severe dashing of hopes was a more fierce and public round of inter-organizational conflict than had ever taken place in COPE's long history.

During the campaign itself, Harry Rankin bitterly criticized the organization in the media. While Rankin had ceased for some time to play an active role in COPE's internal

\textsuperscript{67}This is not, however, unique to this particular Community Directions Conference. See the next chapter for a more extensive discussion of these conferences.

business, he nonetheless continued as "Mr. COPE" in the public mind and enjoyed the respect of many in COPE. His disparaging public remarks were damaging to both COPE's election campaign, and to solidarity within the organization. Later, at the first Executive meeting after the election, the Chair distributed a "report" in which Rankin, with characteristic acerbity, shared his assessment of the campaign. Charging that "COPE '93" had been dominated by "single issue people," Rankin argued that the election campaign was an issue-less one...COPE '93 did not present a clear alternative to the NPA...COPE grew over the years because it fought the Establishment and especially the big developers...Ordinary people, the little people, saw COPE as their champion. In recent years this principled approach of COPE became diluted. The preservation of neighbourhoods and human rights became the key issues. COPE seemed to be drifting away from its basic philosophy and working class roots...No COPE member would dispute the need to fight for human rights, gender equality, equal rights for gays and lesbians and for minority groups...but they must not supplant or take the place of other issues on which COPE thrived as a champion of the people.69

While distancing themselves from Rankin's choice of tactics and rhetorical style, others in COPE echoed his analysis of the campaign.70 In particular, they were displeased with the nomination process, which they saw as a superficial attempt to achieve "diversity for diversity's sake" that resulted in a slate of "opportunistic" and/or "single-issue" candidates with little commitment to the organization or its overarching political principles. For their part, the so-called "single issue" activists on the COPE Executive responded that, once again, the "left" was showing itself to be very good at "eating its own young."71 They argued that, while there were some problems with the process of nominating candidates for COPE '93, new constituencies had been mobilized like never

70Executive Committee meeting, Dec. 8, 1993; "Post-election Workshop and Follow-up," by Rita Chudnovsky, Jan. 23, 1994; Executive Committee meeting, Feb. 9, 1994.
71ibid.
before. The current task for COPE was not to sit in judgment on people's political motives but, rather, to welcome and support the new activists.

Despite serious differences of opinion in the immediate post-election period, there appeared to be a consensus that COPE had to, once and for all, stand in unity behind a proactive political agenda that clearly stated who and what the organization stood for. They also agreed that the real issue of debate was not the need for COPE's slate of candidates and policy to reflect the diversity of the population of Vancouver, but the appropriate balance between "our existing and fundamental principles and the new or changing agenda that will be built by and in a broader coalition."\(^{72}\)

In the summer before the 1996 election,\(^{73}\) I asked 36 current and former COPE members to reflect on the status of the organization. These interviews revealed that, contrary to an appearance of unity on core objectives, COPE's inter-organizational tensions had not yet been resolved. For the purposes of this analysis, I have divided the COPE members according to their political involvements in addition to COPE. Nine of the respondents (25%) had been members of, or close to, the Communist Party. Five (14%) had very close connections with the NDP. Nine (25%) had carried out most of their political work within COPE itself. Finally, thirteen of the interviews (36%) were done with individuals who had, in addition to their activity in COPE, been primarily involved with new or explicitly urban social movements (e.g., the women's movement, environmentalism, the Downtown Eastside Resident's Association, the Tenants Rights Action Coalition).

When asked whether they sensed a difference in COPE with respect to political style, 29 of 36 interview respondents (81%) felt that, indeed, there had been a noticeable shift. There was, however, a great deal of disagreement about the direction that COPE

---

\(^{72}\) "Post-election Workshop and Follow-up," by Rita Chudnovsky, Jan. 23, 1994; Executive Committee meeting, Feb. 9, 1994: 2.

\(^{73}\) Eight of 36 COPE interviews were conducted after the 1996 election, and I have analyzed them with this in mind.
had taken over recent years. Eleven of 36 thought COPE had changed for the better—that it had become more inclusive of new identities beyond the traditional "working class, CP" base. Eight of the eleven had come to COPE from social movement organizations. Twenty-one of 32 interview respondents (66%) agreed with the statement that the "older members of COPE were out of touch with contemporary political reality." Almost all of the movement activists and those with strong links to the NDP, and four of six COPE activists answered this question in the affirmative. In particular, they felt that COPE's traditional focus on the working class, trade unions and "fighting capitalism," did not address significant demographic changes that had occurred in the city. As expressed by one movement activist who had a lengthy history with COPE:

I don't think there is one overriding issue...You have to rally people on issues they feel affect them in their day-to-day lives...Politics has changed. We've got to come to a new analysis on that.74

Similarly, nearly half of the respondents were adamant that "the newer activists in COPE had not taken the organization off track." Many of those who looked favourably upon the changes taking place in COPE felt that COPE had to evolve to be more responsive to the changing community around it and more inclusive of diverse issues and constituencies. Others felt that it was important that no constituency or issue be privileged above others.

...so there is no secondary. Everybody is around the table at the same time. We seem to fall into this trap all the time, and so consequently we're very protective of our cause. No "we haven't got time for that," "we can't move away from this." So we can't come out in support of another movement in the fear that we'll lose what's important to us. That's erroneous. No, we're not taking away from each other. Let's find ways of how we can support each other and then bring forward our agenda as a collective...75

In contrast, when asked if they had concerns that the "newer" activists in COPE were taking the organization "off track," 11 of 33 interview respondents answered in the

74 COPE interview C22.
75 COPE interview C24.
affirmative—nine of whom pointed to the erosion of COPE's staunchly left-wing identity. Likewise, only a third of those with CP links felt that the 'older' COPE members were 'out of touch.' In a typically unequivocal response, one of the five respondents with CP links who did not agree with the statement remarked that:

The realities of the old-line COPE members is to remember what our job is, and that is to represent the people and maintain a left position.

Six respondents—three with a CP background and two whose primary political activity had been with COPE—saw COPE's changing "political style" as negative. In their opinion, COPE had been transformed from a principled and militant political organization to a reformist and "wisy washy" group without a clear sense of purpose.

...People have had their fling with diversity for diversity's sake. It wasn't very successful, and now I think they realize, there is a broad consensus in the organization that we want diversity...but we want diversity that is based on a strong political consensus of who we are, what our political goals are, and that has to be built. And that the leadership has to take a collective responsibility for maintaining that kind of balance, and ensuring that there is a vision that is shared throughout the organization.76

Finally, six respondents indicated that, although the group had to change, the results had not been positive due to problems attracting enough people to do the necessary work.

...but at the same time there's all kinds of initiatives...that kind of wilt on the vine.77

I also asked the COPE members whom I interviewed what they thought about the role of trade unions and working class politics in COPE. Again, I found much disagreement among the respondents. Twelve of 30 interview respondents stated that trade unions have always played a central and fundamental role in COPE, and that COPE has always shared with labour a desire to advance workers' rights and interests. Seven of the respondents indicated that, while certainly important, the role had diminished as a

76 COPE interview C08.
77 COPE interview C16.
result of a decline in the labour movement, as well as a general decline in working class politics. In the words of one respondent,

What's really happened is that the influence of trade unions in our society as a whole is dropping. I don't see trade unions as a cornerstone in the movement. I see them as part of it. ⁷⁸

Others shared that view, but for different reasons. Almost half of the respondents stated that COPE's relationship with organized labour and the working class was limited to contact with the elite of the trade union movement—i.e. the leadership and paid union staff—and was thus really only a utilitarian rather than an organic alliance. Two interview respondents stated that, while the unions and a working class political agenda were central to COPE in the past, they are now only one component of a broader progressive programme.

In response to a question about COPE's relationship with the various social movements besides labour, six respondents stated that there had been improvement over recent years, while 11 argued that COPE needed to do more to make new activists feel comfortable in the organization.

What's incumbent upon COPE is to have a policy where the social movements see their issues and agendas reflected, so they see that that's...the place for their support...and in order to do that a political party has to be well connected in a genuine way, not in a 'go and sit in on a meeting and draw the agenda.' ⁷⁹

...you have to invite them in at the ground level, have them there developing the policy, right from the start, rather than bringing them to a table and saying "here's our policies." ⁸⁰

When asked why they joined COPE, eight of 34 interview respondents explicitly stated that one important reason was their desire to bring the particular perspective of their "marginalized" movement constituency to COPE, in order to broaden COPE's

⁷⁸COPE interview C16.
⁷⁹COPE interview C25.
⁸⁰COPE interview C16.
political agenda. Of the eight, six had come to COPE from a history of social movement activism, while the remaining two had been active in the NDP, where they advanced similar objectives. For some, the experience had been a disappointing one.

I am disheartened because I don't believe the left understands and is committed to true inclusion…where we can deal with things as equals, and that we put our money where our mouth is and support individuals that might be marginalized in a proactive fashion—to be able to speak for themselves, and speak on behalf of issues in general…Within the left…they have convinced themselves…that they've already done the work that needs to be done…and they understand the issues…And I'm not sure that most of the people who hold power right now within progressive organizations…understand that there's still some learning and work that they need to do.81

The goals of "diversity," "inclusiveness," and "balance" were, however, quickly eclipsed by planning for the 1996 election—the key component of which was, once again, negotiating an alliance with the CND. COPE's 1996 Community Directions conference barely succeeded in lending an appearance of genuine interest in the views and opinions of community activists. While participants in the five-hour event were assured that "the conference will give COPE supporters, neighbourhood groups, and community activists the opportunity to provide information, to help shape the policies, and to build the coalition we will carry into the November election,"82 there was little evidence that the views expressed on the themes of governance, housing, the environment and parks, safety, taxation and fiscal policy, and education and youth had an impact on the election campaign. Rather, the campaign emerged fully formed from a joint COPE/CND "Election Planning Committee" (EPC).

With the help of key NDP strategists, the EPC crafted an uncharacteristically negative campaign in 1996, focusing voters' attention on "unfair tax increases, out of control development, ever-increasing property crime, traffic congestion, and inadequate

81COPE interview C23.
transit," all "the legacy of an NPA dominated civic government." COPE's major election broadsheet featured the headline "COPE will stop the NPA's Unfair Tax Increase," and a colour insert of crime statistics for several large Canadian cities. In perhaps the most controversial aspect of the campaign, COPE sponsored advertisements on billboards throughout the city depicting the NPA Mayoral incumbent "hiding" from his government's record of tax increases, "out of control development," more traffic and not enough public transit, no ward system, a failed tree [removal] by-law, and more crime.

Following a concerted effort by the NPA to portray COPE as subservient to the provincial NDP—a charge aided by the decision of COPE's only Council incumbent to run as an NDP candidate in that year's spring election of the provincial legislature—COPE emerged from the 1996 election without a single seat in elected office. Quite obviously, the COPE strategists' attempt to counter voter apathy with a negative campaign had failed. As media commentators pointed out, research in the U.S.—where such tactics are commonplace—has consistently shown that "mud-slinging matches tend to feed cynicism and disgust, making democracy itself the loser." In a substantial departure from the detailed policy proposals of COPE's long history, in 1996 COPE neglected to inform voters of the organization's vision for the city. In effect, the campaign gave no reason to vote for COPE as opposed to not voting for the NPA. As one columnist lamented, "I'm writing about this campaign, which means I'm...paying attention, and I still don't know what COPE wants to do with the city...I don't like the NPA either. In fact there are lots of things I don't like. Maybe you should vote for me."Ironically, COPE's campaign may actually have benefited the NPA by spurring their supporters to vote, while the vast majority of those eligible saw no reason to vote at all.

84COPE will stop the NPA's tax increase plans," election broadsheet, 1996.
85Shari Graydon, "If we could only vote without leaving the couch...," Vancouver Sun, Nov 20, 1996: A15;Tom Flanagan, "City Desk: Political Graffiti," Terminal City, Nov. 8-14, 1996: 6.
The low voter turnout of 32 percent was not the only contributing factor in the electoral shutout. Perhaps more troubling, in the polls where COPE could historically count on support, the left-wing vote was split between COPE, the Green Party, two new municipal parties—VOICE and the Labour Welfare Party—and a number of independent candidates. Overall, COPE received 30 percent of the total vote, VOICE 10 percent, the Greens 9 percent, and the LWP 2 percent. When combined, the opposition vote exceeded that for the NPA by 4 percent (West and Tennant, 1998). As reported in the Vancouver Sun.

Judging from the poll-by-poll results, the smaller parties attracted thousands of voters who might ordinarily be considered part of COPE’s natural or hoped-for-constituencies—young environmentalists, the east-end poor and working class, Harry Rankin-style socialists and upscale west-side residents concerned about NPA development policies.87

The post-election period featured another round of by now very familiar debates within COPE.88 Obviously, the organization's 'non-programme' did not appeal to either traditional or new constituencies of support, while the electoral merger with the CND seems to have distracted COPE from actively pursuing its stated intention of creating a more diverse, inclusive, and progressive political agenda. Ultimately, if it is to survive to run in the next election, COPE will have to resolve longstanding inter-organizational tensions about who and what the group wants to represent.

6.6 Summary

The history of COPE illustrates, in great part, a fundamental trajectory in progressive party politics. Since the late 1960s, new social movements have mobilized around postmaterial concerns and non-class—or cross-class—identities. Feminists, environmentalists, anti-racist activists, and others, have challenged the conventional

understanding of "legitimate" public debate. Left-wing political parties have, to varying 
degrees, tried to respond to these challenges by expanding their typically class-centric and 
productivist agendas to include qualitatively "new" issues and movements. Generally 
speaking, coalition-building between "old" and "new" social movements within the context 
of mainstream electoral politics has been less than successful. Bridges have often been 
carefully constructed between disparate movements, only to be eroded when, finding 
themselves on the defensive in contemporary capitalist societies, ostensibly progressive 
parties opt for increasingly narrow programmes. In consequence, "new" issues and 
identities are once again marginalized or abandoned altogether.

In this chapter, I have analyzed the content of COPE's political agenda over the 
course of almost three decades. COPE has deep working class and socialist roots, and 
was originally conceived as a fearless and unapologetic champion of the working class in 
Vancouver. In election after election, COPE steadfastly advanced a platform comprised 
of class-related and materialist themes, while proudly proclaiming the organization's links 
to, and support of, the trade union movement. COPE's historical documents also give 
many signals that policy-makers were aware that COPE's programme had to be expanded 
to reflect new movement constituencies as well, if it truly sought to "unite all progressive 
forces in Vancouver." Indeed, through the 1970s and 1980s, COPE's political agenda and 
the constituencies to which it appealed for electoral support did broaden beyond the 
traditional preoccupation with organized labour and proposals for material redistribution. 
However, such initiatives remained secondary to the "main" class and economic focus.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, COPE's policy and platform materials showed a 
considerable shift in emphasis. I have attributed this change to the increasing involvement 
of new social movement activists unwilling to see their specific concerns and objectives 
remain on the fringe of COPE's political programme. Rather, as "partners" in the COPE 
"coalition," they demanded inclusion on more equitable terms. While COPE's economic 
policy still overshadowed the nascent emphasis on feminist, anti-racist, and
environmentalist demands, the organization seemed poised on the brink of a more radical transformation. Not surprisingly, change was accompanied by inter-organizational conflict and, in the early 1990s, COPE entered into what I have termed an 'identity crisis.' Rather than resolve the crisis, however, COPE attempted to avoid it by entering into an electoral alliance with the Civic New Democrats in 1993. The consequence of this "coalition" was, first, the marginalization of the new social movement sentiments and, second, the marginalization of COPE in Vancouver politics. As we will see in the next chapter, my analysis of COPE's political style shows a similar attempt at strategic and structural transformation—initiated by new social movement activists—followed by a rather quick retreat to conventional electoral politics.
CHAPTER SEVEN
THE STRATEGY OF IMAGINATION: PARTY AND MOVEMENT IN COPE'S
POLITICAL STYLE

7.1 Introduction

New social movements have combined their challenges to the substantive content of the mainstream political agenda with an equally strident campaign to change the way in which politics are done in Western democracies. As we saw in Chapter Two, in some instances movements have either joined with existing political parties, or created new parties, with the explicit intention of 'making change from within' the electoral system. In this chapter I examine COPE's experience as a "movement-party." COPE has consistently distinguished itself from parties that function on provincial and national levels, as well as those that have, like itself, confined their aspirations to the municipal realm. COPE has, in fact, always insisted that it is not a party but is, rather, a coalition of progressive groups and individuals seeking social and political change in Vancouver. Nevertheless, while members of the Communist Party of Canada and the Vancouver and District Labour Council were instrumental in COPE's formation, COPE has also attracted the support and participation of new movement activists who have questioned the established practices of the organization. In what follows, I analyze the extent to which COPE's style of political action—its organizational structures and political strategies—has differed from that of a conventional political party. Further, as in my analysis of the content of COPE's political programme, I also pay close attention to the structural and strategic shifts, and the inter-organizational debates that have marked COPE's three decades of existence. The discussion is once again organized around the four discernible periods in COPE's history.

7.2 1968 to 1979: Party Building

During the early years, three persistent themes characterize COPE's political style: a demand for electoral reform in Vancouver; a call for COPE to raise its level of activity
on a year-round basis; and an appeal for electoral unity among progressive forces in the
city. With respect to the first theme, various initiatives were advanced by COPE's Council
platforms as mechanisms for expanding civic democracy, but key among them were a
ward system and increased citizen participation in decision-making, particularly on issues
of planning and development. A ward system would provide more equitable
representation of geographical communities in the city, make elected officials more
accountable to individual voters and community groups, and allow individuals "to
participate more effectively in civic affairs and influence Council decisions." COPE also
called for "representatives elected by labour, ratepayer, and other community groups" to
be appointed to the boards of civic institutions, an end to "multiple and absentee landlord
voting privileges," and scheduling Council meetings in the evening "so working people
may attend." 

COPE's Parks and Recreation Board policy closely mirrored the Council platform
in its focus on improving citizen and community association involvement in parks and
recreation planning. COPE's School Board policy, as was frequently observed with
respect to the content of COPE's platforms and policies, tended to be more radical in its
demands for democratization of the public education system. COPE held that the
"development and enforcement of rules and regulations should be a collective matter," and
that, "to the greatest extent possible, school life should be a democratic experience." COPE School Board candidates supported community involvement in education and
community use of school facilities, a "Bill of Rights" for students, and, beyond this,
"cooperation and collective decision-making" rather than "competition and
individualism."

---

However progressive these reforms may have been in the context of Vancouver's political system of the 1960s and 1970s—and, indeed, they would have been significant improvements—COPE's proposals for enhancing civic democracy did not extend beyond the limits of "normal politics" in a manner that would be expected of a "new politics" party. During this period, COPE did not call into question the institutions of representative democracy but, rather, sought ways to improve mechanisms of access and representation for individuals and collective interests. Nor did COPE challenge the traditional role and function of political parties, other than supporting the general consensus in Vancouver that provincial and federal parties should stay out of the municipal realm. Only the lower-profile School Board policy presented a qualitatively different interpretation of the meaning of democracy. This generally conventional approach to politics is echoed in the other prominent themes of this period.

The second prominent strategic issue of this time in COPE's history concerns repeated arguments made from within the organization that COPE had to remain active in between elections. COPE members often reflected on the need to view "contesting an election as a year round task," with candidates speaking out "on every important issue that affects local residents" and becoming active in "a variety of community organizations." Other recommendations aimed more explicitly at laying sufficient groundwork to effectively fight an election campaign. For instance, in an assessment of COPE's performance in the 1972 election one candidate refers to "a great neglect of the organization" prior to the actual campaign period.

We should all be asking "What has COPE been doing for the past four years? What has been done in between elections? And, if nothing much has been done, why not?" All the previous work done in the first two elections by the candidates as well as the many dedicated workers for

COPE was, in a sense, mostly wasted if nothing was done between elections to build COPE.\textsuperscript{7}

Remedial suggestions involved structural measures such as the creation of specially designated positions for organizers of COPE's office, publicity, and fundraising, as well as positions charged with mobilizing various constituencies of support—a youth organizer who would work to organize students and young people, a group organizer who "would keep a file of all important groups in the city with whom special contact should be made during elections and in between elections," "an organizer who would deal with ethnic groups and [their] problems," and "a union organizer and co-ordinator who would specifically work with unions on a continual basis."\textsuperscript{8} The candidate goes on to propose that COPE form committees monitoring civic government as "training centres for potential candidates; disseminators of information to COPE members and the media; research centres; [and] activators within the community on important issues in their respected areas." Decision-making power on such committees would be confined to COPE members.\textsuperscript{9}

Further criticism of COPE's inactivity between elections came from a group of young social activists who had joined the organization in the summer of 1972 with the goal of facilitating COPE's evolution into a more broad-based, participatory and democratic "vehicle in which to advance the interests of the working class, as we see them."\textsuperscript{10} Attached to a collective letter of resignation sent by this group to the COPE Executive late in 1973—under the heading "What is to be Done"—was "a proposal to restructure COPE so as to become more effective in bringing about social change in Vancouver." In strategic terms, this required COPE to "expand its emphasis to include continuous community organizing as well as electoral politics." However, despite the

\textsuperscript{7}Reflections on the 1972 election, as solicited by the Chair of the Election Committee, by School Board candidate Irene Foulks, no date (likely early 1973): 1.
\textsuperscript{8}ibid.: 1-2.
\textsuperscript{9}ibid.: 2.
\textsuperscript{10}Resignation of the "Chud-Smith Group," Nov. 27, 1973: 1.
group's claim that "our major political priority is building a united front around electoral and non-electoral organizing," the mechanisms they favoured for putting their political vision into practice were essentially similar to those outlined above—that is, "COPE Community Committees," "city-wide policy committees," "organizational committees," the creation of an "organizer" position on the COPE Executive, and quarterly general membership meetings charged with making "all major decisions."  

The results of the 1974 civic election indicate that either COPE was unsuccessful in implementing the various proposals aimed at 'priming the electoral machine,' or that these mechanisms were not sufficient to build the kind of support network required to elect more candidates to local government. COPE also appears to have had trouble finding meaningful avenues of participation for those people who were attracted to the organization. One analytical report, for example, complains that there was "virtually nothing for the mass of our supporters to do," and that "a large number of party people are still uninvolved." The report goes on to make such recommendations for "the future" as involving "some new people" in the Executive and, once again, making COPE "a full time municipal 'party'" that plans campaigns for the entire 24 month period between elections.  

In the late 1970s, achieving desired levels of on-going activity continued to present a problem for COPE. Having by now established "Area Committees" of COPE members in many neighbourhoods, levels of year-round activism and electoral support were still found wanting. In his thorough analysis of the 1976 election, COPE's Campaign Chair argued that

It is my understanding that the major function of those [Area] committees is electoral, i.e., they exist as full-blown organizations only during election campaigns. Between elections area people should be working through the

---

11ibid.: 3.
12ibid.: "What is to be Done."
community groups in their areas... Of course, there must be... people in each area to act as liaison between what is happening in the community and COPE's central organization, but most COPE people should be involved in local issues through local organizations, not necessarily, nor even desirably COPE-dominated.14

The campaign chair also urged COPE to carefully consider the overall objectives of the organization.

Should the goal be for COPE to operate as an organization that appears only around election time to run the candidates that have been active in various community groups? Or should it move in the direction of becoming a year-round political party with an ongoing program of organizing and policy development? Up to now, the continuity of the organization seems to have been maintained by a small executive and three yearly events—the New Year's Eve party, Rankin's birthday, the August garden party, plus several general meetings. Should there be more general party activity?15

At the close of the decade, COPE was still grappling with questions of how much and what kind of political activity the organization should be engaged in, as well as with the more general issue of what the overall role and mandate of the group should be. After the 1978 election—when COPE once again failed to elect any candidates to join Harry Rankin in office—COPE's internal analysis raised familiar concerns about the low level of activity in the Area Committees and, more significantly, asked "where is our emphasis—education or electing and what proportion thereof."16 This query signals that COPE had begun to wonder if the electoralist emphasis of the discussions and proposals regarding 'year round activism' were adequately confronting what was perhaps a larger and more pressing problem—the lack of a support base large enough to win elections. As I explain below, this dilemma became a major focus of debate within the organization in later years. At this point in time, however, COPE seems to have been overwhelmingly concerned with building an organizational vehicle capable of winning elections.

15ibid.: 7.
In short, while at first glance the unrelenting efforts to increase the organization's political presence and levels of activity in between elections seem to reflect a movement-party commitment to "walking on both legs" of parliamentary and extraparliamentary activism, more careful observation reveals that COPE's goal was primarily electoral in nature. The numerous strategic and organizational changes that were proposed over the years were often explicit in their electoralist objectives. In spite of these efforts, however, there appears to have been little in the way of year-round mobilization and, during election campaigns, a hierarchical command structure presented few opportunities for meaningful participation by members and supporters. Thus, with respect to this aspect of its political strategy, COPE did not distinguish itself from a conventional political party during this time period.

COPE's formative period also saw a major strategic preoccupation with unifying the left opposition in Vancouver. As expressed in a document examining the results of the 1970 election, COPE members were convinced that

[p]rogressive forces...must find the ways and means to unite behind one progressive platform and one or more candidates...unity should be broad enough to include all who want substantial reforms, who want to defeat the local Establishment, and who offer a genuine alternative...17

In concrete terms, "unity of progressive forces" meant an electoral coalition comprised of COPE, organized labour, the civic arm of the New Democratic Party, and various community organizations. As Harry Rankin explained, unity

means agreement first of all with the NDP. But is should by no means be limited to them because such unity would not be broad enough to ensure victory at the polls. It should include trade unions, ratepayer groups and community organizations. It should include the groups and individuals who opposed and defeated the Arbutus shopping centre, who opposed the Four Seasons project, who oppose a Third Crossing and freeways, who want public transit, who want to save our environment from polluters, who want a ward system. In short this unity should include all those who want an end to concessions by City Council to developers and who want to

participate in the planned development of our city in the interests of its citizens...18

As discussed in Chapter Five above, COPE and the NDP experienced for many years a relationship of mutual distrust that made it very difficult for the two groups to forge an alliance. Beyond this problem, however, COPE's particular interpretation of unity also seems to have posed problems for achieving a broadly-based coalition, in the 1970s and beyond. On the one hand, COPE preferred a scenario in which the NDP desisted from party activity at the municipal level, leaving NDPers in Vancouver free to join COPE, as well as avoiding the electoral handicap associated with the involvement of provincial and federal parties in Vancouver politics. As revealed by one uncharacteristically blunt statement, tactically COPE's goal was "to knock the NDP out of civic politics in their own name...Our position should be to consolidate COPE as such in the name of COPE."19 On the other hand, community organizations seem to have been viewed as junior partners in a COPE-dominated coalition conceived primarily as a means toward electoral victory. Returning to Rankin's early appeal, achieving unity was dependent upon changing the political perspectives of the community groups and a willingness to compromise on all fronts.

...Will the many community groups...be prepared to drop their "non-political" stand and actively enter into civic politics around one program and one slate? I don't know the answer to that one, but let's start discussing it and find out...such unity...would require a great deal of compromise, willingness to consider one another's viewpoints with open minds, and perhaps abandonment of previously held positions. But that's how unity is achieved.20

If by "non-political" we read 'extra-parliamentary' in this statement, it appears quite likely that the "coalition of progressive forces" that COPE had in mind during this period of the organization's history was, first, a purely tactical alliance with little concern for developing a shared understanding of substantive issues or political visions and, second,

20ibid.
focused on the electoral sphere as the centre of the political process. This reading is further supported by criticisms raised by the group of young activists who resigned from the COPE Executive in 1973. They claimed that efforts to encourage involvement in COPE by students, unorganized workers, and the women's movement were met with resistance by the COPE leadership.

We have consistently tried to contact these people regarding their participation in COPE, and to advance internal changes in COPE which would facilitate their participation. We took very seriously the criticisms we heard of COPE in the community, the major one being that the decision-making power in COPE was highly centralized and jealously guarded. We were determined to show the community that COPE's membership and structure were open to the active involvement of ALL progressive elements in the city.21

As one way of demonstrating COPE's openness, the group attempted to organize a series of "educational workshops" with "outside speakers" in order to solicit "community input." COPE's leadership, however, rejected this strategy, arguing that "COPE workshops on the subjects proposed should be conducted by COPE leaders charged with responsibility for those fields" and, further, "that COPE workshops should not be conducted by people unknown to COPE whose policies might be in opposition to those of COPE or who may not even know COPE policy."22 The leadership then sought and received the support of a general membership meeting to reverse constitutional and structural changes that had recently been adopted in order to improve COPE's links with organizations and social activists in the city, confirming for the dissident group "in a very concrete way the criticisms directed at COPE by other progressive elements in the community."23 In response to the group's charges, COPE's Co-ordinating Committee declares that, in fact, some coalition 'partners' are more important than others, and that joining the "coalition" meant acknowledging COPE's leadership.

23 op. cit.
...The labour movement is its [COPE's] main source of strength and inspiration. COPE will not be diverted to base itself on any group of social activists of ultra left orientation or otherwise...COPE is open to all citizens regardless of their political beliefs or affiliations who are prepared to support its program. It will not allow itself to become a forum for discussion of ideology or political views...COPE is primarily an action organization, not a discussion group, and cannot afford to use up its time or energy in endless internal debate...nor can it permit non-elected groups within COPE to formulate or dictate COPE policy.24

Additional signs of COPE's rather conventional political style in the late-1960s and 1970s are found in the group's archival documents. With respect to the process of candidate selection and training, for example, it was suggested that COPE should try "to get more than the minimum number of candidates—27—so that the membership can be given some choice in selecting the COPE slate," and that a "list of people active in community groups should be kept as potential candidates. It has also been suggested that splinter groups be invited to join COPE and to compete for positions on the COPE slate."25 Exactly what kinds of candidates should COPE be looking for? According to the 1976 Campaign Chair:

First of all, we want people who are running because they want to win...who have lived in the city for a number of years and who have participated visibly in community affairs...who will be strong candidates who will appeal to the voters and who have support in the community. This means they have the ability to bring people into the campaign to work...26

COPE also channeled significant organizational resources into a "voter registration" drive following the 1976 election, the goal of which was not only to bring in many unregistered voters into the political mainstream, but also to begin consciousness-heightening for the 1978 election. It is the kind of issue that will appeal to a broad spectrum of people...who can be brought in to work on the drive and may stay to work on the campaign.27

24op. cit.: 1-2; 2a (my emphasis).
26ibid.: 15.
27ibid.: 10.
Once again, although these initiatives for candidate selection and voter registration would most certainly have represented improvements on established processes, inside COPE as well as in Vancouver's electoral system, they do not reflect the far-reaching, qualitative tenor of new social movement challenges to conventional democratic institutions and practices. In effect, they are aimed at fine-tuning the workings of the existing political system rather than fundamentally altering it. There are also indications here of a relatively closed and rigidly hierarchical decision-making structure.

In summary, three strategic concerns recur throughout COPE's formative period—calls for the extension of civic democracy, attempts to increase COPE's political presence in between elections, and efforts to forge an electoral coalition among disparate elements of the left opposition in Vancouver. COPE also examined and attempted to improve its procedures for candidate selection, and spearheaded a voter registration drive in order to increase participation in electoral politics. All of these initiatives would have substantially improved the functioning of the democratic system in Vancouver. None of them, however, fall outside the boundaries of democracy as it is conventionally practiced. COPE's suggestions for electoral reform were fairly narrow in their scope, year-round and extra-parliamentary activity were viewed primarily as means to an end—winning elections—rather than as ends in themselves, while "unity of progressive forces" was conceived as an electoral vehicle. During this time, COPE clearly saw itself as the leader of the left opposition in Vancouver. Thus, despite the group's repeated claims to the contrary, in the 'party-building' phase COPE's political style did not deviate significantly from what would have been expected of a mainstream political party. In the next section, I explore the effects of electoral victory on COPE's strategic objectives and organizational structure.
7.3 1980 to 1989: COPE in Office

Given the electoralist focus of COPE's organizational structure and strategy up to 1980, it is not surprising that there is little evidence of innovation or debate with respect to political style through most of the 1980s—the period in which the group made substantial electoral gains. If the overarching goal was, in fact, to win elections, then obviously COPE would have felt itself to be 'on the right track' once the group started to elect more candidates to office. COPE thus continued to operate well within the boundaries of a conventional political framework.

During the 1980s, COPE continued to campaign for electoral reform through a ward system and citizen participation in, and some decentralization of, civic decision-making processes. As explained in the discussion paper prepared for COPE's first Community Directions Conference, COPE believed that City Council required sufficient autonomy from the province to "determine its own form of government," and to "regulate business and other activity...to meet civic objectives and to protect the rights of citizens." COPE was committed to bringing about more "accessible and accountable civic government," by developing "local area plans in consultation with local communities," continuing "to encourage community involvement through local area planning, citizen advisory committees," and adopting "an open door policy for delegations to city council."  

In terms of the group's organizational structure and political objectives, COPE maintained a hierarchical and centralized command structure geared to winning elections. While COPE claimed in campaign documents that "COPE policy is developed with input from community groups...We are accessible and accountable!" internal decision- and policy-making processes seemed somewhat contradictory. In one revealing incident, early

in 1984 the COPE Executive convened a special meeting "for all Executive members, candidates, and key campaign workers" in order to "begin a review of COPE's election platform, examine current issues and the mood of the electorate, and to make proposals about the main policy projections for the 1984 campaign."\(^{31}\)

The outcome of COPE's 'preliminary' discussions was a detailed, 35 page "Discussion Paper" on "Policies for Progressive Civic Government."\(^{32}\) What is most interesting about this meeting and the discussion paper is that they precede the 1984 Community Directions Conference that ostensibly sought "community input" into COPE policy. Given this flow of events, it is difficult to view the conference as a genuine attempt to encourage grassroots 'direction' of COPE. Rather, "Community Directions" appears more likely to have been a tool designed to 'direct' individual supporters and community groups toward participation in the upcoming election campaign. The same contradiction holds true in 1986, when the COPE Executive again opened the Community Directions Conference with a "Background Policy Paper" outlining COPE's position on a wide range of civic issues.\(^{33}\)

The kinds of opportunities available to COPE supporters who wanted to become more active included "input and assistance to develop policy and organize political actions and campaigns," various fundraising events, and volunteer positions as "[d]istributers, fundraisers, signmakers, cooks, demonstrators, typists, telephoners, mailers, [and] campaigners..."\(^{34}\) COPE also participated, in cooperation with the Civic New Democrats and the Vancouver and District Labour Council, in another voter registration campaign prior to the 1990 election. It was hoped that this campaign would "become the occasion

---

\(^{34}\) "News From COPE," 1982: 8, 7.
for a massive effort which will simultaneously ensure a fully democratic list, and at the same time serve to expose the NPA's anti-democratic stance."  

Once again, the practices of COPE's education activists deviated somewhat from the general pattern in COPE. Discussing the term in which COPE held a majority of seats on the School Board, for example, a newsletter explained that 

...the COPE led School Board has taken steps to involve parents, teachers, union members and community spokespersons in decision-making. City wide parent representatives are now members of all School Board committees to offer advice and criticism. School Trustees are assigned to areas of the city according to the principles of a ward system...A VSB [Vancouver School Board] committee to combat racism held successful public hearings and in consultation with community groups established a race relations program. 

Finally, during this period COPE continued to pursue "unity" among progressive activists in the city. Indeed, it was COPE's unity policy, "advanced over 12 years of struggle," which was credited for COPE's electoral success in the 1980s. COPE also publicly supported the extra-parliamentary mobilization of the Solidarity Coalition and the peace movement, as well as the strike action undertaken by municipal workers in 1981 and teachers in 1983. 

The apparent consensus on the objectives and strategies of the organization came to an end in 1989. In this year, a series of discussions took place within the COPE Executive about internal processes and procedures. In September, COPE held a special meeting to address concerns about a perceived lack of membership input and the unfocused operation of the Executive. This discussion continued at the regular Executive Committee Meeting in October, beginning with a definition of "the Collective Process."

Five major weaknesses were identified: that many political decisions were being made

---

36op. cit.: 3.
37ibid.: 1.
38"COPE—Working to Keep Vancouver in the Forefront of the Movement for Peace," 1984;
outside the Executive Committee, a lack of participation and active committees, a lack of meaningful political debate in Executive meetings, insufficient connections among Executive members outside of meetings, and an atmosphere that was not open to new or different ideas.\textsuperscript{39}

The meeting agreed that the Executive needed: a set of common purposes, a focus, better communication between meetings, collective responsibility for decision-making and implementation, less reliance on the Table Officers for leadership, a greater comfort-level for activity in COPE, more involvement of women, a broader cross-section of people involved, more networking amongst activists involved in specific issues, more issue-oriented Executive meetings, more input from "average" members, respect for one another's ideas, more value placed on the grassroots, more emphasis on organizing and organizers, and opportunities for activists to attend Executive Committee meetings. Furthermore, it was also decided that, in the future, the Executive would operate as a collective,\textsuperscript{40} decisions would—whenever possible—be made on the basis of consensus, meetings would be open to COPE members as well as interested community activists, and meeting agendas would address specific issues and strategies with political action as the chief objective. Later meetings of the Executive Committee featured "guests" invited to speak on housing and the environment. The focus on environmental issues led to the formation of a COPE Standing Committee on the Environment and a COPE-sponsored public meeting on the environment.\textsuperscript{41}

In summary, for the majority of the 1980s, COPE continued to function much as a mainstream political party. COPE continued to advocate democratic reform initiatives that, while constituting improvements to the existing political system in Vancouver, would

\textsuperscript{39}\textit{Minutes, Executive Committee Meeting, Oct. 1, 1989.}
\textsuperscript{40}i.e., a flattened structure in which each member is guaranteed an opportunity to speak without interruption, no one is allowed to dominate debate, and everyone is equally responsible for decisions.
\textsuperscript{41}\textit{Minutes, Executive Committee Meeting, Oct. 11, 1989; Minutes, Executive Committee Meeting, Nov. 15, 1989; "Newsletter, Dec. 1989, No. 2—COPE Forum on Environmental Issues, by Sam Snobelen."}
not have fundamentally altered it. A ward system was still seen as somewhat of a panacea for the democratization of City Hall, while citizen participation was conceived in parliamentary terms of raising voter turnout, and providing institutionalized channels for "consultation" and democratic "accountability." Internally, winning elections remained the ultimate goal, and organizational structures and political strategies were devised and implemented accordingly. There is little evidence of dissension within COPE around goals or tactics until 1989. By the close of the decade, however, COPE had begun to debate and adopt a number of structural and strategic measures which reflected the sentiments of new social movements.

How might this apparently abrupt shift be understood? It is not the case that COPE had simply decided that the tactics and means it had employed to that point were inadequate to the task of electing more candidates. As we saw earlier, COPE achieved an electoral breakthrough in 1980 and, in a de facto alliance with Michael Harcourt and his "independent" running mates, held a majority in City Council from 1982 through 1985. Although COPE suffered a serious setback in 1986, when Harcourt moved on to the provincial New Democratic Party, the group had experienced a significant recovery in 1988. Poor showings in civic elections cannot, therefore, be held responsible for the qualitative internal shift that began to occur in 1989. A more likely source of the new topics of discussion and innovative political tactics was an increase of participation in COPE of new social movement activists. Indeed, it was inevitable that, if the previous attempts to involve "the community" were at all successful, COPE would at some point have to contend with challenges to its traditional chain of command, organizational framework, and political strategies. As I argue below, these challenges were at their strongest in the early 1990s, but began to diminish shortly thereafter, as new movement priorities were supplanted by those of electoral pragmatism.
7.4 1990 to 1992: Tentative Steps Beyond the "Party" Line

COPE began the decade of the 1990s by proceeding with the structural and strategic innovations of 1989. COPE initiated an environmental task force in early 1990. Unique in COPE's history, the "Task Force on the Urban Environment" was sponsored and financed by COPE, but functioned as an autonomous entity charged with preparing a report to be delivered directly to the Community Directions Conference planned for later in the year. The task force was comprised of COPE members as well as independent environmental activists, all with equal status in planning and decision-making. Through the environmental task force, COPE hoped to gain

- a good sense of the community's concerns, hopes and desires in regards to the environment of the city;
- public awareness of its concern about these issues;
- specific proposals that could be put forward for action by City Council, the School Board, and the Parks Board;
- policy proposals for COPE to adopt as the basis of its platform;
- a program around which community organizing can take place to meet the community's concerns and achieve its hopes and desires.

In May of 1990, COPE held a meeting with representatives of the Vancouver Green Party. The Vancouver Greens had been running candidates in civic elections since 1984 and had been enjoying a steady rise in support. Described as "open and warm," the discussion focused on the possibility of developing a COPE-Green coalition for the upcoming election. COPE also evaluated its relationship with the Civic New Democrats, who had once again declared their intention to run candidates in 1990. In this case, it was felt that the CND had a number of internal difficulties and limited electoral opportunities and, therefore, that COPE should continue on a path towards broadening its community-based support, rather than devoting undue attention and resources to a COPE-CND relationship.

42 Minutes, Executive Committee Meeting, Feb. 21, 1990.
44 Minutes of Table Officers Meeting, May 22, 1990.
45 ibid.
COPE's 1990 "Community Directions" conference was the most lengthy and well-attended to date. Featuring Toronto civic activists as guest speakers, the Friday night and all day Saturday conference was highly process-oriented. As described in a letter to potential workshop facilitators, "Community Directions' is about setting our agenda through a process. There are no pre-set conclusions. There are no boring policy papers. There won't be any election gimmickry. There will be a thoughtful dialogue about our city and where it is headed."46 Similarly, in her welcoming remarks to conference participants, COPE's President stressed her commitment to

helping facilitate a real community process...Community Directions is the beginning of something—not the end. At minimum we want to ensure that each participant receives follow-up material based on our discussions, workshops, and emerging conclusions. However, I believe that we must strive for an ongoing community process of discussion, resolution of issues, priorities and actions that can produce our agenda for Vancouver.47

The 1990 agenda was also considerably different from that of previous Community Directions conferences. Participants were informed of COPE's decision to

put aside these more traditional "issue" workshops in favour of broad themes that incorporate all these issues in a larger context...Because we are dealing with complex, far reaching workshop areas—attention to the process is critical. We need time to sort out problems facing us, establish a common understanding, learn from each other's experience, and hopefully develop a consensus about our future.48

In a relatively brief—in comparison with 1984 and 1986—document prepared for conference participants, COPE presented a "vision" of civic democracy extending well beyond the group's conventional concerns with a ward system, levels of voter turnout, and improving institutional channels for citizen participation. In the prologue to the document, COPE emphasized that "[t]he following commentary is not intended to be a 'platform' or 'policy paper.' Rather, it is presented here to share our questions and concerns about the

48ibid.: 2.
trends we see developing in Vancouver...to stimulate discussion and interaction as we begin the process of discussing our future."

Pointing to the cynicism engendered by the exclusionary political procedures followed by the current civic government, COPE argued that

The citizen is not inherently apathetic, consumerist and parochial...[These] are predictable responses to stifling conditions...Meaningful citizen involvement with planning and initiative from the grass roots can spur enthusiasm, positive-thinking, creativity...Just yet, we don't have a blueprint for the change that is needed. We have a network of seeds at the grass roots: neighbourhood associations, tenants' and seniors' groups, unions, recycling groups, local area planning committees, community centres and community gardens, bicycling clubs, food banks, mutual aid enterprises and ginger groups of all sorts...Our vision of the citizen doesn't require the total transformation of the human species. But it does mean transforming the social and political structures that dampen enthusiasm and creativity.\(^{50}\)

Finally, in the follow-up to the conference, COPE solicited further "dialogue" with participants by providing them with "materials that summarize the collective discussion and emerging conclusions of Community Directions" and asking for their feedback in order to develop a program for the 1990 election.\(^{51}\) Indeed, COPE's 1990 election platform clearly reflects these workshop summaries. COPE's City Council policy, for example, included references to citizen empowerment and grassroots democracy.

Global Issues Demand Civic Action—This demands innovative civic government and real participatory democracy that will empower citizens to make local decisions that affect the quality of life in the city and for the planet...Leadership and Integrity—COPE is a coalition of community voices...COPE will be the catalyst for a renewal of grassroots democracy...\(^{52}\)

COPE did not, however, pursue an alliance with the Vancouver Green Party for the 1990 election. Nor did the organization's internal procedures around candidate

\(^{49}\)"Visions of the City," Community Directions, 1990.

\(^{50}\)ibid. (my emphasis).

\(^{51}\)Follow-up Letter to Participants, Community Directions, 1990.

\(^{52}\)"COPE City Council Policy Statement," 1990: 1, 2.
recruitment and nomination for the 1990 campaign display a qualitative shift in keeping with the tone set by the Community Directions conference and campaign rhetoric. Instead, the COPE executive followed the traditional practice of recommending a slate of candidates to the membership for approval at a nomination meeting. While members were technically welcome to nominate additional candidates from the floor of the meeting, this was rarely done. Rather, members generally cast their votes on the advice of the COPE Executive.

Perhaps in anticipation of resistance to this process, the Executive Committee provided the 1990 nomination meeting with a detailed rationale for their recommendation of a particular slate of council candidates. In an obvious attempt to reconcile the different objectives of party- and movement-oriented members of the Executive, the explanation is both complex and somewhat contradictory. First, the Executive explained that a "unity agreement" had been struck with the Civic New Democrats and the Vancouver and District Labour council on the understanding that COPE and the CND would each run a half-slate of candidates. For Council, this left COPE with a total of five spots and at least "seven very powerful contenders." Thus

The Executive decided that we should make recommendations to the nominating meeting as to who should be on the slate. The reason for this is that there are very large political factors to weigh, and some intensive analysis and discussion are needed, that are not practically possible in a large general meeting. Some of the factors that were discussed were the following:

1. We need to make sure that our slate is as electable as possible.
2. We need to make sure that our slate represents as broadly as possible the various parts that make up the political coalition that is COPE.
3. We need to make sure that the slate shows the public that COPE is a broad and truly representative group.
4. The slate must have a proper balance of men and women.

53 I know of only one instance of a nomination from the floor. The candidate was, however, successful in gaining a spot on the COPE slate.
5. The slate must reflect as broadly as possible the ethnic and racial diversity of Vancouver. In particular several Executive members felt that it is critical to COPE's credibility that we run persons of colour.

6. The slate should reflect renewal in COPE and should attempt to include new Council candidates.\textsuperscript{55}

After extensive debate, the Executive conducted a vote to decide which of the seven potential candidates to recommend. Ironically, the results do not conform very well to the above "factors," with the possible exception of the concern with electability. Of the five candidates selected by Executive ballot, three were council incumbents, one had been elected to Council several times before, one was a former Parks Board Commissioner, and all five were white. The two potential candidates who did not make it on to the slate were described as, first, "elected to the School Board in the past and...plugged into some key sections of COPE's support network" and, second, "has come close to being elected in the past."\textsuperscript{56} The COPE membership approved the Executive recommendation at the nominating meeting.

This incident marks the beginning of another transition in COPE's political style, this time away from a short-lived movement-oriented focus on radically altering the conception and practices of democracy, towards a more conventional preoccupation with winning elections by appealing to the broadest possible range of voters. While movement sentiments lingered in COPE's organizational structure and political strategies for the next few years, with each successive election campaign the group took on more and more of the trappings of a conventional political party.

The results of the 1990 election offer some clue as to why this shift occurred. COPE made strong showing at the polls, and all five of the Council candidates were elected. This may have, once again, increased support within COPE for a more traditional, electoralist approach. Beyond this, however, a more comprehensive

\textsuperscript{55}ibid.: 1-2.
\textsuperscript{56}ibid.: 1.
understanding of this most recent transformation requires an examination of three additional factors—the impact of the decline of the Communist Party of Canada on COPE, COPE's dependence on the support of the Vancouver and District Labour Council and its affiliated unions and, interrelatedly, COPE's unrelenting preoccupation with striking a formal alliance with Vancouver's social democrats through their electoral organization, the Civic New Democrats.

As I explained earlier, the Vancouver branch of the Communist Party of Canada played a key role in COPE. The CP was a highly centralized, hierarchical, and disciplined organization, and its members were extremely committed to their political ideals. A willingness to put in endless hours of volunteer labour and links to a number of progressive organizations in Vancouver made the Communists and their supporters a valuable asset for COPE. That an organization with limited financial resources was able to repeatedly mount effective election campaigns under the at-large system is undoubtedly attributable in large measure to the dedication and hard work of COPE's Communist membership. As explained by a former CP activist,  

...One of the reasons that COPE was so successful was that there was care, there was organizational care, there was a group of people who felt deeply about the future of the organization, and paid a lot of attention to its needs....the function that organization used to play has to be taken up by the left in new ways, because there are some essential ingredients that the old CP used to provide—organizational strength, education, a whole number of things that any successful left movement needs.  

However, although the connections to the CP had obvious benefits, they also constituted a handicap with respect to broadening COPE's base of support. COPE's early organizational structure and political style closely mirrored that of the CP—that is, democratic centralism—and this served as a deterrent to involvement in COPE by new social movement activists as well as social democrats. In the words of another former CPer,  

57COPE interview C08.
With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the CPC, what happened was that, in one sense, the wind was taken out of the sails, and in another, it provided opportunities to overcome obstacles that had always been there—the opportunity to achieve an alliance with the CND and with other popular movements or social movements within the city...As long as the CPC existed as a force within COPE, it had always been difficult to achieve those alliances.58

Parallel with COPE’s critical reflections on the group’s internal democratic processes and its relationship with the "grassroots," the CPC was also experiencing an attempt by a substantial faction of "reformers" to make the party more relevant to the times. Much like COPE, in 1989 a majority of members of the British Columbia Communist Party called for political renewal involving "an unequivocal commitment to political pluralism," respect for diverse views and "real political debate based on grassroots democracy."59 This view was not shared by the so-called "old guard" of the party, and a bitter debate and eventual split in the CP ensued.60

The split and subsequent decline of the Communist Party of Canada had serious consequences for COPE as well. Participants on both sides of the CP dispute held positions on the COPE Executive, making meetings and decision-making somewhat strained. Beyond personal tensions, however, the collapse of the Communist Party created a substantial gap in COPE with respect to routine organizational maintenance and the group's ability to mobilize extraparliamentary support—two crucial tasks that had largely been taken care of by the CPers. In a very real sense, the end of the CPC created a vacuum within COPE that, to the present, has yet to be adequately filled.

Returning to COPE in the late 1980s and early 1990s, it is clear that the organization experienced both a push and a pull towards changing internal procedures and reaching out to new constituencies of support. The push came from a need to rebuild the

---

58 COPE interview C37.
60 It is estimated that the CPC lost 60% to 70% of its membership between 1990 and 1992, while a legal battle over control of the party’s resources further fueled the acrimony between opposing factions (van Houten, 1992: 10).
grassroots base once the Communists ceased to provide needed organizing skills and a ready-made network of sympathetic social activists for COPE to draw upon. The pull came from both the desire and opportunity to open COPE up to new activists with novel political ideals who had, up until then, either maintained their distance because of the Communist influence, or had been repelled by the hierarchical and centralized party style of the organization. Unfortunately, however, the new social movement activists and the groups outside COPE with whom they were involved could not provide the human resources required to replace those that had been lost. Nor could they hope to counter the decisive influence of the Vancouver and District Labour Council and its affiliated unions, who continued to provide a very substantial proportion of COPE's financial resources. As one COPE member explained,

Frankly, unless you have the labour movement...as a central part of COPE or any other civic movement, it's not going to succeed. Labour provides the counterpoint to the other elites—resources, organization, policies...you can't get to the hearts and minds of the people unless you've got a road that gets you there and a vehicle to drive in.61

Or, in more succinct terms,

Of course, the only way you get a progressive municipal party funded in this town is with the connections to unions...we do need their money because our constituency doesn't have it.62

This need for a renewed and secure resource base led COPE, under the auspices of the Labour Council, to divert a great deal of the organization's energy towards an alliance with the Civic New Democrats and away from further pursuing the radical democratic impulses that had appeared in the organization in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Ultimately, this strategy led to COPE's transformation into a mainstream political party rather than a movement-oriented "anti-party."

61 COPE interview C37.
62 COPE interview C12.
As mentioned earlier, COPE and the CND ran "joint slates" in the elections of 1988 and 1990. In those campaigns, however, "unity" consisted of only a minimal agreement not to compete against each other, and to cooperate if elected to Council, the School Board, or the Parks Board. In fact, such was the fragility of the accords wrested from the two groups by the VDLC that cooperation often broke down even before the election campaign was over. Thus, while COPE and the CND ran joint slates of candidates, the two groups operated autonomous campaigns—separately nominating the allotted number of candidates, independently devising election platforms, even campaigning out of separate offices. COPE members generally felt that the CND benefited much more from the alliance than vice versa, a feeling that was apparently validated when all five of COPE's council candidates—and none of the CND's—were elected to City Council in 1990. Furthermore, once the NDP had been elected to form the provincial government in Victoria, COPE officials on the School and Parks Boards found themselves publicly in opposition with not only the NPA, but also with the CND. COPE was unequivocal throughout this period about the need for the organization and its representatives to maintain an independent and critical stance towards the provincial government, regardless of the party that happened to be in power.\(^63\)

In the lead-up to the 1992 by-election to replace COPE's Bruce Yorke on Council, the tensions between COPE and the CND crested. In a series of letters exchanged between the Presidents of COPE and the CND and the Secretary-Treasurer of the VDLC,\(^64\) the CND expressed concern over COPE's public criticism of the provincial government and refused to accept COPE's unilateral decision (with the VDLC's apparent

\(^{63}\)COPE Parks Commissioners and School Board Trustees reported that CND officials refused to caucus with them, often voted against them and, in the case of the School Board, reversed earlier policy positions in order to support the NDP government's education budget. See "COPE Newsletter, Issue # 1, Sept., 1991: 8; "COPE Newsletter, Feb./Mar., 1992, Vol. 1, #2: 1-2.

\(^{64}\)Letter from Mary Lynn Baum [CND] to John Fitzpatrick [VDLC], June 29, 1992; Letter to John Fitzpatrick from John Church [COPE], June 30, 1992; Letter from John Fitzpatrick to Mary Lynn Baum, July 9, 1992.
complicity) that the vacant Council seat was COPE's to fill. COPE refused to consent to a proposed meeting, sponsored by the VDLC, between the two groups, indicating that, instead, COPE hoped "to participate in a larger meeting with the VDLC, representatives of various committees, etc., and hopefully the Civic NDP, as well as provincial NDP constituency representatives." The VDLC countered that it reserved the right to be consulted on these matters and we want input from both parties before labour endorses anyone. After all, the VDLC is responsible for raising the necessary funds to run the campaign...The VDLC...will, no doubt, be reviewing the results of this by-election very closely. It will also review the role that the VDLC plays in it, and whether we can afford the luxury of having two parties represent the views of labour.

COPE went on to acclaim a candidate selected for nomination by the Executive Committee. The subsequent loss of a by-election that many thought there was a good chance of winning seems to have raised doubts within the organization about its fierce independence in the face of CND and VDLC pressure. Many attributed the election loss to a lack of human and financial resources and, more specifically, to lackluster support from Vancouver's New Democrats and trade unions. Complaints were also expressed regarding the lack of "political experience" of COPE's newer community- and social movement-based activists. Others, however, continued to press for the creation of a broader network of alliances, and for more activity between elections to improve COPE's visibility and counter voter apathy.\textsuperscript{65}

Later in 1992, the VDLC made good on its earlier word by sending a representative to attend a COPE Executive Committee meeting for the expressed purpose of discussing future Labour Council support for municipal election campaigns. The delegate explained that the VDLC was approaching both the CND and COPE to tell them that the VDLC was no longer prepared to support a "unity slate." Instead, the Labour Council wanted to see the formation of one civic political party to represent the left. The

\textsuperscript{65}Special Executive Committee meeting, July 26, 1992; Executive Committee Meeting, Oct. 14, 1992.
VDLC felt that having two parties was wasteful of increasingly scarce resources—that it made economic sense to run one campaign. Moreover, the existence of two parties was detrimental to the VDLC's primary goal of gaining control of City Council.\footnote{At a later meeting, representatives of the VDLC explicitly stated that, unless a single unified campaign was achieved, there would be no VDLC involvement in the 1993 election (Table Officers Meeting, May 25, 1993).}

The COPE Executive agreed to a future meeting with the VDLC but, while there was a general consensus that the support—particularly monetary—of the VDLC was critical for COPE, they maintained that a single civic party already existed to represent the left in Vancouver and that its name was the Committee of Progressive Electors.\footnote{Executive Committee meeting, Nov. 18, 1992; Executive Committee Meeting, Feb. 10, 1993.}

Members of the COPE Executive also acknowledged that, like the left more generally, COPE had to re-examine its political goals and vision, in conjunction with a new set of allies.\footnote{Executive Committee Workshop, Jan. 24, 1993.} However, as COPE became preoccupied with planning for the 1993 election, calls for reflection and renewal quickly took a back seat to securing the candidates and resources necessary to run an effective campaign.

\section*{7.5 1993 to 1996: COPE's Political Decline}

In 1993 there was a qualitative shift in COPE's approach to coalition-building with the Civic New Democrats. Under the watchful eye of the VDLC, COPE agreed to run a unified campaign with the CND while, at the same time, summarily rejecting another alliance proposal from the Vancouver Green Party. The COPE/CND merger was further facilitated by the election of a new set of CND leaders who were both more sympathetic to COPE and 'willing' to give up the NDP label in Vancouver civic politics.\footnote{Such a label had, of course, always been unpopular and never more so than when the NDP was in power provincially.} Just four days after the May, 1993 Community Directions conference,\footnote{Although much shorter and less well attended, "Community Directions IV" nevertheless assured participants of their role in developing COPE's election platform ("Welcome to Community Directions IV," May 15, 1993).} COPE and the CND
established a joint "strategic planning team" comprised of equal numbers of both groups, and no one else.\textsuperscript{71} At the September Annual General Meeting, the new President of the CND happily informed COPE members that "for the first time we will have unity of the left."\textsuperscript{72}

Nevertheless, a minority on the COPE Executive continued to argue that COPE had to expand its notion of "the left" beyond the CND and the VDLC.\textsuperscript{73} As part of a strategy to bring this about, they developed and obtained approval for an affirmative action policy to ensure gender parity and diversity on the 1993 slate of candidates.

Just over 50\% of Vancouver's residents are women; about 27\% are visible minorities; at least 10\% are gay or lesbian; and approximately 10\% are people with disabilities. If COPE is to create a true vision for the future of the city which has resonance with its voters, the COPE slate of candidates for municipal office should reflect these proportions.\textsuperscript{74}

As a direct result of this policy and an extensive "candidate search," half of the candidates nominated by the joint COPE-CND meeting in 1993 were women, while the complete slate was comprised of a wide range of cultural backgrounds, one person with an obvious physical disability, as well as a gay and lesbian contingent. The largest nominating meeting in COPE's history and the most "diverse" slate of candidates to date did not, however, translate into votes for "COPE '93." Two candidates were elected to each of the School and Parks Boards, and only one rookie Councillor was successful. Moreover, many of the candidates recruited to run in the 1993 election—and their sometimes substantial support networks—were never seen around COPE again. As one COPE member recalled about one constituency that had been drawn into the 1993 campaign,

...people walked away and just never identified again...There really wasn't anything there to sustain their activities...COPE never caught on about how all these communities evolved. COPE never really understood that the gay

\textsuperscript{71}Special Executive meeting, May 19, 1993.
\textsuperscript{72}Annual General Meeting, Sept. 8, 1993.
\textsuperscript{73}Executive Committee meeting, June 9, 1993.
community is just not kind of a quirky group that we should feel sorry for. They didn't understand the power and influence that it was building...75

This chain of events caused a great deal of debate within COPE about the wisdom of running a campaign based on a very narrow version of "unity." Thus, while some on the COPE Executive blamed the poor results on low voter turnout, an unpopular NDP provincial government, and demographic changes in Vancouver, both the remaining elements of COPE's "old guard" and the new social movement activists questioned the wisdom of the alliance COPE had struck with the CND.

To some, the 1993 merger represented an unprecedented sacrifice of COPE's autonomy and it's formerly uncompromising stand on the needs of the majority of Vancouverites. According to one of COPE's founders,

We have always had a program showing clearly what we stood for. It has been consistent over the years. It was never based on what is most likely to elect us. It was based on what we believe in. We stood or fell by that program...The intention of COPE when it was founded was that it would be an umbrella group uniting all progressive civic reform forces. Our success in that goal has varied over the years. Our efforts to work with the NDP which is a formalized political body of the left...have never been as successful as we wished...Co-operative efforts must continue. Yet we must not relinquish our distinctive roles. We must stay with our concept of being an umbrella to unite all progressive civic reform forces. We must not become the political arm of any one political party...76

For new social movement activists, the alliance with the CND merely presented an appearance of "coalition-building," while draining energy away from attempts to broaden COPE's grassroots base or, in the words of one COPE member, "people have the naive hopefulness that if you call it a coalition it will be one. You can call it a toaster, it doesn't make it one. You have to build a coalition. And it takes time."77 As stated in a summary of a COPE post-election workshop,

75COPE interview C16.
77COPE interview C12.
There is a need to distinguish between the content and process of building unity between COPE and the CND and the process of building 'the coalition' of communities... Another underlying question was raised... the degree to which COPE is an electoral machine and/or an organization that is part of an on-going social movement. 78

Through the remainder of 1994, COPE was preoccupied with three main tasks. First, the COPE '93 coalition had incurred a sizable campaign debt, and a number of fundraising strategies were employed to retire it. Secondly, the COPE Executive developed a restructuring proposal aimed at streamlining day-to-day organizational maintenance while, theoretically, freeing up more time and resources for substantive political work. It was also hoped that the proposed "committee structure" would be attractive to civic activists more interested in the issues than COPE or the more procedural aspects of electoral politics. Finally, in November of 1994, COPE launched a "Wards for '96" campaign.

As discussed above, a ward system had long been a key objective of COPE. The purpose of this campaign was two-fold. First, COPE wanted to pressure the NPA civic government to include yet another question on the wards issue on the 1996 civic ballot. Secondly, the wards campaign was intended to serve as a political vehicle to raise COPE's profile and mobilize supporters prior to the next election campaign. "Wards for '96" consisted of the fairly conventional tactics of media releases, a petition drive among the COPE membership, contact with community organizations, and several "petition blitz days" on which a group of COPE members engaged in street-level campaigning.

Despite launching the wards campaign and restructuring the Executive Committee, COPE was still having a great deal of difficulty securing a sufficient number of active members to take a proactive role in the politics of the city, stay in touch with various constituencies, or engage in extraparliamentary activity if that had, in fact, been desired. The core group involved in the organization had, in fact, diminished to an historical low.

As one of the handful of Executive members responsible for sustaining COPE through this period explained,

As I say that its becoming more of a collective, at the same time the group has become much smaller. I remember going to my first COPE Executive meeting and there would be 30 people sitting around the table, and now there's about ten...Its sort of ironic on some level that in the early days, when I joined, the Executive was sort of anybody who wanted to participate. At the AGMs they'd say "Who wants to be on the Executive," and you'd put your name up and they'd say "Oh, okay, let's have everybody rather than having any votes, which was in some ways a way to involve people and make them feel that they were participating in an ongoing way in the organization. Now we did restructure significantly...and the group is much smaller—the thought being that we would develop more committees and it would be more levels and that people wouldn't be asked to come to so many meetings where nothing much happened in between the meetings, other than sort of general discussion. I'm not sure that has been particularly successful—we have some committees that function, but we haven't broadened ourselves in the way we had anticipated...and more and more we're seen as an electoral machine, party, thing, every three years and less and less sort of a grassroots organization where people, where much happens in between elections. Frankly, I don't know whether COPE has ever been any more than that...but the actual organizational tasks that we do undertake seem to be more and more focused on the election, either past or coming up, and less and less on actually going out to organize people in the community.79

As I reported in Chapter Six, although most of the COPE members I interviewed agreed that COPE needed to change, they differed substantially on the kind of change required. Disagreement on the issue of political style was, in fact, a source of considerable tension within the group. Eleven of 34 respondents (32%) explicitly referred to what they saw as both necessary and positive adjustments to internal structures and processes within COPE. Equally distributed among activists whose political heritage was with the CP, the NDP, COPE, or social movements, typical responses described COPE's "old style" as very hierarchical and centralized, with clear distinctions between "leaders" and "followers," and the "new style" as less hierarchical and more consensus-oriented.

79COPE Interview C22.
There's definitely an old guard...[whose] attitude was and is "you create a programme and carry it forward." You lead and expect people to follow...I'm more interested in a more participatory form of democracy, democracy that involves people, and there are lots of ways to do that...The reason people aren't involved politically is because they know by experience that their input isn't valued.80

Others pointed to a perceived shift in the locus of progressive activism away from the institutionalized structures of representative democracy towards informal, grassroots level participation, and to the difficulty COPE has had in responding to that transition.

I see most of the activity in the city not at a partisan level, not even necessarily in the trade unions. The structures by which people participate in their communities look different. I don't think we've fully made that transition yet. And I think we have people in COPE who both come from a much more centralized style of doing politics, and people in COPE who come from a much more grassroots, coalition, let a thousand ideas bloom kind of politics—and I think there's tension there...it's pretty obvious.81

Conversely, while agreeing that COPE has benefited from a more transparent and democratic style of operating, seven of the 34 respondents (21%)—three of whom had helped to found the group—felt that change had gone much too far, with too few tangible results.

There was at least some validity about it not being open enough, whatever that means. But rather than tinkering with the organization and addressing that one bit, they've, rather than tuning the engine, they threw out the entire engine and put in a different one. And that didn't work. Got rid of the paint colour red and made it yellow, and that didn't work. Changed the name of the vehicle, that didn't work.82

Interview responses about the satisfactions individuals had derived from their involvement in COPE are also revealing with regard to inter-organizational disagreements on the question of political style. Answers to this question were highly polarized between those who evaluated their experience in primarily parliamentary terms, and those for whom extraparliamentary or non-electoral outcomes were most significant. Sixteen of 36

80COPE interview C07.
81COPE interview C25.
82COPE interview C34.
respondents (44%) pointed to COPE's performance in the electoral sphere as cause for satisfaction. Specifically, they were pleased that COPE had achieved a degree of electoral success. They were also satisfied that at least some of COPE's policy had been implemented by civic government. Finally, the very survival of COPE as an electoral vehicle for progressive movements in Vancouver was also viewed as satisfying. Six of nine with CP histories, two of five from the NDP, fully eight of the nine whose primary political activity had always been with COPE, and only three of the 13 movement activists gave answers like the following.

The people who were elected put a stamp on what it would be possible, how you could be as a progressive person in civic politics in Vancouver that makes a great deal of room for other people to come along, and to stand for office and to do good work in opposition and, I hope, some day in government.83

We have had some good wins...and I guess the most satisfying thing is that we demonstrated that you could be explicitly left and socialist and have electoral success.84

In contrast, seventeen interview respondents (47%), including ten of the 13 movement activists, gave extraparliamentary reasons for being satisfied with their involvement in COPE. The ability to engage with alternative political principles and practices, to give voice to traditionally marginal issues, working closely with like-minded and inspiring individuals, as well as participating in coalition-building were all cited as ways in which respondents were satisfied.

The fact that we're still here and we have a voice is particularly satisfying. It's not as loud and as forceful as I think it needs to be but, given the times, I think we did pretty well.85

Discussion in the interviews about disappointments showed a similar degree of polarization among the COPE members I talked to. On this question 19 of 34

83 COPE interview C12.
84 COPE interview C08.
85 COPE interview C22.
(56%)—four of the nine from the CP, four of the five with NDP connections, six of nine COPE activists, and four of thirteen movement activists—were displeased with COPE's electoral performance and recent inability to mount an effective election campaign, while 23 (68%)—five CP, three NDP, three COPE, and 12 of 13 movement activists—mentioned such non-electoral problems as the lack of democratic process in COPE, the slow pace of change within the organization, and COPE's increasing preoccupation with electoral politics. Indeed, for at least one "movement-oriented" COPE member who had tried extensively to effect change from within the mainstream electoral arena, the experience had been so disappointing that it was deemed futile.

I'm very interested in participating in a functional democracy. That's the sort of thing I say these days. I'm interested in helping to create one. But I firmly believe that the kind of change that I'm interested in won't come from above, and I've fallen into the trap myself, and seen other people fall into the trap, of thinking that it can. "If we take over the wheels of power then we can dismantle them," and I just don't think it's true. I don't think it's possible. I've seen that kind of attitude be perverted far too often. If you achieve power in the electoral system the way that it works, then that becomes your raison d'etre politically. You become more committed to it. I've seen that happen lots of times with people in the NDP. I'm seeing it happen a bit with COPE. They haven't achieved power, so it hasn't happened so much.87

Like the above respondent, most of those interviewed continued to distinguish between COPE and the CND, although there were signs that here, too, differences of opinion were emerging. On the one hand, seventeen of 27 respondents (63%), who commented on differences between COPE and the CND with respect to the two organizations' efforts to represent the needs and demands of community groups and social movement constituencies, stated that COPE had a far superior record, because it was more stridently on the political left, and because it was more organically connected to the movements. The CND, in contrast, was described as "reformist," and more concerned

86 Three individuals cited both electoral and non-electoral disappointments.
87 COPE interview C07.
with getting elected than with nurturing links in the extraparliamentary arena. The following are comments typical of respondents holding this view.

The people in COPE operate far more outside the power structures and have more progressive politics, or are more willing to voice their progressive politics.\textsuperscript{88}

In terms of the people who were involved in COPE, they were much more people who were connected substantially to grassroots politics.\textsuperscript{89}

At least the old COPE brought together people who had already done their work in the communities... it was a coalition of activists that were there for very good reason...\textsuperscript{90}

On the other hand, seven of the 27 (26\%) felt that there was no longer much difference between the two groups, as COPE had become much more of a mainstream party in recent years, "caught up in the idea that the only way they can promote change is through having power at City Hall."\textsuperscript{91} Thus, while 24 of the 27 (89\%) respondents who answered this question saw COPE's extraparliamentary links as very important and positive, a number of them thought the organization was abandoning this aspect of its heritage.

Their assessment is, in fact, validated by COPE's serious shortage of active members in the interim between the 1993 and 1996 elections. Several direct pleas were made through 1995 and 1996 for more active members, but to no avail. Thus, COPE spent the remainder of the inter-election period focusing on fundraising and engaging in only a minimal level of political activity. What organizational resources were available were further tapped in the fall of 1995 when another round of negotiations with the CND began. Much like 1993, suggestions that COPE should consider opening the "coalition" to groups in addition to the CND were rejected. Instead, despite the Chair's assurance

\textsuperscript{88}COPE interview C30.
\textsuperscript{89}COPE interview C23.
\textsuperscript{90}COPE interview C06.
\textsuperscript{91}COPE interview C11.
that, "[c]ontinuing COPE's 27 year history of building unity on the left, we are working to
develop a broad coalition to bring progressive government to Vancouver," another two-
way campaign planning mechanism was established. Comprised of COPE and CND
representatives, the "Election Planning Committee" was charged with devising a strategy
and platform to which future candidates would be expected to adhere.

As I argued in Chapter Six, the 1996 election campaign was highly inconsistent
with COPE tradition. Rather than developing detailed policy proposals, COPE's platform
focused on discrediting the NPA. As an attempt to counter voter apathy, the strategy
failed miserably. Many voters had little sense of what COPE's political agenda or vision
was, while the roughly one third of eligible voters who did cast their ballots were polarized
by a unified right and a fractured left. Two new parties—VOICE and the Labour Welfare
Party—in addition to the Green Party captured a substantial number of votes that would in
earlier times have gone to COPE. In a powerful indictment of the strategic choices made
over the past two campaigns, COPE did not elect a single representative.

Three meetings were called after the 1996 election to try to reach some
understanding of what went wrong and what should be done in the future—two for
candidates, the COPE and CND Executives, and campaign workers, and one for COPE's
general membership and other supporters. Participants in the June meeting were
presented with a summary of the very familiar themes arising from the two earlier forums.

The campaign did not reflect the vision, issues, or organizational base of a
viable, on-going political organization...We can only know the real interests
of people who value the city as a living and working community when we
are working with them around their ongoing struggles...Our fundraising
and volunteer base was limited or 'borrowed' (from NDP and candidates'

---

93 Post-election Meeting, Nov. 27, 1996; Post-election 1996 Meeting, Feb. 15, 1997; "Is there a Future for
COPE?: A Meeting of Members, Friends and Supporters of COPE," June 22, 1997. There were
suggestions at the November meeting that "post-mortem" discussions should immediately be opened up to
anyone who wanted to participate, but they were declined in favour of developing an internal analysis
first. Given the relatively low attendance at the June meeting, interest in COPE's future had clearly
subsided by that time.
lists) because we had not broadened the base in the years prior to the election. Our lack of ongoing work resulted in fewer contacts among various groups and communities. In summary: COPE needs to view elections as one aspect of ongoing work to create a more livable city, rather than viewing "outreach" as an aspect of conducting elections...[and COPE] needs to assert its independence from the provincial NDP and explore co-operation with other groups opposing the NPA.94

Although all three meetings featured lengthy and frank discussions, none of them produced either a clear consensus of opinion, or concrete suggestions for any new direction that COPE might take—other than a proposal for hiring a full-time COPE "organizer" and opening a street-level office, which hardly seemed feasible given the current state of COPE's resources and electoral prospects.

7.6 Summary

In addition to challenging the mainstream political agenda, new social movements have called for alternative ways of "doing politics" that are less formal, hierarchical, and instrumental. Ideally, social movements are signs of a desire by many progressive activists in Western capitalist democracies to engage in a more consensus-oriented, participatory, and decentralized political style that is, in large measure, viewed as an end in itself. As I have argued, however, alternative political practices have not fared very well in the conventional political arena. My analysis of COPE's political style in this chapter further confirms a sense that participation in mainstream electoral institutions, in their current form, may not be a fruitful strategic component of a counter-hegemonic project. Rather, such a strategy runs the risk of de-mobilizing extra-parliamentary movements, as radical impulses are channeled towards more conventional processes.

COPE's early organizational structure and strategic orientation were derived from its Communist Party roots. Thus, despite repeated insistence to the contrary, throughout the first two decades of its history, COPE was very much a political party in everything...
but name. In fact, COPE seems to have been a highly centralized and hierarchical organization, while the democratic reforms it advocated for Vancouver civic government fell well within conventional boundaries. COPE was not, however, simply a party like any other. During this period, COPE's distinctiveness came from the central role played in the organization by dedicated activists who did not distinguish between parliamentary and extraparliamentary politics—the two were inseparable. Thus, while COPE was not itself engaged in extraparliamentary mobilization, it was well connected to a number of social movements via members with dual commitments.

It was not until the late-1980s that COPE began to experiment with alternative structures and processes, spurred on by the entry of new social movement activists into the organization. This foray into a more movement-oriented style was cut short, however, when COPE found itself with a serious organizational deficit following the demise of the Communist Party of Canada. Rather than channeling scarce resources into reconstituting its grassroots movement base, COPE opted for an electoral strategy that placed the group in a formal partnership with the Civic New Democrats. Although this strategy may have provided COPE with certain kinds of needed resources, it was clearly not successful in either electoral or non-electoral terms.

In the next and concluding Chapter, I draw out the implications of my analysis of COPE's "content" and "style" for a broader understanding of contemporary progressive politics. On a theoretical level, I discuss the results of my case study of COPE in terms of a neo-Gramscian perspective on counter-hegemonic politics. On an empirical level, I place my research in the context of the changing nature of local politics in a post-Fordist era. Finally, I discuss the implications of COPE's particular experience for both the theory and practice of counter-hegemonic politics.
CHAPTER EIGHT
PROGRESSIVE POLITICS IN A POST-FORDIST ERA

8.1 Introduction

*I think a lot of people on the left went through a lot of disillusionment over the last several years. I think disillusionment is a good thing. I don't think illusion is a good thing.*

—COPE Interview C19

I began this dissertation by explaining that, in 1993, COPE—the Committee of Progressive Electors—changed its name to the Coalition of Progressive Electors. This was not a mere cosmetic adjustment. Rather, the semantic shift was symbolic of two key influences on COPE's historical development: an attempt to craft a viable electoral organization, and a desire to take up the goals and concerns of a 'new generation' of activists. From my vantage point as a sociologist, COPE appeared as a microcosm of contemporary progressive politics. With its roots in the Communist Party and the trade union movement, its unrelenting quest to forge a coalition of progressive actors in the local political sphere, its tense and ambivalent relationship with the social democratic left, and its tentative responses to the aspirations of new social movements, COPE is confronted with many of the perplexities facing the left in these difficult and uncertain times of post-Fordist economic and social transformation.

Theoretically, students of radical social change have been compelled to rethink their analytical frameworks in light of the far-reaching economic and political changes that have taken place in the capitalist West. In particular, as both a general theory and a guide for action, orthodox Marxism has been the subject of much critique. An exclusive emphasis on class struggle as the only catalyst for social change, combined with a teleological assumption that capitalism's inherent contradictions would inevitably lead to revolution, rendered Marxism inadequate to the task of understanding the new subjects and objects of protest that began to emerge in the late 1960s. New Social Movement
theory (NSM) has attempted to overcome Marxism's apparent failings by approaching new movements on their own terms—asking why and under what conditions they have been constituted, and what implications they have for a revolutionary project. NSM theory has alerted us to the significance of the distinct goals and collective identities taken up by diverse new social movements such as feminism, ecology, and anti-racism, as well as furnishing us with a much broader conception of "the political." However, in its exuberance over the radical potential of new social movements, NSM theory has overstated the distinction between so-called "new" and "old" social movements, while contributing little to concrete questions of strategy. Intentionally or otherwise, as a theory of contemporary protest and social change, the NSM approach is incomplete. What is needed, then, is an analytical lens that can re-focus the meaning and pertinence of social movements of both "old" and "new" varieties within the current economic and political conjunctture.

I have argued that a neo-Gramscian approach is able to grasp the multiplicity of identities, power relations, and sites of conflict in contemporary capitalist societies. Neo-Gramscian theory allows us to examine critically the movements of our times as well as ask pointed questions about revolutionary procedure. In concrete terms, a neo-Gramscian analysis is concerned with the process of coalition-formation—the often perilous, always fragile, but potentially workable creation of a broadly inclusive and widely endorsed counter-hegemonic project. A neo-Gramscian approach also provides some practical clues as to how a collective 'we' comprised of diverse social movements might proceed from the ever-harder realities of 'here' to a more just and democratic 'there.' Counter-hegemonic politics encompasses all spheres of society. A counter-hegemonic project must directly challenge established centres of power in the economy and the state—at global, national, and local levels—as well as reconceiving the very "rules of the game," the accepted ways in which we as human beings think and act in relation to one another, and to the natural environment.
In the advanced capitalist democracies, the task of building electoral coalitions has generally been taken up by political parties that have either tried to gain the active support of social movements, or dismissed their concerns as unwelcome 'distractions' from the main goal of winning state power (Boggs, 1996: 237; Flacks, 1994). As the limitations of conventional party politics became increasingly apparent, and as new social movements began to challenge established political boundaries, many experiments in constructing a "new" kind of party have taken place. In this dissertation I have examined COPE as an instance of a "new politics" or movement-oriented party. My research has focused on COPE's efforts to articulate "new" and "old" political agendas, to adopt a new social movement style within the realm of "normal politics" and, ultimately, to serve as a counter-hegemonic vehicle within the local political context. Again, I have structured this inquiry around three questions:

1. what kinds of internal disputes and struggles have arisen as a result of COPE's attempts to integrate diverse social movement concerns during different periods of the organization's development, and how have these struggles been resolved?

2. are the transformative goals and practices of new social movements compatible with the instrumental requisites of an electoral organization?

3. what are the future prospects for the convergence of diverse social movement goals and practices within a political party?

8.2 Thematic Struggles and Their Irresolution

After providing a political-economic and historical contextualization of the COPE case study in Chapters Four and Five, I directly addressed the first two research questions in Chapters Six and Seven respectively. In Chapter Six, I examined "the challenge of solidarity" in terms of the substantive "content" of COPE's political agenda and the constituencies to which COPE has appealed for support. Through a reading of COPE's
archival documents, observation of the group, and interviews with COPE activists, I found that, throughout its history, COPE has tried to integrate "old" and "new" issues in its policy and campaign platforms. COPE has also consistently attempted to "reach out" to a wide variety of social movement constituencies. However, my analysis also revealed that the articulation of "new" and "old" within COPE has not been a smooth process. Nor has it been a balanced one.

Through the first phase of the COPE's history, from 1968 to 1979, the group's materials showed an overwhelming preoccupation with material needs and redistributive issues, and with attracting the support of Vancouver's "working people" through the trade union movement. While COPE occasionally acknowledged additional concerns and constituencies that could not be easily subsumed under a class perspective—notably the demands of ethnic minorities, the women's movement, and environmentalists—such overtures were largely overshadowed by the "main" economic programme and appeals to the working class.

In the early 1980s, with Vancouver in the midst of a recession and forced to deal with Social Credit "restraint" initiatives, COPE's primary substantive focus was again, and quite understandably, economic development, job creation, and the preservation of municipal services. However, economic recovery did not command all of COPE's attention at this time. In comparison with the previous decade, COPE gave more attention to the concerns and issues of new social movements. COPE publicly expressed support for social movements in addition to labour, and developed concrete policy proposals aimed at combating sexism, racism, and other forms of oppression. With the onset of a new development boom in the late 1980s, COPE's programme began to reflect growing popular concern with preserving the quality of life in Vancouver. Although economic proposals remained on COPE's political agenda, issues of "livability," the environment, and "inclusion" now received some prominence. But given the productivism
of the group's economic policies, the new social movement agenda remained relatively marginal in COPE's overall vision of the city.

By the early 1990s, however, there was a qualitative shift in the position of new social movement issues and constituencies in COPE's political programme. COPE began the decade with a concentrated effort to make the organization more reflective of, and attractive to, the full range of progressive actors in Vancouver. The formation of a semi-autonomous forum on the urban environment and the 1990 Community Directions conference were clear signs that COPE was taking changes in the political landscape seriously, and that more new social movement activists were becoming involved in the organization. This was also the time in which the Communist Party of Canada—a key organizational ally and primary source of COPE's active membership—was embroiled in a major internal debate that would end in its effective dissolution.

The erosion of COPE's steadfast, if narrow, socialist identity propelled the organization into an 'identity crisis' over who and what it could claim to, or wanted to, represent. Rather than directly confront the crisis, however, COPE opted to side-step it by "borrowing" the electoral constituency of the provincial New Democrats, who had been elected to the provincial legislature in 1991. Upon entering into a formal alliance with the CND, COPE placed itself on a mainstream trajectory that appealed to neither its traditional support base, nor to new social movements. The end result was a resounding defeat at the polls in 1993 and 1996.

Thus, in answer to my first research question—

what kinds of internal disputes and struggles have arisen as a result of COPE's attempts to integrate diverse social movement concerns during different periods of the organization's development, and how have these struggles been resolved?

—the analysis indicates that COPE has, indeed, engaged in numerous attempts to articulate the claims and demands of "new" and "old" social movements within its political programme, but these efforts have been uneven in different periods of the organization's
history, with a material and class focus most often taking precedence. Furthermore, when it became clear that COPE had to modify its identity in correspondence with changes occurring in Vancouver's political economy, and within its own ranks, the group opted for a mainstream programme lacking in either "new" or "old" radical content. In effect, COPE's deradicalization amounted to a denial rather than a resolution of substantive political dilemmas.

COPE's experience with attempting to integrate "old" and "new" movements and issues is not unique. Recalling my review of Eurosocialism in France, Greece, and Spain, the Slow-Growth Coalition in San Francisco, and Burlington's Progressive Coalition, it would appear as though electoral coalitions like COPE have much in common. All such coalitions acknowledge the desirability of encompassing a wide range of movement constituencies and issues, as well as the necessity of constructing durable bridges between disparate movements. However, they also seem to have a great deal of difficulty building and sustaining equitable movement alliances. Moreover, under hostile economic and political conditions, electoral coalitions have a strong tendency to either retreat to a narrow agenda that once again privileges some voices over others, or to capitulate to a mainstream political agenda that precludes radical discourse of any form. In both instances, solidarity and electability suffer, while a counter-hegemonic project is all but abandoned.

In Chapter Seven I took up the question of the compatibility of electoralist and new social movement political "styles." I examined COPE's organizational structure and political strategies in order to determine whether or not, and in what ways, COPE could be considered a "new politics" party. In this respect, my analysis revealed a general lack of fit between the radical democratic impulses of new social movements and COPE's political practices. Throughout most of its history, COPE functioned as a typical left-wing party, albeit of a communist rather than a social democratic variety. From the organization's founding in 1968 through to the late 1980s, COPE advocated electoral
reform and citizen participation that would have merely improved rather than fundamentally altered the workings of civic political institutions. COPE's frequently expressed concern about increasing the group's "year round" activity was primarily couched in electoralist terms. Likewise, persistent attempts to unite the progressive left in Vancouver had a strong electoralist flavour. COPE clearly saw the formal political sphere as the key site of the political process. Throughout most of the 1970s and 1980s COPE saw itself as the leader on Vancouver's left, while its primary strategic objective was to win municipal elections.

There is evidence of two inter-organizational challenges to COPE's established strategies and modus operandi. In the early 1970s, a group of self-identified representatives of new social movements attempted to open COPE's policy formation and decision-making structures to a broader range of input, and to expand the strategic emphasis to include extraparliamentary mobilization. These proposals and their originators were summarily rejected by COPE's leadership. The second challenge came in the late 1980s and was much more successful, for a time. Beginning in 1989, COPE engaged in a series of discussions about democratizing and increasing active participation in internal processes and procedures. Over the next few years, COPE formally adopted a number of organizational and tactical principles that strongly reflected the political sentiments associated with new social movements. However, this tentative turn towards a movement style was sharply reversed after COPE struck a formal alliance with the Civic New Democrats in 1993. From this point onwards, COPE took on even more of the trappings of a conventional political party.

Yet despite the organization's strategic preoccupation with winning elections and its hierarchical and centralized organizational structure, COPE was, for much of its history, somewhat unique among conventional political parties. Dedicated members of the Communist Party lent COPE a direct link to many progressive organizations in Vancouver, while carrying a substantial share of the burden of ongoing organizational
maintenance. Other community activists—most notably from the Downtown Eastside Resident's Association—augmented COPE's profile as a grassroots organization. Through the dual (or multiple) commitments of COPE's core membership, the group was able to maintain some semblance of an extraparliamentary presence. In the 1990s, with many of the communists and their allies either retired or disaffected, COPE was left with a serious deficit in active membership. Entering into a coalition with the CND was seen as the only way to secure the resources required to mount election campaigns in 1993 and 1996. But, while the campaign machine ran with great efficiency, few in Vancouver were compelled to vote for the new "mainstream" COPE.

As we saw in Chapter Two, rather than winning elections, the role of "new politics" or movement-oriented parties is conceived as one of highlighting the limitations and shortcomings of existing political processes while, at the same time, demonstrating through their organizational structures and practices that alternatives are not only imaginable but possible. Ideally, movement-parties have an expressive rather than instrumental view of the political process, and see participation in elections as only one component of political activism. Obviously, for most of its history COPE cannot be considered a "new politics" party. While for a short time COPE did show strong signs of transformation in that direction, by continuing to prioritize an electoral strategy COPE was unable to proceed further along a movement path. In its most recent phase, COPE appears to have adopted an exclusively electoralist focus.

COPE's mainstream strategic turn is not unfamiliar to observers of the so-called "new politics" parties. As we saw with the cases reviewed in Chapter Two—the German Green Party, Santa Monicans for Renters' Rights, and the Montreal Citizen's Movement—when they enter the realm of "normal politics," movement-parties encounter heavy pressure to conform with conventional practices; that is, to refashion themselves into pragmatic and efficient electoral machines. And, when they take an instrumental approach to the electoral process, they forfeit their radical role. Thus, based on my review
of relevant literature and my case study of COPE, an answer to the second research question—

are the transformative goals and practices of new social movements compatible with the instrumental requisites of an electoral organization?

—would seem to be, no, they are not. This initial negative conclusion needs, however, to be immediately qualified. The radical democratic objectives and practices of new social movements cannot be incorporated within an electoral organization whose primary raison d'être is winning elections. As I argued above, a strategy to gain state power remains a crucial component of a counter-hegemonic project but, to serve as a counter-hegemonic vehicle, a progressive political party cannot play by the established rules of the game. That is, unless they explicitly counter the goals and procedures of mainstream electoral politics with workable democratic alternatives, movement-parties run the risk of demobilizing progressive opposition.

In the final analysis, a systematic examination of COPE's "content" and "style" shows that, in its present form, COPE cannot be viewed as a counter-hegemonic force in Vancouver politics, although its particular experience is instructive nonetheless. Analysis of COPE reinforces the argument that a counter-hegemonic project requires a substantive synthesis of movement visions, both "old" and "new." COPE's experience also underscores the need to view electoral and extra-parliamentary struggles as twin components of a counter-hegemonic political strategy. Finally, as I explain below, an examination of COPE's historical evolution underscores the close relationship between "content" and "style" in progressive politics. As indicated in Table 8.1, the various tendencies and shifts within COPE that I documented above have proceeded simultaneously.
Table 8.1 "Content" and "Style" in COPE's Political History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>The &quot;Old&quot; and the &quot;New&quot; in COPE's Political Programme</th>
<th>Party and Movement in COPE's Political Style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1968-1979</td>
<td>* preoccupation with economic development, redistribution of material resources, and appeals to working class constituency via the trade union movement</td>
<td>* electoralist strategy focusing on electoral reform, increasing COPE's &quot;year round&quot; presence, and uniting the civic left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Party Building&quot;</td>
<td>* some relatively insignificant attempts to address issues arising from feminists, &quot;youth,&quot; and &quot;ethnic communities,&quot; and appeals to new social movement identities</td>
<td>* hierarchical and centralized organizational structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* effort to make COPE more open and to give more attention to extra-parliamentary mobilization soundly defeated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-1989</td>
<td>* began by prioritizing economic recovery, job creation, resistance to Socred restraint agenda; stress on material issues and alternative economic policies</td>
<td>* proceeding as above, unchallenged, until 1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COPE in Office</td>
<td>* also made some concerted attempts to reflect the interests of constituencies other than labour; support for extra-parliamentary coalitions, employment equity, equal pay for work of equal value</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* in the late 1980s continued to address the effects of the recession, but also responded to growing concern with &quot;livability&quot; and a new emphasis on equality and inclusion; environmental issues also given some prominence</td>
<td>* 1989 marks a new round of discussion about internal structure and procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* tentative adoption of a number of practices and tactics associated with new social movements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 8.1 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>The &quot;Old&quot; and the &quot;New&quot; in COPE's Political Programme</th>
<th>Party and Movement in COPE's Political Style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990-1992</td>
<td>* more concerted effort to include and attract a wider range of constituencies and interests; dropped the exclusive reference to the VDLC and labour</td>
<td>* strongest challenges to hierarchical leadership structure and traditional electoralist strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* &quot;identity crisis&quot; about who in Vancouver the group could claim to, or wanted to, represent</td>
<td>* debate and implement more movement-oriented initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* intensification of debate about the relationship with the Civic New Democrats and the provincial NDP in government</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blending &quot;Old&quot; and &quot;New&quot;/Tentative Steps Beyond the &quot;Party&quot; Line</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-1996</td>
<td>* major &quot;outreach&quot; effort; name change from &quot;Committee&quot; to &quot;Coalition&quot;; blend of &quot;old&quot; and &quot;new&quot; in lead-up to Community Directions conference</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* struck a formal alliance with the CND under the &quot;COPE 93&quot; banner</td>
<td>* difficulty in attracting and maintaining an active support base pushes COPE to strike an electoral alliance with the CND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* &quot;identity crisis&quot; continues</td>
<td>* COPE's &quot;style&quot; now mimics that of a conventional political party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* struck another electoral alliance with the CND under the &quot;COPE&quot; banner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* 1996 campaign evaluated as &quot;negative&quot; and as a &quot;non-programme&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COPE's Political Decline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 8.3 A Shifting Dualism

By drawing a conceptual distinction between "content" and "style," my analysis highlights important debates and changes that have occurred in COPE throughout the organization's long history as well as underscoring their coterminous nature. The
summary presented in Table 8.1 demonstrates that changes in the content of COPE's political programme and its desired constituencies of support coincide with challenges to COPE's established political style. In the "Party Building" phase, we see COPE's primary preoccupation with material issues and the working class, but also some relatively marginal overtures to new social movements. On the "style" side, we see that in the early 1970s COPE faced an inter-organizational challenge by a group of "new" activists. Although this challenge was defeated, COPE seems to have taken at least some aspects of the critique seriously, thus making some accommodation for new movement concerns in its platforms and policies. This 'pre-emptive' programmatic expansion proceeded throughout most of the 1980s, when COPE continued to relegate new social movement issues and constituencies to the margins of its overall political vision. By the late-1980s, faced with rising concerns about preserving the quality of life among many sectors of Vancouver's population and growing resistance by new social movements to their marginalization within the city's purported "coalition of the left," COPE began to exhibit a more qualitative transformation. The substantive shifts in both "content" and "style" were cut short, however, by COPE's decision to enter into an overtly electoral alliance with the CND in 1993. From this point onwards, COPE no longer appears as a radical organization in any meaningful respect.

Thus, the first point to be made about the analytical concepts of "content" and "style" is that they are, in fact, two sides of the same coin. Second, while "content" and "style" are interrelated, political practice requires occasional pragmatic adjustments that may foreground one element over another. Within the overall framework of a counter-hegemonic project, the relationship between content and style is a necessarily contingent one—an unfixed or shifting dualism. On the one hand, the strategic options available to progressive movements are limited by the structural landscape of a given historical moment. On the other hand, counter-hegemonic politics require the flexibility to respond to new possibilities that arise as societies change. As Epstein (1991: 22) argues,
...because movements confront different tasks at different times, there is no timeless model of correct revolutionary theory or practice; they must continually reconstruct their conceptions of revolutionary politics if they are to remain vital...developing a flexible revolutionary politics...requires not only a commitment to bringing about change but an understanding of historical context.

In COPE's case, the 1990s clearly demanded that the organization prioritize the reformulation of its political vision in keeping with the demands and interests of new social movements, as well as the reconstitution of the group's extra-parliamentary base of support. COPE had fallen out of step with the progressive currents in Vancouver, while the heavy emphasis placed on running 'successful' election campaigns left little energy with which to nurture links with movement activists and organizations. Above all, an electoralist and mainstream approach was inappropriate to the specific context in which COPE found itself in the early 1990s. This conclusion brings us to the question of what should be the strategic priorities of counter-hegemonic politics in a post-Fordist era or, as I have more succintly asked of the COPE case study—

what are the future prospects for the convergence of diverse social movement goals and practices within a political party?

8.4 Prospects for a Counter-hegemonic Politics

In an era of global post-Fordist restructuring, progressive politics at the local level is confronted with a range of possibilities and constraints. During the post-World War II period of relative affluence and stability known as Fordism, local governments were largely subordinated to centrally-organized welfare state policies that (somewhat) reduced disparities between and within localities. At the municipal level, Fordist policy "mainly focused on expanding urban infrastructure and managing large-scale urban renewal" (Mayer, 1991: 107; Jessop, 1994). By the mid-1970s, the limits of Fordism were clearly visible. As discussed above, an economic recession, coupled with growing concern about the social and environmental effects of mass production, mass consumption, and unlimited
growth, undermined Fordist accumulation strategies and modes of social regulation. Attempts to overcome the crisis of Fordism have involved a switch to a more flexible and decentralized mode of production, and experimentation with new institutional norms and practices. In the local context, post-Fordist restructuring processes have had two significant effects (Mayer, 1991). First, changes in production strategies and consumption norms have created an increasingly polarized class structure. Second, urban centres are compelled to compete with one another in the world economy.

Post-Fordist economic growth has been characterized by a decline in stable manufacturing jobs and the rise of a polarized labour force comprised, at one end, of highly-skilled, well-paid professional employment and, at the other, of insecure, unskilled consumer services and a "downgraded" manufacturing sector based on subcontracting, sweatshops, and home-work (ibid.: 108). Consumption patterns have also changed substantially. The days of standardized mass consumption have been replaced by "customized production, limited runs, and products tailored to new household types" (ibid.: 110). Post-Fordist consumption is premised upon labour-intensive production methods often carried out under precarious working conditions, reinforcing the polarized occupational and class structure.

The second consequence of post-Fordist restructuring, of particular significance in the local context, is the emergence of a global urban hierarchy in which cities must compete with one another to attract investment, state funding, skilled workers, and consumer dollars on the basis of not only the quantitative cost of doing business, but also on a host of factors affecting the overall "quality of life" (ibid.: 115; Jessop, 1994). With the downloading of many federal responsibilities, cities are increasingly forced to enter directly into the world economy. Urban centres are also faced with the challenge of coming up with new modes of social regulation to lend some coherence to local strategies for economic renewal, and it is here that local politics takes on growing significance. As
Keil and Lieser (1992: 60-1) explain, local political struggles are crucial to the process of developing a stable post-Fordist regulatory scheme.

Their capacity to impact the formation of the structured coherence of a world-city ranges from the power of transitory or more stable political projects to open attacks against the structures in formation...Local political movements have considerable leverage in this period of internationalization; they help determine the local conditions of global capitalism.

A plethora of institutionalized channels, fora, and public/private "partnerships" have been created by the post-Fordist local state to harness the knowledge and skills of local actors to the tasks of economic growth and social stability (Mayer, 1994). Because they possess resources currently required by the "entrepreneurial city," previously excluded groups now have "a real basis for negotiation" on state policy. However, as Mayer cautions, the "inclusion" of community groups in institutional arrangements with local government is a highly ambiguous process. On the one hand, community organizations entering into formalized relationships with the state have been able to achieve "concrete local improvements that are in many respects superior to anything the state or corporations have been able to achieve" (Mayer, 1991: 118). But on the other hand, such "partnerships" have also encouraged the incorporation of previously marginalized and oppositional social groups. In many instances, movement participation in these processes has allowed the local state to "prevent decisive change" and "avert actual shifts in power" (Mayer and Roth, 1995: 313).

Furthermore, the most marginalized segment of the population, a growing urban "underclass" struggling to meet the most basic necessities of life, has been largely excluded from neo-corporatist planning. Post-Fordist regulation strategies have, therefore, created new divisions and conflicts between "established" community organizations and those social groups whose needs and interests are less easily accommodated within the new political arrangements (Mayer, 1991: 119). Thus, not only is the post-Fordist city
increasingly polarized in economic terms, but new political arrangements are also producing cleavages between "outsiders and new insiders" (ibid.).

The issues taken up by oppositional movements in what Mayer terms the "dual city" are in fact quite different, and thus far the "quality of life" demands of the privileged inhabitants of the "first city" have been pursued with little regard for the needs of the marginalized underclass residing in the "second city." Moreover, emerging post-Fordist social and political divisions do not fit well with traditional partisan politics, or with familiar social movement alliances. Instead, we see instances of rather peculiar coalitions; for example, unions and manufacturers seeking to protect local industry, or conservatives joining with environmentalists in resisting threats to the urban environment posed by rapid population growth (ibid.: 120). Clearly progressive local politics needs to find a way to bring the movements of the first and second cities together, in recognition of their mutual interests. Most crucially, this will consist of

- exposing the realities of "flexibilized" exploitation, showing how environmental and economic degradation are related, and using all the room available for shaping the post-Fordist compromise to insist that the exclusion of the lower third of society is unacceptable (ibid.: 121-122).

Once again, we are confronted with the necessity of coalition-building around both material and non-material issues and of fundamentally challenging the neo-corporatist political arrangements that would deradicalize some movements and segments of the population while further marginalizing others. Thus, in the local context, the task of a counter-hegemonic political party is first, to coalesce the movements of the first and second cities, and second, to use the new "partnerships" to push post-Fordist economic and social development in a more equitable and democratic direction.

To Mayer's assessment of the local political economy we must also add that the polarized social structure and neo-corporatist political arrangements of the global city are textured by a complex matrix of oppressions that sometimes reinforce, and sometimes contradict one another (Creese and Stasiulis, 1996). Recognizing the multiple forms of
oppression provides a more adequate sense of the complexity of coalition-formation in a post-Fordist era. Men and women, dominant ethnic groups and ethnic and racialized minorities, and straights and queers, for example, do not evenly inhabit the first and second cities, and recognizing this once again underscores the need for counter-hegemonic politics to encompass new, non-oppressive cultural ideologies and discourses as well as alternative economic and political strategies.

As I noted earlier, in Vancouver the signs of post-Fordist restructuring have been well documented. Increasing interaction with the Pacific Rim, combined with an "uncoupling" from the provincial staples economy, have cast Vancouver onto the global stage as a world city. (Davis, 1993). "Quality of life" issues have become a primary impetus for economic growth in Vancouver (North and Hardwick, 1992: 231). The past three decades have seen dramatic growth in the service industry and a corresponding erosion of the manufacturing sector (Hutton, 1997; 76; Hutton, 1994: 224). And, as Barnes et. al. (1992: 188) point out, "there are clear differences within the service sector in terms of pay, benefits, working conditions, regularity of employment, and so on."

Vancouver has also experienced persistently high unemployment levels (Hutton, 1994: 231), growing poverty, and a longstanding concern with the negative effects of rapid growth, particularly with respect to housing affordability, transportation, land use, and the environment (ibid.: 231, Elliott et. al., 1999).

The rise in international migration, another aspect of post-Fordist globalization, has also had a significant impact on Vancouver's social and political landscape. The population of Vancouver has grown dramatically over the past few decades, with the vast majority of newcomers arriving from Asia. Although the skills and investment capital that recent immigrants have brought with them are recognized as key to Vancouver's buoyant economy, the less positive impacts of growth have frequently been racialized, while appeals for more equitable growth management have sometimes been delegitimized, based on their purported "racist" tone (Mitchell, 1995). There is, therefore, a pressing need for
progressive politics to delink the notion of "multiculturalism" from current strategies for capitalist expansion, in order to draw out the common issues of concern among Vancouver's diverse ethnic communities. Further, as the composition of Vancouver's population has changed, ethnic and racialized minorities are challenging with some success their historical exclusion from political institutions, as well as demanding that new issues be placed on the political agenda, including, for example, the increased need for settlement services such as English-language training and the persistence of discrimination against visible minorities in the city (Abu-Laban, 1997). Obviously, a post-Fordist counter-hegemonic project must also address these issues and demands.

8.5 Counter-hegemonic Politics at the Local Level and Beyond

Many have welcomed Vancouver's recent rise to global status. However, as Barnes et al. point out, the official civic ideology which embraces the "world city" image and Vancouver's growing interconnection with the Pacific Rim

...often fails to recognize the stresses and strains that change brings: the creation of peripheral groups of service workers, tensions between old immigrants and new, inflation in the real estate market and consequent homelessness, and congestion and environmental degradation. Clearly, to opt out is not an option. But perhaps, with political will and energy, it will be possible to redress the now seeming imbalance...(1992: 199).

Given the NPA's 'free market' orientation and close connections to corporate interests, the political will needed to guide Vancouver's development in a more equitable and sustainable direction must be sought among the oppositional movements of the city. As we have seen, while drawing together Vancouver's progressive forces into an electoral coalition has been COPE's historical mandate, the group has never been successful in this project and, in recent years, has all but disappeared from the political landscape. At this point we need to ask, first, around what issues and political forms might a durable
counter-hegemonic coalition be constructed in Vancouver and, second, whether or not COPE can serve as the organizational expression of that coalition.

In one key respect, COPE activists have foreshadowed the increasing significance of local politics through their commitment to civic activism. The sole point on which I found a consensus of opinion among the COPE members I interviewed was their sense of the importance of local activism. When asked why they joined COPE, fully 34 of the 36 explained that they saw local struggles as fundamental to achieving progressive change. As stated by one long-term COPE member,

Civic politics is where people live...neighbourhoods, community participation...issues that arise in neighbourhoods...those things are so close to people's daily lives that it's just a natural kind of place to get involved for me...social change, that's where it's felt really strongly...change that people could see and feel and become part of...and really sense that they can do something concrete in their lives and it means something for their kids and their neighbours (COPE Interview C13).

However, while the local level has taken on a greater degree of significance in the post-Fordist era, the terrain on which these activists struggle has been dramatically altered. For many with a lengthy history of political involvement in Vancouver, the ground has shifted in an as yet indeterminate way. As my interviews revealed, although almost everyone agreed that COPE needed to change, they were quite divided about the form that transformation should take. For some, change meant returning to an "old style" left praxis. For others, democratization and a shift in strategic focus to the extraparliamentary arena were in order. For yet others, entering the political mainstream was the answer to new uncertainties. I have argued that paying closer attention to the current political-economic context can assist us in making difficult choices about "what is to be done." Local politics have changed in a city enmeshed in truly global restructuring processes. An understanding of the possibilities and risks for progressive movements in a post-Fordist era can provide a new sense of direction for local politics in Vancouver.
The early COPE was closely modeled on the "old political paradigm" associated with Fordism. Under Fordism, politics was largely concerned with issues of economic growth, distribution, and security (Offe, 1985), while marginalized social groups outside the orbit of capital and organized labour had little access to institutionalized decision-making channels. COPE's programmatic and strategic emphases were centred around material concerns, "the working people" of Vancouver, and "managing" change via elected office. While never achieving a majority in civic government, for many years COPE's working class identity had sufficient appeal and meaning to establish the group as Vancouver's 'official opposition.' COPE also maintained a degree of visibility in the extraparliamentary realm through the 'many hats' worn by the group's core members.

Although there were signs as early as 1989 that COPE needed to reconstitute itself, the results of the 1993 and 1996 civic elections clearly showed that neither a move to the political centre, nor a strategic prioritization of election campaigns could draw the support of all who are opposed to the present course of socio-economic development in Vancouver. In the current conjuncture, electoral appeals to "working people" or "ordinary people" assume a homogeneity among progressive movements that is belied by the processes of economic polarization and political demobilization/exclusion, as well as by the social diversity of the city. Thus, while the pro-business NPA has recently consolidated its hold on municipal power, we have seen the fragmentation of social movement support for progressive civic politics.

In the 1996 civic election, COPE competed with the Green Party and VOICE for the socially-conscious "middle-class" vote, while both the Labour Welfare Party and the Greens attempted to represent the needs of Vancouver's economic underclass. When viewed against the backdrop of post-Fordist economic, social, and political change, it is obvious that COPE has failed to engage in the kind of coalition-building required of a counter-hegemonic party in the current moment. However, if the economic and social cleavages that make coalition-building a difficult and complex process are underscored by
an awareness of the vagaries of the local post-Fordist political economy, so too are revealed the potential points of departure for a workable counter-hegemonic project. Returning to this study's central themes of political "content" and "style," the most fruitful avenues for progressive politics in the global city appear to centre around, first, the much valued "quality of life" in Vancouver and, second, the development of democratic institutions that encourage active and meaningful participation by people in the decisions that affect their lives and the future of the communities in which they live.

"Quality of life" has been a key component in Vancouver's recent economic growth, and has been a primary factor in attracting immigrants to the city from throughout the country and the world. For long term residents and newcomers alike, preserving the quality of life in the city is a salient concern. As a political 'rallying call,' the quality of life issue has the potential to encourage dialogue and build bridges among a wide variety of progressive movements. Indeed, in the 1970s and again in the early 1990s, perceived threats to the quality of life gave rise to local movement activism in sometimes surprising places, as well as producing unexpected alliances among segments of the population.

"Quality of life" is a multifaceted concept that encompasses both material and postmaterial or cultural dimensions, and has a potential resonance with any variety of identities. Quality of life may mean adequate nourishment and a roof over one's head, it may mean freedom from the threat of violence and sexist or racist discrimination, it may mean celebrating multiculturalism or queer sexuality, and it may mean protecting the ecological integrity of Vancouver and its surrounding region. Furthermore, none of these diverse meanings of quality of life can be sustained in isolation from the others. As a political issue, quality of life seems well suited to the kind of flexibility and openness required of a counter-hegemonic vision in a city comprised of diverse interests and movements.

The second component of a counter-hegemonic project is a strategy for winning state power and, perhaps more crucially in the current moment, mobilizing
extraparliamentary movements around radical democratic and egalitarian political forms. Political discussions in Vancouver have increasingly acknowledged the limitations of municipal government as it attempts to deal with social, economic, and environmental issues that are clearly regional, if not national or global, in scope. Political debate in Vancouver has also focused on the shortcomings of the at-large electoral system, while the very low voter turnout in Vancouver civic elections—running lately at around 30 percent—is an obvious indication of widespread dissatisfaction with, or lack of interest in, established local political institutions. If a progressive coalition were to articulate this existing dissatisfaction while at the same time modeling a consensual and participatory democratic alternative, it would truly have potential as a counter-hegemonic agent. Such a coalition would participate in election campaigns in Vancouver for the purpose of publicizing and mobilizing support for alternative democratic forms at the local and regional level while also making links with—or spurring the formation of—similar organizations operating at the national and international levels.

This dual emphasis—on the "quality of life" and radical democratic practices—is informed by a neo-Gramscian perspective on contemporary revolutionary politics. "Quality of life" can serve as a point of departure for constructing a broadly inclusive "new historic bloc" comprised of a wide variety of class- and identity-based movements. A strategic focus on the formation of alternative democratic organizations conforms with the expanded notion of left political strategy signaled by the neo-Gramscian perspective. In the current context of post-Fordist restructuring, extra-parliamentary mobilization and the development of organizational structures that demonstrate, in practice, how politics could be conducted differently, appear as strategic priorities. More specifically, the role of an electoral organization—a party—in a contemporary counter-hegemonic project is to present, in concrete organizational form, a challenge to mainstream political institutions, and to increase the prominence of, and gain support for, an alternative world view.
COPE has played a valuable role in progressive politics in Vancouver for many years. Systematic and critical reflection on COPE's historical development and recent electoral decline has provided knowledge of external and internal challenges that will prove useful to progressive activists in the future. However, as a progressive political party in Vancouver, it appears as though COPE has run its course. The current political conjuncture calls for the formation of a counter-hegemonic vehicle unmarked by an "old left" legacy and entrenched loyalties to particular progressive movements. A new coalition should be able to build on the lessons of the past, while giving all potential members an equal voice in defining political agendas and strategies.

My elucidation of these potential points of departure for coalition-building and progressive political strategy is not intended to downplay the difficulties and tensions that would obviously accompany any such attempts. I have argued that local politics has become increasingly significant in a post-Fordist era, and that global restructuring has changed the local political landscape in ways that affect the prospects for the formation of a local counter-hegemonic project. The rising significance of the local is, however, but one aspect of post-Fordist restructuring. Also of great consequence for contemporary progressive politics has been the process of globalization. In particular, the movement of transnational corporations and the policies of nation states threaten at every turn the gains made by local movements. This dissertation has not directly addressed the specific economic and social 'adjustments' that have been imposed on the local level by transnational capital or higher levels of government. Nor has it documented the specific powers of local government in Vancouver to counter the demands of global capital or to implement economic and political alternatives to the neoliberal free market. As Teeple (1995: 103) argues, in many instances the neoliberal policy agenda of central states has undermined the ability of locally elected governments to "create alternatives to the 'free market' agenda." Thus, while local movements may have some capacity to reject or alter undesired developments,
What eludes them are institutional mechanisms for promoting economic redistribution, for effectively controlling the flow of capital, or for effectively determining the planning processes that shape their community's future. These processes derive from sources beyond the locality—the megacorporation and the nation state—and it is these sources that are beyond the reach of locally based mobilization (Flacks, 1994: 344).

Obviously, a counter-hegemonic strategy cannot remain confined to the local level, and an important question arising from my research is whether or not local politics can be a stimulus to the formation of a more expansive counter-hegemonic project capable of challenging and re-directing the power of transnational capital on behalf of more democratic and pluralist objectives.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

COPE Archival Documents

Intra-organizational Materials:
- Minutes of Meetings
- Correspondence
- Community Directions Conferences
- Newsletters
- Policy Documents
- Internal Analysis

Election Materials:
- Campaign Brochures
- Leaflets
- Policy Statements
- Press Releases
- Correspondence

Secondary Sources


Laxer, James (1996). In Search of a New Left: Canadian Politics After the Neoconservative Assault. Toronto: Viking.


Contemporary Social Movements in Theory and Practice. Toronto: Garamond Press


Contemporary Social Movements in Theory and Practice. Toronto: Garamond Press.


Party Politics in Canada, Hugh G. Thorburn (Ed.). Scarborough, Ont.: Prentice 
Hall Canada, Inc.

University Press.


## APPENDIX I

### COPE: Key Events and Organizational Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Key Moments and Events</th>
<th>Organizational Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Harry Rankin is elected to Vancouver City Council.</td>
<td>The original organizational structure is comprised of three tiers: membership, Steering Committee, and Executive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>The Committee of Progressive Electors is founded.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>circa 1973</td>
<td></td>
<td>Addition of Area Committees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>circa 1976</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Executive and Steering Committee are merged to form a single, expanded Executive Committee. A minimum of four membership meetings/year are required by the constitution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>COPE wins a breakthrough, electing three Councillors, two Parks Board Commissioners, and a majority of five School Board Trustees.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>COPE council candidate Bruce Yorke defeats the NPA's Philip Owen in a civic by-election.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
COPE: Key Events and Organizational Structure

1986  COPE suffers a major electoral setback, with Harry Rankin losing the race for Mayor to Gordon Campbell of the NPA, and representation for COPE down from four to two on Council, five to one in the School Board, and a steady number of three Parks Commissioners.

Late 1980s/
Early 1990s  COPE is restructured back to a large Executive Committee and a smaller group of Table Officers. One membership meeting/year is now required.

1990-1992  A bitter internal dispute in the Communist Party of Canada sends reverberations through the COPE membership.

1993  The Committee of Progressive Electors changes its name to The Coalition of Progressive Electors.

1993  Significant electoral downturn for COPE, with electoral representation decreasing from five to one on Council, and remaining the same at two each on the Parks and School Boards.

1994  Organizational restructuring to a committee structure and a number of specifically designated positions on a smaller Executive Committee.

1996  COPE is completely shut out of office in the civic election.

1997  The COPE AGM adopts a resolution to hire a full-time, paid organizer and open a store-front office.
APPENDIX II

Interview Schedule for COPE Activists

A. Political Biography:
(My questions begin on a personal level, asking when and why you joined COPE, how you feel about your experience in COPE, and what other kinds of activism you have been involved in.)

1. When did you first become involved in COPE? So, how long have you been a member?

   probe: continuous membership?

2. How would you describe your role in COPE (past and present)? What kinds of things do you ordinarily do as a ______[member/etc.] of COPE?

   probe:
   - candidate for office? elected?
   - executive member?
   - participation in key decisions
   - involvement in day-to-day (mundane) tasks,
   - centrality of COPE activism in daily life

3. Why did you join COPE? What motivated you to join COPE (reasons)? What kinds of goals or aspirations did you have when you joined COPE (what did you hope to achieve)?

   probe:
   - changes in motivations and aspirations over time (nature of change, reason for change)

4. In what ways have you been satisfied through your involvement in COPE? What factors have contributed to your feelings of satisfaction?

5. In what ways have you been disappointed by your involvement in COPE? What factors have contributed to your feelings of disappointment?

6. Besides COPE, are there any other progressive groups that you have been, or are currently active in? [If so] What were/are they?

   probe: primary focus of current activity?
B. 'Old' and 'New' Social Movements:
(The next set of questions concerns the evolution of COPE as an organization.)

7. Do you have any sense of a difference between, say, an "old style" and a "new style" of politics within COPE (i.e. differences in the way things are done, the method of operation, the manner in which things are done, or the kinds of issues or policies that are taken up)?

probe:
- has there been any passing of an 'old guard' or 'older generation'?
- (if so) how is the new crop of activists different from the old? (i.e. changes in the kinds of people who are active in COPE)

8. Some people associate COPE with the labour movement, particularly the VDLC, and communism/socialism. How would you describe the role of trade unions and "working class politics" within COPE?

probe:
- historically and at present
- does COPE support labour/working class politics? In what ways?

9. What about communism/socialism?

probe: historically and at present

10. Some people say that the 'newer' activists ("new generation", "younger") in COPE are taking the organization 'off track'. What do you think?

11. Conversely, others say that the 'older' members of COPE are 'out of touch' with the contemporary political reality. What are your thoughts on this issue?

12. What would you say have been the key events or turning points in COPE's history? How do these events help to explain the current profile of the organization?

C. Party/Movement:
(I would like to turn now to the relationship between COPE and the various social movements that are active in Vancouver.)

13. Many people draw a strong distinction between political parties and social movements. How do you feel about this distinction?

probe:
- what would you say are the differences between parties and movements? (policy and practice)
-if they say movements "lack focus", leadership, etc., probe about their thoughts about movement criticisms of traditional parties and movements as "too focused" and, therefore, exclusive rather than inclusive.

14. Where would you place COPE in terms of party/movement distinctions? [i.e. is COPE a party, a movement, or both?]

probe:
- in what ways do you see COPE as a radical/unconventional/anti-establishment political party organization?
- do you think that COPE has moved in the direction of conventional or establishment party politics? In what ways?

15. How would you describe the relationship between COPE and the various progressive social movements in Vancouver?

probe: [both substantive and processual issues]
- to what extent do COPE's policies and actions reflect the social movement agendas (i.e. would you say that COPE advances or takes up movement agendas)?
- in practice, how are the links between COPE and the various social movements actually created and maintained (specific examples)?
- different relationship between COPE and individual movements—i.e. environmentalism, feminism, First Nations, labour, etc.
- how do you think the various social movements view COPE? What do they think about COPE?

16. Do you think parties and movements should remain separate or work together in order to achieve their respective goals? Explain.

probe:
- in what ways?
- [if work together] How would you evaluate COPE's performance in this regard?
- if it was up to you, what, if anything, would you do differently?

17. Are there any issues on the horizon that could further unite or divide COPE and the various social movement constituencies ['old' and 'new']?

D. COPE and the Other 'Left' Civic Parties:
(The next set of questions focuses on COPE's relationship with the NDP and the Green Party.)
18. How would you describe the relationship between COPE and the NDP?

probe:
-civic and provincial level

19. What are the similarities and differences between the CNDP and COPE in terms of their efforts to represent the needs and demands of community groups and social movement constituencies?

20. What about the Green Party?

probe:
-COPE's relationship with?
-similarities?
-differences?

21. Some people say that having more than one progressive party on the civic scene splits the vote, allowing the NPA to retain power. Do you think it would be desirable or possible for COPE, the CNDP, and the Green Party to permanently join forces under one banner? (If so) What would that banner be? What would be the problems arising from such a coalition, if any?

E. Future Projections and Additional Comments:
(Now I want you to briefly look into your crystal ball and tell me what you foresee for COPE in the future.)

22. What, in your view, are the prospects for COPE in Vancouver municipal politics? Explain.

23. Is there anything that I've missed in this interview that you would like to add?

24. Are there any other people that you think it would be important to talk to in a study of COPE?
...Now, some final questions about your background, so I can better describe my total sample.

25. In what year were you born? 

26. How many years of formal schooling did you complete?

   ___ 0-8 years
   ___ 9-11 years (some high school)
   ___ 12 years (high school graduate)
   ___ 13-15 years (some college/university)
   ___ 16 (university graduate)
   ___ 17 or more, but without a post-graduate degree
   ___ 17 or more and masters degree
   ___ 17 or more and PhD
   ___ other (e.g., vocational training)

27. What is your principal occupation at the present time? [Get exact particulars, including whether R has a managerial/supervisory function. If retired or currently unemployed indicate below and then ask for the last main occupation. If R has two jobs determine which one is the main one and indicate both.]

   R is currently: ___ retired ___ unemployed

28. Is the organization where you work a private-sector business, a government organization, or a non-profit organization?

   ___ private-sector business: Which industry? 
   ___ government organization: Which ministry? 
   ___ non-profit [and non-government] organization:
      Specify: 

I.D. # ________

Respondent's Name: __________________________

Date: __________________________

(address & phone) __________________________
29. Are you employed by someone else, are you self-employed, or do you work without pay in a family business or firm?

_____ employed by someone else
_____ self-employed
_____ work without pay in a family firm
other ______________________

30. [If self employed or family firm] Not counting yourself or other owners, about how many people are employed in this business on a permanent basis?

_____ none
_____ one
_____ 2-9
_____ 10-24
_____ 25-49
_____ 50-99
_____ 100-499
_____ 500 or more

31. Do you belong to a trade union?

_____ no

Have you ever belonged to a union?

_____ no
_____ yes

Which one:

How active:

______________________________

_____ yes

Which one:

How active:

______________________________

32. Where would you locate yourself in terms of class background?

______________________________

33. Gender

_____ female

_____ male