

# The CCF, NPA, and Civic Change: Provincial Forces Behind Vancouver Politics 1930-1940\*

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With the exception of recent literature by political scientists Paul Tennant and Fern Miller and historian John Taylor,<sup>1</sup> the course of Vancouver's development in the 1930s has not been well documented. Canadian urban historians have dealt extensively with the urban reform movement in Toronto, Montreal, and Winnipeg, but no comparable study has been undertaken for Vancouver.<sup>2</sup> Instead, historians have focused on the pre-1929 period, portraying Vancouver's local business elites as the guiding force in Vancouver development and suggesting that municipal politics operated independent of provincial interference.<sup>3</sup>

A closer examination of civic politics during the 1930s, however, would suggest that provincial, not municipal, forces directed the course of urban politics during the key 1930s decade. While the immense influence of CPR officials, real estate promoters and commercial entrepreneurs on Vancouver's growth attests to the importance of a local business elite,

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Tennant, "Vancouver Civic Politics, 1929-1980," *BC Studies* 46 (Summer 1980): 3-27; Fern Miller, "Vancouver Civic Political Parties: Developing a Model of Party-System Change and Stabilization," *BC Studies* 25 (Spring 1975): 3-31; John Taylor, "The Urban West: Public Welfare and a Theory of Urban Development," in *Cities in the West: Papers of the Western Canadian Urban History Conference*, edited by A. R. McCormack and Ian Macpherson (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1975), pp. 286-313; "Urban Social Organizations and Urban Social Discontent: the 1930s," in *Western Perspectives I Papers of the Western Canadian Studies Conference 1973*, ed. D. J. Bercuson (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974), pp. 33-44.

<sup>2</sup> John Weaver, "'Tomorrow's Metropolis' Revisited: A Critical Assessment of Urban Reform in Canada 1890-1920," in *The Canadian City*, eds. A. Artibise and G. Stelter (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1977), pp. 393-418; "The Modern City Realized: Toronto Civic Affairs, 1880-1915," in *The Usable Urban Past*, eds. A. Artibise and G. Stelter (Toronto: Macmillan, 1979), pp. 39-72; Michael Gauvin, "The Reformer and the Machine: Montreal Civic Politics from Raymond Prefontaine to Mederic Martin," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 13(2) (Summer 1978): 16-26; Alan Artibise, *Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban Growth* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's, 1975).

<sup>3</sup> R. A. J. McDonald, "City-Building in the Canadian West: A Case Study of Eco-

this focus gives business leaders too predominant a role in Vancouver politics. Although a pro-business sentiment characterized Vancouver's development before and after 1929, it was provincial politicians, not local businessmen, who initiated the two key changes of the 1930s in Vancouver's political arena: the structural reform of Vancouver's government in 1935 and the formation of a new civic party, the Non-Partisan Association (NPA), in 1937.

Moreover, Vancouver's development was not as autonomous as has been suggested. The city is a ward of the province. Although Vancouver enjoys the special status of a separate municipal charter,<sup>4</sup> provincial decisions greatly affect it, especially in the field of finance. This was particularly obvious during the economic crisis of the depression. Constitutional arrangements left municipalities at the mercy of provincial administrators who determined the cities' duties and services as well as the amount of federal aid distributed to each city. Consequently, the imposition on Vancouver of a new structural form and a new civic party was seen by many as a natural extension of provincial control.

The Vancouver experience is somewhat unique in western Canada. While most cities had accepted a reform package by the early 1900s, Vancouver's government remained virtually unchanged until the 1930s. During that decade there were few reform advocates or campaigns; in fact, the two changes in Vancouver's political makeup happened relatively independently of one another. Although municipal reform ideology permeated civic politics, no structural reform and no new civic "non-partisan" group would have occurred without provincial interference. The province's power over the city during a financial crisis and specific political developments at the provincial as well as civic levels of government prompted provincial politicians to intervene in local affairs and alter the shape of Vancouver politics for the next forty years.

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As the thirties opened, civic and provincial politicians shared a common belief about government. Good government meant good management

conomic Growth in Early Vancouver," *BC Studies* 43 (Autumn 1979):3-28; Norbert MacDonald, "A Critical Growth Cycle for Vancouver, 1900-1914," in *The Canadian City*, pp. 142-59; Patricia Roy, "Railways, Politicians and the Development of the City of Vancouver as a Metropolitan Center 1886-1929" (MA thesis, University of Toronto, 1963).

<sup>4</sup> The Vancouver Charter is a private act of the legislature. No direct part is played by either the provincial cabinet or the ministry in charge of general municipal affairs, in the drafting and making of most amendments to the Charter. See Paul Tennant, "Vancouver Civic Politics," pp. 4-6.

based on the principles of business efficiency. Since Vancouver's incorporation in 1886 businessmen had formed the largest group on city council.<sup>5</sup> City aldermen were committed to thrift and balanced budgets and opposed any depression relief programs that might undermine individual initiative.<sup>6</sup> At the provincial level, Conservative Premier Simon Fraser Tolmie pledged his government to a "business government" philosophy and filled his cabinet with successful businessmen, many from Vancouver.<sup>7</sup> In 1932 the Conservatives commissioned a businessmen's inquiry into provincial government expenditures. In the name of greater efficiency the *Kidd Report*, as it was commonly known, proposed extreme measures of retrenchment, an end to party politics and a reduction in the number of MLAs.<sup>8</sup> Although these recommendations were never implemented, this report clearly outlined the logical, albeit anti-democratic, conclusions of a "business government" philosophy for an administration facing a financial crisis.

A common commitment to the principles of business efficiency, how-

<sup>5</sup> Paul Tennant, "From Democracy to Oligarchy: The Vancouver Civic Political Elite 1886-1980," Canadian Political Science Association Paper, Halifax, May 1981, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Borrowing was justified only if it encouraged "legitimate" development — a category that did not include relief. The relief department was under constant investigation during the thirties. In the minds of city councillors relief was a cause of economic problems, not a symptom. Programs like the reduction of wages and relief work hours, the removal of married women and Orientals from the labour market, and an "Employ Vancouver Citizens First" campaign demonstrated the conservative attitude of council members and their belief that they were not responsible for the mass of unemployed.

<sup>7</sup> Businessmen argued that a balanced budget that did not increase taxes or debt was necessary to ensure British Columbia's "international competitive position." Any expenditures on non-revenue producing undertakings was regarded as waste. See Robert Groves, "Business Government," chapter II (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1976). Cautious business and government officials agreed that the needs of industry should come before any other government activity in the province, especially with the uncertainty of world markets. Business and government had worked hand-in-hand earlier in the province's history. Groves argues that the relationship grew even closer in the 1920s.

<sup>8</sup> British Columbia, *Report of the Committee Appointed by the Government to Investigate the Finances of British Columbia* (Victoria 1932). For an analysis of the report see, Groves, "Business Government," pp. 122-58; I. D. Parker, "Simon Fraser Tolmie and the B.C. Conservative Party 1916-1933" (MA thesis, University of Victoria, 1970), pp. 108-11; Edith Dolbie, "Party History in British Columbia," in *Historical Essays in British Columbia*, eds. J. Friesen and H. K. Ralston (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1976), pp. 75-77; Martin Robin, *The Rush for Spoils: The Company Province 1871-1933* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1972), pp. 238-43; Margaret Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History* (Vancouver: Evergreen Press, 1971), pp. 446-48; T. A. Dunn, D. C. Jones, "Education, the Depression and the Kidd Report" (MA paper, University of British Columbia, 1976), pp. 1-40.

ever, did not ensure a smooth working relationship between city and province; neither did a change of party at the provincial level. Vancouver voters in the 1933 provincial election showed strong support for Thomas Dufferin Pattullo's Liberals,<sup>9</sup> but the new administration did little to alleviate existing tensions. Rather, the relationship between the two levels of government deteriorated steadily over the decade. A personality conflict between MLA Gerald Gratton McGeer and the Premier, Pattullo's persistent suspicion of big city and big business influence on provincial politics, and the financial problems created by the depression ensured that the interests of Vancouver city council and the Victoria provincial legislature would conflict.

The first rupture occurred when Pattullo did not include McGeer, a prominent Liberal and well-established lawyer, in his cabinet. McGeer, claiming he had been promised the position of Attorney-General, denounced the Liberal party and turned his attentions to Vancouver.<sup>10</sup> In December 1934, while still an MLA, he was elected mayor with the biggest landslide victory in civic history. As mayor and MLA, McGeer became the major link between provincial and civic governments and played a key role in Vancouver political developments in the mid-thirties.

McGeer had made a name for himself in the 1920s when he led B.C.'s case for freight rate reform before the Board of Railway Commissioners.<sup>11</sup> In 1933, his popularity — or notoriety — increased through his role as Trades and Labour Council spokesman at the Banking Commission hearings. McGeer was outspokenly critical of the private money system and large financiers like the Banking Commission chairman, H. R. MacMillan.<sup>12</sup> Armed with his own ideas about a national banking system and a state planned and controlled economy,<sup>13</sup> and displaying an evangelistic style that never failed to attract attention, he emerged an extremely pop-

<sup>9</sup> The city of Vancouver elected five Liberals and two CCF members to the new legislature in 1933 — a turnaround from the 1928 election, when the Conservatives had filled the six possible seats. The Conservative party had splintered into three groups prior to the election. All three sections were poorly organized and found it difficult to get a hearing in larger centres as the campaign developed into a Liberal-CCF contest. This fragmented opposition, coupled with the desertion of the business community to the Liberals in the face of a socialist threat, gave Pattullo the advantage needed virtually to sweep the province. See F. H. Soward, "British Columbia Goes Liberal," *Canadian Forum* XIV (December 1933):87; *Sun*, 3, 4 November 1933; Parker, "Simon Fraser Tolmie," pp. 106-16.

<sup>10</sup> *Sun*, 21 November 1933; see Angus MacInnis, "More About the British Columbia Election," *Canadian Forum* XIV (September 1934):170.

<sup>11</sup> Robin, *The Rush for Spoils*, p. 207.

<sup>12</sup> MacInnis, "More About the British Columbia Election," p. 169.

<sup>13</sup> See G. G. McGeer, *The Conquest of Poverty* (Quebec: Garden City Press, 1935).

ular figure in Vancouver. McGeer was essentially a populist who could draw on support from all sections of the city.<sup>14</sup> As a son of the east side he was assured an east-side following, while his later crusades against communism and organized labour won him the support of west side downtown interests, although the west side could never completely accept his unorthodox, bombastic style of politicking and his bizarre views on monetary reform. The man had an uncanny ability to take advantage of popular causes,<sup>15</sup> and as mayor he found one even more popular than his attack on big business. In 1935 he initiated a Dominion-wide movement for constitutional change. This movement, which put McGeer on a federal stage,<sup>16</sup> severely criticized both the federal and provincial government's handling of the depression.

Pattullo's attitude toward the city and its business interests did nothing to alleviate the developing friction between himself and McGeer over constitutional issues. The Premier considered the *Kidd Report's* recommendation for "non-party" administration an attempt by Vancouver business interests to head off an imminent Liberal victory.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, he denounced the big business-government alliance of the previous Conservative administration and created a cabinet "as independent as possible of the Vancouver political machine."<sup>18</sup> Moreover, Pattullo imposed new responsibility for social services on the municipalities.<sup>19</sup> The cities, in turn, refused to accept what they saw as the "consequences" of provincial arrangements with the federal government and insisted that legitimate representation to Dominion conferences could be made only by the city, not the province.<sup>20</sup> The basis for a common front by the municipalities lay in the fact that all were dependent on, and restricted to, the taxation of real property for revenue. When property owners were no longer able to pay their taxes, the municipalities' only recourse was to put the property up for tax sale. By 1934 the threat to private property was

<sup>14</sup> Taylor, "Urban Social Organizations," p. 39.

<sup>15</sup> MacInnis, "More About the British Columbia Election," p. 168.

<sup>16</sup> See John Taylor, "Mayors in the Depression: A Study of the Evolution and Failure of Social Policy and Collective Organization" (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1976); *Sun*, 1 December 1934.

<sup>17</sup> Groves, "Business Government," pp. 151-52; Dunn and Jones, "Education," pp. 24-26.

<sup>18</sup> Margaret Ormsby, "T. Dufferin Pattullo and the Little New Deal," in *The Politics of Protest*, ed. R. Cook (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), p. 36.

<sup>19</sup> *Sun*, 3 December 1934.

<sup>20</sup> City of Vancouver, Council Minutes, RG2-B1, vol. 31, 28 March 1931, p. 424, City Archives, Vancouver, B.C.; *ibid.*, vol. 35, 16 October 1934, p. 538.

so great in the minds of Vancouver aldermen that council discontinued sales for tax arrears for at least one year.<sup>21</sup> Throughout B.C., municipalities faced the prospect of the “wholesale reversion of real property to the municipalities for unpaid taxes.” A Vancouver city council statement summarized this fear:

The point has now been reached where the very existence of municipalities has been imperilled by failure to recognize and apply an equitable, stabilized and permanent basis of relationship between Provincial Governments and Municipalities, both as to duties, services, and revenues.<sup>22</sup>

Council members were not alone in their belief that the provincial government was not giving the city a fair deal. Pattullo’s hard-line approach to Vancouver’s economic problems upset the city’s Liberal MLAs, who rallied behind G. G. McGeer in protest.<sup>23</sup> The mayor had requested several economic reforms from the provincial government.<sup>24</sup> Pattullo had flatly refused, creating serious division within Liberal ranks. The Premier’s position was supported by a financial survey completed in March 1935.<sup>25</sup> Thomas Bradshaw, an eastern financial expert commissioned by city council, reported that the city was well off compared to other Canadian cities and could afford mid-depression costs. In contrast, McGeer claimed that the city was going bankrupt and appointed his own experts — prominent local businessmen and public leaders — to substantiate his position.<sup>26</sup> This difference reflected a larger problem. Bradshaw, a hard-nosed chartered accountant who recommended severe measures of retrenchment for the city, did not take into consideration the social and political anxiety generated by the large numbers of organized unemployed

<sup>21</sup> City of Vancouver, By-Laws, RG2-C1, vol. 55, 15 November 1934, p. 77, City Archives, Vancouver, B.C.

<sup>22</sup> Council Minutes, RG2-B1, vol. 35, 16 October 1934, pp. 161-62.

<sup>23</sup> Vancouver Liberals S. S. McKeen, Robert Wilkinson, Helen Smith, Gordon Sloan, George Weir, and Gordon Wismer gave their unanimous support to McGeer. “No Interest Cut If Bondholders Object, Pattullo,” *Province*, 8 March 1935. Pattullo Papers, Add. MSS. 3, Box 83, File 12, Provincial Archives of British Columbia, Victoria, B.C.; “City’s Liberal Members United to Save Credit,” *Province*, 8 March 1935.

<sup>24</sup> *Sun*, 6 March 1935. McGeer had asked the province to suspend the sinking fund, reduce the city’s interest payments, provide more loans for relief, review taxation structures, and authorize more baby bonds for the city to raise money for a new city hall.

<sup>25</sup> City of Vancouver, B.C., *Survey of Financial Condition Conducted at the Request of the City Council* (Vancouver: Hall, Holland and Company, 7 March 1935), by T. Bradshaw.

<sup>26</sup> City of Vancouver, B.C. *Taxation and Financial Survey of the City of Vancouver*. Compiled by a Select Committee at the Request of the Mayor, 1 May 1935.

and Vancouver's growing debt; neither did Pattullo. In 1935, Vancouver MLAs and city aldermen shared a more subjective view of the city's problems, one that was totally justifiable from the perspective of the city's taxpayers.<sup>27</sup>

The anxiety of Vancouver's local and provincial politicians in 1935 over the debt and the increasing numbers of unemployed was further heightened by the CCF's growing presence in the city. The initial forays of the CCF at the municipal level had been unsuccessful. From 1933-1935, under the ward system, the party had been unable to gain any seats on council, and had only occasional successes on the school and parks board.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless it continued to believe that the city was "the logical unit for action, the logical nucleus for change."<sup>29</sup> The growing numbers of highly visible, discontented unemployed in the city, many of whom were affiliated with or at least sympathetic to the CCF, lent credence to this argument and worried McGeer and his followers. The electoral support of the CCF in the 1933 provincial election, which made the party B.C.'s official opposition, had come largely from urban areas.<sup>30</sup> Two provincial CCF members won seats in East Vancouver. Many feared that it was only a matter of time before these working-class wards would elect socialist candidates at the civic level. While the election of two independent socialist candidates to council in the 1920s had provoked little comment,<sup>31</sup> the economic crisis created a favourable atmosphere of political unrest. The emergence of a civic wing of the CCF that could mobilize the support of east-side working-class wards threatened to divide municipal politics along class lines for the first time while solidifying the CCF's provincial power base.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>27</sup> City of Vancouver, *Survey of Financial Condition*, *passim*; Taylor, "Mayors in the Depression," pp. 102-03.

<sup>28</sup> CCF advertisements were virtually non-existent in the 1933-35 civic campaigns. In at least two cases, nomination papers were filed incorrectly and the party did not run a full slate of candidates until the 1936 election.

<sup>29</sup> L. Telford, "The Challenge Column," *The Commonwealth*, Vancouver, 8 November 1934.

<sup>30</sup> T. M. Sanford, "Politics of Protest: The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and the Social Credit League in British Columbia" (PhD thesis, University of California, 1961), p. 107-09.

<sup>31</sup> Angus MacInnis was elected to the school board and then to city council. Parm Pettipiece was also on council in the twenties. *Sun*, 30 November 1933. See D. G. Steeves, *The Compassionate Rebel: Ernest Winch and the Growth of Socialism in Western Canada* (Vancouver: J. J. Douglas, 1977), p. 75.

<sup>32</sup> See Taylor, "Urban Social Organizations," for a comparative analysis of the impact of the depression on civic politics in Winnipeg, Edmonton and Vancouver; Sanford, "Politics of Protest," pp. 98-133.

From the outset various groups made efforts to discredit the entry of the CCF into the civic arena. The Vancouver *Sun* warned Vancouverites of the evils of party politics in urban affairs, clearly demonstrating the paper's fear of an organized socialist party gaining control of city hall.<sup>33</sup> Mayor McGeer also mounted his own offensive. In a fanatical effort to discredit the party, he went out of his way to identify an essentially moderate CCF with communism, atheism, and the "radicalism" of the unemployed.<sup>34</sup> When relief camp workers entered Vancouver in April 1935, McGeer accused the CCF of "using camp strikers for political purposes" and implied that the party was behind the strike.<sup>35</sup> While McGeer may have believed his own oratory, practical, political reasons also account for his anti-CCF crusade. The CCF challenged the mayor's personal aspirations for a federal seat in the Vancouver Burrard riding.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, a civic CCF success could undermine his national role as leader of the Dominion conferences of mayors. The election of CCF aldermen could damage his populist image and divide the city along class lines when it was most important for McGeer's federal career that he be Vancouver's only voice at the national level.<sup>37</sup>

McGeer was also obsessed with the idea that council in its present form was highly inefficient and corrupt. He placed the relief department and the police commission under constant investigation throughout his term of office. The mayor was especially critical of the distribution of direct relief and spent thousands of dollars each month investigating costs despite aldermanic reports that the expense could not be justified.<sup>38</sup> As a

<sup>33</sup> *Sun*, 17, 21, 28 November 1933.

<sup>34</sup> Taylor, "Mayors in the Depression," p. 254.

<sup>35</sup> G. G. McGeer, "A Momentous Declaration," Radio Address transcript, 27 April 1935, Pamphlet # 1935-09, City Archives.

<sup>36</sup> Three CCF candidates from B.C. were elected in the 1935 federal election. Arnold Webster, a CCFer, and G. G. McGeer ran a very close race in the Burrard riding, but McGeer emerged victorious.

<sup>37</sup> Bruce Hutchison predicted that the united voice of cities could affect the future of all political parties: "While provincial and federal politicians in the western provinces are divided by party labels, municipal leaders having no party interest to serve, can stand together as a unit. Their influence should be incalculable." "Favour McGeer's New Monetary Credit Scheme," *Province*, 29 January 1935.

<sup>38</sup> "At the City Hall," *The Commonwealth*, 15 February 1935; Council Minutes, RG2-B1, vol. 35, 2 January 1935, p. 772. In 1935, City Clerk C. Jones and City Solicitor J. B. Williams were dismissed for negligence in connection with the disqualification of Pettipiece as an aldermanic candidate. Later that year charges of corruption were brought against Internal Auditor Frank Stead, City Clerk W. L. Woodford, and City Comptroller W. Wardhough and later dismissed.



self-styled reformer, McGeer made it his mission to rescue the city from unfair constitutional responsibilities and at the same time to clean up an inefficient civic administration, whether it existed or not.

In March 1935, filled with reformist zeal, McGeer initiated a movement to alter fundamentally the structure of Vancouver's government. With the 1928 amalgamation of Point Grey, South Vancouver and Vancouver, the enlarged city had been divided into twelve wards each electing one alderman to council. McGeer now proposed a new system of at-large elections for the city and a reduction in the number of aldermen from twelve to eight. According to the press, the idea had grown out of talks in the Legislature among those MLAs who were worried that the city might default on its debts. When city aldermen deferred any action on McGeer's structural reform proposal for at least one year, the mayor turned for support to Liberal members of the provincial legislature's Private Bills Committee. A provincial amendment to the City Charter could force the city council to either accept the change or at least hold a plebiscite on the issue at the next civic election.<sup>39</sup>

The committee's desire to impose a new at-large system and a smaller council on the city stemmed, in part, from its impatience with the council's apparent inability to decide on a site for the new city hall.<sup>40</sup> A local ratepayers' association, labelling the mayor a dictator, had thwarted McGeer's plan to build on the Strathcona Park site.<sup>41</sup> Several members saw the ward basis of council as too sectarian to decide the question and suggested that the choice be left to experts such as those on the Town Planning Commission. McGeer insisted that council alone should decide. While differing with the mayor on the city hall issue, the committee members agreed with McGeer that an at-large system and fewer aldermen would be good for the city.<sup>42</sup> A smaller, more centralized council would look after the city's interests as a whole and not be held back by ward politics or sectional demands. Members proposed that a structural reform plebiscite be put to the electorate at the December 1935 civic

<sup>39</sup> *Sun*, 14 March 1935. McGeer's successor, Mayor George Miller, in his inauguration speech, thanks McGeer for taking charge in 1935 and securing the necessary amendments to the Charter. "Remarks on G. G. McGeer," by George Miller, 6 January 1937, McGeer Papers, Add. MSS. 9, Box 7, File 3, Provincial Archives of British Columbia, Victoria, B.C.

<sup>40</sup> *Sun*, 13 March 1935.

<sup>41</sup> "Ratepayers Voice Opposition to City Hall Plan," *The Commonwealth*, 28 June 1935.

<sup>42</sup> *Sun*, 14 March 1935.

election.<sup>43</sup> So strong was their desire to implement these changes that they passed another amendment decreasing the percentage of voters required for approval of such a plebiscite from 60 percent to a simple majority.<sup>44</sup>

The CCF also favoured structural reform for the city. When Liberal representatives called for a united front of Vancouver MLAs, CCF members rallied to the city's defence and helped initiate the proposed plebiscite. The civic arm of the party and the District Trades and Labour Council appear to have accepted the old urban reform argument that the abolition of corrupt ward interests would lead to better government.<sup>45</sup> There were also important practical considerations. Under the ward system working class areas of the city were not fairly represented. The most glaring discrepancy existed between the downtown district (wards 1 and 2) and the southeastern working-class areas. Wards 6 and 7 in the southeast had, respectively, three and four times the population of ward 2, but each elected only one alderman. City-wide elections provided the CCF with an opportunity to draw on its growing east-side support and make a consolidated bid for power. If east-side voters exercised their franchise, a new at-large system could work to the party's advantage.<sup>46</sup>

The common desire of McGeer and the CCF for at-large elections creates a curious paradox. Why would McGeer want to implement an electoral system that the CCF believed would work to its own advantage? Perhaps McGeer did not think that the CCF could rally enough support under an at-large system to be successful. Perhaps he believed that at-large elections would weaken the CCF's civic power base in the long

<sup>43</sup> Are you in favour of abolishing the ward system and electing aldermen at-large? Are you in favour of reducing the number of aldermen from twelve to eight? City of Vancouver, Record of Nominations and Elections 1924-1949, 1935 Plebiscite, RG2-D1, 11 December 1935, p. 209, City Archives, Vancouver, B.C.

<sup>44</sup> British Columbia, Statutes of the Province of British Columbia, An Act to Amend the "Vancouver Incorporation Act, 1921," 23 March 1935, c. 92, sec. 3.

<sup>45</sup> *Sun*, 25 November 1935; *The Commonwealth*, 31 May 1934. R. P. Pettipiece had advocated abolition of the ward system since 1933.

<sup>46</sup> British Columbia *Federationist*, 11 September 1936, 29 October 1936; *Sun*, 6 December 1935. The 1935 voters' list gives the following voting population per ward:

<i>Wards</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Wards</i>	<i>Population</i>
1	4,289	7	12,972
2	3,437	8	4,297
3	3,586	9	6,945
4	6,935	10	6,263
5	6,217	11	6,027
6	9,720	12	6,821

term by preventing the institutionalization of the party in eastern wards.<sup>47</sup> Most likely he simply felt that the benefits outweighed the risks. Certainly McGeer's national role as a constitutional reform leader, his federal aspirations and his commitment to business government dictated that, as mayor, he make his city a model of administrative efficiency. An at-large system would advance his career while satisfying his obsession with economic efficiency. A smaller council elected at-large could function as a businesslike board of directors under McGeer's unchallenged guidance and control.

Several reasons then, some more legitimate than others, existed for a change in Vancouver's electoral system. In addition, by 1935 the ward system no longer satisfied neighbourhood sentiments<sup>48</sup> or, as the CCF argued, provided fair representation for all parts of the city. Yet these inadequacies were never raised by McGeer and Liberal MLAs and were not the motivating force behind their efforts. Problems with the ward system could have been remedied by the adjustment of ward boundaries, but the "reform" leaders proposed at-large elections. Their principal motive was to create an efficient, businesslike administration that could better deal with depression problems, as they saw them, from a provincial perspective.

The plebiscite proposal was not well received by many groups at the civic level. While MLAs were generally pleased with their work, city councillors, with the exception of Halford Wilson, loudly protested the "high-handed" actions of the provincial government. Ward-based aldermen were aware that they had nothing to gain and much to lose from an at-large electoral system and the attendant reduction in numbers.<sup>49</sup> Local ratepayers' associations, also ward-based, voiced their opposition but offered no sustained argument. The Vancouver business community was divided on the issue. The Associated Property Owners initially endorsed the proposals but at the eleventh hour suggested postponement of the plebiscite for a few years.<sup>50</sup> The mayor's advisory committee of prominent businessmen and public leaders recommended the appointment of a

<sup>47</sup> Taylor, "Mayors in the Depression," p. 258.

<sup>48</sup> In 1928 the old neighbourhood wards, except for the four along Burrard Inlet, were broken up in order to introduce "more efficient" strip wards running north from the Fraser River. As a result each strip ward included a section from Vancouver and a section from one of the other municipalities.

<sup>49</sup> Alderman Loat declared: "They are taking away our rights to attend to our own affairs. If they cut their own body by half there would still be too many MLAs." "Aldermen Critical of Plebiscite; Smaller Council Plan Forced by Government," *Sun*, 7 December 1935.

<sup>50</sup> *Sun*, 11 December 1935.

city manager but no radical change in the electoral system.<sup>51</sup> The Board of Trade made no statement in 1935 but in 1936 considered opposing the new system's implementation. In light of support for the changes in the December 1935 plebiscite, the board decided to take no action. No doubt the board's relative indifference was a result of its more immediate concern over the economic amendments to the City Charter.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, the knowledge that at-large elections could work to the CCF's advantage must have contributed to the business community's general reluctance to endorse electoral reform. What seems clear is that, even though the system needed improvement, few at the civic level would have done anything about it.

For the public generally, the December 1935 plebiscite was a non-issue. The press favoured the reform and consequently presented little debate. Most advocates of the new political machinery fell back on the arguments of American urban reformers, but charges of patronage and corruption were never substantiated and one would be hard pressed to find any major examples of ward graft or scandal in the 1930s.<sup>53</sup> A low turnout of 19 percent was another indication of public indifference. The average percentage of voters in favour varied little from ward to ward with a city-wide average of 69 percent of the small group that voted support for the new system.<sup>54</sup> In March 1936 the amendment to abolish the ward system passed through the Legislature without incident.<sup>55</sup>

The new system's political effects were felt almost immediately. Aldermen and Board of Trade members expressed fears that one group could dominate council through a block vote in the city.<sup>56</sup> The problem for

<sup>51</sup> City of Vancouver, *Taxation and Financial Survey*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>52</sup> City of Vancouver, Board of Trade, Council Minutes, 5 March 1936, Add. MSS. 300, vol. 13, p. 165, City Archives, Vancouver, B.C.

<sup>53</sup> *Sun*, 9 December 1935. The *Sun* argued that Vancouver needed "big men who have the metropolitan viewpoint," not "little men who are big shots in little neighbourhoods." A thorough examination of the provincial press 1930-35 reveals few examples of civic corruption.

<sup>54</sup> Although turnout for non-mayoralty elections, held every two years, was generally low, City Clerk Fred Howlett reported in 1935 "that interest in the election seemed slacker than he had ever seen in his experience dating back to 1910, including 24 previous contests." *Sun*, 11 December 1935. City turnout in 1937 was 35.3 percent and in 1939, 33 percent. Explanations offered included "no popular public issue" and "light rain."

<sup>55</sup> British Columbia, Statutes of the Province of British Columbia, An Act to Amend the "Vancouver Incorporation Act 1921," 1 April 1936, c. 68, sec. 3.

<sup>56</sup> "Aldermen Critical of Plebiscite," *Sun*, 7 September 1935; "Alderman Kirk Warns of Danger of Group Vote in City Elections," 24 April 1936, Newspaper Clipping Docket, Alderman Kirk and Mrs. Thomas, 1915-19, 1936-37, City Archives, Vancouver, B.C. Kirk advised the legislature to authorize another method of election.

these men was that this power was in the hands of east-side residents who, given their provincial persuasions, would likely vote for the CCF.<sup>57</sup> In response, the Board of Trade considered the promotion of a slate of candidates representing business interests, but again no action was taken.<sup>58</sup> The provincial press asked voters to think of their council as a board of directors and to vote for aldermen with the appropriate work experience. Independent candidates tried to capitalize on this theme. Their campaigns in December 1936 emphasized a lack of party affiliation and business experience.<sup>59</sup> Although the CCF was never directly attacked, campaigns for an efficient businesslike administration at city hall were an obvious attempt to discredit the civic wing of the socialist party.

The call for business government in 1936 does not appear to have hurt the CCF. For the first time the party ran a full slate of candidates and presented an efficient, organized, team-like image to the electorate.<sup>60</sup> Three of the eight aldermen elected were CCF members, and approximately 24 percent of Vancouver's electorate voted for the party. All incumbents except Halford Wilson suffered defeat. No doubt the numerous accusations of corruption levelled at council members during McGeer's term played a part in their loss. However, more central to their defeat was the fact that they had run as unaffiliated independents who had to win the support of the city at-large. Although the CCF did little advertising in the regular press, their candidates had the advantage of being associated with an identifiable group. The *Federationist* described the larger significance of the victory for the party: "It has broken the stranglehold of individual capitalistic endeavors. . . . It has consolidated the CCF movement in Vancouver. . . . This . . . victory if not audible in Montreal, will be distinctly heard in Victoria."<sup>61</sup>

The provincial government was to hear more from the civic arm of the CCF during the party's first year on council. The CCF repeatedly emphasized the importance of a civic base to enhance the power of a future CCF majority in Victoria. Weekly classes on civic affairs encouraged CCF supporters to become involved in city politics in order to ac-

<sup>57</sup> City of Vancouver, Board of Trade, Special Committee Minutes, 7 October 1936, Add. MSS. 300, vol. 149, p. 78, City Archives, Vancouver, B.C.

<sup>58</sup> Mayor McGeer was asked to run again but he refused. *Ibid.*, Council Minutes, 10 September 1936, Add. MSS. 300, vol. 14, p. 20, 34-35, City Archives, Vancouver, B.C.

<sup>59</sup> *Province*, 11 April 1936; Vancouver *News-Herald*, 9 December 1936; *Sun*, 8, 9 December 1936.

<sup>60</sup> *Federationist*, 3 December 1936.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 10, 17 December 1936.

quire experience and training for future provincial positions.<sup>62</sup> However, the most threatening aspect of CCF success was its behaviour as a municipal party. The three aldermen voted together on the majority of issues during their 1937 term.<sup>63</sup>

A CCF motion that MLAs could not hold office as aldermen was one attempt to impose provincial party policy on the council.<sup>64</sup> More controversial was their refusal to accept half measures from the provincial government in the area of social services. CCF aldermen stood by their provincial party's policy of a minimum wage for the unemployed while most city councillors were prepared to accept any financial offer the Legislature would make.

When the party disciplined one CCF alderman for wavering on the issue, an anti-party politics campaign emerged full-blown.<sup>65</sup> The press launched a savage attack on the CCF, condemning its imposition of party discipline on freely elected civic representatives.<sup>66</sup> In council, two aldermen sponsored a motion "deprecating the introduction of party politics into civic affairs." Alderman Crone, a Liberal MLA, and Alderman Cornett, a former Conservative MLA, felt compelled to withdraw their motion in the face of CCF accusations that "old line parties representative of a minority of vested interests" had dominated city hall in an "underground fashion" for years.<sup>67</sup> The CCF now had a major urban forum from which to voice its policies and effectively criticize those of its provincial opponents.

The CCF also appeared to be making substantial gains at the provincial and federal levels of government. In the 1935 federal election the party won the largest share of the provincial popular vote, 33.2 percent, indicating strong support for the B.C. federal party. In 1936 the provincial CCF expelled its more moderate members. The party's platform in the 1937 provincial election reflected the new leadership's strong com-

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 September 1936; 19 August, 1937.

<sup>63</sup> "CCF Oppose Mayoral Plan," *ibid.*, 13 September 1937.

<sup>64</sup> "Council Kills CCF Proposal," *ibid.*, 16 September 1937.

<sup>65</sup> CCF Alderman R. Parm Pettipiece was the chairman of the social services committee. When he questioned CCF policy, the *Sun* suggested division in the CCF ranks. The *Federationist* accused the *Sun* of trying to divide the party members on council while Pettipiece was quietly brought back into line. He was denied the CCF endorsement for the 1937 civic election. *Federationist*, 24, 30 June 1937; 19 August 1937; 14 September 1937.

<sup>66</sup> *News-Herald*, 14 August 1937; see *Federationist* rebuttal, 16 August 1937.

<sup>67</sup> "Rap Attack on Council's CCF Members," *Federationist*, 16 September 1937; "Crone Attacks Party Politics," *Sun*, 17 September 1937.

mitment to doctrinaire socialism and increased the fear of CCF success. Despite its more radical stance the party captured 28.3 percent of the popular vote drawn largely from its Vancouver power base. Although it was no longer the official opposition in 1937, the strong voice of the CCF at all three levels of government posed a major threat to B.C.'s traditional parties.<sup>68</sup>

The CCF's behaviour on city council, coupled with its fresh commitment to socialist principles and its federal and provincial successes, crystallized the need for action. On 3 November 1937 eight men met in a downtown office to discuss Vancouver's political future.<sup>69</sup> The result was the formation of a new political group dedicated to the elimination of party politics at the civic level, the Non-Partisan Association. According to the founding members, the NPA's function was to protect the integrity of civic politics by endorsing a slate of candidates who had not pledged allegiance to any outside body. To ensure its non-partisan character the NPA resolved not to recruit candidates; rather, its sole function would be to endorse them and then publicize its selection. Once elected, candidates would be under no obligation to the Non-Partisan Association and would be free to act according to their own consciences in the best interests of Vancouver.<sup>70</sup>

It was clear from the outset, however, that the NPA was a provincial Liberal and Conservative reaction to the recent success of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation in municipal politics. To have entered civic politics under provincial party banners would have split the non-socialist vote and increased the likelihood of a CCF majority. The best way for the Liberals and Conservatives to combat their "socialist" opponents was to form an alliance at the local level. Such a working arrangement would be easier to effect than a provincial coalition, where personal prejudices and official party lines stood in the way.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, the familiar reform philosophy of nonpartisanship lent itself to their cause. Without directly condemning the CCF, the Non-Partisan Association

<sup>68</sup> Sanford, "Politics of Protest," pp. 98-123, 133. The 1937 CCF platform proposed the formation of a planning board and commissions to bring about a socialist state, higher taxes on wealthy individuals and corporations, government action to open up company towns and destroy company unions, experimental collective farms and total health insurance.

<sup>69</sup> "Non-Partisan Association 1937," 3 November 1937. Add. MSS. 54, vol. 13, File Associations # 53, City Archives, Vancouver, B.C.

<sup>70</sup> *Sun*, 13 November 1937; 4 December 1937; 25 November 1938. See Fern Miller, "Vancouver Civic Political Parties," pp. 3-31.

<sup>71</sup> Sanford, "Politics of Protest," pp. 102-04, 134-38.

could work towards the elimination of the socialist party by attacking all partisan involvement in civic politics. Once Liberals and Conservatives had amalgamated to form the NPA, the CCF would be the only party remaining at the civic level and, by definition, would therefore be the enemy.

The background and political affiliation of the founding members attests to the partisan nature of the group and its provincial orientation. Almost all were successful, well-established professionals and businessmen who had been involved in provincial politics for years. Brigadier-General G. V. W. Odlum was a newspaper publisher and active military officer, E. Drew Pratt and R. Rowe Holland were influential lawyers, and E. W. Rhodes was a senior officer at the Canadian Bank of Commerce. The remaining four were important business figures: Brenton S. Brown, provincial manager of Crown Life Insurance; S. S. McKeen, president of his own shipyard company with major industrial holdings in the province; J. C. McPherson, president and owner of Pemberton Realty Company; and W. Lloyd Craig, a grain broker and forwarding agent for national investors. Their political affiliations are even more revealing. Only Holland, the parks board chairman, and Rhodes were without a strong provincial connection. Brown was the Liberal party's provincial vice-president<sup>72</sup> and Pratt the Conservative party's provincial secretary. Odlum was an unsuccessful federal Liberal candidate in 1921, an elected MLA in 1924 and a member of the provincial Liberal executive. McKeen, a Liberal MLA elected in 1933, was defeated in the 1937 provincial election. McPherson had acted as an intermediary in the McGeer-Pattullo conflict of 1935 while Craig had managed several provincial and two mayoralty campaigns, the latter for McGeer in 1934 and George Miller in 1936. Clearly, the majority of the NPA's original founders were provincial party organizers, who had both the motive and the means to mount an anti-CCF offensive under the guise of the Non-Partisan Association.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Brown demonstrated his fear of the CCF in a letter to Pattullo. He complained that most of the elected positions in the Police Commission were Tory or CCF. "The CCF should not be allowed to creep into offices of this kind." B. S. Brown to Pattullo, 5 November 1936, Pattullo Papers, Add. MSS. 3, Box 67, File 2, p. 2, Provincial Archives of British Columbia, Victoria, B.C.

<sup>73</sup> Biographical sources for the paragraph include S. M. Carter, ed., *Who's Who in British Columbia* 1931, 1933-34, 1937-38-39 (Victoria: S. M. Carter, 1931-39); *Who's Who in British Columbia* 1940-41, 1943 (Vancouver: S. M. Carter, 1941-43); B. M. Greene, ed., *Who's Who in Canada*, vol. 20 — 1928/29, vol. 25 — 1934/35, vol. 35 — 1947/48 (Toronto: International Press Ltd., 1929-48); C. D. G. Roberts and A. L. Tunnell, *The Canadian Who's Who: A Handbook of Cana-*



The CCF lost no time whatever in attacking the “non-partisan” character of the new organization. Through sharp political cartoons and editorials the *Federationist* ridiculed “the hypocrisy of the ‘no politics’ smokescreen” used by the NPA: “The Non-Partisan Association is just as much a party as is the CCF. It is true it has within its ranks Liberals and Conservatives. That does not make it Non-Partisan; it makes it Bi-Partisan.”<sup>74</sup>

The NPA’s first public meeting left little question about who the organization represented and to whom it appealed.<sup>75</sup> The number of prominent provincial figures on the first executive reflected the seriousness of the CCF threat in the provincial mind. Of the original eight founding members only Rhodes and Holland, those without provincial connections, were absent. Lieutenant-Colonel Nelson Spencer, a former Conservative MLA, and Lieutenant-Colonel Alfred Thompson, a former Conservative MP for the Yukon Territories, joined Provincial Secretary Pratt on the executive, while G. G. McGeer, a Liberal MP, George A. Martin, McGeer’s financial adviser and a member of the Liberal executive, and W. B. Farris KC, brother of former Attorney-General J. W. deB. Farris, swelled the Liberal ranks. Joining this political elite were the wealthiest men in the province: Austin Taylor, Colonel Victor Spencer, W. C. Woodward and W. H. Malkin. Only Malkin, who was Vancouver’s mayor in 1928 and a former Board of Trade president, had a record of civic political involvement. All had substantial economic interests beyond their Vancouver base and good reason to fear CCF nationalization policies. Spencer, with his brother, owned family department stores in British Columbia. Malkin, owner of a large wholesale company, held directorships on the boards of provincial, western and national corporations. Taylor, who had worked for the Conservatives on the 1932 *Kidd Report*, was a mining executive and financier with major holdings in provincial, regional and national industries. Woodward, a member of the provincial Liberal executive and soon to become C. D. Howe’s federal wartime assistant and B.C.’s Lieutenant-Governor, was president of Woodward

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*dian Biography of Living Characters*, vol. II, 1936-37, vol. III, 1938-39 (Toronto: Murray Printing Co., 1937-39); Newspaper Clipping Dockets, City Archives, Vancouver, B.C.; *Sun British Columbia Directory* (Vancouver: Sun Directories Ltd., 1934-40).

<sup>74</sup> “Non-Partisan Group Seen as Old Line Party Combination,” “The Civic Election,” *Federationist*, 18 November 1937.

<sup>75</sup> “New Civic Election Group,” *Sun*, 13 November 1937; “Non-Partisan Association,” 12 November 1937, Add. MSS. 54, vol. 12, File Associations #53, City Archives, Vancouver, B.C.

stores with interests in B.C. and Alberta and a director of national corporations. These men identified their economic interests with the health of the provincial and federal economies and the policies of provincial and federal governments. Yet in 1937 they were actively involved in civic affairs. Clearly, the province's business and political elites had decided to conduct their first line of defence against the CCF at the local level.<sup>76</sup>

The NPA's domination of city hall and the civic forum was immediate. Indeed, after the election of Gutteridge in 1937, no CCF alderman was able to gain office. The NPA was able to elect aldermen and dominate council on the strength of solid west-side support that effectively neutralized the block of east-side support for the CCF.<sup>77</sup> By 1940 it was clear that the NPA's strength increased through its ability to capture support from independent candidates. That year, although a solid block of CCF support remained, the NPA replaced the CCF as the dominant group in every pre-1936 east-side ward.<sup>78</sup> The key, under an at-large system, was money and sophisticated organization, especially the NPA's access to Liberal and Conservative voters' lists, campaign opportunities for NPA candidates at provincial association meetings, and the experienced assistance of provincial party organizers.<sup>79</sup>

While NPA campaigns were influenced by the executive's provincial orientation, the choice of NPA candidates was not. Thirteen NPA aldermen dominated council during the 1937-1940 period. These men represented the executive only in so far as they supported the capitalist system and appeared willing to protect the city's business interests. While over half had either held elective office or were members of the provincial Liberal and Conservative parties, virtually all had served on council before the NPA's formation.<sup>80</sup> Six out of thirteen lived on the east side

<sup>76</sup> See footnote 73. Also see *Federationist*, 18 November 1937.

<sup>77</sup> In the 1937 aldermanic contest the NPA received 40 percent of the vote, while the CCF polled 31.5 percent, but the 8.5 percent spread was sufficient to elect NPA candidates to three out of four aldermanic seats.

<sup>78</sup> Independents received 29.8 percent of the aldermanic vote in 1939 as compared to only 13.6 percent in 1940. The CCF remained constant while NPA strength increased by 15.3 percent overall.

<sup>79</sup> In the 1937 campaign, the CCF estimated that the NPA spent \$20,000 while the CCF spent \$300, *Federationist*, 9 December 1937. Also the CCF reported that "an NPA candidate attending a Liberal Association meeting urged that as "a good Liberal" he be given a solid Liberal vote, *Federationist*, 2 December 1937; also see "Big Shots Spend Thousands to Defeat CCF in Civic Election, NPA has War Chest of \$8,000.00," *Federationist*, 7 December 1939; "Liberal-Tory Merger Defeat CCF in Civic Vote," *Federationist*, 14 December 1939.

<sup>80</sup> Alderman Crone, an NPA alderman and Liberal MLA, wrote to Pattullo in July 1938 warning him that Vancouver could not be treated like other municipalities.

of the city. Generally they were over fifty years of age, and the majority, not surprisingly, were small businessmen.<sup>81</sup> Their background and affiliations, however, were of secondary importance to provincial interests. The executive's major concern was that the NPA serve as an organized alternative to the CCF for the block of western voters in order to eliminate the socialist voice and thereby weaken the CCF's provincial power base at the local level.

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The Vancouver experience during the 1930s demonstrates that provincial, not municipal, forces directed the course of urban politics. The introduction of at-large elections and the formation of the NPA were, for the most part, provincially inspired solutions to political and financial problems that affected both city and province. In each case, provincial figures played the key role. In fact, the at-large system was introduced against the wishes of city aldermen and business groups. It seems clear that not only were civic interests secondary to provincial but provincial figures felt it was their right to influence, if not control, civic politics.

The major reason for provincial intervention in Vancouver politics was fear of the CCF. In 1935 this fear was an important force behind the movement for at-large elections. Although McGeer and Liberal MLAs miscalculated the system's ability to control the CCF, it seems clear that these men felt threatened by the imminent victory of the party in eastern wards, the provincial CCF stronghold. In fact, the first at-large election in 1936 gave an advantage to the socialist party and created an even greater need for action in the minds of provincial Liberals and Conservatives. In 1937, upset by CCF success at all three levels of government and the party's high profile in the city, provincial elites decided to become involved in civic politics and formed the NPA. In both instances, the provincial political situation combined with threatening civic developments to prompt provincial figures to intervene in municipal affairs.

In addition to the CCF threat, the at-large movement was inspired by a commitment to administrative efficiency in government. The desire for at-large elections reflected the MLAs' strong belief that city govern-

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The city was one-third of the province's population and he believed the electorate to be very civic minded. Crone told the Premier that "the financial integrity of Vancouver is of just as much importance to me as the financial integrity of B.C." Crone to Pattullo, 12 July 1938, Pattullo Papers, Add. MSS. 3, Box 67, File 2, pp. 12, 16-18, Provincial Archives, Victoria, B.C.

<sup>81</sup> Addresses and occupations were taken from City of Vancouver, Record of Nominations and Elections 1924-1949, RG-2-D1, City Archives, Vancouver, B.C.

ment was primarily business, not politics, and that parochial interests based on wards interfered with the city's development. McGeer had presented the structural reform as part of an economic reform package that would prevent Vancouver from defaulting. Vancouver MLAs, Liberal and CCF, naturally agreed with proposals that could save their city from bankruptcy and provincial politicians from great embarrassment. In 1935, McGeer and Liberal and even CCF MLAs believed that an at-large system would provide more economical, efficient government for Vancouver.

In contrast, the formation of the NPA was not motivated by reform philosophy. Although non-partisan politics was the logical extension of the idea that city government was a business, the NPA was without question a practical reaction to CCF success. No matter how efficient, an at-large council was dangerous if control rested in the wrong hands. In 1936 the CCF, with or without eastern wards, looked as though it could establish a strong base in the city. While the rhetoric of NPA members suggested a commitment to business government unassociated with parties or politics, the group was clearly a bi-partisan coalition formed to weaken, if not eliminate, the CCF's urban power base.

Thus the two changes in Vancouver's political makeup happened relatively independently of one another. Each "reform" was initiated by a different provincial group with different priorities. Elected MLAs introduced the at-large system in part to provide Vancouver with a more economical and efficient form of government. The sole purpose of provincial party executives and provincial businessmen who created the NPA was to weaken the CCF's position in the city, its provincial power base. Although there was some overlap in personnel between groups, there is no evidence that the changes were conceived, or presented, as parts of the same 1935 reform package. In fact, the formation of the NPA was the unforeseen consequence of at-large elections and provincial fears.

Liberal and Conservative intervention in civic politics in the 1930s provided only a partial solution to the threat of the CCF. At-large elections combined with the NPA's formation succeeded in keeping CCF aldermen off council and in heading off the establishment of a permanent left-wing alternative in city politics. However, a solid block of CCF support remained in civic elections and an even larger percentage of the Vancouver electorate continued to vote for the provincial CCF.<sup>82</sup> By

<sup>82</sup> Aldermanic support for CCF candidates — city wide average 1936 — 24 percent, 1937 — 31.5 percent, 1938 — 24.2 percent, 1939 — 27.7 percent, 1940 — 28.5 per-

1941 it was clear to concerned Liberals and Conservatives that the first line of defence, the NPA, was not going to be enough to counter the CCF threat. The second line would take the form of a 1941 wartime coalition. The NPA had demonstrated just how effective a Liberal-Conservative merger could be.

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cent. In the 1941 provincial election the CCF received 37.7 percent of the vote in Vancouver Burrard, 36.1 percent in Vancouver Centre, 58.1 percent in Vancouver East and 21.7 percent in Point Grey. See Sanford, "Politics of Protest," p. 151.