Vancouver Civic Politics, 1929-1980*

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In this essay my aim is to provide a general overview of Vancouver civic politics while paying special attention to the origins, nature and consequences of the city's unique system of civic political parties. Civic political parties, in one form or another, have been a crucial element in Vancouver politics almost since the present city was established in 1929.[1] Since 1929 there have been two brief and critical formative periods in the city's politics. One period was 1934-37; the other 1968-72. Each was marked by sharp controversy and by changes in attitudes, in civic operation, and in the functioning of civic parties. Each was followed by relative stability in which controversy was diffuse and change came slowly. Out of the first formative period emerged a stable one-party system which lasted for more than three decades until it was shattered in the second formative period. Out of this second period emerged a new multi-party system. Out of each formative period emerged a new and narrower elite to take charge of the city's politics.

In examining Vancouver's politics and party system I shall begin by explaining several underlying elements which have remained largely unchanged (not only since 1929, but, as it turns out, since the founding of the old city in 1886) and which remain vitally important today. I shall then discuss the basic civic beliefs and related political behaviour which appear to have emerged from the 1934-37 period and to have survived until 1968-72. Next I shall describe the more important features of the civic administration and indicate the factors which combined to make 1968-72 a new turning point. Subsequently I shall explain the events of

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[1] Vancouver City and the municipalities of Point Grey and South Vancouver became the present city on January 1, 1929 following popular approval of the amalgamation proposal in all three municipalities.

1968-72, describe the ensuing period, and conclude with my observations about the nature and effects of the civic party system.

Autonomy, Plebiscites, and the Election System

In discussing Vancouver civic politics[2] it is appropriate to begin by examining several elements — civic autonomy, the plebiscitarian tradition, and the election system — which remained largely unchanged during the 1929-1980 period. These elements have underlain the city's politics since the founding of the city in 1886 and, in combination, produce much of the uniqueness in the city's political character. Indeed, it would seem to be the case that only in light of these three elements can the two formative periods be assessed and explained adequately.

One of the underlying elements is the "special status" or autonomy which the city enjoys vis-à-vis the provincial government. Alone among British Columbia's approximately 140 municipalities, Vancouver is governed under a separate municipal charter. The Vancouver Charter[3] is a private act of the legislature. In the drafting and in the making of most amendments to the charter no direct part is played by either the provincial cabinet or the ministry in charge of general municipal affairs.[4] The charter, of which there have been three new versions since that of 1886, has in each case been drafted by local officials and in most cases

[2] Little published analysis other than contemporary newspaper accounts exists for Vancouver civic politics. Factual data concerning elections, plebiscites and voting behaviour are contained in the *Nomination Book and Record of Elections* maintained by the civic returning officer (i.e., the Vancouver city clerk). The annual or biennial *Municipal Yearbook*, issued by the city clerk, contains information about the organization of the council and the bureaucracy. Annual reports of the various civic departments at times contain valuable information. Concerning specific issues that come before council, it is usually possible to obtain comprehensive information from contemporary reports to council by council committees, reports to council from civic departments and submissions to council from interest groups — together with related newspaper accounts. My interpretation rests on information from these sources and, for the period since 1967, upon my own experience as a founder, executive member and president of TEAM, and upon information gleaned from innumerable conversations with, and queries to, civic politicians (of all civic parties) and officials, both active and retired.

[3] SBC 1953, c. 55, together with amendments.

[4] This unique circumstance, which had its origin in the period when the legislature lacked disciplined parties (i.e., when major legislation need not have prior cabinet approval) and when municipal matters were not seen as requiring overseeing by provincial civil servants, leaves Vancouver in dealing with the provincial legislature (at least to maintain the charter) very much in the position of an American city dealing with the state legislature. The city deals with legislators rather than with bureaucrats and with a legislative committee (in B.C. the Private Bills Committee) rather than with executive departments. Here is one instance in which B.C. politics is more American than Canadian.

amendments proposed by the city council have been accepted by the legislature. Although the city is naturally greatly affected by provincial policy and action (notably in the field of finance), it is the case that Vancouver is remarkably autonomous in matters of civic structure, procedure and operation — that is, in matters relating to formal aspects of decision-making and distribution of power. In many cases the city has chosen to remain similar to other British Columbia municipalities, but in others, as in having an elected park board and in giving no formal power to the mayor, the city has chosen to be different.

Having a separate charter free of close provincial controls allows the continuation of a second underlying element — the firm tradition or convention that major changes in the formal aspects of decision-making and in the distribution of civic power must be approved by popular plebiscite.[5] Historically this plebiscitarian tradition is something of a holdover from pre-amalgamation days, in all three municipalities, when populist values were paramount and the voters had much greater influence than they have today. Influence was exerted in the early period not only through plebiscites on specific decisions (e.g., streetcar fares and hours of work at city hall) but also through election of a wider range of officials than is the case today (e.g., of water commissioners in the suburbs). In general terms it may be the case that direct citizen influence is largely an element of the past which may not easily be restored. The plebiscitarian tradition, however, does continue. The plebiscitarian tradition, coupled with the feature of civic autonomy in charter revision, imposes a form of double jeopardy upon those who would reform the city from within — that is, they must not only attain office, they must also persuade the voters to approve the reforms. Attaining office has often proved easier than persuading the voters to accept reform.

Another underlying element is the election system. The amalgamated city was created in 1929 with twelve wards, each electing one alderman. Opposition to the ward system became widespread — business groups, labour unions and the local branch of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation[6] all favoured abolition of wards. Eleven aldermen favoured wards and so council declined to hold a plebiscite. In 1935 provincial legislators from Vancouver bypassed council and had the legislature amend the charter to require a plebiscite. (It should be observed that the

[5] In most instances the plebiscites are advisory rather than binding. In some cases, however, the charter or other legislation has required that certain specific decisions receive popular approval before going into effect.

[6] *Vancouver Sun*, 25 November 1935; Vancouver *Daily Province*, 4 December 1935.

legislature did not, as it could have, simply amend the charter to eliminate wards; rather it upheld the plebiscitarian tradition by compelling the council to let the voters decide the issue.) In the plebiscite, of December 1935, two-thirds of those who voted favoured abolition. Wards were abolished for the election of 1936 and have never been restored, leaving Vancouver as the only large Canadian city with the at-large system. The question of wards remains perhaps the most intense and divisive issue among those who are politically active in Vancouver.

The actual electoral system used for all elective offices is the usual "first-past-the-post," or simple-plurality, system. For aldermen, school trustees and park commissioners (as well as mayor) each voter has as many votes as there are positions to be filled and the winners are those with the most votes. This system works to the advantage of the largest cohesive voting group, allowing it to take all, or nearly all, of the positions even if the group itself is a minority among actual voters. Let us suppose that there are 100,000 voters and that of these 35,000 support group A; 20,000, group B; 10,000, group C; 10,000, group D; and that 25,000 support no particular group and so vote randomly. Group A will elect all its candidates, because each of them will receive 35,000 votes as well as additional random votes. Thus one group, composed of a minority of voters, fills all positions. This example is in fact a rough approximation of what has frequently happened in Vancouver since the abolition of wards — although before 1968 there was usually only one group able to muster a cohesive group of supporters.

Basic Civic Beliefs and the NPA

As one turns from Vancouver's autonomy, plebiscitarian tradition and election system to the more visible side of politics in the city prior to 1968, one is able to identify certain basic beliefs which motivated and provided substance to political debate and action within the city. Together these beliefs indicate that Vancouver was a rather extreme example of the western Canadian and American non-partisan city. Although in the case of each basic belief it is possible to identify an opposing belief, it remained the case generally before 1968 that the actual persons who held opposing beliefs either were concerned primarily with only one or two issues (and so were able to co-operate on other issues with those who held each of the basic beliefs) or were concerned with most issues but unable or unwilling to act as a group. Thus it was generally the case that the basic beliefs formed a *set* of beliefs which were

held by an identifiable dominant group within the city. The five basic beliefs dealt with political parties, citizen participation, leadership preparation, civic development and the nature of the city itself.

Whether political parties should contest civic elections became a major issue with the forming of the CCF in 1933 and its entry into civic elections. The party, however, elected no person to council until 1936, when wards had been abolished. The Civic Non-partisan Association (NPA) was formed in November 1937, and it contested the December 1937 election against the CCF. The NPA did not consider itself to be, and was not commonly regarded as, a political party — even though it filled the academic definition of a party by being a permanent organization contesting elections with the intent of gaining control of public offices.[7] By conventional usage in Vancouver the term "political party" applied only to a group which was recognized as a party at the provincial level and which, as a secondary feature, committed its civic candidates to a policy platform. Only the CCF met this definition. In part the NPA was formed, in a common phrase of the time, "to keep parties and politics out of city hall." (Much later the common view, even among NPA leaders, came to be that the NPA had been formed *solely* to keep socialists out of city hall. This over-simplification denigrates the various more positive initial goals of the NPA, some of which were shared with the CCF.) By 1940 the NPA had come to dominate city council, obtaining more support than the CCF even in former east-side CCF strongholds, and the CCF withdrew from city politics. For the next two decades the NPA remained dominant and in tune with the city. Some anti-NPA independents were elected, and anti-NPA factions appeared sporadically; but the independents often joined the NPA and the factions always faded away. By the late fifties, however, organizational danger signs began appearing within the NPA. Younger Liberals and, more noticeably, younger Conservatives who might ordinarily have become active in the NPA turned instead to federal politics. The Civic Voters Association (CVA) brought younger professionals and business people together in an anti-NPA slate, electing Tom Alsbury as mayor, and Tom Campbell, among others, as an alderman. Major corporate donors decreased their support for the NPA. Although the CVA ultimately fell apart, the NPA continued its decline. Unable to recruit able younger candidates,

[7] E.g.: Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties* (London: Methuen, 1954), pp. xxiii and xxiv; Sigmund Neumann, ed., *Modern Political Parties* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), p. 395; Roy C. Macridis, *Political Parties* (New York: Harper, 1967), p. 9.

the organization was forced to rely more upon persons late in years but early in the alphabet. The high quality of council performance which had been evident for much of the NPA period now declined. Idiosyncracies (and alcohol) came too much to the fore at city hall. Although a polite press kept the details from the public, reporters and columnists became highly contemptuous of some council members. Allan Fotheringham's leading column in the *Vancouver Sun*, however, often consisting simply of factual descriptions of council meetings, revealed to the public what a laughing-stock council had become.

"Citizen participation" is not a phrase which was used frequently, if at all, in Vancouver before 1968. In general the NPA view of government was one which resembled Edmund Burke's.[8] That the elected official was to be independent of party and of previous commitment was naturally associated with the view that he should follow his own judgment and "conscience" (an entity invoked frequently by NPA candidates) in day-to-day decisions. The abolition of wards has been a major reversal of the former view and practice that geographic or neighbourhood groups should have special influence. Functional interest groups appear to have been equally suspect, at least when pressing for anything remotely smacking of self-interest. (One is reminded of Hobbes' view that such groups are "Worms within the entrails of the body politic.") Two exceptions, however, serve in part to prove the rule. First, homeowners' or ratepayers' groups, perhaps because they were usually trying to prevent change (such as construction of gasoline service stations) often had their wishes acceded to. Second, the Board of Trade was clearly regarded not as a mere interest group, but as something approaching the legitimate voice of the city. The close relations between board and council (council members appear usually to have accepted the automatic invitation to join the board) perhaps symbolized the view that commerce

[8] It is not always appreciated how intertwined and reinforcing are the beliefs that political parties are undesirable, that elected members should follow their own judgment rather than the opinions of their constituents, and that sectional interests (e.g., of wards) must be curbed if interests of the whole are to be safeguarded. A paraphrase of Burke's well-known statement typifies the NPA view: "Council is not a *congress* of ambassadors from different and hostile interests; which interests each must maintain, as an agent and advocate, against other agents and advocates; but council is a *deliberative* assembly of *one* city, with one interest, that of the whole. . . ." ("Speech at the Conclusion of the Poll to the Electors of Bristol . . . November 3, 1774," in Bohn's Standard Library, *Burke's Works*; London: George Bell and Sons, 1902; vol. I, p. 447.) Those interested in pursuing further the differing views of representation underlying Vancouver politics will find much of relevance (although there is no actual reference to Vancouver) in Hannah Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).

was the essential civic activity. At the most general level of participation, that of voting, there were two noteworthy developments during the NPA period. First, voting turnout became associated with geographic location and social class. From amalgamation until 1936 the *difference* between east-side and west-side (a distinction which roughly equates with that between working class and middle class) voting turnout had *declined* to almost nothing.[9] After 1945 the difference *increased* to the point that west-side turnout usually exceeded east-side turnout by 15 to 20 percentage points. Second, cohesive group voting (for the NPA) became more concentrated in the higher turnout, west-side, middle class area of the city. East-side voters tended to vote more randomly and to favour candidates at the beginning of the alphabetical list on the ballot — a fact which the NPA itself in its declining years came to derive advantage from.

A successful business career, often supplemented by active participation in the civic affairs committee of the Board of Trade, was the surest path to elective civic office during the NPA period. Not infrequently, however, persons quite lacking in previous activity associated with civic government were elected to office — indeed, given the absence of parties, and the inactivity of the NPA between elections, there was little opportunity except in the civic affairs committee of the Board of Trade for a person to be active before becoming a candidate. The criterion of business success was, in one sense, something of an equalizer. The NPA does not appear ever to have developed an entrenched hierarchy within its own organization; nor has Vancouver ever had many prominent families in which membership could be taken as a sign of civic eligibility. Business provided a pathway which stressed achievement rather than origin or social connections. The NPA does not appear to have favoured potential candidates from large firms rather than small — in fact the plucky independent small businessman seems even to have had some advantage in gaining nomination. In any case, almost all the NPA candidates elected to public office were business people — in later years an increasing proportion of them had obtained professional degrees (especially in commerce and law) before entering business.

Under the NPA, especially after World War II, the essence of civic policy was promoting commercial growth and development. Downtown development was especially encouraged, both to provide additional tax

[9] The actual percentage point *difference* between turnout east and west of Ontario Street in mayoral elections from 1928 to 1936 was, successively, 6.0, 4.8, 1.4, 2.8 and 0.6.

revenue and, by the early sixties, to head off central business district decay such as was occurring in major American cities at the time. The civic government's role in development was seen as providing the essential services — including zoning decisions — while the details of planning, construction and operation were to be left to the private developers. By the mid-sixties the downtown west-end of the city had been transformed by the construction of numerous highrise apartment buildings for the growing downtown work force. In keeping with the actual and intended nature of this work force, almost all these buildings were designed for single persons or for couples without children. The east-end of downtown, the existing skid-road and Chinatown (known as Strathcona), was being transformed through federally financed urban renewal into further housing and new amenities (which could not be afforded by the existing residents of the area) for the expanding population. In the outlying parts of the city several large shopping/apartment complexes had been built or, as in the case of Marathon Realty's Arbutus Centre, were about to be built. As the centre-pieces of civic development there were to be several huge highrise downtown office/shopping complexes, the largest being Marathon's waterfront Project 200, which would have a number of highrise towers daily occupied by many tens of thousands of workers and consumers. The major public service to be provided by the civic government (and without which the downtown complexes could not function adequately) was to be a freeway system cutting into the downtown through Chinatown, branching through the core and through Project 200, and coming together in a third crossing to the north shore. Although many persons were involved in the evolution of the freeway proposals, Gerald Sutton-Brown, the senior civic administrator, had played a major part and the proposals were often referred to as the Sutton-Brown proposals.

Although one risks both over-generalization and over-simplification by attempting to identify varying beliefs about the nature of the city in any particular period, at least some tentative propositions may be made about such beliefs in the NPA period. Implicit in some of the beliefs and policies is the view of the city as a whole community in which fragmentation, both geographic and functional, should be avoided, in which commerce, guided by private enterprise, is the fundamental civic activity, and in which the virtuous citizen is the single-family homeowner. This was the NPA view of the city — it was apparently more characteristic of the NPA in its later than in its earlier years. It showed itself in an abhorrence of overt partisan activity, an acceptance of civic rule by business

people (with a corresponding repugnance towards socialist and working class groups), a desire for unlimited commercial and physical growth and development in the city, and no desire at all for citizen participation in civic decision-making. Finally, linked to all these yet also standing apart on its own was the issue which arose again in the late sixties and has remained the most salient of civic issues — the issue of whether the city should return to the ward system. In a way which newcomers and outsiders have difficulty in comprehending, the ward issue has assumed in Vancouver the symbolism and the emotionalism which renders rational debate not only impossible but also superfluous. Those who are familiar with the intensity and extremism associated with the issue of fluoridation in other cities will perhaps have some inkling of the depth of feelings and the absurdity of the more extreme beliefs (on both sides) associated with the ward issue in Vancouver. At one extreme are those who believe wards would bring the worst evils of municipal corruption; at the other are those who believe wards would bring nirvana to the neighbourhoods and perfect democracy to city hall.

The Civic Administration

During the three decades of stability which the city enjoyed under the NPA the major change was the growth of the civic civil service to a commanding position within civic government. The ending of the great depression, the economic boom caused by World War II, the need to serve the growing city population, and the desire of the NPA to provide excellence in civic government all contributed to steady growth in civic administration. Traditionally the city council, through its standing committees, had made the major administrative decisions, but as the civil service grew so did bureaucratic influence, and the standing committees of council not only ceased to have a guiding role but even came to be seen by senior administrators as a negative influence upon civic administration. The council itself, as a collective body, proved unable to provide consistent leadership. The mayor and aldermen were part-time amateurs; the NPA ethos of independent rather than group decision precluded the possibility of concerted action by council; and most of the council members believed that the appointed experts should be free of detailed control. Leadership flowed increasingly into the hands of senior administrators — men of outstanding competence and integrity such as the city engineer, John Oliver, and the city comptroller, Frank Jones. The idea of formalizing the actual situation by introducing some form of appointed

executive, such as that in the city manager system,[10] became popular among the senior administrators, among NPA supporters (although not among all NPA council members), among the business community (especially within the Civic Bureau of the Board of Trade) and among the one or two UBC academics then interested in local government. An American consulting firm, the Public Administration Service of Chicago, an organization well known (at least to those who had heard of it) as inclined to favour the city manager system, was hired by the city to review the civic administration and to make recommendations for improvement. The consulting firm recommended the city manager system.[11]

Although the principle of an appointed civic executive was generally acceptable, there was strong opposition, notably from several aldermen, to the idea of giving all executive power to one man. A compromise was agreed upon. Rather than giving all power to one man the council would give it to a board, to be called the Board of Administration, to consist of two appointed officials and the mayor. Although this structure would be identical to the council-commission executive structures common in Alberta and Saskatchewan, it appears that the Vancouver board was devised for purely local reasons rather than as a copy of the other structures. The board was created in July 1956 with Oliver and Jones as the appointed members.[12] The council abolished its standing committees and delegated its executive powers to the board. The board functioned as intended until Tom Alsbury, the anti-NPA candidate, became mayor in 1959. Alsbury believed that the mayor ought to have some influence within the board (a point of view which had not been held by his predecessor). Often the mayor found himself in a minority on the board as well as in the council. The council, still dominated by the NPA, remedied the situation by reforming the board to consist only of two appointed officials. Subsequently Oliver and Jones retired and were replaced by Gerald Sutton-Brown, the former head of the Planning Department, and Lorne Ryan, the former city electrician. During the sixties the board was the centre of power in civic decision making. Although the two board

[10] For a concise description of the various forms of civic executive, see Thomas Plunkett, *Urban Canada and Its Government* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1968).

[11] Public Administration Service [Report to Mayor and Council of Vancouver, 30 November 1955], (mimeo. Public Administration Service, 1313 East 60th Street, Chicago).

[12] Council, *Minutes*, 29 May and 5 June 1956; Vancouver *Daily Province*, 9 and 18 May 1956; *Vancouver Sun*, 28 March, 30 and 31 May and 16 July 1956. The Charter was amended in 1957 to recognize the reform, although the amendment was not legally necessary as existing provisions allowed the council to establish whatever sort of civic executive it wished to.

members were officially of equal status, Sutton-Brown was the more forceful of the two. In fact Vancouver had come to have the city manager system.

The Turning Point

In retrospect it is clear that by the mid-sixties groups were emerging in Vancouver which, although unorganized and without spokesmen in the beginning, would come to form the opposition to the established order. One of these groups consisted of younger downtown business and professional people, including lawyers and accountants; another consisted of volunteer and professional community workers together with lower income neighbourhood and youth groups; another consisted of planners and architects; another consisted of ratepayer groups in the more affluent areas; and yet another consisted of school teachers and UBC academics. These groups were for the most part composed of people who had entered their careers untouched by the values of the NPA and at a time when problems of urban growth and its social effects were becoming highly apparent. From these groups emerged the reform leaders and under their leadership some of the groups began to take conscious action to oppose the NPA and the civic bureaucracy.

Among the various factors which made 1968 a major turning point in Vancouver politics, two events in 1967 were of primary importance in serving to increase political awareness and to facilitate communication within and among the potential reform groups. One event was the election of Tom Campbell, who took office as mayor in January 1967. Campbell, an independent since the fading away of the Civic Voters Association, succeeded in defeating the NPA incumbent. He quickly gained the reputation, at least in the view of the reform groups and of small "L" liberals generally, of being everything a mayor should not be: anti-intellectual, contemptuous of citizen participation, and committted to the private profit motive in civic development. Although such a view of the man was a caricature of reality, and although Campbell was without individual power at city hall (a fact which few of his detractors understood), he became the symbol of city hall insensitivity and contempt towards the reformers and the real needs and interests of the people of Vancouver. Although the NPA turned to Campbell as its candidate in 1968, Campbell in fact played a part in ending the NPA regime — and not only by goading on those who were the NPA's opponents as well as his own. Had the CVA attained in the early sixties the

success which its anti-NPA successors did a decade later, Campbell might well have been seen as a reformer. In any case, Campbell himself represented the political conflicts and outlooks in Vancouver in a way that perhaps no predecessor had managed to do. Campbell had been born on the east side yet lived on the west side, he was a lawyer yet a populist, and a developer who was opposed to the NPA. Campbell was the dominant figure in Vancouver politics from 1966 until 1972; he was never defeated; he chose not to seek re-election in the election of December 1972.

The other major event which took place in 1967 was the attempt by the Board of Administration and the council to proceed with construction of the proposed freeway. In November the council held the required public hearing as the first step in the necessary property rezoning. Under the leadership of the reform groups an overflow crowd of some 800 persons (fully half of whom were UBC faculty and students) attended the meeting. When the mayor adjourned the unruly proceedings for a coffee-break the most outspoken critics (including Walter Hardwick and Setty Pendakur) took over the meeting and treated the aldermen (less strategically placed than the mayor for quick escape from the council chamber) to loud denunciations of the freeway proposals. For ensuing days and weeks the public hearing and its aftermath dominated public discussion; the controversy became known as the "great freeway debate." It marked a sudden and substantial outpouring of demands for citizen participation in civic policy making. Although the demands were made ostensibly on behalf of citizens generally, they were made almost entirely by spokesmen from the new groups. In response the council postponed action on the freeway. Among the new groups the freeway debate quickly proved a catalyst to action. In city hall itself during the chaotic public hearing those dissatisfied with the NPA were able for the first time to identify and make contact on a general basis with persons of similar view. In the council chamber itself and in the nearby corridors on that November evening the dissidents chatted busily among themselves and, with their vest pocket diaries in hand, eagerly arranged to meet again for further discussion.

The New Parties

Within a few weeks regular Wednesday noon luncheon meetings were being held in the Grosvenor Hotel by an unnamed but growing group intent on explicit political action against Campbell and the NPA. By

January the core of this Wednesday group[13] was actively recruiting new members. At the first publicly advertised meeting, held in March, the name "The Electors Action Movement" (TEAM) was chosen (VIVA — "Vancouver Independent Voters' Association" — was among those rejected) and Art Phillips was elected interim-president. During this same period another group, the Citizens' Council on Civic Development (CCCD), was formed by persons opposed to the NPA policy on civic development as a non-political forum for public discussion. Both TEAM and the CCCD sought to represent and include in their membership citizens from all groups and areas in the city. In fact both groups, which had many members in common, were almost entirely composed of west-side persons of professional occupations who were already part of the various reform groups.

Both TEAM and the CCCD were motivated essentially by opposition to the freeway and the other development projects supported by the NPA. "Citizen participation" became their by-word and was perhaps the most salient positive goal of the new reformers. In context among these two groups the concept of citizen participation implied at least three major elements: (1) vigorous public discussion during election campaigns and use of campaign methods resting on active participation by candidates and supporters (as opposed to the bland uninformative media campaigns of the NPA), (2) full provision of information to the public by developers and by the civic administration about development projects, and (3) participation, through public hearings and such devices as planning committees, by representatives of all affected groups in the formation and final approval of particular projects. TEAM and the CCCD were reform groups of the "city beautiful" variety, seeking to change certain policies of the city, but still 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. Later in 1968 TEAM was joined in explicitly political opposition to the NPA by a second new civic party, the Committee of Progressive Electors (COPE), which formed around Alderman Harry Rankin, who had been elected as an independent in 1966. COPE was a socialist party with substantial working class membership and support from organized labour. COPE (and Rankin, in particular, who had rejected TEAM's

[13] The group included Art Phillips, Bill Bellman, Ed Lawson, Hilda Symonds, Elsje Larsen (later Armstrong), Haig Farris, Setty Pendakur, Al Stusiak, Paul Tennant, Franklin Wiles, Walter and David Hardwick, Bill Gibson, Geoff Massey, Peter Oberlander, George Taylor, Gowan Guest, Shirley Schmidt, Charles Jordan-Knox and Jack Volrich.

overtures), focused on the needs of the underprivileged and impoverished, and, motivated by a marxist interpretation of society, sought not to preserve and protect but to reduce or destroy middle class control of the city. Also in 1968 the Vancouver Area Council of the New Democratic Party turned its attention to civic politics.[14] The NDP entry, however, is noteworthy only for its failure. The provincial leadership was against the entry (Tom Berger, the provincial NDP leader, as well as other prominent NDP members were, or became, TEAM members); voters gave little support; and in 1976 the provincial NDP party disbanded the Area Council.

In December 1968 the NPA elected the mayor (Campbell) and 7 aldermen; COPE elected Rankin; TEAM elected Phillips and Walter Hardwick. In 1969 Alderman Brian Calder, the young NPA businessman, switched to TEAM. Every one of the eleven incumbents was re-elected in 1970. The 1970 standings, however, showed the shape of things to come. Rankin topped the poll, followed by Marianne Linnell, the most progressive of the NPA aldermen, and then by Calder, Hardwick and Phillips.

The Battles of 1969-1972

The four years between the elections of 1968 and 1972 were electric years in Vancouver politics. They were marked by intense public controversy over each of the major development projects. In each case the pattern of events was the same as in the case of the freeway proposal.[15] In each case a specific, visible, physical development was proposed by private developers supported by the civic administration. The proposal was presented to council at a relatively late stage without there having been a chance for citizens to become informed or to participate. In each case the TEAM aldermen and Harry Rankin led the attack within council while citizen groups formed and fought in the community against

[14] For an excellent account of the entry of the new parties see Fern Miller, "Vancouver Civic Political Parties: Developing a Model of Party-System Change and Stabilization," *BC Studies* 25 (Spring 1975): 3-31. See also Robert Easton and Paul Tennant, "Vancouver Civic Party Leadership: Backgrounds, Attitudes and Non-Civic Party Affiliations," *BC Studies* 2 (Summer 1969): 19-29; as well as Gregory Nash, "The Entrance of the NDP into Vancouver Civic Politics," (unpublished essay, Department of Political Science, UBC, 1975).

[15] For a description of this pattern and for a contemporary citizens' guide to city politics, see Vancouver Urban Research Group *Forever Deceiving You: The Politics of Vancouver Development*, rev. ed. (Vancouver Urban Research Group, 1972). Cf. also Donald Gutstein, *Vancouver Ltd.* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Co., 1975), pp. 138 ff.

the proposal. In each case Mayor Campbell and almost all the NPA aldermen supported the bureaucracy and the private developers. In each case, however, at least two NPA council members (Marianne Linnell being one of them) eventually came to side with the citizens' groups, thus providing an opposition majority on council. In each case the citizens and the progressive members of council were victorious — the proposal was either stopped completely or postponed with little chance of being taken up again. (A partial exception was the Eaton-Royal Centre downtown complex, which was the only major project underway by 1968.)

TABLE 1

Vancouver City Council Election Results 1968-1978

Election	*NPA*	*TEAM*	*COPE*	*INDEPENDENT*
1968	8	2	1	0
1970	7	3	1	0
1972	1	9	1	0
1974	4	6	1	0
1976	3	5	1	2
1978	5	1	1	4

The battles of 1968-1972 had consequences going beyond the immediate details of the various controversies. In the first place, members of the civic bureaucracy became more sensitized to the process of citizen participation and more wary of developers. However, the TEAM politicians came to see Gerald Sutton-Brown and some of the senior planning staff as so wedded to traditional views and methods as to be incapable of getting along with the new. In the second place, the tremendous energy required to organize and maintain the opposition to the developers, to the bureaucracy and to the NPA could not be carried on indefinitely. Because of their success and their exhaustion the various citizen groups faded away or, like the CCCD, lapsed into routine activities. Third, the politically inclined of the citizen reformers gravitated largely to TEAM to continue the battle directly against the NPA. Among the more prominent of these reform recruits were Michael Harcourt and Darlene Marzari. It was thus the case that TEAM grew while the citizen groups declined. Finally, the NPA lost its vitality and sense of purpose. During 1972 the throes of the NPA were chronicled for the public day-by-day

in Fotheringham's column in the *Vancouver Sun*. Tom Campbell decided not to run again and in the end the NPA did not even present a mayoral candidate in the December 1972 election (the intending candidate withdrew in face of public discussion of his lobbying activities for private interests).

The New Council of 1973-1974

The election brought TEAM to power, with the party electing the mayor (Phillips), eight of the ten aldermen, eight of the nine school trustees, and four of the seven park commissioners. COPE again elected only Harry Rankin. The NPA elected Marianne Linnell to council and elected the remaining members of the other two boards. The TEAM victory, despite its impressive dimensions, was not built on growth in popular participation or support. The voting turnout, which was down to 32 percent from the 45 percent levels of 1968 and 1972, indicated the fading of reform energy and a return to normality. TEAM was now the beneficiary of the winner-take-most features of the election system. The proportion of voters supporting the eight TEAM aldermen ranged from 32 to 64 percent, with the average being 43 percent. TEAM support was concentrated in the west-side middle class areas. On the east side the NPA incumbents did better than most TEAM candidates. The new council members were the cream of the cream in terms of educational and professional attainment. Indeed, it is likely the case that few, if any, other cosmopolitan cities with open elections have ever produced a city council composed so completely of persons of high occupational and social status. Each of the eleven had a university degree; eight of them had pursued post-graduate studies; four of them were university professors. By one standard academic measure of occupational prestige the new council stood at the 94th percentile among the general population.[16]

The TEAM members of council differed from their NPA predecessors in several obvious ways besides having a higher social status. First they were on the average more than a decade younger than the NPA members of the previous council. Second, the dominance of commercial-business interests among the NPA had been transformed into dominance by those in the professions having no business interests. Only Phillips, an

[16] The measure used is that presented in Peter C. Pineo and John Porter, "Occupational Prestige in Canada," *Canadian Review of Anthropology and Sociology* IV (Feb. 1957): 41-53.

investment dealer, had some business interests, and these were company shares handled at arm's length. Third, each of the TEAM council members, through either direct professional experience or through civic political activity (and in most cases both) were highly knowledgeable in policy areas of direct relevance to the city. The head of each major administrative department — Finance, Health, Social Planning, Legal Services, Engineering, Planning and Social Welfare, could, in different circumstances, have been plausibly replaced by one of the TEAM members of council. The previous circumstance, in which administrators had occupied, in part properly through formal delegation, the policy-making sphere normally associated with elected bodies, was obviously going to be remedied, if not reversed.

TEAM's coming to power was thus not without paradox. The issues and controversies which led to the formation of the party were largely settled before it came to power. The outpouring of citizen protest and participation had faded by the time electoral success was attained. From 1968 to 1972 COPE and TEAM had co-operated because both were opposed, although for somewhat different reasons, to the major development projects. Now the motive for co-operation had faded, and with this fading came an embittering of relations between the two groups. (This souring of perceptions, however, did not seriously impair the political relations between Rankin and the TEAM council members — Rankin would have a major council committee chairmanship throughout the TEAM period.) TEAM thus assumed office in a certain isolation — facing a suspicious civic administration while lacking the enthusiastic support, both from other reform groups and from TEAM members, that would have been there had the party assumed office in 1968 or 1970.

During 1973 and 1974 the TEAM council did work to implement much of the party's policy platform. The few lingering possibilities of resurgence of the freeway proposal were finally choked off. Neighbourhood participation in local area planning was prodded along. Transformation of the former industrial area of False Creek into a diversified residential area was effected under direct development by the city itself. The downtown Granville Transit Mall was planned and completed expeditiously. A bylaw was passed to phase large advertising billboards out of existence. The development of downtown was brought under much greater council control through various zoning and procedural changes. The former secrecy of the development process was abolished through new requirements for early public notice and through creation

of the Development Permit Board, all of whose decisions were made in public meeting. City council itself began to hold evening meetings to facilitate the appearance and attendance of citizens. An information booth and other innovations, including the recording of all council votes, to facilitate information dissemination, were introduced at city hall.

The TEAM platform had called for replacement of the Board of Administration with an executive committee composed of the mayor and several aldermen. This plank was not implemented. The first major decision of the TEAM caucus was to dismiss Gerald Sutton-Brown. This decision left Lorne Ryan as the only member of the board. In practice Mayor Phillips now became the full time chief executive of the city, working closely with Ryan, whose title was changed to that of city manager (without, it must be stressed, granting Ryan the dominance the title implies). At the same time council committees were given new importance in policy initiation (although they were not placed in charge of departments) and so most members of council were able to play a direct part in policy-making and implementation. Confusing though the new arrangement may be to those whose expectations are derived from the neat categories of local government textbooks,[17] Vancouver has been governed since 1973 under a combination of the strong-mayor, city manager and council-committee forms of civic executive. The system is undoubtedly much more open than the previous one, but also more subject to delay and personality conflict.

The most contentious policy in the TEAM platform of 1972 was that concerning wards. TEAM favoured a partial system, with some aldermen to be elected at large and some from wards. TEAM promised to hold a plebiscite on the issue. After taking office the new council instructed the Community Development Committee of Council, chaired by Alderman Volrich, to hold hearings and arrange the plebiscite. It was quite evident that most groups and persons who came forward favoured either a partial or full ward system. Even the Board of Trade favoured the partial ward system. (After the election the TEAM membership, although still bitterly divided on the issue, had switched to favouring the full ward system.) As preparations were made for the referendum of October 1973 it was commonly thought by council members and media commentators that the citizens would favour at least the partial ward system — that is, it was assumed that the citizen groups and persons who had publicly expressed themselves on the issue were representative of the citizens in

[17] Cf. Plunkett.

general. Only the NPA campaigned on behalf of the existing at-large method. The ward issue, indeed, served as a tonic to revive the NPA and brought Warnett Kennedy to the fore as the major NPA and anti-ward spokesman. Twenty percent of the eligible voters voted in the plebiscite. The results were consistent throughout the city. In only three of the 124 polls did a majority of those who voted want a change from the at-large system. A surprising number of voters — no fewer than 12 percent, or one in every eight voters — cast a blank ballot. Some voters (but presumably only those who had ignored the preceding public debate) found the issue confusing; others had come to the polls to vote on other plebiscites (concerning park land and local skating rinks) and were not concerned about wards. Of those who did cast valid ballots 59 percent favoured the existing at-large system; 41 percent favoured change to either the partial or full ward system. Council took no further action and the ward issue dropped from public discussion.

The Decline of TEAM and Revival of the Ward Issue

As is shown in table 1, the three elections of '74, '76 and '78 brought a steady decrease in TEAM strength on council. Three TEAM incumbents, including Hardwick, did not seek re-election in 1974; their places were taken by three NPA candidates, one of whom was Warnett Kennedy. Before the 1976 election aldermen Darlene Marzari and Mike Harcourt quit TEAM. Marzari had always been more concerned with social issues than with the "city beautiful" while Harcourt quit within minutes of losing the 1976 TEAM mayoral nomination to Alderman Volrich. Both Marzari and Harcourt were re-elected in '76 and '78 as independents. Volrich was elected mayor in '76 but from the beginning of his term experienced difficulty in dealing with several of the four TEAM aldermen. The difficulties rested essentially on differences in style and personality. TEAM was no longer a team. In September 1978, following Volrich's suggestion that he might seek re-election as an independent, the split between the mayor and the party organization became permanent. Both Volrich and Alderman Don Bellamy quit TEAM. Alderman May Brown became TEAM's mayoral candidate. Volrich and Bellamy were re-elected as independents, but with the endorsement of the NPA, in the November election. Alderman Marguerite Ford, the only incumbent TEAM alderman seeking re-election, was the only TEAM person elected to council. On school board and park board

TEAM fared just as badly as on council. On each board TEAM lost to the NPA the majority it had held since the 1972 election.

The ward issue revived in 1977 when Rankin, Marzari and Harcourt, along with Darg Bell-Irving, a TEAM member, took part in forming a pro-ward group called AREA (Area Representation: Electors' Alliance). AREA faltered somewhat in early 1978 when its leaders became hesitant about pressing for another plebiscite, for it was at the time commonly thought that a plebiscite would fail. Because of AREA's initiative, however, TEAM took up the question again and in July Alderman Bellamy moved in council that a plebiscite be held along with the November election. Although Bellamy's proposed wording, which left the way open for a partial ward system, was rejected, council promptly passed a motion by Rankin that a plebiscite be held allowing voters to indicate their preference between a complete ward system and the at-large system. AREA immediately began an active and comprehensive campaign to encourage a pro-ward vote. The NPA and Mayor Volrich campaigned in favour of the at-large system. The plebiscite results were this time not consistent throughout the city — pro-ward sentiment was considerably stronger among east-side voters than it was among west-side voters. This time only 4 percent of the voters cast blank ballots. Of those who cast valid ballots, 51.7 percent favoured the ward system. Of all those who voted (that is, including those who cast blank ballots), however, only 49.6 percent favoured the ward system.[18] At the same time the voters elected a council in which seven of the eleven members had stated during the campaign that they were against the ward system.

At Mayor Volrich's initiative in 1979 the new council appointed a group of men (a provincial judge, who became chairman of the group, a businessman, a clergyman and two professors) to investigate and make recommendations upon the ward system (as well as certain other matters, such as the powers of the mayor and the term of office of council members). The group held public hearings, commissioned various studies, and ultimately decided in favour of a ward system.[19] Unfortunately for all concerned, the actual details of the group's ward proposal were so novel and complex that few besides the group itself took the proposal seriously. The proposal rested upon using the boundaries of the five provincial legislative constituencies within the city as the boundaries of wards for electing aldermen, school trustees and park commissioners. As

[18] Voter turnout was 38 percent.

[19] Vancouver, Governmental Review Commission, *Report* ["The Eckardt Report"], (Vancouver: Office of the City Clerk, November 1979).

it happened the boundaries had been drawn in the first place by the same provincial judge (in his earlier role as provincial royal commissioner), who now served as chairman of the group of five. Each ward would elect two aldermen, one school trustee and one park commissioner. In addition, there would be elected from each ward by the voters at large an additional alderman, school trustee and park commissioner — that is, the voters throughout the city would elect one member of each board for each ward separately — and in addition to the members elected by the voters in the wards themselves. Furthermore, the chairmen of the school board and park board would no longer be chosen from among board members by the boards themselves; the two chairmen would now be chosen, along with the mayor, by the voters-at-large. Altogether each voter would be faced with no fewer than twenty-one ballots: three for selection of the two board chairmen and the mayor; three for selection of "pure" ward representatives (i.e., one for the two aldermen and one each for school trustee and park commissioner); and fifteen for the "at-large" ward representatives (i.e., three ballots for each of the five wards.)[20] The group also recommended enlarging the mayor's powers to match those of other mayors in the province and extending the term of office to three years. The council agreed in February 1980 to request charter amendments for these changes but dropped the matter of wards. There are various local views as to why the group of five produced its ward proposals — perhaps the group's lack of civic political experience rendered it incapable of appreciating either the nature of civic politics or the more specific aspects which would govern reception of its proposals. In any case the net effect of the appointment of the group of five was to further entrench the at-large system and to further embitter political conflict within the city.

Conclusions: The New Party System and the New City Politics

The new and competitive party system which emerged in Vancouver in 1968 has now existed for more than a decade. Changes have taken place within the party system since 1968, but it appears highly unlikely that the system will soon revert to a situation of one-party dominance. The main features of Vancouver's competitive party system may be summarized as follows. First, the successful parties — COPE, TEAM and

[20] In a conversation initiated by him in response to my having been the first to point out publicly that twenty-one ballots would be required (cf. *Daily Province*, 7 December 1979), one of the group of five indicated to me that the group had not realized that the "at-large" ward representation would indeed require twenty-one ballots.

the NPA — are purely local parties. TEAM and the NPA, able in turn to gain the larger share of the west-side middle class vote, have been dominant during the decade. Second, the two new parties are active on a year-round basis, with several membership meetings and more frequent executive and committee meetings. (For example, during the non-election year of 1977 there were approximately 100 such meetings within TEAM.) The NPA remains much less active. Third, the three parties monopolize access to elective office in Vancouver. Since 1968 only five persons (the four council members and one school trustee) have been elected to public office as independents — and each of the five had previously been elected as a party member. Fourth, in all three parties a general membership meeting selects candidates by secret ballot. Thus any Vancouver citizen may join one of the parties and have a direct influence in the selection of candidates —in this feature of party activity there is now a direct avenue for citizen access to a major element in the civic political process.

Fifth, election campaigns are financed, organized and conducted by the party organizations on behalf of their slates of candidates. Individual candidates often spend additional amounts on their own campaigns, but financial ability is not a major factor in either the selection or the success of individual candidates. Sixth, most elected members have maintained their party affiliation after elections and the party label is commonly attached to the names of elected members in public discussion. The independents on council have behaved less as independents than as close affiliates of one of the parties. As independents, Marzari and Harcourt have worked closely with Rankin of COPE; during 1977 and 1978 the three were more cohesive in their voting (agreeing on some 80 percent of spit votes) than were either TEAM or NPA aldermen. Following the 1978 election the two new independents, Volrich and Bellamy, were in general aligned with the NPA aldermen. Thus the increasing presence of independents on council has marked less a weakening of the party than it has the splintering of one of the parties (TEAM).

These six features underlie Vancouver's party system. There are at least two features which one might expect to be present but which are absent. First, party identification is not highly developed among the voters — that is, only a minority of voters would appear to vote a straight party ticket.[21] (It will be recalled that each voter has twenty-seven votes —

[21] Rankin of COPE receives more votes than do most NPA candidates even in the NPA strongholds, while leading NPA candidates do better than most COPE candidates even in the areas of COPE's best performance.

one for each elective office.) Such voting is probably most common among COPE supporters and among those still committed to the traditional NPA beliefs. Second, party discipline among elected members is not highly developed. The NPA, whose members caucus only rarely, had a voting cohesion on council in the 1975-78 period of around 60 percent (50 percent would represent no cohesion at all), while TEAM, whose elected members caucused more frequently, had a cohesion of just under 70 percent. COPE, of course, has been able to attain a score of 100 percent since 1968.

The formation of TEAM and COPE has gone hand in hand with major changes in the basic beliefs motivating political debate and action in the city. Even though the political changes flowing from the two watershed periods of the mid-thirties and late sixties had a common result in the coming to power of a narrow new elite, the beliefs and behaviour of the contemporary elite, including contemporary NPA leaders, are quite different from those of the former NPA elite. Although these changes have plainly flowed from the 1968-72 period, the relation with the new party system is not one of simple cause and effect. In good part the new party system is as much effect as cause of these changes. The most obvious change is that civic political parties are now fully accepted within the city, although the traditional rejection of provincial/federal party participation at the local level continues unabated. Just as the CCF failed to survive the first formative period, so the NDP failed to establish itself in the second period. Secondly, the professions have become the main path to civic office, while a career dependent on real estate now renders any candidacy highly suspect. Since 1972 the only council members having had a business career have been two or three NPA aldermen. A career in one of the professions together with much civic activity — in voluntary agencies, on the school or park board, in pressure groups or in the parties themselves — is today the surest path to city council. This statement is as true of the contemporary NPA as it was of TEAM previously. It is now virtually impossible to imagine the election to council of any person lacking previous activity in city politics. Thus not only have the professions come to provide the civic elite, but the activity of civic politics has itself become something of a profession.

The two new parties play a major role by training their members in civic politics and, with their open membership policies, providing a major access route that was not formerly present. The NPA, no longer able to be as choosy, has also become more open — indeed its nomina-

tions are more open than are those of either TEAM or COPE.[22] Each of the three parties now nominates more candidates from ethnic minorities than the NPA did formerly, and TEAM has nominated many more women than any other party. The first non-whites elected to civic office (Setty Pendakur to council and Jack Say Yee to school board) were TEAM candidates; Volrich is only the second mayor not of anglo-saxon origin (the other was elected in 1887); and TEAM women candidates have been surprisingly successful. Third, promoting growth and development is no longer the essence of civic policy. In the development process the secrecy has been removed and the city itself has undertaken several major developments. As far as the civic policy generally is concerned there has been a major retrieval by city council of actual control over policy making. Indeed the reduction in power exercised by the senior bureaucracy is perhaps the most important single continuing outcome of the 1968-72 period.

In the two remaining areas — those of beliefs about the nature of the city itself and about citizen participation — there has been less change. Under TEAM all three elected bodies decentralized administration to some extent and the council allowed major local area input into the planning process. The city is viewed less as a corporate whole than it was previously, but full recognition of neighbourhoods, as only the ward system would allow, continues as a dubious prospect. Most TEAM council members came to office favouring the partial ward system, but once in office they tended, with only one or two exceptions, to see increasing wisdom in the at-large system which brought them to office. Functional interest groups of all varieties, on the other hand, would appear to be listened to more seriously than was formerly the case. At times seemingly inconsequential groups have been able to define issues and promote causes (such as preservation of the hangars at Jericho beach) which would have been given very short shrift in the previous period. Associated with the greater role of interest groups generally has been the decline of the particular influence of Board of Trade. Although the board's civic bureau continues as perhaps the most active and well-informed group concerned with civic matters, the board's formerly pervasive role has faded away. Failure by civic authorities to inform and consult potentially affected groups and individuals before decisions are made still occurs from time to time, but such failure itself quickly becomes an issue and is no longer the prevailing practice.

[22] That is, persons who have not established themselves as party supporters have a better chance of getting a nomination in the NPA than in TEAM or COPE.

Looked upon in broad perspective, however, the changes brought to Vancouver politics by the new party system are not fundamental. Since 1968 there has been more conflict and competition within the elected political elite (together with the resulting increased sensitivity to a greater diversity of interest groups) but the elite itself, in which members of the professions have pre-empted the businessmen of the preceding period, is even less representative of the population in socio-economic terms than was the elite of the preceding period. Moreover, the dominance of west-side residents within city council has been greater since 1968 than at any previous time.[23] In effect the response of the civic political system to demands for citizen participation was to bury those demands by installing the champions of participation as the new elite. The only substantial threat to the west-side professionals who compose the elite is a ward system. This threat has been buried as well.

[23] The numbers and proportions of east-side residents elected to council has declined steadily since the abolition of wards in 1935. From 1936 to 1947 six of the thirteen persons elected to council were east-siders (46 percent); from 1948 to 1957, four of the twelve were east-siders (33 percent) from 1958 to 1967, three of the seventeen (18 percent); and from 1968 to 1978, one of the nineteen (5 percent). In this tabulation a person is counted only at the time of first election to council — thus Rankin is counted in the 1958 to 1967 period. Don Bellamy was the only east-sider elected for the first time in the 1968-78 period.