"IS SUTTON BROWN GOD?"

Planning Expertise and the Local State in Vancouver, 1952-73

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T HE POSTWAR ERA SAW unprecedented prosperity and growth in Canada. The period between 1945 and 1975, what some have called the Thirty Golden Years, was also marked by a great expansion of the welfare state. New and reformed bureaucracies were empowered to face postwar anxieties, to deal with the increasing complexity and plurality of society, and to ensure the "good life" for citizens. For cities, the forces of postwar change were pronounced. Housing shortages, rapid urbanization, accelerated suburbanization, the rise of the automobile, and the growing affluence of residents brought growing demands on municipal governments. As a result, the local state increasingly employed new modes of governance in order to deliver basic services. Important elements of this were the creation of planning departments and of new administrative structures that gave planners and planning expertise a privileged and central role in the operation of the local state. This article examines this development in 1950s and 1960s Vancouver.

Vancouver, Canada's most important westerly port and the largest city in British Columbia, was a modest and conservative place with an economy dominated by the management of the regional logging and fishing industries. From 1952 to 1972, the populist provincial government of W.A.C. Bennett pursued a program of modernization that served the development of the resource economy. Following high modernist logic, the construction of highways and dams was the main focus of provincial investment.[1] Vancouver was no less caught up with this "culture of

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[1] R.W. Collier, "Downtown: Metropolitan Focus," in *Vancouver: Western Metropolis*, ed. L.J. Evenden (Victoria: Department of Geography, University of Victoria, 1978), 159; Martin Robin, *Pillars of Profit: The Company Province, 1934-1972* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), 170.

modernity." Notably, from the mid-1940s, the city won acclaim for its modernist architecture.[2]

Progress, growth, and modernization were broadly shared aims, and it was in this context that Vancouver hired its first city planner, Gerald Sutton Brown, who served as director of planning from 1953 to the end of 1959 and as city commissioner from 1960 to early 1973. In following the arc of Sutton Brown's career, two abutting stories tell how the role of planning expertise was negotiated within the local state. The first concerns the institutionalization of city planning and the establishment of a profession rooted in high modernist ideology. The second entails how, in the context of the global sixties, the dehumanizing and undemocratic nature of planning was revealed and confronted. What emerges is that the 1950s and early 1960s were a period when planning experts and expertise were uncritically accepted as instruments of the local state. Only in the late 1960s did people begin to feel that the consequences of high modernity were untenable.

Historians have written a great deal about planning. Some have traced its intellectual origins in the late nineteenth century. The earliest advocates were Progressive Era reformers who looked to design better urban environments to counter the ills of the Industrial Age.[3] Others chart the professionalization of planning. By the late 1920s, planners had established a professional identity rooted in the scientific management of urban space.[4] Another group has investigated the new planning policies and technical solutions of the postwar years. The rise, fall, and consequences of freeways and urban renewal are well-discussed terrain.[5]

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[2] Mayna Star Vancaillie, "To Build a 'Better City': Urban Renewal and the Culture of Modernity in Post-War Vancouver" (BA honours thesis, University of British Columbia, 2000); Rhodri Windsor-Liscombe, *The New Spirit: Modern Architecture in Vancouver, 1938-1963* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1997), 6.

[3] See Helen Meller, *Towns, Plans, and Society in Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design in the Twentieth Century*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).

[4] See Joseph Heathcott, "'The Whole City Is Our Laboratory': Harland Bartholomew and the Production of Urban Knowledge," *Journal of Planning History* 4, 4 (2005): 322-55; John D. Fairfield, "The Scientific Management of Urban Space: Professional City Planning and the Legacy of Progressive Reform," *Journal of Urban History* 20, 2 (1994): 179-204.

[5] The literature on urban renewal is especially rich. For instance, Christopher Klemek, *The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal: Postwar Urbanism from New York to Berlin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); Jon C. Teaford, *The Rough Road to Renaissance: Urban Revitalization in America, 1940-1985* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990); Samuel Zipp, *Manhattan Projects: The Rise and Fall of Urban Renewal in Cold War New York* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Sean Purdy, "'Ripped Off' by the System: Housing Policy, Poverty and Territorial Stigmatization in Regent Park Housing Project, 1951-1991," *Labour/Le Travail* 52 (2003): 45-108. On freeways, see, for example, Raymond A. Mohl, "Stop the Road: Freeway Revolts in American Cities," *Journal of Urban History* 30, 5 (2004): 674-706;

In some cases, historians have focused on single planners. For example, Robert Moses stands as an archetype of the all-powerful planner and is the source of ongoing debate.[6]

This literature fails to recognize that, although city planners were nominally professionalized by the 1920s, planners were few and far between. They worked mostly as consultants, drawing up one-off master plans that often went unused. Local planning bodies served in a loose, advisory capacity, and municipal governments were not compelled to heed planning advice. The postwar period, then, is crucial to understanding the emergence of planning expertise. It was only in the late 1940s and early 1950s that planners were drawn into the processes of the local state in a meaningful way. Changes in civic administration made planning an occupation, a career, and an entrenched part of bureaucracy, as it had never been before. Some historians have hinted at this development. Christopher Klemek, for instance, suggests that a post-1949 professionalization of planning occurred in response to the initiation of urban renewal policy: planners were needed to manage the program. Stephen Bocking hedges that 1940 to 1970 was a period when the authority of urban expertise "was perhaps most unchallenged." More decisively, Helen Meller calls 1942 to 1965 the "golden age of planning."[7] This article endeavours to explore the contours of this entrenchment and the way in which the role of planning expertise within local government was eventually challenged.

An important element to this story concerns the fact that mid-twentieth-century planning embodied high modernist principles.[8] According to anthropologist James C. Scott, high modernity is best

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Zachary M. Schrag, "The Freeway Fight in Washington, DC: The Three Sisters Bridge in Three Administrations," *Journal of Urban History* 30, 5 (2004): 648-73.

[6] Part of the revisionist debate is captured in Hillary Ballon and Kenneth T. Jackson, eds. *Robert Moses and the Modern City: The Transformation of New York* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007). The archetype was set by Robert A. Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Knopf, 1974).

[7] Christopher Klemek, "From Political Outsider to Power Broker in Two 'Great American Cities': Jane Jacobs and the Fall of the Urban Renewal Order in New York and Toronto," *Journal of Urban History* 34, 2 (2008): 311; Stephen Bocking, "Constructing Urban Expertise: Professional and Political Authority in Toronto, 1940-1970," *Journal of Urban History* 33, 1 (2006): 52; Meller, *Towns*, 67. See also Kevin Brushett, "People and Government Traveling Together: Community Organization, Urban Planning and the Politics of Post-War Reconstruction, 1943-1953," *Urban History Review* 27, 2 (1999): 44-58; Christopher Fullerton, "A Changing of the Guard: Regional Planning in Ottawa, 1945-1974," *Urban History Review* 34, 1 (2005): 100-12.

[8] Scholars of modernity, while not always using this terminology, argue that there is something distinctive about its twentieth-century iterations. See Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1988); and Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000).

thought of as an exaggerated belief in the capacity of scientific and tech-
nological progress to meet growing human needs and to bestow social
benefits. It was an ideology commensurate with the interests of political
and economic elites, and it gained credibility across the political spectrum
and around the world in the 1930s. While as a discourse it emphasized the
gains that average people would make in a rationalized society, planning
was depoliticized and citizens were excluded from the decision-making
process. Rather, it was planners, engineers, and scientists who were at
the vanguard of high modernity and who used their skills and status to
design prescriptions for the future.[9] High modernist planning became
common practice only after the Second World War, stimulated by the
convergence of corporate capitalism and mass democracy.[10] Those within
the city planning profession worked to smooth over the contradiction
of an economic system based on individual gain and a political system
predicated on the common good.

Many histories of city planning and government, while treating
the issue of experts, largely leave the high modernist impulses of the
mid-twentieth century at the margins of analyses or invoke the idea of
high modernity with little substantiation.[11] In part, this article offers
a historically specific example of high modernist planning and how
it worked with respect to politics, administration, and practice in the
postwar North American context. Between 1952 and 1972, city planners
worked within a planning consensus that was high modern and that
emerged from complex transnational debates over the future of cities.
Operating within different legislative frameworks, planners pursued the
same goals with the same methods and technical solutions, but their
efforts played out in major cities as local debates, with local actors and
local consequences. For more than just practical reasons, then, I look at
one city and at one planner in order to speak to broader currents.

Many writers note Sutton Brown's political and administrative im-
portance in Vancouver. Variously, he was an "engineer-planner working
for a business government" and "the most powerful person at city hall,
his power verging on absolute." Meeting him was like "being granted
an audience with the Queen."[12] These evaluations are insightful, though

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9 James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have
   Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998): 4-5, 94-96.

10 Robert A. Beauregard, *Voices of Decline: The Postwar Fate of US Cities*, 2nd ed. (New York:
   Routledge, 2003), 29-30.

11 Danielle Robinson, "Modernism at a Crossroad: The Spadina Expressway Controversy in
   Toronto, Ontario, ca. 1961-1970," *Canadian Historical Review* 92, 2 (2011): 295-322.

12 Stephen V. Ward, "British and American Influences on Canadian Urban Planning: The
   Example of Vancouver, 1910-1975," *British Journal of Canadian Studies* 13, 1 (1998): 132; Donald

in most ways Sutton Brown was a conventional planner of his time. Yet he played a central part in the postwar history of urban development in Vancouver, a history in many ways like that of other North American cities of the time.

PLANNING EXPERTISE, PROFESSIONALIZATION, AND HIGH MODERNITY, 1953-59

Early in the twentieth century, members of the Vancouver elite embraced planning as a technique for social and economic efficiency. Real estate men and boosters populated Vancouver's Town Planning Commission (TPC), which was normative in the sense that it was a non-professional board that served the city in an advisory capacity only. In 1925, these people were critical to the hiring of St. Louis planning consultant Harland Bartholomew, whose *A Plan for the City of Vancouver*, produced in 1929, stood as a framework for the city.[13]

The interventions of the state in the management of a successful war effort, especially, underlined the value of planning and, in the waning years of the Second World War, all levels of government began to emphasize the need to rebuild in order to avert a return to the economic depths of the Depression.[14] For the local state, the focus was predominantly on city planning. In 1944, Vancouver rehired Bartholomew's firm to update its original plan. Paid for by downtown merchants, the new plan detailed the economic and physical requirements of the postwar future.[15]

Accepting that technical and administrative matters overburdened the advisory TPC, City Council resolved in 1951 to create a stand-alone planning department within the civic bureaucracy. The decision also served to limit conflict on planning issues as council and the independent

Gutstein, "Vancouver," in *City Politics in Canada*, ed. Warren Magnusson and Andrew Sancton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 178; Setty Pendakur, quoted in, "Who Really Runs City Hall? Bureaucrats Use Many Tricks to Keep Politicians in the Dark," *Vancouver Sun*, 9 March 2010.

13 Wayne J. Caldwell, ed., *Rediscovering Thomas Adams: Rural Planning and Development in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011); Michael Simpson, *Thomas Adams and the Modern Planning Movement in Canada and the United States, 1900-1940* (London: Mansell, 1985); John Bottomley, "Ideology, Planning, and the Landscape: The Business Community, Urban Reform, and the Establishment of Town Planning in Vancouver, British Columbia, 1900-1940" (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 1977), 4; Vancouver Town Planning Commission, *A Plan for Vancouver, British Columbia* (Vancouver: Town Planning Commission, 1929).

14 Meller, *Towns*, 67; Mohl, "Stop the Road," 677; Beauregard, *Voices of Decline*, 77; Bocking, "Constructing Urban Expertise"; Brushett, "People and Government."

15 Town Planning Commission, "[Report Series] Town Planning Commission; Harland Bartholomew and Associates," (Vancouver: TPC, 1944-48).

TPC had often opposed one another in the 1940s over a series of policy decisions. The city promptly hired McGill University professors Harold Spence-Sales and John Bland as advisors and was informed that planning should be a function of municipal government "because of the growth of the city and the increasing complexity of municipal responsibilities."[16] Indeed, planning was being accepted in other major Canadian cities. The report also called for the creation of a technical planning board (TPB), populated by civic department heads and chaired by the director of planning, to coordinate planning initiatives and present proposals to council.[17] In such a centralized system, the collective weight of departmental experts would be behind every proposal. Council quickly acted on the recommendations. In doing so, it changed the role of planning in city government and precipitated a shift in power from elected officials to professionalized experts. Planning was to be an active part in the day-to-day governance of the local state. As a result, city planning became an institutionalized occupation in a way that it had not been before.

In November 1951, the city advertised the newly created director of planning job in ten professional journals in Canada, the United States, and Britain. The advertisement called for someone with a civil engineering or architectural degree and training and experience in planning, underlining the as yet ill-shaped nature of the planning profession. In line with the Spence-Sales and Bland assertion that a British planner would be more comfortable "with the constituted basis and the traditions of British Columbia," all seven of those shortlisted were from the United Kingdom.[18] Gerald Sutton Brown was seen as the best applicant and was flown to Vancouver in April 1952, whereupon he impressed all of those who interviewed him. Indeed, council so highly rated his expertise that, pushed by his salary demands, it bumped its salary offer well above what had been advertised. Sutton Brown's hiring was met with widespread

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[16] Harold Spence-Sales and John Bland, "Report upon the Establishment of a Planning Department in the City of Vancouver," 20 July 1951, City of Vancouver Archives (hereafter CVA), City Council and Office of the City Clerk Fonds, Public Records Series (hereafter PRS) 40, 120-A-4, file 32.

[17] "City Planning Still Nebulous," *Vancouver Province*, 3 February 1950, 8; Notes on Planning Organization and Accomplishments 1952-1962, prepared for Commissioner G. Sutton Brown, CVA, City Planning Department Fonds, director's general files, PRS 648, 77-F-2, file 10.

[18] Both James Lemon and Stephen V. Ward have noted the distinct tendency for Canadian cities and federal agencies to hire British planners, a fact that also speaks to the earlier establishment of planning in Britain. See James T. Lemon, *Liberal Dreams and Nature's Limits: Great Cities of North America since 1600* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 267; and Ward, "British and American Influences," 129-30. Spence-Sales and Bland, "Report"; Draft copy of advertisement, CVA, City Council and Office of the City Clerk Fonds, PRS 20, 81-B-6, file 2; Personnel Director to City Council, 5 March 1952, CVA, PRS 20, 81-B-6, file 2.

approval. Ratepayers' and business groups received him warmly, and the press hailed him as a "top flight English community planner." Indeed, as he got to work, the booster sentiment was that now, with a planning department in place, "we are all set to go places."[19]

Born in Jamaica, Gerald Sutton Brown was "a man of medium height, a lean-faced pipe-smoker with a precise English accent and a habit of thinking carefully before he [spoke]." When hired, at the age of forty-one, he moved to Vancouver with his daughter Anne, a niece, a nephew, and his wife Katherine. He enjoyed fishing and gardening and took office work home. While he was sincere in his professional ideas, he did not let them get in the way of vacations to "the fleshpots of Europe." He remarried in the mid-1960s to a barrister named Joan and died in retirement on a golf course in California in 1985.[20]

Sutton Brown was an ambitious careerist. Between 1932 and 1952 he had held seven positions in different local governments in England. Each subsequent job was more prestigious than the last, culminating in a post as county planning officer for Lancashire, "the most senior position of this type outside of London."[21] In this role, he was involved with keeping the war-torn cities of the industrial northwest functioning. His obituary writer noted that he took the Vancouver job because he felt that it was time for a change. That his first wife was from Canada likely explains why he applied for the position in the first place.[22] His education as a civil engineer at the University of Southampton, which followed his formative years at a private boarding school in Jamaica, determined his approach to planning. In effect, he learned planning on the job during a period when the engineering-minded scientific management of urban space was becoming the dominant approach in the discipline. This approach was high modernist.

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[19] Personnel Committee Special Meeting minutes, 24 April 1952, CVA, PRS 20, 81-B-6, file 2; "Planner to Receive Top Salary," *Vancouver Province*, 24 April 1952; "Let's Say 'Yes' to Mr. Brown," *Vancouver Province*, editorial, 26 April 1952; D.A. McGregor, "Realistic Town Planning," *Vancouver Province*, op. ed., 29 January 1954.

[20] "City's Town Planner Calls Job 'Interesting,'" *Vancouver Province*, 25 April 1952; "Vancouver Has its Faults but Sutton Brown Likes it Here," *Vancouver Sun*, 11 December 1959; Sutton Brown to G. Elliott, Southport, Lancashire, 6 August 1962, CVA, PRS 476, 111-C-4, file 193; "Sutton Brown Rites Set for Thursday," *Vancouver Sun*, 19 November 1985.

[21] Sutton Brown's resume shows that his planning jobs were either as a regional planner or as a town planner working within a civic engineering department. This suggests that the stand-alone civic planning department was a postwar product. See Acting City Clerk Ronald Thompson to Mrs. I. Crichton, 5 August 1952, CVA, Robert Henry Fonds, Add. MSS. 1245, 618-D-1, file 14.

[22] Certainly, Sutton Brown mustered only muted enthusiasm for his new job, saying: "It's not that this is a better job, but I certainly am happy about the chances for the future." See "City's Town Planner Calls Job 'Interesting,'" *Vancouver Province*, 25 April 1952.

High modernist planning had to do with power and policy, with administration and space. High modernist planners worked, through hierarchical structures of authority, to bring about an often drastic reorganization of the urban landscape. The most basic element of high modernist planning was its temporal fixation on the future. Everything Sutton Brown did was "forward looking." He warned, for instance, that "any slackness or lack of forethought at this critical stage in Vancouver's planning could prejudice the future." Lest this sound too foreboding, Sutton Brown was openly optimistic, insisting that Vancouver had "a fantastic future."[23]

Sutton Brown also understood planning as a progressive social instrument. He emphasized this by underlining part of the text of a speech in which he called on a shared belief: "What we are all striving for is an improvement – *a substantial improvement* – in the human environment and in the efficiency of its operation – we are trying to make our cities, towns and villages better places to live in and work in."[24] This connection between physical and social problems was, of course, a predisposition of planners: it was planning's raison d'être. In its drive to effect significant social change, high modernist planning was an exercise in social engineering.

Third, Sutton Brown was convinced that social and physical progress had to be expert-led. He expressed a great deal of self-assurance in claiming: "To show imagination is easy, but to make the most imaginative use of limited resources, that is where the planner's skill is fully tested." He stressed the need for objectivity, which the TPB exemplified. "The meetings of the Board," he explained, "are not held in public and the members thus are enabled without external pressures of any sort to thrash out on a realistic and factual basis the several problems concerning the development of the City upon which they are required to report." The paradox here was that Sutton Brown's status as an expert gave him a platform to be a political advocate. He inserted himself into the legislative process numerous times. Politics purportedly had no role in planning, yet planning regularly had a role in politics.[25]

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[23] "Aggressive Policy Advocated for City," *Vancouver Sun*, 9 October 1953; "'Fantastic Future' Seen for Vancouver," *Vancouver Sun*, 11 April 1956.

[24] Gerald Sutton Brown, "Whither Planning?" talk given at Community Planning Advisory Committee Conference, Hotel Vancouver, 10 November 1959, CVA, PRS 648, 77-F-2, file 10, 1.

[25] "Aggressive Policy Advocated for City," *Vancouver Sun*, 9 October 1953; Sutton Brown, "Whither Planning?" 1. Bruce Seely notes the same dynamic with highway engineers. See Bruce Seely, *Building the American Freeway System: Engineers as Policymakers* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987): 37.

This view of expertise also shaped Sutton Brown's opinion on the public's role in planning:

> There is a great tendency to say we now have professional men appointed to do the job – they should get on with it, and we are no longer necessary. Now that may be true in some form of benevolent dictatorship, but it is catastrophic in a democracy.
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> In a democracy, when inevitably we are interfering with the liberties of the individual to the public interest, the informed awareness by the citizens of what is taking place is absolutely vital.[26]

Sutton Brown took to public speaking in an attempt to create this "informed awareness." The public was receptive. Many civil society groups wrote to the planning department requesting a speaker, demonstrating that they were cognizant of urban changes and interested in planning. Sutton Brown usually tailored his message to each organization. He spoke to the Downtown Business Association (DBA) of economic development, to the City of Port Coquitlam Industrial Council of protecting sufficient industrial land, to the Western Society for Rehabilitation of redeveloping slums, and to the Kitsilano Ratepayers' Association of maintaining property values.[27]

Guided by more than rational argument, his rhetoric was held together by language, principles, and imagery borrowed from business, science, and medicine and in opposition to politics.[28] By employing the language of other professions, Sutton Brown invoked a shared understanding that business, scientific, medical, and apolitical expertise was imperative in society. In making these associations, he tried to create a narrative about what planning was and why it was so necessary. Sutton Brown's was but

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26 Sutton Brown, "Whither Planning?" 5.
27 "Vancouver in 1976: 900,000 People, 140,000 More Cars," *Vancouver Sun*, 8 February 1955; "'Fantastic Future' Seen for Vancouver," *Vancouver Sun*, 11 April 1956; "Planner Urges Study of Industrial Land," *Vancouver Province*, 15 March 1954; "New Planner Finds Big Headache," *Vancouver Sun*, 18 October 1952.
28 The connections to business, science, and apolitical expertise permeate this article. Sutton Brown's use of medical imagery, however, largely had to do with his conception of slums as "blight" that necessitated certain "surgical operations" from planners – namely, urban renewal. His allusions to disease were tied to both the nineteenth-century public health tradition and the Chicago School urban ecology model, which compared the city to the body and the natural world. On the public health origins of municipal regulation, see Patrick Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City* (London: Verso, 2003), 63-72; and Stanley K. Schultz, *Constructing Urban Culture: American Cities and City Planning, 1800–1920* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), esp. 91-140. On the urban ecology tradition, see John R. Logan and Harvey Molotch, *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), vii-6.

one of many voices engaged in a debate about the future of cities. But as director of planning, Sutton Brown had a privileged position through which he could work to shape what Michel Foucault calls the "political economy of truth."[29]

A fourth dynamic, critical to legitimizing expert-driven planning and to shaping the contours of high modernity, was established in the tools that Sutton Brown used in his work. The most obvious tool was the plan itself, which he argued was the very framework of planning administration. So, like Bartholomew before him, Sutton Brown directed all of his efforts towards putting together an overarching and absolute plan. By 1955, he spoke openly of a "20-Year Development Plan," culminating in 1976.[30] From that point, he geared all of his predictions and policies towards what he expected 1976 Vancouver to look like. Curiously, there was never an actual plan in any material sense. However, the idea of the twenty-year development plan, and the insistence that it was being worked on and was forthcoming, was powerful. All of the planning department's decisions were justified and mediated by the plan and its ends. Sutton Brown spoke through it in echo, perhaps, of something Le Corbusier wrote: "The despot is not a man. It is the Plan."[31]

The five-year fiscal plans that Sutton Brown developed, in conjunction with the TPB, were a more material planning device than the twenty-year development plan. He argued that the city could not rely on isolated money bylaws and that, in the interest of efficiency, planning needed sustained support and money. He was quick to emphasize the fiscal prudence and realistic aims of the plans.[32] Because the city required voter approval to borrow money and to raise taxes in order to build public works, Sutton Brown spoke often about the importance of the five-year plans. These plans were very much political policies generated by the technical experts on the TPB.

Sutton Brown also made his claims to expertise by emphasizing the scientific techniques of planning. He referred to surveys, "basic data," "modern processes," and "detailed analyses" – in short, to techniques that dealt with things that were quantifiable. This bias was amplified by the near unique emphasis on physical and technical dimensions. Social concerns and qualitative features of urban life were ignored because they

29　Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. and trans. Colin Gordon (Brighton, UK: Harvester Press, 1980), 131-33.

30　"Planning Legislation," memo, ca. 1953, likely by Sutton Brown, CVA, PRS 648, 926-B-4, file 6; "New 20-Year Plan Aims to Guide City's Growth," *Vancouver Province*, 4 March 1955.

31　Quoted in Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 111.

32　"Vancouver 'Can't Rely on Isolated Money Bylaws,'" *Vancouver Sun*, 24 October 1957; "No 'Fancy Schemes' in City's Master Plan," *Vancouver Province*, 11 March 1955.

Figure 1. Gerald Sutton Brown (middle) reviews a "draft copy" of the 20-Year Development Plan with "Average Citizens." *Source*: "'Average Citizens' Approve Plan," *Vancouver Province*, 13 November 1952.

resisted rational, engineering-style interpretation. Sutton Brown insisted that planning departments be staffed by personnel with "a high level of technical qualifications" based on function and specialization and that they be trained to handle the "severe responsibilities" of the task at hand. A council, comprised of part-time aldermen otherwise occupied with their own business affairs, gave Sutton Brown the discretion to set up his own department, and he looked to enforce a professional standard by hiring British planners.[33] He also created a hierarchical management structure within the department. Sutton Brown did not do any planning but, rather, dished out assignments and acted in a supervisory role. He was also instrumental in creating and leading the Planning Institute of British Columbia in 1958, and he networked with planners across North America through conferences, professional journals, and correspondence.

The fifth element of high modernist planning had to do with policy itself. The responsibilities of the new planning department were extensive, covering provisions for everything from sidewalks to parks and cemeteries, garbage collection to public works. To a large extent,

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[33] Sutton Brown, "Planning Administration," reprinted from vol. 4, 1954, *Community Planning Review,* issued to its members by the Community Planning Association of Canada, 77 MacLaren Street, Ottawa, Canada, PAM 1954-132, CVA, 2, 5; "New Planning Setup to Cost City $80,000," *Vancouver Province*, 23 December 1952.

Sutton Brown's challenge lay in deciding how to come to grips with suburbanization.[34] In this light, Sutton Brown sought to advance four policies: urban renewal, downtown redevelopment, freeways, and comprehensive zoning. These were high modern initiatives: expert-managed technical solutions to perceived urban problems that involved the drastic alteration, regulation, standardization, and modernization of city space. Sutton Brown's adherence to these policies spoke to both the goal of professionalization and the way Vancouver was entangled with the dominant currents of city planning. In a sense, he laid claim to these planning solutions because they were so widely held and because they thus validated the central involvement of planning expertise in the operation of the local state.

The first policy Sutton Brown pursued was urban renewal. Slums had long-since emerged as a concern of urban civil society. But, as Joseph Heathcott argues, the mid-twentieth century political agenda for slum clearance was shaped from 1942 to 1952.[35] Politicians, housing reformers, and planning advocates debated what to do about the perceived connection between poor physical living conditions and social depravity. Local actors were responding to real needs and became important forces in shaping national policy. In Vancouver, the lack of low-rent housing was a long-standing issue, exacerbated by an aging housing stock and postwar demand.[36] A growing consensus stressed the need for physical renewal.

City planners like Sutton Brown were crucial to these debates because they brought a new language to the issue and, crucially, a technical solution to the problem: urban renewal. Urban renewal involved the public acquisition and clearance of privately owned property through the power of eminent domain. The land was then made available for public housing and private redevelopment. Renewal initiatives were remarkable for their scale and for the way they involved a dramatic reworking of urban space. To achieve rational order, provide modern housing, and produce economic efficiency – all for the betterment of society – the slate first

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[34] Suburbanization was, however, a trend Sutton Brown could never really influence. On suburbanization in Canada, see Richard Harris, *Creeping Conformity: How Canada Became Suburban, 1900-1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Veronica Strong-Boag, "Home Dreams: Women and the Suburban Experiment in Canada, 1945-60," *Canadian Historical Review* 72, 4 (1991): 471-504; John C. Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace: The Evolution of Canadian Housing Policy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993).

[35] Joseph Heathcott, "The City Quietly Remade: National Programs and Local Agendas in the Movement to Clear Slums," *Journal of Urban History* 34 (2008): 221-42; Teaford, *Rough Road*, 6.

[36] See Jill Wade, *Houses for All: The Struggle for Social Housing in Vancouver, 1919-1950* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994).

had to be wiped clean. The hegemony of urban renewal extended across the Western world, within a Cold War context, and was an important element in the ambitions of the postwar liberal welfare state.[37] Local officials, who decided when and where to proceed, initiated projects. Vancouver was at the forefront of redevelopment efforts because Sutton Brown diligently pursued it as an integral part of his planning program. The *Vancouver Redevelopment Study* (1957) laid out the premises of renewal in the city.[38]

   The second solution advocated by Sutton Brown was downtown redevelopment. He called the planning report entitled *Downtown Vancouver, 1955-1976* a milestone, the first of its kind in North America. The report outlined initiatives to meet the needs of the central business district (CBD), arguing that the downtown's "physical separation from the rest of the city, added to its special function and character[,]" made it worthy of special consideration. The centrepiece of his redevelopment plan was a multi-block civic centre comprising a collection of monumental public buildings. Representing a triumph of modernist architecture, the civic centre was intended as a demonstration of power and order. It was hardly a new idea. Bartholomew had proposed this in his original 1929 plan for Vancouver, and the idea, revived in 1946, narrowly missed approval in a plebiscite.[39] Nor was this ambition Vancouver's alone. Sutton Brown corresponded with officials in Pittsburgh, Baltimore, and Seattle (among other places) regarding parallel projects. He wrote that he was "bringing up to date [his] information on modern American City Developments" and that he relied "to a considerable degree on the up-to-date experience" of planners in other cities. In comparing notes planners were collectively subscribing to the same thinking about the functional and financial benefits of dramatically rebuilding sections of the downtown.[40]

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[37] See Klemek, *Transatlantic Collapse*. On the extent of renewal in Canada, see Kevin J. Cross and Robert W. Collier, *The Urban Renewal Process in Canada: An Analysis of Current Practice* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1967). On the connection between urban renewal and the Canadian welfare state, see Brushett, "People and Government"; and Tina Loo, "Africville and the Dynamics of State Power in Postwar Canada," *Acadiensis* 39, 2 (2010): 23-47.

[38] Vancouver Planning Department, *Vancouver Redevelopment Study; Prepared by the City of Vancouver Planning Department for the Housing Research Committee* (Vancouver: Vancouver Planning Department, 1957).

[39] "Don't Worry: The Heart's Strong," *Vancouver Sun*, 16 February 1963; Vancouver Technical Planning Board, *Downtown Vancouver, 1955-1976* (Vancouver: Technical Planning Board, 1956): 1; "Planner Sees Dreams for City Coming True," *Vancouver Province*, 30 October 1952.

[40] Sutton Brown to City Clerk, Baltimore, 19 September 1956, CVA, PRS 648, 77-E-3, file 1; Sutton Brown to A.G. Odell, Jr., A.G. Odell, Jr. and Associates, Charlotte, North Carolina, 19 September 1956, CVA, PRS 648, 77-E-3, file 1.

The championing of freeways by city planners, Sutton Brown's third major policy, also had to do with reconciling the perceived importance of the downtown with ongoing suburbanization. The need to make the CBD accessible to far-flung metropolitan residents was only intensified with the growth of consumerism and automobile ownership.[41] At first, Sutton Brown spoke cautiously about freeways, noting that they were "a drastic measure at a drastic price" and that the city would not be able to afford them without help. But, by 1956, he confidently insisted that freeways "[would] be built," "[would] be required," and "soon [would] be the only answer to increasing traffic."[42]

Sutton Brown's growing confidence likely stemmed from his involvement with the Technical Committee for Metropolitan Highway Planning (TCMHP), which began work in the mid-1950s. The committee, which included engineering and planning experts from the province and the municipalities of the Vancouver metropolitan region, released a final plan in April 1959 that proposed a $340 million system. Sutton Brown helped establish the metropolitan committee and headed the steering committee, likely because of his esteemed position as director of planning for Vancouver.[43] In the latter capacity, Sutton Brown held meetings in his office but did little if any actual planning work. He summarized the various reports included in the plan and addressed the media. Acting as the administrator of the project, Sutton Brown reinforced the existing consensus on the technical imperative of freeways, which would be built through existing neighbourhoods yet be a credit to the public good.

Sutton Brown's fourth initiative, and first successful major legislation, was a comprehensive zoning bylaw. The bylaw was designed to assign and strictly regulate land use in the city according to function, a power that previously was not uniformly exercised. The *Zoning and Development By-law* of 1956 was an exercise in modernization, a document that copiously rationalized and ordered city space. Land uses were standardized and specialized according to technical designations that

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[41] In its appeal to mass consumption, high modernist planning in Western democracies was rooted in Keynesian economics. See David Ley, "Styles of the Times: Liberal and Neo-Conservative Landscapes in Inner Vancouver, 1968-1986," *Journal of Historical Geography* 13, 1 (1987): 47-49.

[42] Unlike in the United States, where the federal government paid 90 percent of the cost, in Canada financial support for freeways had to be pieced together with upper-level government. See "Planner Forecasts City of 1,000,000," *Vancouver Province*, 23 January 1953; "Town Planner Urges Aggressive Policy," *Vancouver Province*, 8 October 1953; "'Fantastic Future' Seen for Vancouver," *Vancouver Sun*, 11 April 1956; "New Road Network a 'Must' for City," *Vancouver Province*, 9 November 1956; "Vancouver Can't Rely on Isolated Bylaws," *Vancouver Sun*, 4 December 1957.

[43] V. Setty Pendakur, *Cities, Citizens & Freeways* (Vancouver: s.n., 1972), 12.

resulted in a language resistant to colloquial understanding. Sutton Brown emphasized the totality of the zoning scheme and repeatedly refused to rezone single properties, instead emphasizing the overarching land needs of the city.[44] The zoning bylaw became a rationale unto itself.

The bylaw also provided the director of planning with unprecedented powers. City aldermen were astonished by the inclusion of phrases such as "in the opinion of [the TPB]" and "at the discretion of [the TPB]" found in the 1955 draft of the law. Thirteen organizations showed up at a public hearing to protest the discretionary powers being given to city staff, but several groups, including the Board of Trade, the Vancouver Housing Association, and the Architectural Institute of BC (AIBC), backed the bylaw. Most of the controversial language was changed, but the director of planning still gained explicit stewardship of the bylaw and decision-making power on rezoning applications, development permits, and design specifications. Only the right to appeal rested with another body. Mayor Frederick Hume brushed off any lingering criticism, saying: "Many experts have been in on the drafting of this by-law and they have given the very best of their skill and knowledge."[45]

By the end of the 1950s, the planning department had completed a series of reports linked to the twenty-year development plan and had overseen the extension of basic services. But of Sutton Brown's main policies, only the zoning bylaw was in place. Urban renewal, however, would begin early in the 1960s, and freeways and downtown redevelopment remained central planning aims of the decade. To a great extent, the lag had to do with the fact that planning took time, financial considerations often had to be worked out with upper-level governments, and major civic spending had to be approved by plebiscite. Nonetheless, what Sutton Brown had accomplished was important. He had established in Vancouver a professional identity for planning rooted in high modernist ideology and now institutionalized in the local state. In December 1959, he was appointed to the Board of Administration (BOA). Reflecting on his promotion, Sutton Brown said that he expected council and the public to continue to support a progressive planning program. He summed up his sentiments

44 Vancouver Technical Planning Board, *Zoning and Development By-law No.* 3575 (Vancouver: Technical Planning Board, 1956); City Clerk to Sutton Brown, 28 February 1955, CVA, PRS 648, 925-E-1, file 5; Sutton Brown to Board of Administration, 2 April 1959, CVA, PRS 476, III-A-6, file 77; "Lawyer Hits 'Inelastic' Zoning Law," *Vancouver Sun*, 5 June 1956.
45 "Planning Board Powers under Fire," *Vancouver Sun*, 19 October 1955; "City Finally Passes New Zoning By-Law," *Vancouver Province*, 23 February 1956; "New Zoning By-Law in Operation June 18," *Vancouver Province*, 18 May 1956.

by musing, while lighting up a filter-tip cigarette: "We have our faults, but I wouldn't care to be anywhere else."[46]

THE POLITICS OF CHANGE I:
THE BOARD OF ADMINISTRATION, 1956-64

The creation of the BOA in 1956 signalled the further entrenchment of expertise in local government and was another instance of the postwar expansion of bureaucracy. It was formed in response to unprecedented growth and the increasing complexity of problems facing the municipal state. More pointedly, it was intended to reduce the workload of aldermen who were expected to be successful businesspeople and to deal with civic affairs on a part-time basis. Hiring full-time administrators was a practical step that allowed local politicians to maintain their dual roles as citizens and civic officials.

Out of a desire for more honest, efficient, and economical government, elites in Vancouver had toyed with the idea of a council-manager system since 1938.[47] The council-manager model, originally championed in the 1910s by American Progressive Richard Spencer Childs, relied on a belief that administration could be separated from the trappings of civic politics and policy formation, and it accepted the virtues of scientific management.[48] The Civic Bureau of the Board of Trade (BOT), a group of business elites whom John Bottomley saw as crucial to establishing a pro-growth agenda, strongly supported the implementation of such a governance model in Vancouver. In 1953, it recommended the installation of a variant of the Childs model, a council-commissioner system used in Calgary and Edmonton. Administrative matters would be dealt with by a board comprised of two appointed commissioners, the mayor, and an ex-officio alderman.[49] Perhaps unconvinced by this approach, council

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[46] "Vancouver Has Faults But Sutton Brown Likes It Here," *Vancouver Sun*, 11 December 1959.

[47] "New Board 'Farce' Alderman Claims," *Vancouver Sun*, 9 June 1956. On the political ideas of Vancouver's elites, see Bottomley, "Ideology"; and Andrea Barbara Smith, "The Origins of the NPA: A Study in Vancouver Politics, 1930-1940" (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1981).

[48] On the council-manager system and Childs, see Bernard Hirshhorn, *Democracy Reformed: Richard Spencer Childs and His Fight for Better Government* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), xxii-xxiv; Richard J. Stillman II, *The Rise of the City Manager: A Public Profession in Local Government* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974), 9-10; John Nalbandian, *Professionalism in Local Government: Transformations in the Roles, Responsibilities, and Values of City Managers* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 7; Schultz, *Constructing Urban Culture*, 186.

[49] Brief of Vancouver and New Westminster District and Labour Council to Civic Finance Committee, 22 September 1938, CVA, PRS 20, 82-A-2, file 1; "Civic Prober Describes City Commissioner Rule," *Vancouver Sun*, 6 February 1953; Interim Report of the Committee on

soon hired a Chicago-based firm to consider the issue. Their November 1955 report backed the orthodoxy of council-manager government. But the civic finance committee, uneasy with putting too much power in the hands of unelected officials, rejected the recommendation. In a subsequent majority report on civic government, Alderman George Cunningham backed the council-commissioner variant as the middle course between ensuring expert counsel on urban affairs and maintaining a responsibility to voters.[50]

If Cunningham approached reform carefully, City Clerk Ron Thompson was livid at the very prospect. In his minority report, Thompson wrote: "In my view it is contrary to the true spirit of democratic government for any person or group of persons other than the duly elected representatives to be completely vested with power to make all administrative decisions." The Vancouver Central Council of Ratepayers' Associations (VCCRA), the main body representing homeowners, repeatedly wrote to council with parallel concerns. But, once prompted by BOT, council sided with Cunningham's logic and voted in May 1956 to create a new layer of bureaucracy atop the TPB. Significantly, the vote was five to three and BOA was contingently set up for a six-month trial period. Despite this sign of wariness, the cautiousness was mixed with deference. After some debate, council voted to allow BOA to define its own duties and responsibilities and unanimously reapproved it in January 1957.

Apprehension over expert authority resurfaced in early 1959 when council voted seven to two to allow BOA to hold its meetings in secret. The press, who relied on open meetings for news, no doubt manufactured part of the outcry over this action. But there was also real concern about the character of local democracy. The VCCRA planned a protest rally over the action, and one poll found the public to be three to one against closed meetings. Mayor Tom Alsbury brushed off claims that the decision was a dictatorial manoeuvre, suggesting that he had the backing of a silent majority. Indeed, Alsbury received so many letters of support on the issue that he came up with a form letter response.[51]

Civic Finance and Administration on Civic Administration in Vancouver, 13 April 1953, CVA, PRS 20, 82-A-2, file 4.

[50] Public Administration Service, Chicago, "Report on an Administrative Survey of Municipal Government – City of Vancouver, BC," 20 November 1955, CVA, PRS 20, 82-A-2, file 6; Alderman George Cunningham, Majority Report on Civic Government, 2 May 1956, CVA, PRS 20, 82-A-2, file 11.

[51] City Clerk Ron Thompson, Minority Report on Civic Government, 7 May 1956, CVA, PRS 20, 82-A-2, file 10; Gwyn Watkins, President, VCCRA to the Legislative Committee, 20 February 1960, CVA, PRS 476, III-A-5, file 63; Council minutes, 16 July 1956, CVA, City Council and Office

Sutton Brown, then, was appointed as commissioner amidst ongoing debate over BOA and local governance. Alsbury, in fact, stormed out of the meeting at which Sutton Brown was appointed because the mayor wanted to be removed from BOA. That matter dragged on for another year, as both the commissioners and the mayor complained that too much of their time was spent in meetings. Alderman Bill Rathie built the case for the mayor's removal by insinuating that it would bring more city business out into the open: council would get a say on issues before the mayor could quash them. This logic prevailed, and council voted nine to one in January 1961 to cut BOA to two commissioners, even though the move was construed as a temporary measure. As Sutton Brown later described it, the decision effectively gave Vancouver a "dual-headed" city manager.[52]

Sutton Brown's status as an expert and his experience in Vancouver led to his promotion. The city received more than 150 applications for its open commissioner post (one of the original commissioners had retired), the advertisement calling for someone with proven administrative experience and an extensive background in a wide area of municipal service. In effect, his experience as director of planning and his role on the TPB groomed him for the new job. Sutton Brown made new professional affiliations to reflect his new position, joining the Institute of Urban Administrators of Canada and the Municipal Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada. With the mayor's removal from BOA, the commissioners split the city's administrative duties instead of holding meetings. The senior commissioner, John Oliver, took on electrical, engineering, civil defence, fire, and court duties; Sutton Brown was responsible for building, planning, health, the budget, and social services. Finance, legal, and the city clerk were under joint control, and special projects were dealt with on an ad hoc basis. These distinctions were important. In a direct way, Sutton Brown was charged with the local state's provision of welfare. Certainly, in any case, his passion was for administration. He argued forcefully that the key to planning was

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of the City Clerk Fonds, PRS 20, 21-G-5, file 2; Special Council Meeting minutes, 5 June 1956, CVA, PRS 20, 21-G-5, file 2; "Aldermen Battle over Board's Duties," *Vancouver Sun*, 20 June 1956; "Mayor Won't Budge on Closed Meetings," *Vancouver Sun*, 29 January 1959; "But Citizens 3-1 Against," *Vancouver Sun*, 4 February 1959; "New Censorship at City Hall," *Vancouver Province*, editorial, 29 January 1959; Dozens of replies by Alsbury, CVA, Mayor's Office Fonds, General Correspondence Files, PRS 483, 36-B-7, file 13.

52 "Mayor Walks Out as City Post Filled," *Vancouver Province*, 9 December 1959; "Board Admits Failure," *Vancouver Sun*, 11 October 1960; "Board Cut Demanded by Rathie," *Vancouver Province*, 8 December 1960; Sutton Brown to Elliott, Southport, Lancashire, 6 August 1962, CVA, PRS 476, III-C-4, file 193.

shaping an administrative structure that ensured the implementation of plans. More than ever, Sutton Brown's role was to shape, and to find financing for, high modern planning initiatives and to administer them through an attendant bureaucracy.[53]

The BOA structure left civic power centralized in the hands of the commissioners. Sutton Brown's greatest influence came from his control over the budget, personnel matters, and the management of the city's bureaucracy. But the commissioners also controlled information at City Hall. For all intents and purposes, then, they shaped civic policy. In 1956, BOA replaced thirty-four issue-based aldermanic committees. Thereafter, council met but once a week to discuss policy and BOA recommendations.[54] BOA decided what issues to submit to elected officials and when. Typically, BOA would submit an item of city business to council, which would usually vote to ask BOA to study the matter and report back. The commissioner overseeing the issue might write a report him- or herself. Or, he would pass it on to an appropriate department. The department head's report, once approved by the TPB, would come back to the commissioner bearing a recommendation. The commissioner would vet it and generally recommend that council adopt the TPB recommendation. The final recommendation was then resubmitted to council, which almost unfailingly accepted the expert advice. In sum, council generally dealt with problems twice, yet rarely generated the policies it endorsed.

This quiet, business-like administrative role, which Sutton Brown used to implement high modernist policy, was entangled with the city's pro-growth coalition. Sociologists John Logan and Harvey Molotch use the term "Growth Machine" to describe the government and market forces across North America that were, from the beginning of the twentieth century, concerned with the exchange value rather than the use value of land. This ideological bent depended on the association of economic growth with social and political harmony. The broadly shared postwar consensus was that the role of the local state was to promote the ends of capital, a conviction linked to the context of the Cold War. In Van-

[53] "Attacks on Board Don't Scare Applicants for Top City Job," *Vancouver Sun*, 10 September 1959; Bylaw no. 3790, a bylaw to amend the procedure of the Board of Administration, passed 25 August 1959, CVA, PRS 483, 36-B-7, file 12; BOA memo re: Revised Procedures, 1 February 1961, CVA, PRS 578, 73-D-2, file 1; Sutton Brown, "Planning Administration," Reprinted from the *Community Planning Review*, vol. 4 (1954), CVA, Pamphlet 1954-132, 2.

[54] Gutstein, "Vancouver," 198; Norbert MacDonald, *Distant Neighbors: A Comparative History of Seattle and Vancouver* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 168-69; Vancouver Urban Research Group, "Forever Deceiving You: The Politics of Vancouver Development (Revised) – Election Special (November 1972)," (Vancouver: Vancouver Urban Research Group, 1972), 44; Special Council Meeting minutes, 16 July 1956, CVA, PRS 20, 21-G-5, file 2.

couver, real estate agents-cum-politicians, the Non-Partisan Association (NPA), the press, major corporations, and the development industry were the major proponents of pro-growth policies.[55] The critical dimension was that, while people lived in the city and businesses operated on city land, urban space *was* the business of the real estate and development industries. They looked to use space as a means of production. Theirs was abstract space, to use Henri Lefebvre's designation – the exchange-value-oriented space of bourgeoisie capitalism.[56]

Planning's role in the local state growth machine was central, notably because high modernist planning also dealt in abstract space. Sutton Brown and planners of his time were very much invested in the idea that economic growth, properly directed, was a positive force. The high modernist planning policies that Sutton Brown espoused conformed to the logic of capital and the wants of powerful downtown and real estate interests. Capital recast its ambitions as being for the common good, and planning allowed it to succeed. The precepts of the "Growth Machine" also shaped the nature of public participation in planning and governance. Because financing for planning initiatives in Vancouver had to be approved by plebiscite, Sutton Brown and council drew in civic groups on several occasions in an effort to generate wider support. This public participation, though, was tied to powerful interests. For example, Sutton Brown's ongoing pursuit of allies led to the creation of the Downtown Redevelopment Advisory Board (DRAB) in 1962. It included representatives from the DBA, BOT, and the AIBC. DRAB backed Sutton Brown's planning policies and validated his appeals for public support – but in a predictable and non-representative way.

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[55] The literature on civic politics in Vancouver makes the case that, from 1937 to 1972, the NPA was crucial to ensuring the domination of a pro-business, middle-class political culture. See Fern Miller, "Vancouver Civic Political Parties: Developing a Model of Party-System Change and Stabilization," *BC Studies* 25 (1975): 3-31; Paul Tennant, "Vancouver Civic Politics, 1929-1980," *BC Studies* 46 (1980): 3-27; Gutstein, "Vancouver"; Smith, "Origins of the NPA."

[56] Logan and Molotch, *Urban Fortunes*, ix-x; Timothy J. Colton, *Big Daddy: Frederick G. Gardiner and the Building of Metropolitan Toronto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 58-59; Gutstein, "Vancouver," 197; Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 57.

THE POLITICS OF CHANGE II:
PLANNING, PROTEST, AND CIVIC REFORM, 1964-73

When John Oliver quit his commissioner post in 1964, debate about BOA resurfaced. But Lorne Ryan, the city electrician, was soon named as Oliver's successor.[57] From this point forward the mythology around Sutton Brown grew. As the senior commissioner, Sutton Brown became a focus of criticism as the policy programs he championed in Vancouver unravelled in the face of changing attitudes in the late 1960s. Spurred by public sentiment and action, local politicians increasingly sought to reclaim their power from the civic bureaucracy headed by Sutton Brown.

In the wake of the TCMHP's 1959 report, the *Province* argued: "The thoroughness of the original freeway plan left little room for broad disagreement. The authors of the multi-volume report came from every level of authority in the province and their qualifications as a group cannot be topped." This was not really true, though, for there was plenty of criticism of freeways and their cost. One quotable commentator said that Vancouver was suffering from a case of "expertitis" and that the city was going to be "experted into the poorhouse." When asked in 1961 why some homeowners had had their property values frozen, Sutton Brown wryly noted that the action had been taken when: "freeways were not the dirty word they are today." And yet he noted in 1963 that, while freeways were "dead," they might be revived with provincial money.[58]

Though the lack of political decisiveness kept freeway planning in the works, the problems with undue deference to planning experts and the centralized exercise of authority towards high modernist goals were increasingly evident in the mid-1960s. The earliest flashpoint concerned the Georgia Viaduct, built in the mid-1910s and in disrepair by 1960. Increasingly reinforced by timber supports, it was both a liability and an expense for the city. In 1963, Sutton Brown made its replacement Vancouver's top transportation priority. Financing for the construction was included in the 1964 five-year capital works plan, and when the plan was defeated at the polls, pro-growth advocates were spurred into a fervour of boosterism. The administrative solution was to hold a new plebiscite in September 1965 with a reduced plan as one ballot item and money for the Viaduct as a separate $10 million question. Council and

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[57] "Ryan Gets Top City Position," *Vancouver Province*, 16 December 1964.

[58] Mayor Rathie to Council, 14 December 1964, CVA, PRS 20, 81-C-1, file 10; "Freeway Still All Talk But No Action," *Vancouver Province*, 21 October 1960; "Freeway Could Ruin Vancouver, Warns Bate," *Vancouver Province*, 7 February 1961; "City Urged to Drop Plan for Freeway, Sell Land," *Vancouver Province*, 20 August 1961; "Don't Worry: The Heart's Strong," *Vancouver Sun*, 16 February 1963.

its pro-growth allies launched a full-scale campaign in support of the plebiscite, putting the question as a stark choice between "Progress or Stagnation."[59] Once the referendum passed, though, it came to light that the city's engineers were fitting the Viaduct to the prospective freeway system. The public and aldermen reacted with anger, claiming that they had been duped into approving freeways. The response emphasized that council and the public only knew as much as BOA told them.

Sutton Brown remained at the forefront of freeway planning in Vancouver in the 1960s in various ways. Acting in a leadership role, he shepherded an existing technocratic consensus on freeways rather than manufacturing consent. But the political consensus of the planning process he marshalled was what turned public opinion against him. One of Sutton Brown's clearest roles was his chairmanship of an eleven-person metropolitan technical committee, formed in 1966 to recommend a site for a new First Narrows Crossing, an element of the proposed freeway system.[60]

Sutton Brown exerted further influence in his entanglement with consultants. Expert consultants had long been used in civic governance, and one product of this dependence was the existence of a network of firms that sought contracts continent-wide. Engineers, planners, and administrative professionals regularly solicited business from Vancouver, offering letters and glossy brochures detailing their services. Common wisdom was that consultants provided neutral second expert opinions – a view that consultants were eager to encourage. Under Sutton Brown's authority, consultants were hired frequently to re-examine the conclusions of the city's staff, to design specific elements of the freeway network, and to come up with cost estimates. Sutton Brown regularly inserted himself into the selection process and was attentive to the "qualifications" of the different consulting firms on offer.[61] Employing parallel technical methodologies, and using the city's data, chosen consultants invariably reinforced the conclusions of the civic bureaucracy.

The co-dependence of city officials and consultants became a matter of popular concern in 1967. In excess of forty-five studies were completed

59 "Freeway Connection Put Ahead of Inlet Crossing," *Vancouver Province*, 28 January 1963; "What Is It to Be? Progress or Stagnation," *Vancouver Province*, 25 September 1965; City of Vancouver 1966-1970 Capital Programme, September 1965, CVA, PRS 578, 114-E-6, file 6.

60 "City Official to Head Brain Trust on Bridge," *Vancouver Province*, 11 August 1966; "Crossing Site Studies Begin," *Vancouver Province*, 5 October 1967.

61 Sandy Walker to Ald. Halford Wilson, Notes on Freeways Report, 1959, CVA, Wilson Family Fonds, Halford Wilson Papers, Add Mss. 362, 551-B-1, file 2; Sutton Brown to R. Martin, City Engineer, 2 June 1966, CVA, PRS 476, 111-A-5, files 34-35; Sutton Brown talk delivered to the TPB, 11 April 1969, CVA, PRS 476, 111-A-5, files 34-35.

on freeways between 1952 and 1972, but, in June 1967, the *Vancouver Transportation Study*, conducted by San Francisco consultants, was the first to make the freeway route public: it would cut through the middle of Chinatown. When council ratified the study in October of that year a public outcry erupted immediately. The wave of protest led several aldermen to reconsider their decision. Sutton Brown was quickly the focus of attention as politicians and the public discovered that he had drawn up narrow terms of reference for the consultants' work. Such were the restrictions of their contract that a Chinatown link was ensured. Sutton Brown had predetermined the freeway route without ever engaging the political process. Tom Alsbury, now an alderman, railed that Sutton Brown had led council "down the garden path in that the consultant's terms of reference [were] too narrow."[62] To Sutton Brown, though, freeway studies had followed a logical progression. Early studies and decisions had narrowed freeway route options. In the interest of efficient administration, there was no reason for him to reopen other possibilities.

By late 1967, Vancouver was in the thrall of what has been called the "Great Freeway Debate." Members of the Chinese Canadian community were incensed that a decision on the location of the roadway had been taken without public involvement and without an official decision on freeways more generally. Mayor Tom Campbell at first looked to dismiss the protest by calling it "a tempest in a Chinese teapot." However, unlike early 1960s protests over urban renewal, Chinese Canadians were now backed by professionals, some politicians, students, community activists, and concerned citizens.[63] The debate was marked particularly by a number of raucous and well-attended public hearings prompted by citizen demand. Council tried to insulate itself from criticism by allowing engineers and planners to hold the floor at length at the start of the meetings. This fit an earlier pattern, in which bureaucrats took on the role of public educators. Before 1967, residents had opposed planning actions that affected their immediate interests, such as zoning restrictions, but

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[62] "How to Pick a Freeway," *Vancouver Sun*, 4 November 1967; "2nd Opinion on Freeway Defended," *Vancouver Sun*, 6 November 1967.

[63] See Kay J. Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875–1980* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), chap. 6; Mike Harcourt and Ken Cameron, with Sean Rossiter, *City Making in Paradise: Nine Decisions that Saved Vancouver* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2007), 31-55; Wing Chung Ng, *The Chinese in Vancouver, 1945–1980: The Pursuit of Identity and Power* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999), 97-102; Shlomo Hasson and David Ley, *Neighbourhood Organizations and the Welfare State* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), chap. 4.

planners had had little trouble resisting isolated objections to city-wide policies that they had construed as being for the public good. [64]

However, expert logic could not contain the 1967 protest or the protests that followed. The difference was that now opponents were able to mobilize broad-based coalitions with significant social capital. Such movements were unique enough for Manuel Castells to call them "urban social movements": they were cross-class alliances concerned with the problems of collective consumption. [65] Whereas at first anti-freeway advocates simply picked apart the proposed road system, their critiques now escalated to focus on the centres of power in the local state. As journalist Myrna Kostash argues, this was a typical progression of 1960s social movements. Indeed, freeway protests must be seen within the context of the sixties. The protests of the sixties were a global phenomenon, driven by a passion for change, marked by a shift in politics to the left, and shaped by the rise of social activism as the primary mode of agency. [66] In Canada, the cultural and political changes of the period, generally instigated by a broad range of youthful social movements, were about the democratization of society. Their effect was to liberalize cultural and social norms and to introduce a greater plurality to Canada's political sphere. [67] Theodore Roszak argues that rejecting the technocracy of mainstream society was one of the distinctive features of counterculture. [68] Certainly, the rejection of the technocratic expertise that drove freeway planning was an important rallying point for urban activism.

Anti-freeway advocates in Vancouver were keenly aware that their local struggle took place within a broader context. They followed similar protests in North America and could visit cities like Seattle and San

[64] Donald Gutstein, *Vancouver, Ltd.* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1975), 152-66; Ken MacKenzie, "Freeway Planning and Protests in Vancouver, 1954-1972" (MA thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1985), 77; Kim Livingston, "Urban Social Movements: Urban Renewal and Neighbourhood Mobilization in Vancouver during the 1960s and '70s" (MA thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2002), 3; Lemon, *Liberal Dreams*, 208.

[65] Manuel Castells, *City, Class and Power*, trans. Elizabeth Lebas (New York: St. Marion's Press, 1978).

[66] Myrna Kostash, *Long Way from Home: The Story of the Sixties Generation in Canada* (Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1980), xxiv. For a good overview of how sixties scholars have treated the period, see Karen Dubinsky, Catherine Krull, Susan Lord, Sean Mills, Scott Rutherford, eds., introduction to *New World Coming: The Sixties and the Shaping of Global Consciousness* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2009), 1-6.

[67] The strongest works on the sixties in Canada are Sean Mills, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010); Bryan Palmer, *Canada's 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); and Doug Owram, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

[68] Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter-Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969), chap. 1.

Figure 2. Protesters opposing council's decision to build a freeway link through Chinatown. Note the sign, "Is Sutton Brown God?" in the centre, partially hidden. *Source*: *Vancouver Sun*, 4 November 1967.

Francisco to see the negative effects of freeways. Through their critiques, activists articulated a new understanding and discourse about the relationship between citizens and the city. They began to emphasize the use value of the urban environment and increasingly demanded an active role in planning. Citizens, then, turned not just against high modernist policies but also against the planning experts whose methods excluded social and cultural considerations. At one of the protest rallies, one of the placards architecture students held asked, rhetorically, "Is Sutton Brown God?"[69] It ridiculed a faith in expertise that had never seemed so misplaced.

Council rescinded its decision on the Chinatown freeway link in January 1968. Alderman Alsbury commented on the decision: "The experts were completely wrong and I intend to look very carefully at any technical advice in the future."[70] While this was a symbolic shift in opinion, the legislative decision changed little. It did not constitute a rejection of freeways but, rather, of that particular route. Sutton Brown maintained that involving citizens in planning was "dangerous" because sensitive details might be made public. And planners and consultants continued to coordinate their efforts behind the scene. Although Setty Pendakur suggests that Sutton Brown continued to pursue freeways because of an emotional attachment to the plan, it is more likely that he simply regarded freeways as the only possible solution to the problems

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[69] MacDonald, *Distant Neighbors*, 163; MacKenzie, "Freeway Planning," 61; Pendakur, *Cities*, 61.
[70] "Chinatown Link Plan Rescinded," *Vancouver Sun*, 10 January 1968; "Aldermen Fear Another Council Freeway Switch," *Vancouver Sun*, 11 January 1968.

facing the city. Only when citizens successfully blocked a freeway link between the Viaduct and the Trans-Canada Highway late in 1971 did the technical initiative come to an impasse. Soon, a change in the provincial and municipal governments led to the recognition that rapid transit and freeways were mutually exclusive goals.[71]

Between 1967 and 1972, the public, aldermen, provincial politicians, academics, the press, and elements within the civic bureaucracy repeatedly criticized the role of planning expertise in the affairs of the local state. "Who is really running the city?" was the headline that summed up sentiment. Increasingly, Sutton Brown became the focus of personal attack. Most colourfully, MLA Bob Williams lashed out at Sutton Brown's influence by calling him a "city slicker," "a grey eminence in Vancouver's civic power structure," and "a former Jamaican aristocrat, a man who hails from a country that only recently became a self-governing democracy." Elsewhere, the press criticized Sutton Brown for rejecting an independent study of False Creek in 1972. As ever, he wanted control over planning matters and dismissed the study idea: "It's not a big job. I've had the responsibility for developing whole towns. This is peanuts." But this position was losing its political currency. So, too, was his management style, leading many to think of him as the "firm-handed dictator of city services."[72]

In the end, as Walter Hardwick argues, Sutton Brown's failure was in pursuing policies better suited to the problems of the 1950s than to the problems of the 1960s. Indeed, Sutton Brown backed the same expert-executed planning prescriptions in 1972 as he had when he was hired in 1952.[73] Growing affluence, the baby boom, and the expansion of postsecondary education had produced young white-collar professionals who increasingly saw the downtown not simply as a place of business but also as a place to live. The definitive cultural shifts of the sixties,

[71] "Planners Will Get Private Views," *Vancouver Province*, 8 September 1967; Pendakur, *Cities*, 6; Memo on coordination between consultants engaged with transportation studies, 19 November 1968, CVA, PRS 476, III-A-6, files 33 and 36; BOA report to the Civic Development Committee on "Vancouver's Transportation Situation," CVA, PRS 476, III-A-6, files 33 and 36; Minority Report from the Liaison Committee on the Highway 401 link, CVA, PRS 476, 114-A-4, file 23.

[72] "Who Is Really Running the City?" *Vancouver Province*, 28 October 1971; "Three Accused of Hatchet Job," *Vancouver Province*, 31 January 1969; "Keep Personalities Out, Say Aldermen," *Vancouver Province*, 1 February 1969; "MLA Vows Answer," *Vancouver Sun*, 1 February 1969; "City Risks 'Pig in Poke,'" *Vancouver Province*, 26 September 1969; "False Creek Battle Brewing," *Vancouver Sun*, 2 August 1972; "Masters of City Welfare," *Vancouver Province*, 29 March 1972.

[73] Walter Hardwick, *Vancouver* (Don Mills, ON: Collier-Macmillan Canada, 1974), 49. Some planners challenged these dominant trends throughout the 1960s and looked to articulate a new vision of what city planning should be. Notably, see Paul Davidoff, "Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning," *Journal of American Institute of Planners* 31, 4 (1965): 544-55.

fomented by liberation movements and crystallized by freeway protest, ensured that the environment and the use value of the city became the predominant concerns of an empowered civil society. These perspectives were foreign to Sutton Brown's professional experience. Trained in and committed to the precepts of high modernist planning, Sutton Brown attempted to impose a simplistic order on an increasingly complex postwar society. Popular protest laid bare the fact that his ideas and convictions were behind their time.

Political scientist John Mollenkopf argues that the success of pro-growth coalitions undermined their political and economic support. This was certainly true in Vancouver, where constituents reacted against the active role of the local state in promoting and bringing about significant change.[74] The discontent coalesced in 1968 in a new political party, The Electors' Action Movement (TEAM). A number of writers have argued that TEAM and other concurrent reform movements in cities across the continent were conservative in approach.[75] TEAM, however, combined both conservative and radical elements, in much the same way as did Jane Jacobs.[76] TEAM's policies included a decentralization of city hall, a limit on development, a concern with aesthetics, a focus on the environment, and an adherence to greater democracy.[77] TEAM was able to break the NPA's hegemony in 1968 and 1970, but only when the pro-growth agenda continued unabated did TEAM convincingly win power in December 1972.

The TEAM-led council's first action was to encourage Sutton Brown to leave his position. Mayor Art Phillips explained that the new council wanted "to change the way the city ha[d] operated in line with new ideas." On 10 January 1972, Sutton Brown submitted his resignation, quitting, some said, before he could be fired.[78] The *Province*, no friend of TEAM, wrote that Sutton Brown's departure was a "guillotine job," citing his twenty-one years of "brilliant service," even if he was "an aloof dictator."

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[74] John H. Mollenkopf, *The Contested City* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 3; Hardwick, *Vancouver*, vii; John Punter, *The Vancouver Achievement: Urban Planning and Design* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), 25.

[75] Paul Tennant, "Vancouver Politics and the Civic Party System," in *Problems of Change in Urban Government*, ed. M.O. Dickerson, S. Drabek, and John T. Woods (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1980), 25; Warren Magnusson, introduction to *City Politics in Canada*, ed. Magnusson and Andrew Sancton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 35; Danielle Robinson, "Modernizers and Traditionalists in Postwar Hamilton, Ontario: The Fate of a Farmers' Market, 1945-1965," *Urban History Review* 36, 1 (2007): 45-59.

[76] Klemek, "Political Outsider," 326. Indeed, TEAM would fall apart through 1974-78 because of internal divisions. See Gutstein, "Vancouver," 209.

[77] Patricia Roy, *Vancouver: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1980), 157.

[78] "Sutton Brown Out in Council Vote," *Vancouver Sun*, 10 January 1973; "Commissioner Sutton Brown to Resign," *Vancouver Sun*, 11 January 1973.

Similarly, Alderman Hardwick said that he did not blame Sutton Brown for being the real mayor of Vancouver as council had pushed the role on him instead of doing its job. Hardwick concluded: "[Sutton Brown is] a very clever man, an honourable civil servant in that tradition. He has served his masters well." The most telling comment on Sutton Brown's career, though, was made in passing by an editorial writer in the *Sun*: "Almost by default, given his principles, Sutton Brown was obliged to take the dominant role." Indeed, it was his high modernist understanding of planning expertise that shaped his professional career. In keeping with these ideals, Sutton Brown refused to speak to the media about his resignation. Replying to the question of whether he had any comment, he said: "No, none at all. Seriously, I have nothing to say. I've never commented [on reporters' questions] and I don't propose to start now." A day later, he reiterated his stance but betrayed his true feelings by referring to the "guillotine job" headline: "I can't improve on the editorial in this morning's *Province*. There it is. There is nothing to add."[79]

Sutton Brown's departure stood as a powerful symbol of regime change in the local state. Crucially, it marked the end of the high modernist planning order. Political and policy change at all three levels of government ended any prospect of public funding for freeways. The civic centre idea faded into obscurity. Local advocacy convinced the federal government that urban renewal schemes violated democratic rights of citizenship. The collapse of urban renewal policy in Vancouver mirrored that across the Western world.[80] The shift from high modernity to postmodernity was by no means a rejection of modernity, though: it was simply a reimagining. Citizen involvement in planning, a focus on regional planning, and an effort to accommodate downtown living became norms. TEAM turned from long-range planning to short-range "action-oriented programs," to much acclaim. It looked to improve the quality of life in the city on a smaller scale in ways that benefitted the middle class. Yet zoning remained the primary way to organize and rationalize land use, and developers continued to build high-rises, albeit more attractive ones, across the Vancouver landscape.[81]

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79 "A Guillotine Job," *Vancouver Province*, editorial, 11 January 1973; "Commissioner's City Hall Days Appear Numbered," *Vancouver Sun*, 4 January 1973; "Sutton Brown Accepts $66,000," *Vancouver Province*, 12 January 1973; Frank A. Doyle to Mayor Phillips, 27 March 1973, CVA, PRS 483, 46-A-5, file 7; "Shabby Return for Excellent Public Service," *Vancouver Sun*, editorial, 13 January 1973; "City's Top Official Won't Talk," *Vancouver Province*, 11 January 1973.

80 Livingston, "Urban Social Movements"; Klemek, "Political Outsider," 309.

81 Council minutes, 9 July 1974, CVA, PRS 578, 73-D-3, file 1; Punter, *Vancouver Achievement*, details what he sees as the "Vancouver achievement" in postmodern planning and development.

In the end, Sutton Brown was not the only one to leave the city's employ. Five of the city administration's fourteen department heads, including the director of planning, also left city hall shortly after TEAM's electoral success, as the new council sought to wrest power from the bureaucracy.[82] In general, local government became more consultative. Links between politicians, the public, and bureaucrats were encouraged. Committee meetings were re-established and functioned again as spaces in which differences of opinion were encouraged. BOA was no longer the only point of contact for council, and bureaucrats were no longer the sole determiners of policy. Council strengthened its control, and any delegation of authority to committees of elected and/or unelected city employees had to be ratified with a two-thirds majority. Additionally, the mayor's job was made full-time, though this provided no new authority. With respect to public participation, council meetings were moved to evenings so that the general public could attend. And the planning department instituted a mandatory preliminary dialogue with citizens in the earliest, conceptual stages of planning.[83]

The ambivalence of the post-1973 changes was also apparent in the reforms of the city's administrative structure. In August 1974, both BOA and the TPB were abolished. This was a departure in appearance only. The move was made at Commissioner Ryan's suggestion and he was merely renamed city manager. A new manager's advisory committee simply took the place of the TPB, and most of the TPB's powers were turned over to the director of planning.[84] And where the old mainstays of the postwar bureaucracy had departed, new planners and experts were hired to replace them. So, while it may seem paradoxical and surely ironic, the sum of Vancouver's experience with high modernist planning was an enduring understanding that institutionalized and professionalized planning expertise was central and indispensable to the operation of the local state. The "Is Sutton Brown God?" sentiment marked a rejection of high modernity and of unconditional credulity in planning expertise. Nonetheless, expertise was not something that civic society and the local state could really envision doing without.

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82 "Council Gets Graham Resignation," *Vancouver Province*, 21 February 1973; John Stone, "Political Factors in the Rebuilding of Mass Transit: An Investigation of Failure in Melbourne Since 1970 Through Comparisons with Perth and Vancouver" (PhD diss., Swinburne University of Technology, 2008), 157.

83 Andre Bernard, Jacques Leveille, and Guy Lord, *The Political and Administrative Structures of the Metropolitan Region of Vancouver* (Ottawa: Ministry of State Urban Affairs, 1975), 47-51; Gutstein, "Vancouver," 207; Punter, *Vancouver Achievement*, 30.

84 "Lorne Ryan Promoted – To New Title," *Vancouver Province*, 28 August 1974; Council minutes, 27 August 1974, CVA, PRS 578, 73-D-3, file 1.